



Belfast Cathedral's School project featured in BBC's Songs of Praise

St Anne's Cathedral's Choir School Project featured in BBC One's Songs of Praise programme on Sunday July 5.

The programme looks at the reasons for founding the unique cross community Choir

School Project – through this music tutors from St Anne’s teach singing in three north Belfast primary schools.

Songs of Praise cameras follow tutors Catherine Harper, Therese Woodfield and Master of the Choristers David Stevens out to Cliftonville Integrated, Sacred Heart and Edenbrooke Primary Schools, and the importance of the Cathedral Choir minibuses is obvious.

You can watch the BBC Songs of Praise feature on the St Anne’s Cathedral Choir School Project by [following this link](#)-

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0621xht/songs-of-praise-05072015>

The story about the Cathedral’s choirs is introduced at the beginning of the programme, with the main feature coming just after nine minutes.

The show is introduced by Claire McCollum, who presented the Good Samaritans cheques – proceeds from the annual Black Santa sit-out for charities – in St Anne’s last February.

Before the item ends, the Cathedral Girls’ Choir and Lay Clerks sing a beautifully filmed Prayer of St Patrick.

The link to this episode of Songs of Praise will be available online until August 2.

Public overwhelmingly rejects Troubles amnesty - poll

An overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland oppose an amnesty for Troubles crimes, a major poll has found.

News Letter - The study, which was conducted in the immediate aftermath of May's general election, found that just 14.5 per cent of people support an amnesty – despite the proposal having received significant backing from some senior figures in society.

The poll of 1,810 people found that 57.9 per cent of people (excluding those who refused to answer, who answered 'don't know' or who neither agreed nor disagreed) disagree or strongly disagree with an amnesty.

However, 44 per cent of people support a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission to look at all deeds committed during the Troubles' – despite the fact that many experts believe that an amnesty would be necessary for such a body to be worthwhile.

The poll was conducted by Social Market Research Belfast and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in conjunction with academics from five universities – Liverpool, Queen’s Belfast, Leeds, LSE and Aberdeen. The detailed polling involved half-hour interviews with every person polled.

The poll found that 66 per cent of people either ‘strongly support’ or ‘support’ the Assembly and Executive and 42.5 per cent of people believe that the Assembly should be given tax-raising powers – far more than the 13 per cent of people who opposed such a move towards greater devolution.

The pollsters also found that over 38 per cent of people believe that the First and Deputy First Ministers are working well together – more than the 31 per cent who disagreed with that statement...

...On social issues, the poll found that 53 per cent of people support gay marriage (bizarrely, it found that 24 per cent of Free Presbyterians polled claimed to support same-sex marriage), and 44.3 per cent believe that abortion should be made legal here while 30.4 per cent oppose abortion.

More at -

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/public-overwhelmingly-rejects-troubles-amnesty-poll-1-6836195>

Portstewart churches hold Community Audit

The responses to the Portstewart Community Audit launched last month have been rolling in.

Coleraine Times - Residents of the town have been using the leaflet to express various wishes from more activities for young people and cross community activities for families to the provision of a community bank and a greater policing presence.

Loneliness and traffic management/ calming are two of the topics generating quite a bit of interest in the audits that have been returned so far.

The Community Audit is being conducted by Portstewart Inter Church Civic Project has been launched at the offices of Causeway Coast and Glens District Council in Coleraine.

The group first met over a year ago to explore the possibility of churches working together to improve Portstewart and support those living there.

The group is unique in that it represents all the churches in the town with a number of representatives from Agherton Church of Ireland, Baptist Church, Burnside Presbyterian, Portstewart Presbyterian, Portstewart Methodist and The Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Church.

Smart Thinking at St Canice's

Young parishioners in Faughanvale have raised £500 for charity – and answered a question that has perplexed scientists for years: what is the maximum number of 20p pieces that can fit in a tube of Smarties?

The Orphan Society is benefiting from St Canice's generosity and ingenuity. The parish devised a smart way to raise money during Lent, consistent with the Diocesan themes for 2016 – mission, children and generosity.

