

A Mandela moment is called for in South Sudan

Church Christmas ads campaign underway

Christians against Poverty centre opens in Connor parish

Irish, GB and world news



C of I Parish & GAA Club support Nets for Nigeria

A parish in Co Londonderry, assisted by donations from a local GAA club, have shown that this is truly the season of peace and goodwill.

On Sunday 1st December Garvagh Parish presented a cheque for over £3,000 to Bishop Ken Good, on behalf of the *Nets Work Project*.

At the beginning of this year the diocese of Derry and Raphoe set themselves a target of raising £100,000. This will be used to buy 25,000 mosquito nets, to be distributed by a diocese in Nigeria.

The presentation took place at a special *Nets for Nigeria* Sunday in the parish, with Bishop Good. Rev Paul Whittaker, Rector of Garvagh, said “The project has been a great focus for our parish in 2013. Everybody, including members of parish organizations such as our Sunday School, Praise Group, Choir, Bowling Club and Mothers Union caught the vision of buying mosquito nets”.

The parish has built up good relationships with Glenullin, a local GAA club. Mr Gerard O Kane, a member of the club as well as being a former chair of the Derry County Board, heard about the project. Following discussions with Rev Whittaker he asked if the Glenullin club could also donate money to the appeal. It was an offer that was warmly accepted by Garvagh Parish.

Bishop Ken Good said “I want to pay tribute to the generous spirit demonstrated by the parishioners of Garvagh as well as Glenullin GAA. They show the enormous difference that cooperation can make in their local community as well as in saving lives in Nigeria”.

The World Health Organisation estimates that there were 216 million cases of malaria in 2010 resulting in 655,000 deaths. This is equivalent to roughly 2000 deaths every day.

Mosquito nets have been shown to reduce the death rate from malaria fell by up to 67%. A net costs around £5 / €6 but for a family who spend more than 90% of their income on food this is an expense they cannot afford.

Nets Work aims to raise funds to buy 25,000 nets in Makurdi diocese in Nigeria. It is a joint diocesan initiative with Bishops’ Appeal and Christian Aid.

New Ballymoney CAP centre



A new CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Centre has opened in St Patrick’s Parish Church, Ballymoney.

The 22–strong CAP team began taking appointments in November, and the parish is currently busy making up Christmas hampers for CAP clients.



Beth Thompson

Ballymoney Centre Manager Beth Thompson said: “We are hoping to use the CAP formula to make a difference in people’s lives in our community.”

In the run-up to Christmas, CAP is calling for people to take loans off their Christmas lists and offering advice for avoiding over-spending.

CAP now has centres in Ballymoney and Coleraine providing a free service to people with spiralling debt problems.

Its local staff and volunteers have compiled a top 10 tips to help people enjoy Christmas while preventing debt trouble in the New

Year.

The charity’s service is unique in that the client hands all the letters and demands to Beth and they are sent to CAP’s UK head office where experts negotiate with every creditor on the client’s behalf.

“We leave new clients with a pile of free-post envelopes and as they receive letters about their debts, they don’t have to worry any more, they just pop them into the envelope and we sort it out,” Beth said.

“We know that people with debt are already often dealing with other problems: job loss or relationship problems, low income or illness so we want to take the pressure off and give them the space to deal with some of that.”

The client is then set a budget and given a suggested route forward with a timescale of how long it looks likely to be until they are debt free – generally within five years, all with on-going support from CAP Ballymoney.

The Ballymoney branch of CAP has also launched its ‘Don’t Wait’ campaign in the wake of the news that nine million people are suffering with debt with just a fifth actually seeking help.

“A lot of people just don’t realise that free help is available,” said Beth. “And yet, there are various avenues like our charity CAP, Citizens Advice and the phone-based free ones like Stepchange.”

The charity has been operating for 17 years and at any one time handles £73m of secondary debts, as well as helping with overdue household bills and rent or mortgage arrears.

Generous support sought by PCI for this year's World Development appeal

This Advent and Christmas season congregations throughout the Presbyterian Church in Ireland are encouraged to give generously to the annual World Development Appeal.



This year's appeal, 'Let Justice Flow: Transforming Lives!', highlights projects to be supported in Rwanda and India.

In Rwanda, the overseas development partner being highlighted in our World Development Appeal this year is Moucecore, the Christian Movement for Evangelisation, Counselling and Reconciliation.

[Moucecore](#) seeks to equip the churches for holistic and integrated mission, and to enable both spiritual and socio-economic transformation in church and community. Its motto is "*Being transformed to transform others*".

The year's Appeal is also supporting the Synodical Board of Social Services (SBSS), the development wing of the

PCI's partner church in India, the [Church of North India](#).

