



St Dominic's Church in Athy, Co. Kildare

Closed Kildare church will take on new life as community facility

Ireland's first modern church, inspired by the spirit of Vatican II in the 1960s, is to be converted into a state-of-the-art library and auditorium for the local community.

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

St Dominic's Church in Athy, Co. Kildare will close on November 22, when the town's Dominican community will celebrate its final Mass before a joint ceremony of thanksgiving at the nearby parish church.

The community, first established in the town in 1257, has been based at its present site since the 1850s, with the current church having been built in 1965.

Explaining that the church, priory, and surrounding lands had been sold for €1.39 million to Kildare County Council, prior Fr John Walsh OP told *The Irish Catholic* that the church's modern architecture would facilitate its transformation and said "the land will be used for a town park and some sheltered accommodation will be built on another field adjacent", adding that the priory would also be used for housing. About €8 million is expected to be invested in developing the site.

Fr Walsh had been approached about the possibility of the site being purchased for the benefit of the people and town of Athy, he said. The Dominicans had believed the site should be used "for the good of the people and not for commercial reasons, with the possibility that the

church building would remain open, but not as a church”, he said, and the Provincial Council agreed to the sale following advice from the Athy community.

Although the church has been well-attended, and the town has a thriving Dominican tertiary group, manpower shortages have compelled the friars to leave the town, Fr Walsh said. Eight student brothers are expected to be ordained as priests next year, but fewer than half of Ireland’s Dominicans are under 65, with Fr John’s Athy brothers including three 88-year-olds and two brothers in nursing care.

“The Mid Term Chapter of Priors and Superiors after a visitation of the Master General two years ago asked that we withdraw from some priories in order to build up the Province and better its apostolate in fewer places,” Fr Walsh told *The Irish Catholic*.

While the Dominican site will be used “to build up the town, and bring some needed renewal of the town which badly needs it”, Fr Walsh said the friars’ departure need not be permanent. “We have left four times before and always returned in a new form,” he said, continuing, “we may return again, but for now we remain obedient to the will

of our superiors which bring us great peace and thanksgiving for centuries of ministry and for the love of the local people.”

Columbanus 1400 Festival in Bangor churches is climax of year’s commemoration

Bangor’s commemoration of the 1400th anniversary of the death of Columbanus will come to a climax over the weekend 20 to 22 November.

The Columbanus 1400 Festival will open with the now–traditional Journey of a Single Day concert in Bangor Abbey on the evening of Friday 20.

On Saturday 21 there will be a series of free talks by noted experts on the subject of Columbanus together with story–telling and song for the younger audience. St Columbanus, Ballyholme, will be the morning venue and St Comgall’s, Brunswick Road, will host the afternoon talks.

Saturday evening sees a concert of music of the time, together with new settings of texts by



**COLUMBANUS
1400 FESTIVAL**

COMMEMORATING THE
1400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
DEATH OF COLUMBANUS
BANGOR, CO. DOWN
20TH - 22ND NOVEMBER 2015

Friday 20th November

**JOURNEY OF A
SINGLE DAY III CONCERT**
Bangor Abbey 8pm
Tickets only £50

Saturday 21st November

TALKS
St Columbanus, Ballyshannon
10am & 11.30am and St Conall's
(Brammick, Ball Tulla, 2pm & 3.30pm)
& Story Telling Sessions 2.30pm
Free

**SONGS OF THE
SCRIBE CONCERT**
First Bangor Presbyterian Church
7.30pm
Tickets only £20

Sunday 22nd November

**TO FIND A HEATHEN
PLACE AND SOUND A BELL**
The story of Columbanus in
words and music
Bangor Abbey 3.30pm

A UNITED CELEBRATION
Evangelical service
Bangor Abbey 6.30pm

INQ
friends@colombanusbangor.co.uk
colombanusnorthdown.com
T: 028 9127 0069

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM

Mace Shop
Brammick Road, Bangor

Bangor Visitor Information Centre
Quay Street, Bangor

Ards Visitor Information Centre
Regent Street, Newtownards

North Down Museum
Castle Park, Bangor

Online colombanus.co.uk/ colombanusbangor.co.uk/
(all tickets in advance)



Columbanus himself. This takes place in First Bangor Presbyterian Church.

