

Feature -

4 Corners Festival

Bringing Belfast together

Knit and Knatter group's Christmas trees cross Belfast's boundaries

A great "wet feet" story in which boundaries are crossed and friendships developed.

Liz Feely writes - In the last 18 months the Craft and Fellowship Group from the Church of the Good Shepherd in Monkstown (COGS) have been



Christmas tree made of knitted squares

developing their talents at knitting little people in order to create some of the characters for stories from the Bible. However, in the process, Joan, the group leader, came across an article about a knitted Christmas tree. So in the early spring of this year, eventually organised with a pattern, Joan and the ladies from COGS set about knitting green squares.

The folks from COGS had already over recent years, establish some links with Fr Martin Magill and the parish of St Oliver Plunkett in Lenadoon; by attending

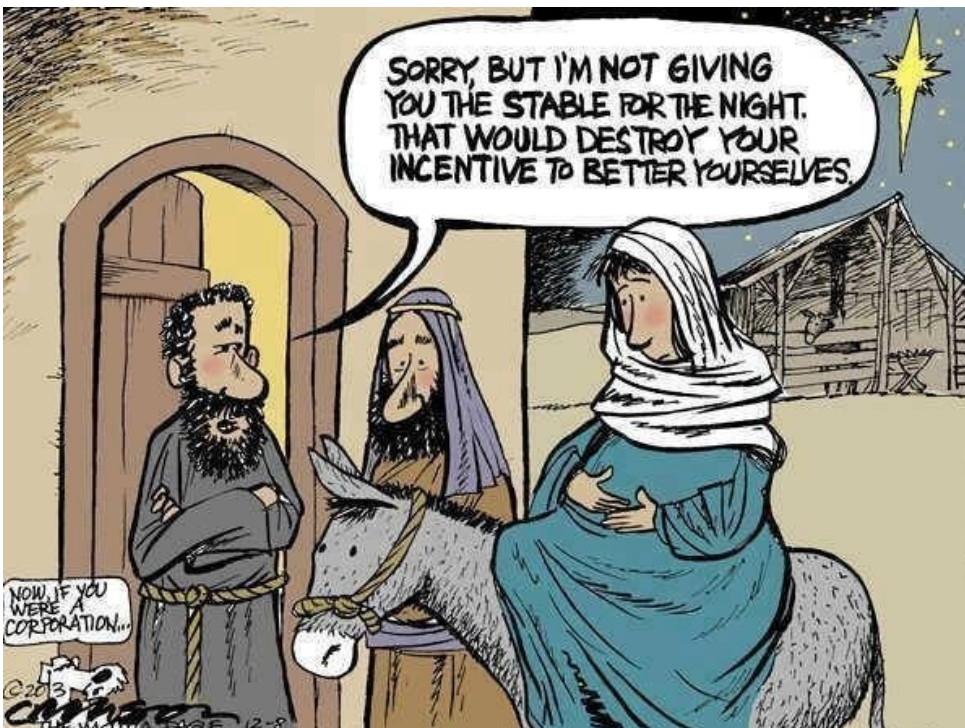
events during the West Belfast Festival, as well as the recent Four Corner Prayer event and a joint retreat to Rostrevor. During a chance conversation at

one of the more recent visits, Joan shared her hope of knitting a Christmas tree. Some of the ladies from St Oliver Plunkett's were excited by the project and asked if they could help by knitting squares. While Joan knew the size of the squares required, she admits she had no idea just how many squares would be actually needed. Not one to refuse such an offer of help, Joan was invited to attend Mass at St Oliver Plunkett's one Sunday to share her vision with the congregation of her goal, to produce not just one tree for COGS in Monkstown but to now make 2 trees, one for each church.

Over the summer months members from St Oliver Plunkett's and COGS Knit & Natter group made exchange visits; the squares, in forty shades of green, grew in number as did the lovely knitted decorations that would be needed to adorn both trees.