SBSS works with India's most marginalised communities, focusing on land rights, the politics of livelihood, and social exclusion.

In keeping with the call to the Church to become a '[place of transformation](#)', in which the dignity of the most vulnerable is upheld, structures of injustice can be effectively addressed, and communities joyfully reshape their own lives in response to the gospel, this year's Appeal will highlight the work of our partners in church and community development.

By encouraging congregations to develop their own capacity to discern local needs, and to equip themselves for the work of sustainable development, the PCI's partners enable both the churches and the communities they serve to be transformed

St Mullin's Church, Timolin, rededicated



A Churchyard Seat was dedicated by Archbishop Michael Jackson following a Service of Redication in Timolin on Sunday December 15. The seat was donated to the parish by the Hendy family in memory of William and Molly Hendy.

The compact St Mullin's Church in Timolin was packed to capacity on Sunday December 15 for a joyful celebration of the parish's efforts.

A Service of Rededication, led by Archbishop Michael Jackson, brought people from the parishes of

Narraghmore and Timolin with Castledermot and Kinneagh together. There were many other visitors and well wishers including some who made their way from overseas to attend.

Over the last year, refurbishment work has been carried out on the interior of the church. Parishioners and the wider community raised over €12,500 towards the work of replastering the south wall of the church, renewing the electrics and repainting the church. While professionals were called in for the replastering, painting and electrics, much of the other work was carried out by the parishioners who volunteered their time and energy for the project.

During the service a number of gifts to the church were also dedicated. An altar cloth was donated by the Mothers' Union in memory of Carrie Holmes. Prayer desk, lectern and pulpit hangings were donated by the Hegarty family in memory of Noel Hegarty and family. A set of burses and veils was donated by the Holmes family in memory of Carrie Holmes. Lectern and Bible markers were donated by the Glynn family in memory of Anthony and Sydney Glynn and a churchyard seat was donated by the Hendy family in memory of

William and Molly Hendy.

The rector, the Revd Isaac Delemere, said the refurbishment project had brought the parish together. "This project has brought out the best in us as a community and with God's blessing we can keep this spirit alive and continue God's witness in this place," he said.

The Archbishop praised parishioners for what they had achieved and said they had much to be proud of. "You have taken a difficult situation by the scruff of the neck and you have turned it forward. As your bishop, I am very proud of you for doing this in a spirit of confidence and trust. You are in the full flow of a programme of parish renewal and this again is greatly to be applauded. The strength of this community lies in the willingness of its people to volunteer and to do – to do what? To do work for God and for one another and for the wider

community. All of this is a pearl of great price and a treasure to be prized," he said.

Dr Jackson added: "It is my pleasure and privilege to honour the gifts which have been made to remember Carrie Holmes, Noel and the Hegarty family and Anthony and Sydney Glynn; the gifts of an altar cloth, hangings, burse and veils, Bible markers and the memorial seat are greatly to be appreciated and will immediately become part of the weave of life of this church, as it gives back to God week by week the honour due to his name."

Carol Service
for Cork's Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual & Transgender
Community & their Friends

Featuring
**Choral
con
Fusion
& Friends**

St. Anne's Shandon
Thur 19th Dec 7.30pm
Followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies

Whoever you are and wherever you are on your journey in faith, you are welcome here

Lisburn rector's 25th anniversary

Canon George Irwin is celebrating the 25th anniversary of his appointment as rector of St Mark's Church, Parish of Ballymacash, in succession to Canon TWW Jones.

Having previously been rector of Movilla Parish in Newtownards and having served as a curate in both St Paul's and Seagoe Parishes, Canon Irwin came to Ballymacash on December 2 1988.

Since then he has seen many changes, not least in the fabric of the church which has just completed a major refurbishment of both the church and parish halls.

Two of the original parochial nominators, Mrs Kaye Somerville and Mr Hilary Morrison, paid tribute to Canon Irwin on his service to parishioners over the years and in particular to his pastoral care which has been of the highest order.

A presentation was made to Canon Irwin and his wife Deirdre.

GB NEWS

Archbishop Nichols appointed to Congregation for Bishops

Pope Francis has appointed Archbishop Vincent Nichols to the Congregation for Bishops, a move that will see the Archbishop of Westminster's influence in the Church rise hugely.

The appointment means that Archbishop Nichols will take part in regular meetings at the powerful "Thursday table" in Rome to recommend Episcopal appointments.

He said: "It is a privilege to assist in the important task of appointing Bishops and I am honoured to have been asked to undertake this role by Pope Francis. I look forward to making whatever contribution I can to the work of the Apostolic See."