Tubes of Smarties, bearing the tag 'Children helping children', were given to young members of St Canice's. They were allowed to eat the sweets so long as they fulfilled certain promises, such as not fighting with brothers and sisters, clearing up their toys and smiling at people. In return, the youngsters were rewarded with 20p pieces which they then saved in the Smarties tube.



Curiously, more tubes came back than were handed out (the suspicion is that parents – reliving their childhood – scoffed Smarties and filled the boxes). Ultimately, the parish collected £248 in 20p pieces; a loose-change collection on Mothering Sunday raised a further £220; and the treasurer topped it up with £32 making a combined total raised of £500.

The Lenten fund-raiser was part of St Canice's ongoing charitable work. Faughanvale already has a mission partner in South America. The parish provides ongoing support to a Saturday evening church supper club in Paraguay which provides perhaps their only hot meal of the week for up to 100 children.

Incidentally, the answer to the question, 'What is the maximum number of 20p pieces that can fit in a tube of Smarties?' is 61 – unless you can beat it.

USA Presbyterian minister transfers to Ireland

American minister Rev Jared Stephens recently left his homeland to become the new Assistant Minister at West Presbyterian Church.

Ballymena Times - The Michigan native is, however, no stranger to our province, having completed a 12 month 'internship' at Groomsport Presbyterian Church just five years ago.

This was organised as part of an international placement facilitated by Princeton Theological Seminary where Jared undertook his formal theological training.



Rev Jared Stephens, who was recently appointed at the new Assistant Minister at West Church, Ballymena is pictured with his wife, Elaine

It was during that time that Jared developed a taste for the Ulster fry and a passion for rugby at Ravenhill. More importantly, he also met his wife, Elaine, who hails from Bangor and, since then, the couple have returned to Northern Ireland at least twice a year.

Jared had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home and cannot remember a time when he was not aware of Jesus or the importance of faith.

He says: “I majored in Philosophy at university and loved this along with my second major, Religious Studies. When I started to think very hard and deeply about these things, it challenged the simple faith than had been handed down to me.

“Through great and painful process God became real to me in a way that he never had before. My faith was awakened; I could claim it as my own and there is power in that”, he said.

Subsequently, Jared went to Princeton and was eventually ordained as a Minister in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America.

For four years he served as the minister at the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford and was also Campus Minister at New York State University at Delhi.

More at -

<http://www.ballymenatimes.com/news/your-community/from-states-side-to-west-side-for-jared-1-6834956>

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Pray for a miracle at October synod - Pope Francis

Pope Francis began his nine-day apostolic visit to Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay by urging the faithful to pray for a miracle at the October Synod of Bishops on the family.

The Pope called for prayers for a miracle, so that the Church might find new and effective solutions to the problems of the contemporary family.

“Families today need such a miracle,” the Pope told over 500,000 people at the Parque Samanes, in the city of Guayaquil.

With God’s grace, the Church can transform “what might seem to us impure, scandalous, or frightening,” he said.

In his homily at the Mass on Monday in Guayaquil, a major port city on the Pacific Ocean and 265 kms from Quito, Pope Francis spoke about the miracle at Cana, and encouraged the congregation to follow the example set by the Virgin Mary.

“She teaches us to put our families in God’s hands, to pray, to kindle the hope which shows



Pope Francis in Ecuador

us that our concerns are also God’s concerns,” he said.

“The family,” he said, “is the nearest hospital, the first school for the young, the best home for the elderly.”

Reminding his listeners that the family is the “domestic Church,” the Pope emphasised the importance of prayer, which “always lifts us out of our worries and concerns.”

He said that in family life, as at Cana, “miracles are performed with what little we have.”

Pope Francis urged the faithful to help those families that are troubled, “those who have run out of wine, those who drink only of discouragement.”

For all those families that follow Mary’s advice, and do what Jesus tells them, the Pope said, the best wine is still to come.

The nine-day apostolic journey to Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay, is Pope Francis’ ninth such journey outside Italy.

