

Discovery Gospel Choir feature in Abbey Theatre's 'Dear Ireland III'

The multi-cultural Discovery Gospel Choir, who are based in St George and St Thomas'

Church on Cathal Brugha Street, will feature in the third and final instalment of the Abbey Theatre's 'Dear Ireland' series on Thursday 17th December at 7.30pm.

'Dear Ireland III' features a series of three minute postcards from underrepresented voices in Irish society, which were



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asked the question, 'What does it feel like to be you, right now, in Ireland?'.

Commenting on the initiative the Directors of the Abbey Theatre, Graham McLaren and Neil Murray said, "The Abbey Theatre is more than the walls which house its productions, and the work of Ireland's national theatre responds and will continue to reflect the challenges being faced by Irish society".

Discovery Gospel Choir features members from 17 different nationalities and was formed in 2004, as part of a major initiative within the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough to respond to the needs of those migrating to Ireland, to make it their new home.

You can watch this free evening of songs, stories and poems here -

[[] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Vlxn_UvkM4]

Perfect timing for opening of new thrift shop

St Canice's Church has opened its new thrift shop in the centre of Eglinton just in time for the Christmas shopping rush. 'New Beginnings', on Main Street, between the village chemist and the local supermarket, is described as "a place of caring and sharing for the whole community".

The COVID-compliant formal opening was performed by the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster.

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Bishop Andrew prayed for the success of the venture, thanking God for the vision behind the project and the seed that was growing in the village. *Photo - left to right: the Rev Canon Paul Hoey (Rector), Elaine Way (Churchwarden), Roberta Sinclair (Co-ordinator), and the Rt Rev Andrew Forster (Bishop of Derry and Raphoe).*

thanking God for the vision behind the project and the seed that was growing in the village.

The Rector of St Canice's, Rev Canon Paul Hoey, recited 'The New Beginnings Prayer', which asks God's blessing for the shop, the volunteers who staff it and everyone who comes through its door.

Bishop Andrew pored over some of the items on sale in the shop, including books and bric-a-brac, and bought two

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autobiographies by rugby internationals Dodie Weir and Paul O'Connell. He chatted to two of the main drivers behind the venture, coordinator Roberta Sinclair and churchwarden Elaine Way.

The shop has lots of items for sale, including giftware, jewellery, clothing, handbags, crafts, books and lots and lots of decorations. All have been donated by local people.

Monies raised by the thrift shop will go towards the St Canice's Hall Restoration Appeal – which aims to replace the hall destroyed in the August 2017 flood – and to local charities.

Northern Ireland 2021 - MP encourages applications to Shared History Fund

East Belfast MP Gavin Robinson has encouraged applications to the £1million Shared History Fund available to groups marking the centenary.

He said, "The slogan marking the Northern Ireland Office's programme of events is particularly appropriate. The centenary is not just about looking back to what has been achieved over the last 100 years, but looking ahead to Northern Ireland's second century.

The Shared History Fund is available to support the engagement of a wide range of arts, heritage, community and other organisations in marking the centenary. I would encourage any interested group to explore the opportunities presented by this fund before applications close on 15th

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January 2021. There are grants available between £3,000 and £100,000.

Northern Ireland's centenary is something that will be marked right across the UK, but obviously the main focus will be here at home. It is something that has affected the lives of every person living here and the future of Northern Ireland really is "our story in the making".Christmas.



Choristers of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

Greetings from the Diocese of Jerusalem

Archbishop Suheil Dawani of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem has sent Christmas greetings to Archbishop

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Michael Jackson and the people of the United Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough.

The friendship link, the Epiphany Agreement, was signed by both Archbishops on the Feast of the Epiphany 2016 (January 10). Over the intervening years that friendship between our two dioceses has deepened and the agreement is due to be extended beyond the initial five year period.

Archbishop Suheil's message was recorded in St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem, just a few kilometres from Bethlehem. Archbishop Jackson has sent a message to the Diocese of Jerusalem. See the Archbishops and hear their messages here -

<https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2020/12/15/christmas-greetings-from-the-diocese>

NI Covid-19 Charity Fund re-opening

The NI Covid-19 Charity Fund is opening for a second round of grants to churches who have been affected by the pandemic.