Pope Francis appointed Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington to join the congregation and dropped Cardinal Raymond Burke. The former Archbishop of St Louis, seen as a prominent conservative, was appointed to the

Congregation by Benedict XVI in 2009, but was not confirmed as president of the Apostolic Signatura, the Vatican's highest court. Francis also dropped Cardinal Justin Rigali, emeritus of Philadelphia, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco of Genoa, the formidable president of the Italian bishops' conference.

The 73-year-old Cardinal Wuerl is already a member of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and a veteran of the Curia who oversaw the Congregation for the Clergy.

Among the other new members named on Monday were cardinals from Germany, Italy, and Brazil Francis' prefect of Religious, Brazilian Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz. Francis also confirmed 18 existing members of the congregation, including Cardinal George Pell of Sydney.

Bishop of Chichester comments on homophobic remarks

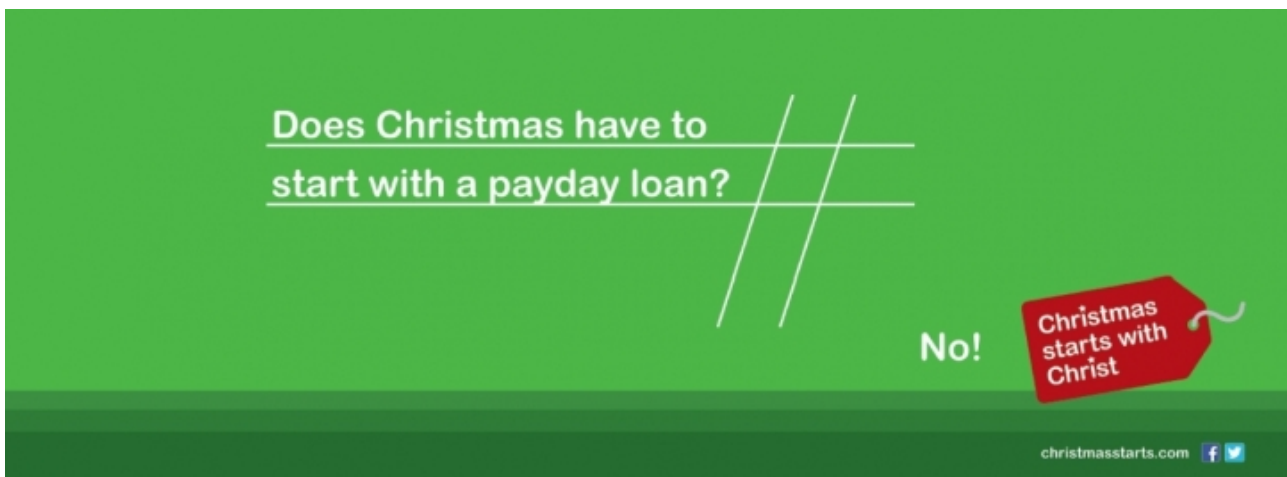
The Bishop of Chichester, Martin Warner, has made the following response to previously published remarks of one of that diocese's elected lay representatives to the General Synod:

The comments by Andrea Minichiello Williams about the decriminalisation of same sex intercourse in Jamaica have no sanction in the Church of England or the diocese of Chichester. Insofar as such comments incite homophobia, they should be rejected as offensive and unacceptable.

The Christian Church is widely perceived as homophobic and intolerant of those for whom same sex attraction is the foundation of their emotional lives. It is urgent, therefore, that Christians find legitimate ways to affirm and demonstrate the conviction that the glory of God is innate in every human being, and the mercy of God embraces each of us indiscriminately.

Giant Christmas starts with Christ poster unveiled in Manchester

The Bishop of Manchester launched a church-backed advertising campaign this week promoting the message that Christmas starts with Christ.



A huge poster measuring 40 feet high and the length of three buses has been fixed to scaffolding on the side of St Ann's church at the heart of Manchester's shopping and commercial district.

It reads: 'Does Christmas have to start with a payday loan? No! Christmas starts with Christ.'

The poster is the UK's biggest outdoor religious Christmas ad, and is expected to be seen by millions.

It is part of the Christ Starts with Christmas campaign reminding people of the real meaning of Christmas, and has been sponsored by the Diocese of Manchester in partnership with the Church of England, ChurchAds.net, St Ann's Church and Churches Together in Greater Manchester.

Bishop David Walker spoke of the importance of remembering the true reason we celebrate Christmas in an increasingly secular society.

"We are asking people to pause and to remember that Christmas does not start with high interest loans or Christmas specials on TV. Christmas Starts with Christ," he said.

