



Advent service prepares most northerly C of I parish for Christmas

Parishioners from the Church of Ireland's most northerly group of parishes gathered in St Buadan's Church in Culdaff yesterday morning – the third Sunday of Advent – for a Joint Worship Service with Nine Carols and Lessons.

It was led by the Bishop's Curate in charge of Moville, Greencastle, Donagh, Culdaff and Cloncha (Malin), Rev Suzanne Cousins. Members of the congregation had travelled from as far away as Belfast to attend the service.

The church was decorated appropriately for the occasion, with a Christmas tree and seasonal window displays, and the first hymn was followed by the lighting of the third candle on the church's traditional advent wreath.

The lessons were read by the parish reader, Dorothy Carey, and parishioners, two of whom were dressed as Mary and Joseph for part of the service. The hymn-singing was led by the Northern Lights Choir. As the service drew to a conclusion, Rev Cousins invited those children present to join her at the front of the church while she gave a short address.

The weekly collection was divided between parish funds and a local charity, and items were collected for Donegal Women's Domestic Violence Services.

Dublin teacher honoured by France

A teacher at a prominent Dublin faith school has been honoured by the French state for her



Louise Curtin is pictured first on the left, accompanied by the other recipients of the award, and the French Ambassador H.E. Stéphane Crouzat who is pictured second from the right.

achievements in the educational and cultural spheres, and for her promotion of French language and culture.

Louise Curtin is a French teacher at Belvedere College in Dublin.

She was recently presented with the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques at a reception at the French Embassy in Dublin.

The Ordre des Palmes Académique was created by Emperor Napoléon Bonaparte originally to

honour eminent members of the University of Paris. It was changed into its current form as an order in 1955 by President René Coty.

Louise Curtin has been teaching in Belvedere College since 1998, and has been running French debating in Belvedere College since 2004, as well as acting as a coach for the National French Debating team, and helping to run the Joutes Oratoires de l'Alliance Française de Dublin.

She has had the most success with boy's teams in the history of French debates in Ireland.

It was Belvedere headmaster, Gerry Foley, who recommended Louise Curtin for the award.

“During the past nineteen years, Louise has shown herself to be extraordinarily passionate in imparting a love of the French language to all her students. A true Francophile, she endeavours to promote all aspects of French culture in her classroom. From music, to food, to literature, to film and theatre, she creates a little corner of France in our Dublin city centre school and in the heart of her students,” Mr Foley said.

Outside the classroom, Louise co-ordinates the school's annual French exchange programme

which is the largest and longest-running exchange in the College.

This affords 35 students, the opportunity to immerse themselves entirely in everyday life in French culture and language in Lyon.

A very high level of commitment is required as Louise travels to France with the boys and receives the exchange students from their partner school, Lycee Saint Marc in Lyon.

The teacher is also a very talented musician who is actively involved in the school's musical activities including being conductor of the Chamber Orchestra.

“It was so wonderful to receive this award surrounded by my family, colleagues, friends and past pupils,” Louise said after the presentation.

“It is an evening that will live long in my memory.”

Some of Louise Curtin's students, meanwhile, will be taking part in the annual Belvedere College SleepOut to raise money for charities working with the homeless, and to raise awareness about the issues around homelessness, from 22-24 December 2017.

This is the 34th Belvedere Annual SleepOut. Last year's SleepOut raised a record €225,021.61.

This year over 100 students, teachers, past pupils and parents will be sleeping out in Dublin's inner city to raise funds and awareness for Focus Ireland, the Peter McVerry Trust and HomeAgain.

Students participating in the SleepOut have highlighted that 18 babies were born into homelessness last year. They spent their first day without a home.

More information see www.sleepoutdublin.ie

Ahoghill Churchwarden wins prestigious 2017 Industrial Chemistry award

Professor Tom Moody, Church Warden in St Colmanell's, Ahoghill, has won a prestigious Chemistry award.

Professor Moody is Vice President, Technology Development and Commercialisation, at Almac & Arran Chemical Company. He has been awarded the prestigious Institute of Chemistry of Ireland Industrial Chemistry Award 2017.



Professor Tom Moody has been awarded the prestigious Institute of Chemistry of Ireland Industrial Chemistry Award 2017.