Bangor Abbey will be the venue on Sunday afternoon for the first performance in Northern Ireland of a new work telling some of the Columbanus story in words and music.

Finally, the festival reaches its conclusion on Sunday evening with a United Celebration in the Abbey at which the preacher will be former Church of Ireland Primate, Lord Eames, who began his own ecclesiastical journey as Curate in Bangor Parish.

NI marriage vote shows need for Church to ‘support Catholic politicians’

A leading priest-theologian has said the Church needs to work harder to support and form the consciences of Catholic politicians.

Commenting in the aftermath of last week’s same-sex marriage vote in Stormont, Fr Niall Coll, who lectures at St Mary’s College, Belfast, said that “Catholicism in the past was so social and cultural that most views were uncontested”.

“There was a consensus in society on issues of personal morality, and as that tide ebbs the great challenge is to help inform politicians who work out of a personal faith”.



Fr Niall Coll (far left)

“The need for that has been growing,” he stressed, pointing out that many in the North fit this description as “they are a Christian people”, but that helping politicians to act from informed consciences is “the big challenge”.

“If it’s true that in the past the Church didn’t want people to do other than what they were told, now it urgently needs people to think and weigh up matters for themselves,” he said. “Often it seems in Ireland that there’s space for only one orthodoxy at a time – and now it’s a secular one.”

Fifty three MLAs voted to urge the Northern Executive “to table legislation to allow for same-sex marriage”, with 52 MLAs opposing the motion and one abstaining. This was the first time in five attempts that a majority of MLAs has backed such a measure, but the Democratic Unionist Party vetoed the decision by lodging a petition of concern.

Same-sex marriage advocates have hailed the result as a symbolic victory, but Fr Coll pointed out that few serious commentators expect Stormont to redefine marriage as understood in Northern Ireland. “In the North the expectation among most people who are politically literate is that the pathway for same-sex marriage is more likely to be achieved through the courts,” he said, “so a lot of what’s happening in Stormont is beside the point.”

Bishop of Connor’s concern at Michelin plant closure

The Rt Revd Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor in a statement comments, “Like many others, I was deeply concerned to learn of the recent announcement of the forthcoming closure of the Michelin tyre factory in Ballymena in 2018. This is

a huge blow to the 860 workers directly affected and their families but also to the people of the surrounding area and to local businesses. I am conscious, too, of others who have lost their jobs in the area in recent times.

“As well as the wider impact of these job losses, of course, they come at personal and family cost of stress as people look for employment alternatives and we in the Church will hold them in our prayers and offer pastoral support in our parishes. The announcement of the job losses also presents a huge challenge to our political and civic leaders to bring new investment and opportunities to the area. I would urge everyone to redouble their efforts to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the hard-working people of this area.”

Events to Recognise Voluntary Carers in Derry and Raphoe

As a new initiative to recognise the work of voluntary carers who care for loved ones at home, the Derry and Raphoe Board of Social Responsibility will be running two special evening



Canon Malcolm Ferry with his wife, Carol

events next spring. The events will be organised to accommodate both Derry and Raphoe.

Each evening will include an act of worship and hospitality giving time and space for those who attend an opportunity to swap stories, share experiences and support one another. The format will be flexible and designed to be as helpful and supportive as possible. It will also be an opportunity for parishes to support their carers who attend by volunteering practical support where possible and appropriate.

Board member Revd Malcolm Ferry (rector of St Augustine's Church in Londonderry) relates to this first hand. Malcolm's wife, Carol, was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's disease at the age of 38 when their three children were still at primary school.

Drawing on their experience of daily living with a progressive illness, which can be debilitating at times, they want other families to know that they are not alone and to encourage them to be positive and share the many blessings life can bring.

"Sometimes we see the wheelchair and the person in it but we don't see the person pushing it," Mr Ferry explains. "There are also a lot of 'hidden disabilities' such as mental illness or dyslexia and therefore 'hidden carers' are commonplace in our churches. In the current climate, where more and more resources are being taken away from carers and respite care is less and less available, we are seeking to support voluntary carers in a small way."