In recent weeks the timber structure for the trees was purchased and has been put together. In the last few days Joan's dream has come to life in the Heartspace of COGS, Monkstown; for there stands a 7' tree of knitted green squares and decorations and at the same time our friends in St Oliver Plunkett's are in the process of completing their tree, to be ready in good time as we enter our Advent celebrations.

This year we have seen some 'troubles' re-develop in areas of Belfast, however Joan and her merry band of 'knits' at COGS have discovered through our meetings together that in spite of our differences, our 2 parishes have much more in common



- Both are situated in working class housing estates with defined paramilitary links
- Our stories have revealed what can only be described as 'a mirror-like image' of each other's experience
- We have lots to learn about

each other and ourselves

- Probably the most important thing is that we worship Jesus Christ as Lord
As we celebrate this Christmas season may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be claimed by us all.

The knitting groups' activities were highlighted by the President of the Methodist Church who visited them. Arlene Moore, C of I rector at COGS responded, " Thank you so much Madam President for your support, prayers and for being in our midst today. And for sharing on Facebook your tribute to the hard work and secret service of so many.....not just within our two churches but from other churches as well and joined by numerous people within the two communities.

"God has truly inspired and used this project for His glory. We are delighted that Fr Aidan Brankin has invited Joan to read a lesson at Mass on Sunday morning; and Sally will read a lesson at our Carol Service in COGS on Sunday night. So the partnership in the Gospel continues and we are already considering our next united venture..... and involving others from Sacred Heart parish as well at the invitation of Fr Martin Magill. We are open to offers of co-working with other churches/denominations as well. Do please get in touch if anyone is interested."

4 Corners Festival *Bringing Belfast Together*

Belfast's 4 Corners Festival 2014

Belfast's 4 Corners Festival was inaugurated in 2013. It was a an idea that sprung from a casual chat between clergy over coffee in a Catholic Presbytery House in Lenadoon.

Presbyterian minister, Rev Steve Stockman, writes - The parish priest was Fr Martin Magill and as he and I conversed a few things rose to the surface in the most uncontrived of ways. I was saying how amazed I was coming up to Lenadoon that west Belfast was like going through the Narnia wardrobe. There was a whole part of Belfast I had never seen before; Churches, schools, sports stadiums and ice cream parlours! Martin had said that he experienced the same thing when he tried to find Ballyhackamore Library for

an event in the East Belfast Festival. That got us on to Festivals and how some “secular” festivals were dealing with the spiritual issues of the day better than the Churches. We had been saying for some time that the Week of Prayer For Christian Unity needed a little fresh edge and energy and suddenly we wondered about such a venture. Within weeks we had a group of able people around us and within a few months we had the 4 Corners Festival.

“4 Corners is named after a prayer poem that I wrote for 1998’s Jesus In The City Conference and used in a service in St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Can I add that using it was Martin’s idea! 4 Corners aims to make a Christian contribution to peace and reconciliation in our city, to do more than say “look, the Churches don’t hate each other” by putting on a series of imaginative events that might actually help us to love each other as Jesus demanded we would of neighbour and even enemy. 4 Corners hopes to take people across Belfast into parts of their city that they might not otherwise have reason to be in. There, we hope that we will create a space for people to meet, listen and become friends. 4 Corners has no budget or staff but has many ideas and big dreams for what our city could be. Join us in bringing the 4 Corners of Belfast together.”

Here is the initial programme for 2014...

JANUARY 15th – 4 CORNERS FEAST

in conjunction with Simon Community, Vincent De Paul, Welcome Centre and Salvation Army in CITY HALL (by invitation only)

JANUARY 16th@4pm – PEACEBUILDING NETWORKING (South and East Belfast) in CITY HALL

JANUARY 17th @7pm – 4 CORNERS, 4 STORIES

with politicians in STORMONT LONG ROOM

JANUARY 19th @7pm – THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PEACE in THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

with RODDY COWIE in FITZROY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, University Street

JANUARY 21st @4pm – PEACEBUILDING NETWORKING (North and West Belfast) in CITY HALL