A number of C of I parishes received funding in the first round and are eligible again for the financial period October 2020- March 2021.

If you didn't apply first time around then you can do so this time around.

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David Knox, funding consultant, helped parishes secure over £400,000 in total last time around. His telephone number is +44 7715 893591.

Maghera Parish received £47,000. St Gall's Bangor received £32,000. St John's Newcastle received £22,000.

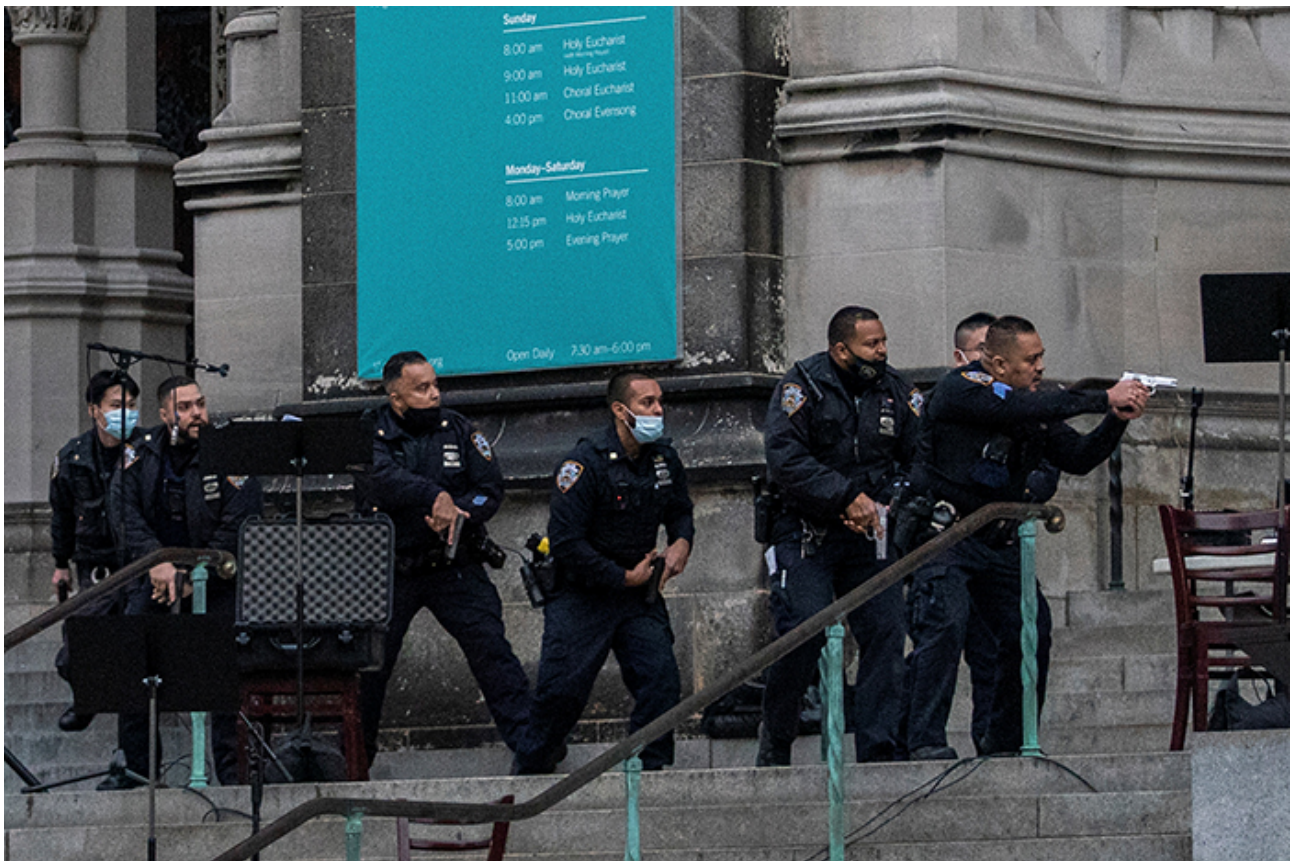
Gunman killed by police on steps of Saint John the Divine Cathedral Church in New York

Police shot and killed a man on the steps of the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York City on Sunday (13 December) after he began firing two guns into the air just after an outdoor Christmas concert concluded. No one else was injured.