The initiative is also a call for churches to increase their understanding of the wide range of disabilities across society and to support those

loved ones who care 365 days of the year. The Church of Ireland designates the third Sunday in November as 'Disability Awareness Sunday'. Some useful resources are available at www.ireland.anglican.org/news/category/19

This new initiative is an extension of this work and it is hoped that others may learn from this approach in Derry and Raphoe.

Death announced of South Africa's first woman priest

The first woman to be ordained a priest in South Africa has died, it has been announced. The Revd Canon Nancy Charton served at Grahamstown Cathedral as a lay minister and Sunday School teacher before being ordained there first as a deacon and then, in 1992, was one of three women ordained priest by the late Bishop David Russell.

She died on Wednesday Morning in Graaff Reinet, in South Africa's Eastern Cape, at the age of 95.



The Revd Canon Nancy Charton, South Africa's first woman priest, died this week at the age of 95

“We give thanks for her long life of devotion to her Lord and his church and people and pray for the family,” a spokesman for the Cathedral said.

“I remember Nancy fondly from when I served in St Mary’s Cathedral, Johannesburg,” the Primate of Southern Africa, the Most Revd Thabo Makgoba, said. “She was a pioneering woman, whose whole life was committed to serving God through his people.

“At the 20th anniversary celebrations of the ordination of women to the Priesthood, Nancy was the preacher. Her sermon outlined the long road she had travelled to fulfil her vocation to the priesthood, and gave thanks to God for the many people who had encouraged and supported her.”

Nancy Charton began her studies at the University of Pretoria in 1939, and became a researcher and lecturer at the then University of Natal in the 1940s. She moved to Grahamstown in 1965, where she spent the rest of her academic life, first as a lecturer and then professor in the department of political studies at Rhodes.

She was named a distinguished fellow of the university and, upon her retirement was ordained a deacon of the church. She was ordained a priest within a few weeks of the church resolving to ordain women in 1992.

“On behalf of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, its bishops, clergy and people, I send our condolences and prayers to [her] family,” Archbishop Makgoba said.

Media digest

Tel/Guard

Plans to impose a two-child limit on benefit payments have been labelled as "fundamentally anti-family" by Churches and other faith groups, including the CofE (see blog below). The coalition argues that the Conservative plans could break up families, discourage stable new households and even drive up abortion rates.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11986399/Tory-two-child-limit-on-benefits-fundamentally-anti-family-faith-leaders.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/nov/10/uk-faith-leaders-unite-to-challenge-welfare-penalties-on-larger-families>

BBC

A two-minute silence will be observed across the country later to remember the nation's war dead. Veterans will join serving armed forces personnel at the Cenotaph in London. Services will be held at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, and at churches, schools, town halls and military bases.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34783337>

Tel

Article reflecting on the early arrival of Christmas on Britain's High Streets and the millions who have already watched the John Lewis Christmas TV advertisement on line. The feature includes a reference to a study commissioned by the Church of England, which revealed four in 10 British adults do not realise that Jesus "was a real person who actually lived". Twenty two per cent said that Jesus was "a mythical or fictional character".

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11986980/Lets-not-forget-what-Christmas-is-really-about.-Clue-Its-not-John-Lewis.html>

Ind

Christianity "could disappear completely" within a decade in parts of the Middle East, a report has warned as Isis and other groups continue their violent persecution of the faith. Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), a UK-based Catholic campaign group, has charted a dramatic decline in faith followers over the last two years largely due to what it called the "religiously motivated ethnic cleansing" in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria and other countries suffering Islamist insurgencies. But researchers found that totalitarian regimes such as in North Korea and extremism in faiths outside Islam were also playing a part in the 22 nations reviewed.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/christianity-on-course-to-disappear-in-parts-of-middle-east-as-ethnic-cleansing-continues-report-a6728831.html>

BBC

The first charter flight of Syrian refugees will arrive in the UK next week, the Home Office's most senior civil servant has said. Permanent Secretary Mark Sedwill said the UK was "on track" to meet the Prime Minister's target of receiving 1,000 Syrian refugees by Christmas. The move is part of the Government's plan to take in 20,000 refugees from Syria by 2020.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34779524>

BBC

The Prime Minister David Cameron will join 60 other leaders from Africa and Europe for a meeting in Malta

over the next two days to discuss the mass movement of people. Europe is likely to offer countries in Africa billions of euros in assistance to help deal with the migrant crisis and to tackle people smuggling gangs.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34783940>

BBC

Chancellor George Osborne should postpone tax-credit reforms for a year to enable debate about the future of working-age benefits, a group of MPs has said.