JANUARY 22nd @7:30pm – Tenx9 with 4 CORNERS in THE BLACK BOX

JANUARY 24th @ 7:30am – 4 CORNERS PRAYER BREAKFAST
in 174, Antrim Road

JANUARY 24th (time TBC) – BURNS' NIGHT
with PHILIP ORR and MIKE GASTON in SACRED HEART CHURCH, Old
Park Road

JANUARY 27th @7:30pm – 4 CORNERS, 4 STORIES
with Church leaders in SOUTH BELFAST METHODIST, Lisburn Road

JANUARY 29th @7pm – SORRY FOR YOUR TROUBLES
with PÁDRAIG Ó TUAMA in AN CULTÚRLANN, Falls Road

JANUARY 30th @7:30pm – LISTENING TO YOUR ENEMIES
with PAT MAGEE and JO BERRY (chaired by Rev Lesley Carroll) in
SKAINOS, Newtownards Road

FEBRUARY 1st (time TBC) – PRAYER FOR ALL CORNERS
across BELFAST

more info here: [4 CORNERS FESTIVAL](#)

<http://www.4cornersfestival.com/>



A simple effective idea - a pop-up Nativity in a vacant store in Portstewart with notices of services in various local churches

First Black Santa's niece set for charity sit-out for Macmillan

All Saints' Antrim parishioner, Cynthia Cherry is braving the elements for a charity sit-out this weekend.

Antrim Times - Cynthia may perhaps be following in the footsteps of her uncle, Dean Sammy Crooks,

Belfast's first 'Black Santa', when she launched her four-day fundraising challenge at Junction One, yesterday Friday.

Cynthia will be continuing her fundraising efforts for Macmillan Cancer Support, which have already seen £22,000 being raised for the charity so far this year alone.

The Antrim woman will be 'sitting out' on Friday and Saturday, December 20 and 21, and Monday and Tuesday, December 23 and 24, from 12 noon to 4pm each day.

She'll be supported in her endeavours by Elaine Henderson and Catriona McDonald.

Drumbeg rector sat out for charity

Drumbeg Parish and Community pulled out all the stops for charity from Sunday 15 December when Revd Willie Nixon, joined by parishioners and members of the local community, began a 24 hour sit-out at the church gates.



Alan and Nicola McMillen pictured with Revd Willie as they drop off some food for the Storehouse Project.

The sit-out at the end of the Malone Road raised £1509 for the Simon Community in Belfast, and collected three trailer loads of non-perishable food stuffs for the Storehouse food-bank project.

Quoted in the Belfast News Letter, Revd Willie said, "We had no sleep at all. It obviously was very cold and wet and we were drowned rats in the morning. But it was worth it."

This was the culmination of a weekend of charity fundraising by the parish and community. Other charities which benefited from the weekend's activities

were: Save the Children, the Salvation Army Toy Appeal and the Habitat for Humanity Drumbeg Parish and Community Ethiopia 2014 Project.

Cork youth Christmas trip

Seventy young people from all over the Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross descended on Cork City on Saturday 14th December for the annual CDYC trip to Cork.

The bus left Skibbereen in the morning, collecting all along the way and joined the Carrigaline group in Cork. First stop the Haven for hot chocolate followed by a few hours of Christmas shopping, then on to Mahon Point for skating and ending with food in the Mahon shopping Centre. This event grows more and more popular with each year, since it started about fifteen years ago.

Catholic Marriage Care Service hit by 42% cut in Government funding

ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Service has experienced a significant reduction in Government grant aid over the past four years. By the end of 2014, ACCORD will have experienced a reduction of 42.4% in Government grant aid, representing a total funding loss since 2010 of €3,621,140.

This means that for ACCORD central office in Maynooth, the amount of grant aid from the Family Support Agency in 2014 will be reduced to approximately €700,000. This grant pays overheads and salaries for nine full-time and five part-time staff on the central office payroll including four regional officers serving 37 ACCORD centres in the Republic of Ireland outside of Dublin.

Bishop Christopher Jones, President of ACCORD said, “We deeply regret that this dramatic reduction in Government grant aid has left us with no option but to make four of our staff redundant, and in addition reduce one full-time position to a part-time post. Unfortunately, we have no alternative but to make these redundancies compulsory. Staff have been met and ACCORD is engaged in a process to finalise new arrangements, which will take effect in early February 2014.