The cathedral choir had just finished performing a free Carols for the Community concert – masked and distanced – on the front steps around 3.45 pm EST [8.45 pm GMT] and the crowd of hundreds of attendees was dispersing when the man began firing shots into the air in front of the bronze doors, according to New York Police Commissioner Dermot Shea and the Associated Press.

At least 400 people had watched the concert from Amsterdam Avenue, including Lisa Schubert, the cathedral's vice president of programming and external relations. Schubert told Episcopal News Service (ENS) she estimated the shooting started four minutes after the end of the concert, by which point about 150 people remained in the area in front of the cathedral.

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Police officers move towards a man who opened fire outside the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in the Manhattan borough of New York City on Sunday (13 December)

People jumped for cover, hiding behind lampposts or lying flat on the steps as the gunman fired, although he did not seem to be aiming at anyone, according to New York Bishop Andrew Dietsche, who was also in the street along with Clifton Daniel III, the cathedral's dean, when it happened. Witnesses reported that the man was yelling, "Kill me," Shea said at a press conference in front of the cathedral later that evening. Police responded "almost immediately" and shot and killed the man, whose name has not yet been released by the New York Police Department.

"It is by the grace of God today that we don't have anyone struck" by the gunfire except the gunman, Shea said.

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Police recovered two semiautomatic guns and a bag they believe the man was carrying, which contained a full container of gasoline, rope, wire, knives and a Bible. Police had no word on a motive but said they had tentatively identified the man and that he has a “lengthy criminal history.”

“He could have easily, easily, easily hurt other people,” Schubert told ENS. “This is an incredible tragedy – and we’re so lucky.”

“It is horrible that our choir’s gift to New York City, a much-needed afternoon of song and unity, was cut short by this shocking act of violence,” the cathedral’s staff wrote in a statement. “We will remain strong, together, and serve as a safe space for prayer, meditation and celebration during the upcoming holiday season. We are grateful to our first responders, and our prayers are with all those affected by this event.”

Saint John the Divine, on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, is the seat of the Diocese of New York, the largest Episcopal church and one of the largest cathedrals in the world. It was closed yesterday (Monday) as police continued to investigate the shooting, but Schubert said it was expected to reopen for masked, physically distant private prayer today (15 December). The concert was one of the few in-person public events in the cathedral’s mostly virtual programming calendar.

“It was an absolutely beautiful holiday concert,” Schubert said. “It was just filled with hope – you know, the news of the vaccine. It was a community of people all very respectful

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and everyone was wearing masks. . . Everything was just so beautifully calibrated and moved so beautifully, and then it was just insanity.”

Schubert said the cathedral staff have plenty of “natural resilience” and are mostly feeling grateful for the rapid response of the New York Police Department and the cathedral’s security team. Still, she said, “I think everyone is just completely devastated.”

“I ask your prayers for the cathedral clergy, staff and community; for the many who were traumatised by the event; and for the gunman himself,” Dietsche wrote in an email to the congregations and clergy of his diocese. “On an afternoon that brought us the most sublime and beautiful Christmas music, an hour of terror, and the shock of self-destructive violence, I bid you all, in the name of Christ, the fullness of Advent hope and Christmas peace.

“Building Hope Together” – report highlights Anglican Communion responses to Covid-19

A major new report by the Anglican Alliance provides an overview of how Anglican churches around the world have remained “a committed, loving and active presence in their communities” during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report says that even churches facing lockdowns have continued “praying, comforting, informing, connecting, feeding the hungry, promoting dignity in need, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick and affirming gospel hope.”