Parliament's Work and Pensions Committee warned there was no "magic bullet" to protect low-paid workers.

The Chancellor is to set out plans in his Autumn

Statement to lessen the impact of planned cuts, after they were rejected by the House of Lords.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34780272>

BBC

The government has "skewed" religious studies teaching in England by excluding non-religious beliefs from the new GCSE, the High Court has heard. Three families are seeking judicial review of the government's decision to give priority to religious views in the new course, due to start in 2016. But government lawyers argued equal consideration for religious and non-religious views is not required by law. Mr Justice Warby said he would give his judgement at a later date.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-34775686>

Times/Tel

A government plan to lengthen Sunday trading hours has been delayed after a cross-party rebellion threatened to derail the legislation. Scottish nationalists claimed credit yesterday for the decision to drop plans for the Commons

to hold a vote on the issue. This was combined with the threat of a rebellion by more than 20 Conservative MPs. George Osborne announced plans in the summer to enable local authorities to decide whether larger stores could stay open for longer on Sundays.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/business/industries/retailing/article4610725.ece>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11986982/David-Cameron-pulls-vote-on-relaxing-Sunday-Trading-hours-in-face-of-unholy-alliance-of-20-Tory-SNP-and-Labour-MPs.html>

Times

A teacher led chants rejecting Christianity and challenging the nativity story at a school named in the Trojan Horse scandal, a panel has heard. Asif Khan, a teacher at Oldknow Academy in Birmingham, was said to have shouted at children: "We don't believe in Christmas, do we?" and "Jesus wasn't born in Bethlehem, was he?" Mr Khan and Jahangir Akbar, the former deputy head teacher at the school, are accused of unacceptable professional behaviour at a disciplinary panel in Bournville. Both men deny the charges.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/education/article4610500.ece>

Tel

A feature on Advent calendars and Christmas cards. David Marshall, founder of the Meaningful Chocolate Company, estimates that 400,000 calendars sold will feature a religious theme, but that many more on retailers shelves will have secular themes. The article notes that the Archbishop of York is backing a Traidcraft campaign to persuade people to buy charity Christmas greeting

cards rather than send digital greetings. Archbishop Sentamu, personally signs around 1,600 cards each year.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/topics/christmas/11984775/Advent-calendars-for-pets-easier-to-find-than-ones-featuring-baby-Jesus.html>

BBC

Government plans to relax Sunday trading laws in England and Wales are facing defeat in the House of Commons. The Scottish Nationalist Party has decided to vote against the proposals, as it fears it could drive down Scottish workers' wages. The Chancellor, George Osborne, promised in the Budget earlier this year that councils and mayors would get the power to set Sunday trading laws in their areas. The Church of England has voiced its opposition to the changes [in a submission](#) during the consultation period earlier this year.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34772708>

BBC

A parish priest obtained more than £13,000 by not handing over fees for funerals and wedding banns, a court has heard. Canon Ian Finn was the priest in charge at St Mary the Virgin church, Haverhill (St Eds and Ipswich diocese). The prosecution at Ipswich Crown Court said Canon Finn had told funeral directors to pay for services by cash or by cheques made out to him, which he then paid into his own bank account. He denies fraud by abuse of position.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-34769926>

BBC/Guard/Tel

MPs have passed the Scotland Bill on new devolved powers. The proposed legislation, which includes powers

over abortion law now moves to the House of Lords for further consideration. The draft legislation will also have to be approved by MSPs at Holyrood before it can become law.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-34760508>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/devolving-abortion-a-chance-to-reframe-scottish-law-campaigners-say>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-politics/11984417/Abortions-in-Scotland-Nicola-Sturgeon-shouldnt-control-them.html>

Times

A brother and sister who fought a High Court case over plans for their mother's funeral have accepted a compromise. Iris Freud died last month aged 92. Mrs Levrant wanted a CofE service, with familiar hymns. Mr Freud wanted a more austere service to fit in with his desire to observe traditional Jewish mourning. After a two-day hearing, the pair have come to an agreement.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4609492.ece>

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