“Redundancies at any time are very difficult for all involved but particularly so at Christmas. We have done our best to keep job losses to a minimum and

will endeavour to continue to meet the ever increasing demand on ACCORD's marriage education and counselling services in these economically challenging times."

Bishop Jones continued, "On behalf of all bishops, I acknowledge the vital work that ACCORD's almost 800 committed members provide in supporting marriage and family life in Ireland. At this time in particular I wish to thank those who have given such generous service in ACCORD central office and who will now be directly affected by these regrettable job losses."

· In 2012 ACCORD:

- delivered 50,629 counselling hours
- prepared 7,115 couples for Sacramental Marriage
- 31,000 pupils attended ACCORD schools' relationships education programme

· There are almost 800 professionally trained members involved in ACCORD's work throughout the 26 dioceses on the island of Ireland. ACCORD was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1962. It aims to promote a deeper understanding of Christian marriage and to offer people the means to safeguard and nourish their marriage and family relationships. ACCORD operates in 57 centres throughout the island of Ireland – North and South – and is committed to providing a quality service.

BRITAIN ISN'T EATING.



**THOUSANDS ARE GOING HUNGRY BECAUSE OF BENEFIT CHANGES.
CALL FOR URGENT ACTION: WWW.CHURCH-POVERTY.ORG.UK/WTB**

Members come from a wide range variety of backgrounds and are appropriately trained to work under supervision in accordance with best practice.

· The Family Support Agency is the major source of funding for ACCORD in the Republic of Ireland. ACCORD also operates with the support of the Health Service Executive (RoI) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI) and various Trusts in Northern Ireland. In addition ACCORD central office receives support from the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. Local ACCORD centres receive support from their diocese.

Self-styled bishop disgraced over sham weddings

A self-styled Catholic bishop was in disgrace tonight after accepting money from criminals to officiate at the sham marriages of illegal immigrants.

Belfast Telegraph - Pat Buckley, 61, was paid £350 for overseeing ceremonies involving couples who had met only hours earlier and then separated immediately afterwards. They were non-[EU](#) residents marrying citizens from one of the member states to acquire rights to stay there. The sentencing marked the culmination of a police investigation into systematic abuse spanning three continents.

The cleric was given a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence, which will not be served after the judge suspended it due to his ill health.

[Belfast](#) Crown Court Judge Mr Justice Mark Horner said: "By acting as you did and solemnising these sham marriages you were undermining the institution of marriage and its very sanctity."

Buckley, of Princes Gardens in Larne, Co Antrim, is a colourful character who split with the Catholic Church following differences over issues like homosexuality.

The marriages of convenience were largely between Bangladeshi men and Portuguese women, the judge said, and the 14 charges involved offences committed between May 2008 and September 2009.

Detectives from the Police Service of [Northern Ireland](#) (PSNI) said their investigation uncovered the systematic infringement of the EU immigration

system in which criminals, some from a professional background, provided false documentation for work permits.

They advertised a sham marriage service in [Hong Kong](#) and mainland [China](#) for illegal immigrants already living in the UK, which included the provision of Portuguese or UK citizens for marriage for a fee of £18,000. More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/bishop-disgraced-over-sham-weddings-29853282.html>

19,044 referrals about child abuse concerns were received in 2012

IN 2012, THERE 19,044 received referrals received to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs where there was a concern of child abuse.



Journal.ie - In a response to a parliamentary question from Fine Gael's Bernard Durkan about the extent to which instances of child mental, physical or sex abuse or child prostitution are reported to her Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Minister Frances Fitzgerald

said that in 2011 there were 15,808 referrals where there was a concern of child abuse and in 2012 there were 19,044 received.

Categories

She said that child abuse referrals are broken down into four categories: sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect and although child prostitution is recorded as sexual abuse, it is not broken down according to the type of sexual abuse reported.