Judges awarded Professor Moody and his team the honour based on the excellence demonstrated within Almac Sciences' enzyme technology development research programme. This is achieved through the unique collaboration between the biocatalysis team within Almac, headquartered in Northern Ireland, and Arran Chemical Company, Athlone, a member of the Almac Group since 2015.

Belfast cathedral charity sitout online video

The Black Santa Sit-out 2017 gets underway on the steps of Belfast Cathedral today, Monday December 18. This year Canons of the Cathedral and other staff, dressed in black, will be on the Cathedral steps each day from Monday until Saturday December 23.

Dean-Elect, Archdeacon Stephen Forde, will be taking part on day one as he learns the ropes in preparation for becoming the bona fide Black Santa next year.

Dean's Vicar, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, said: "Over the past 41 years, this collection has become bigger than one person. This is a good opportunity to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers, Canons of the Cathedral and the two Bishops whose seats are in St Anne's, who all contribute so faithfully to the appeal each year.

"It will feel a little different but as at all moments of need, we know people will rally to support the Black Santa effort to ensure that it is a success and the charities receive their grants as in any other year."

The Sit-out was founded by Dean Sammy Crooks in 1976 who wanted to raise funds for charitable causes. He sat outside St Anne's in the week before Christmas with a small barrel for donations, wearing his black, Anglican clerical cloak. The local press dubbed Dean Crooks Belfast's Black Santa, the name stuck and so the annual tradition began.

Entry to the Cathedral will be free during the Sit-out and people are invited to stop by to say hello to Black Santa, support the appeal, and take a walk around the Cathedral where there will be tea and coffee provided. Children will enjoy the beautiful crib.

Services will be held as usual, and visitors are asked to respect the quiet and the presence of others as they explore St Anne's during this week before Christmas.

Anyone unable to get to St Anne's during the Sit-out can donate directly via the Belfast Cathedral website www.belfastcathedral.org – just click the Donate Now button and scroll to Black Santa Sit-out Appeal.

Canon Niblock said: "We will be on the steps of the Cathedral come rain, snow, hail or gale, and look forward to greeting people as they pass by

or call in to support this appeal which raises vital funds for around 200 local charities.”?

The Cathedral has produced its a Sitout video omvplving Dean’s Vicar Canon Mark Niblock and Cathedral Sexton Mark Geddis, with a special guest appearance by Dean–Elect, the Ven Stephen Forde.

The video can also be viewed on the cathedral’s Facebook and Twitter pages.

The 2017 Sit–Out will end around tea time on December 23 as Christmas Eve this year falls on a Sunday.

Donations can be made on the steps of the Cathedral during the course of the sit–out, by post (download Black Santa Flyer 2017) or online via its website.

The Dublin Sit–Out at St Ann’s church, Dawson Street is also under way and on Wednesday in Ballinamallard the annual Sit–out will led by the Ven. Brian Harper, Rector of Magheracross, and the Revd John Beacom, Minister of Ballinamallard Methodist Church. Donations will be made to Abaana Children’s Choir and Air Ambulance.

Friends of Cathedral Music award grant to Armagh cathedral



Mr Donald Kerr, the Northern Ireland representative of the Friends of Cathedral Music were the Very Revd Gregory Dunstan,

Dean of Armagh and Dr Stephen Timpany, Director of Music.

Recently the Friends of Cathedral Music awarded a grant to the Choir of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

The cheque was presented by Mr Donald Kerr, the Northern Ireland representative of the Friends of Cathedral Music to the Very Revd Gregory Dunstan, Dean of Armagh and Dr Stephen Timpany, Director of Music.

The cheque will be used to endow the organist's salary and to assist in the purchase of a new piano for the Music Hall.

Bishop's tribute to Sir William Hastings

The Rt Revd Harold Miller, Bishop of Down and Dromore, has paid tribute to Sir Billy Hastings. He said, "I am so sorry to hear of the death of Sir Billy Hastings. Billy contributed enormously to the development of the hospitality sector in Northern Ireland during and after the 'Troubles'.

"Most people would have given up, but Billy's steely determination and love for his homeland

meant that he kept going – sometimes almost alone.

“He was a regular worshipper in Down Cathedral, and gave priority to Sunday worship when he was away from home. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife and family. He was a big presence and will be greatly missed.”

Pope calls fake news a sin

Pope Francis has said fake and sensationalised news a sin.