Christmas has become increasingly commercialised in recent years, and in light of shocking statistics that reveal the extent to which its true meaning has been lost, Francis Goodwin, a key figure behind the Christmas Starts with Christ campaign, warns that "a tipping point has been reached".

"Christmas is being lost to secularism and the trend is for this to get worse," he said.

"Just 12 percent of adults know the nativity story; and 36 percent of children do not know whose birthday is being celebrated during the festival.

"Fifty-one per cent of people now say the birth of Jesus is irrelevant to their Christmas."

Reverend Nigel Ashworth, the Rector of St Ann's in Manchester, has said that the church is delighted to be able to display the Christmas message "so visibly at the heart of this great city".

General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, Steve Clifford, has also praised the campaign, saying that it "seeks to show that the Church is good news for the nation in every season, not least of all at Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Saviour".

"The world needs to know that's why we do what we do."

Hundreds of other sites around the country will also display the posters. It is hoped that they will inspire people to check out their local church and find out more about the Christian faith.

The Children's Society welcomes draft Modern Day Slavery Bill

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of The C of E's Children's Society, said: 'The government's draft Modern Day Slavery Bill is critical to tackling trafficking in the UK and we welcome the Home Secretary's commitment to this bill.

'But for the fight against this abuse to be truly effective, child victims of trafficking, who are subjected into a range of horrific abuse, including domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, must get the support they need to be kept safe.

'It is vital that these children have someone they can build a relationship with and trust from the moment they are found. The government has an important opportunity to make these children safe by providing all unaccompanied children – including potential victims of trafficking – with guardians.

'Too often, these children are punished rather than protected because they have been found with false papers or forced into a range of illegal work. As a

result, some are being sent to adult prisons and immigration detention centres rather than being given safe accommodation with full-time care. This must stop.

'Without guardianship being included in the bill, trafficked children will not get the help they need. It is vital these vulnerable children are treated first and foremost as children in need so they can recover from their abuse in safety and thrive.'

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

WCC calls for a "Mandela moment" in South Sudan

Speaking from Geneva where she was at the WCC headquarters for weekend meetings and to attend a Mandela memorial, Dr Agnes Abuom, a Kenyan, said "this is really a Mandela moment" for South Sudan.

"Just when we have laid Mandela to rest and we are celebrating his life of forgiveness and reconciliation, of justice, of freedom, of the capacity to be content and to be inclusive: this is really a lesson for South Sudan", she said.

WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit has sent a letter to South Sudanese president Salva Kiir Mayardit, expressing profound concern for the people of the nation. He wrote in part, "The people of South Sudan have suffered for several decades and are now longing for peace and justice. We pray that the situation will quickly normalize and that peace will prevail again soon."

According to news reports, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir announced Monday that an attempted coup by soldiers loyal to his former deputy, Riek Machar, had been quashed. Machar and others involved have apparently fled to the UN Mission in the capital Juba.

The struggle is seen to reflect emerging concerns and differences between ethnic groups in Sudan.

Abuom stressed concern for the churches in South Sudan which through the Sudan Council of Churches and the WCC were deeply involved in reaching a peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan, and in helping to facilitate the formation of South Sudan as the youngest nation in the world.

She said the churches there have already responded and called for calm. She added that South Sudan, as a young nation, "needs a lot of latitude for

different voices given its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious composition."

"It is unfortunate that there has been an attempted coup, and we would want to say to those people that there is no space again in Africa for armed rebellion," she said. "We believe in dialogue, in the power of the vote and election to change leadership peacefully and to transit from one leadership to another."

Echoing Abuom's comments, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit also called on the government of South Sudan to reach out to all within the country in a way that reflects the highest ideals of Mandela.

"Mandela has helped us see the worst and best in humanity," Tveit said, restating his comments from the Mandela memorial held at the Ecumenical Centre Monday, 16 December. "He helped us to be realistic; even more important, he helped us believe in the one humanity and to love that one humanity."

Tveit met with Kiir in April 2013, when Kiir said "After the independence of South Sudan, it is the churches that have the capability to bring people together and help rebuild the country."

"South Sudan is a state where all religious communities, including Christians, can work freely, and their contributions for the social betterment, regardless of their religious associations, are welcomed," Kiir told Tveit.

"South Sudan needs now, and it is called, to develop a culture of democracy that supports different opinions even when they are not congruent with what the leadership expects, because that is a democracy," Abuom said.

Prayer for Today

**O God of Elizabeth and Mary,
you visited your servants with news of the world's
redemption
in the coming of the Savior.
Make our hearts leap with joy,
and fill our mouths with songs of praise,
that we may announce glad tidings of peace,
and welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.**