Figures to date for 2013 indicate that the level of referrals will be similar to the number of reports made to Social Work Services in 2012.

The minister said that the HSE was ultimately responsible for the delivery of child welfare and protection services but said occasionally her department received calls from individuals concerned.

Referrals

She added that the HSE have advised that all referrals received an initial assessment to determine what further action is required in accordance with Children First Guidance (2011). More at -

<http://www.thejournal.ie/child-abuse-referrals-hse-1231741-Dec2013/>

GB NEWS

Evangelical Christian sparks anger after suggesting Tom Daley is gay because his father died

A prominent evangelical Christian has been criticised by members of her own faith after reportedly hinting that Olympic diver Tom Daley is gay because his father died.

Evening Standard - Andrea Minichiello Williams, founder of Christian Concern, is said to have used Daley as an example of how "the lack of a father" can lead to homosexual feelings.

Speaking to Christian conservatives in Jamaica, Mrs Williams reportedly said it was a "big lie" that homosexuality was natural and inborn.

According to the news website Buzzfeed, she also warned that Britain's decision to repeal its sodomy laws had led to more permissive laws around the age of consent.

Urging Jamaicans to uphold its laws against same-sex intercourse, she said: "Once you strip away all this stuff, what you get is no age consent ... nobody ever enforces that law anymore."

Daley, 19, who has revealed he is in a gay relationship, has so far not responded to the remarks.



Tom Daley told fans he "couldn't be happier" after revealing his gay relationship

for LGB&T people, added that the "bigoted outburst amounts to dangerous hatemongering".

A spokesperson for Mrs Williams told The Independent she was unavailable for comment yesterday.

This week Daley tweeted a behind-the-scenes picture of his 2014 calendar shoot.

But speaking to The Independent, Martin Warner, the Bishop of Chichester, where Mrs Williams was elected to the General Synod in 2011, condemned the comments, saying they "should be rejected as offensive and unacceptable".

Dr Keith Sharpe, commenting on behalf of Changing Attitudes, an Anglican body calling for full equality

WORLD NEWS

Call for prayers for Diocese of Haiti

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori has asked The Episcopal Church to remember the Diocese of Haiti on the fourth anniversary of the earthquake on January 12.

"I urge all Episcopalians to pray and give in solidarity with our largest and fastest-growing diocese," the Presiding Bishop said.

She continued, "I ask for your generosity in a special offering on Sunday, January 12 to aid the Diocese of Haiti in rebuilding Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince."



The Baptism of Our Lord painted by Casera Bazile 1951

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake struck Haiti, killing more than 300,000 people, seriously injuring more than 250,000, and leaving 1.3 million homeless. An extensive number of private and public buildings were destroyed including Holy Trinity Cathedral and the affiliated Episcopal institutions in the Cathedral Complex.

The Episcopal Church continues to respond to the needs that have arisen. Recently the Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti

announced the selection of Kerns Group Architects, P.C., of Arlington, VA, as architect of the new Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Features of the new cathedral include:

- Space for 1,200 with seating in a circular fashion around a central altar platform
- Designed to international earthquake and hurricane resistant standards.
- A central, massive dome that envelops the primary worship space
- Self-sufficiency by generating its own electricity, providing its own purified water and supplying its own telecommunications.
- Incorporation of historic features salvaged from the ruins, including 3 of the 14 world-famous murals depicting Biblical stories with Haitian characters.
- A hospitality/administrative area with meeting rooms, public restrooms and administrative offices clustered around a two-story atrium; these areas will be leased to generate additional income.

In addition to being a place of worship, the new Cathedral is expected to be, once again, a prominent center for the performing and visual arts.

The Presiding Bishop pointed out that the Executive Council “has been a faithful partner in the ongoing response.”

She noted that the fourth anniversary falls on the first Sunday of Epiphany, the day on which the Church celebrates the Baptism of Our Lord, which is depicted in one of the three surviving Cathedral murals.

Prayer for Today

**Living God,
you have created all that is.
Send forth your Spirit to renew and restore us,
that we may proclaim your good news
in ways and words
that all will understand and believe. Amen.**