The Pope told the Italian Periodical Press Union and the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies that dredging up old scandals too was one of the “sins of communication” that hurts all involved.

He welcomed the journalists saying they have: “a task, or rather a mission, among the most important in today’s world: to inform correctly, to offer everyone a version of the facts conforming as closely as possible to reality”.

Pope Francis described how the media must not fall into: “slander, which is sensationalistic, or defamation, looking for outdated and old things,



and bringing them to light today; they are very grave sins, which damage the heart of the journalist and harm people.”

He described journalism though as fundamental for the growth of any society that wishes to be called democratic but criticised the: “drive for sensationalism to the detriment of precision.”

The Pope called for thoughtful reflection and said: “there is an urgent need for reliable information, with verified data and news, which does not aim to amaze and excite, but rather to make readers develop a healthy critical sense, enabling them to ask themselves appropriate questions and reach justified conclusions.”

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Welby criticised for not fully apologising for ruined reputation of Bishop Bell

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been criticised for not fully apologising for the judgement of the church against Bishop Bell.

Bishop George Bell, who died 60 years ago, was accused of abusing a girl in the 1950s but a review this week found that the inquiry was deficient and that the Church of England 'rushed to judgement'.

Those who believe the Bishop to be innocent say his reputation has been destroyed.

But the Archbishop of Canterbury only appeared to criticise the fact that the church named Bell, saying: “The decision to publish his name was taken with immense reluctance, and all involved recognised the deep tragedy involved.”

He added in the statement: “No human being is entirely good or bad. Bishop Bell was in many ways a hero. He is also accused of great wickedness. Good acts do not diminish evil ones, nor do evil ones make it right to forget the good. Whatever is thought about the accusations, the whole person and whole life should be kept in mind.”

Lord Carlisle, who conducted the review, said Archbishop Justin’s comments were: “less than fully adroit.”

According to the Daily Mail, Dr Ruth Hildebrandt Grayson, the daughter of Bishop Bell’s friend Franz Hildebrandt, said the bishop’s family deserved a personal apology from the Archbishop and the Bishop of Chichester.

‘The Church can’t have its cake and eat it,’ she said. ‘Either he is innocent, in which case they must apologise, or he is guilty, which they can’t prove, and the report makes clear that they have not proved.’

Professor Andrew Chandler, Bell's biographer, said the Archbishop's statement was 'wrong' and 'illogical'.

Rev Gavin Ashenden wrote in The Times that the Church needs to be committed to the truth.

King's College carol concert made all-ticket over terror threat

King's College chapel has made its carol concert all-ticket for the first time because of fears over a potential terrorist attack.

For decades, long queues have formed outside the Cambridge college in the hours before its annual concert of Christmas carols and readings, with some people waiting overnight to claim one of around 500 seats.

However, members of the public who want to attend will now have to buy a ticket in advance. They will also be limited to taking in a small handbag.

The changes come after a spate of terrorist attacks, including the bombing of an Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena in May, in which 22 mainly young music fans were killed,



King's College choirboys rehearse for the service, for which the public will no longer be able to queue for entry

and the London Bridge attack the following month, in which eight people were killed and 48 injured.

It also follows a call by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terror group in its *Rumiyah* magazine for followers to kidnap non-Muslim children in Europe. The piece was illustrated with a photograph of British choir boys.

Amid the security concerns, King's College said it felt it had no alternative but to take measures

to protect the safety of crowds attending the concert.

The Rev Stephen Cherry, the Dean of King's College Chapel, said, "We made this change after careful appraisal of our own situation in the light of the current level of security risk across the country. It is a break with tradition but we all recognise that if traditions are to survive they need to respond to the reality of the world we live in today.

"For us the most important things are that we maintain the service as an occasion that is familiar, beautiful, spiritual and inspiring, that it is broadcast to millions of people around the world and that we are able to welcome to the service hundreds of local people and international visitors. On the whole, people appreciate that we are doing what we can to look after them and to ensure it's a great occasion."

The concert, *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*, was introduced by former Army chaplain Eric Milner-White in 1918. This year's festival begins at 3pm on Christmas Eve and will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 4 and at 2pm on Radio 3 on Christmas Day.

In a note to the congregation, Mr Cherry explained: "By issuing tickets in this way we will

maintain the generous spirit of the occasion without requiring members of the congregation to stand outside in the cold all morning.”

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