In his address at the welcome ceremony at the Quito Airport where the papal flight arrived on Sunday afternoon, the Pope said the keys to confronting “contemporary challenges and to building a better future for everyone” are in the Gospel.

The Pontiff assured President Correa of the Church’s cooperation in building a society based on respecting differences, on dialogue and participation in the life of the country with particular attention to the poor and marginalised minorities.

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Reports the Chancellor, George Osborne will use his first Budget to begin a shakeup of Sunday trading laws that currently prevent businesses opening for more than six hours. He said that, “there is still a growing appetite for shopping on a Sunday” and that businesses need the change so they can compete with online retailers. Under the plans, Sunday trading hours will become a devolved issue, meaning that mayors and local councils will be able to decide how long shops can open for. They state the Church of England has made clear its opposition to a change in Sunday trading rules last year and is quoted saying, “We believe that for family stability and community life, as many people as possible should have the possibility of a common day off every week.”

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/11721480/Budget-2015-Shops-to-trade-for-longer-on-Sundays-under-radical-new-plans.html>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sunday-shopping-revolutionised-opening-times-6016142>

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/db5ada02-23fb-11e5-9c4e-a775d2b173ca.html?siteedition=intl#axzz3fB80jkd8>

Mail/Express/Ind

Reports on reflections on the 7/7 bombings in London. They state Ms Hicks, who lost both legs below the knee in one of the tube explosions, helped launch a walk promoting religious unity ahead of today's 10th anniversary of the atrocity. They state Imam Qari Asim, of Leeds's largest mosque Makkah Masjid, the Rev Bertrand Olivier, vicar of All-Hallows-by-the-Tower in the City of London, and Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, from Movement for Reform Judaism, led a procession of faith leaders.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/589301/7-7-tears-policeman-bomb>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/77-bombings-london-anniversary-live-the-52-victims-of-the-london-terror-attacks-remembered-10369569.html>

BBC

Report on company bosses who pray states managers say prayers in the boardroom before making important decisions at Chinese real estate giant Tentimes Group. It mentions Gavin Oldham, executive chairman of retail stockbroker The Share Centre, who it says is an elective lay member of the General Synod, a fact he states openly on his firm's website biography and his Twitter account. It states while he never hides the fact that he is a Christian, he says he is careful not to "flash the brand" at work, saying his faith does guide his business life as well as his personal life.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-33405579>

Star

Report that former TV presenter Selina Scott called in Canon Paul Greenwell from Ripon Cathedral after she saw "fleeting apparitions" in her kitchen. It states the canon practises "deliverance ministry" to help people affected by phenomena such as ghosts. It states Selina is now set to follow Church advice stating that prayers, blessings, Holy Water

and crosses or other Christian symbols can help ward off ghosts.

Tel

Report that the thousands of men and boys killed in the Srebrenica genocide 20 years ago have been remembered at a service in Westminster Abbey. The service was organised by the UK charitable initiative Remembering Srebrenica. More than 2,000 invited guests witnessed 20 candles being lit in memory of the genocide victims.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/bosnia/11721403/Srebrenica-memorial-We-could-have-prevented-this-horror.-We-chose-not-to.html>

Tel

Report that the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro was held at gunpoint for second time in year as robbers stole his car. It states Orani Tempesta's car was attacked by "four heavily armed bandits". It says Brazilian police are struggling to secure Rio de Janeiro streets from violent street thugs before the 2016 Olympics.

Guard/Mail

Reports that a girl aged about 13 was killed when explosives strapped to her body went off near a major mosque in northern Nigeria's largest city Kano. Earlier in the day, five people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a church in the north-eastern city of Potiskum. They state Boko Haram militants have increasingly used young girls and women as human bombs in their six-year insurgency to establish a hardline Islamic state in north-east Nigeria, with indiscriminate targeting of civilians, both Muslim and Christian alike, which has so far claimed at least 15,000 lives and left more than 1.5 million others homeless.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/06/girl-13-blows-herself-up-near-mosque-in-suspected-boko-haram-attack>

BBC Magazine

Nadia Bolz Weber: A pastor for America's outsiders

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/33377925>