Saints, song and sanctuary: Bangor Cathedral brings its history to the stage

Friday 2 October, 2026

Ysgol Glanaethwy and friends present a new production by Cefin Roberts, turning Bangor Cathedral into the stage for its own story.

Bangor Cathedral will become the stage for its own 1500-year story this October, with a new theatre production exploring its past and present as a place of sanctuary and refuge.

Written and directed by Cefin Roberts, *Dinas Noddfa – City of Refuge* features performers from Ysgol Glanaethwy alongside a community cast and local choirs. Through drama, music and song, the Welsh-language production will take audiences from the sixth-century community founded by St Deiniol to the Bangor of today.

Dinas Noddfa means “City of Refuge” or “City of Sanctuary”. The title connects Bangor’s beginnings with a question running through the production: what does it mean to find welcome, shelter and belonging in the city today?

The story begins when Mark and Ruth, a young couple from Bangor, step inside the Cathedral to escape the cold. As they explore, figures from the Cathedral’s past appear around them, revealing the story of the building and the city that grew around it.

The production moves between past and present, with changes in drama and musical style marking the passing centuries. St Deiniol eventually becomes Daniel, a young man welcoming visitors to the Cathedral today.

The Cathedral itself is the central character, giving audiences the chance to experience its history in the place where it unfolded.

Three performances will take place on 30 and 31 October.

Cefin Roberts is a Welsh author, actor and director of music and theatre. With his wife, Rhian, he founded Ysgol Glanaethwy, whose choir became familiar to television audiences through BBC One’s *Last Choir Standing* in 2008 and ITV’s *Britain’s Got Talent* in 2015. Côr Glanaethwy also won Choir of the World at Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in 2024.

Joining the cast and chorus are Côr Cofnod from Caernarfon and Côr Hogia’r Ddwylan, with members from both sides of the Menai Strait.

Cefin says, “When I accepted the challenge of creating a show to celebrate this special anniversary in the history of Bangor Cathedral, I knew from the outset that it would be a big production in every sense of the word. When I discovered that it featured such colourful characters as St David, Dafydd ap Gwilym, Owain Glynd?r, Queen Elizabeth I, and Bishop John Warren (who had a pistol aimed at him during one particularly turbulent period in the cathedral's history), I realised I had an epic on my hands.

At the heart of this story are those who wander around the edges of Bangor Cathedral, people who are constantly seeking refuge and sanctuary. Through dance, song, and drama, we hope to bring all these colourful stories together in a theatrical event worthy of the occasion.

Bishop of Bangor Manon Ceridwen James says, “Welcome and hospitality have been part of the Christian story in Bangor since St Deiniol founded his community here 1500 years ago. They remain central to our faith and to the Cathedral’s life today.

“I’m looking forward to seeing this production bring Bangor’s history to life. It will celebrate our Christian heritage and invite us to think about how we offer welcome and sanctuary to people today.”

Bangor grew around the Christian community established by St Deiniol around AD 525. Its name comes from the *bangor*, or wattled enclosure, which surrounded the early settlement.

The production follows the Cathedral’s 1500th anniversary celebrations in 2025. It explores its continuing place in the city, including its role in welcoming and supporting people seeking food, company and a safe

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place.

Performances take place at Bangor Cathedral on Friday 30 October at 7.30pm and Saturday 31 October at 2pm and 7.30pm.

The production is primarily in Welsh. Welsh learners are very welcome.

Tickets are available at Dinas Noddfa | City of Refuge Tickets, Multiple dates | Eventbrite

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