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The report, *Building Hope Together*, highlights many examples of how churches across the Communion are putting their faith into action and making a positive difference amidst the trauma of Covid-19. “These actions build on the gifts and assets of churches: their sustained community presence and relationships, their trusted leadership, their networks of volunteers and professionals, especially young people”, the Anglican Alliance said. “They also draw on their skills in counselling and community mobilisation, their knowledge of the local areas to identify the most vulnerable, as well as their church buildings, schools and health facilities. Despite their buildings in many places being closed, churches are finding innovative ways of continuing to serve the most vulnerable in their communities.”

The report gives several examples, including that of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, which has commissioned garment workers laid off because of the pandemic, to sew personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers – working from their homes and building on their existing skills. The Church has also developed a voucher system – called *Dignity in Need* – whereby the poorest receive money in exchange for a commitment to repay this grant through work on the church’s social and building projects once the pandemic is over.

The Anglican Alliance was launched following a request by bishops at the Lambeth Conference in 2008. It works to connect, equip and inspire the worldwide Anglican family of churches and agencies to work for a world free of poverty and injustice and to safeguard creation. The Anglican



Alliance provides a mechanism for Anglicans to work together in the areas of development, relief and advocacy.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Anglican Alliance convened an on-going Global Covid-19 Task Force to identify emerging issues. It holds regular regional and global consultations to share learning and hosting thematic consultations on key issues, such as migration and domestic abuse.

The Anglican Alliance has also built an online Covid-19 Resource Hub in four languages to provide technical, spiritual & pastoral resources; and has been mapping appeals from provinces with potential partners.

“While the whole world has been affected by the pandemic, the impact has been felt most acutely in fragile and

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marginalised communities”, Canon Rachel Carnegie, the Executive Director of the Anglican Alliance, said. “Covid-19 has revealed and exacerbated the inequalities between and within countries. The suffering and anxiety are immense – and yet . . . we continue to hear from across the Anglican Communion of churches sustaining hope in their support to the most vulnerable.

“This Advent we are called to reflect on our global interdependence and how we can be good news to one another across the world in this time of pandemic.”

Click [here](#) to visit the Anglican Alliance online Covid-19 Resource Hub; and Click [here](#) to download Building Hope Together (pdf).

Pointers for prayer

Loving Lord, however many years we have made the journey through Advent, may we continue to find the way exciting and refreshing. Help us to be open to new challenges and inspiration, alongside finding comfort in the familiar delights.

Lord our Messiah, as we journey once more through Advent, thank you that we are not alone – we walk together with our fellow pilgrims, enjoying your loving presence as we travel towards the wonder of the nativity.

Pray for the new government of Burundi and for President Ndayishimiye. Ask God to bless Burundi. ‘Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing

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stream' (Amos 5:24).

Please pray for the meeting of the Church Leaders scheduled for the incoming week as the leaders try to co-ordinate a response to the continually changing legislation as it affects churches.

Last night Mary and Joseph went to spend the night with Ivy on our PosadaJourney. They had all sorts of fun together!

Speaking to the soul

The Day of the Lord by Michael Smith

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 21:20-28

20 "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then those in

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Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; 22for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfilment of all that is written. 23Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on

the earth and wrath against this people; 24they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. 28Now when these things begin to take place, stand



Nativity play last year in Broughshane Parish

up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Meditation

The “day of the Lord” is a familiar theme in the Hebrew Scriptures. It was prophesied as a day both dreadful and wonderful, equally terrifying and liberating. The notion of the Day of the Lord carries this dual response, because it is both a day of God’s wrath and judgment when evil will be defeated, as well as a time of God’s vindication and justice when all things will be put to rights. In today’s gospel reading, Jesus continues this double teaching by both

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warning and comforting us about the coming Day of the Lord.

There are times in life when our world seems to fall apart. Disease, death, betrayal, desperate loneliness, and financial insecurity may not cause us to literally flee to the mountains, but they can trigger a response that makes us want to run away in panic or immobilizes us in fear. Jesus is telling us beforehand that times like these will come and when they do, hang on, and be assured that these dreadful days will not have the last say.

“Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near,” Jesus says. In other words, when all hell breaks loose around you, stand your ground and hold your head high. Know that help is on the way!



Michael G. Smith served as bishop of North Dakota for fifteen years and is currently the Assistant Bishop of Dallas.

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