

**In Joyful Hope - a unique inter church witness in Belfast**

**Desecration of priests graves in Co Kilkenny**

**Liam Fox - turn off aid to oppressive regimes**

**Quentin Letts specialist subject in**

**Mastermind - Hereford Cathedral**



*Parishioners in Piltown Co Kilkenny are sickened by mindless vandalism of a church and the desecration of the graves of two priests on St Stephen's night. See report later in this bulletin*

## **Presbyterians donate over £400,000 to Philipines and Syria**

**“Presbyterian generosity never ceases to amaze me,” says the Moderator Dr. Rob Craig. “People in this part of the world and Presbyterians in particular respond magnificently when they see their fellow human being in need, whatever the reason. I would thank everyone for their donations and also for their prayers for all those**

**affected by these disasters.”**

As with most emergencies the Presbyterian response is being channeled through Christian Aid and Tearfund. In Syria assistance is also being given to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, NESSL, the Presbyterian Church's partner church in the area.

Recent news filtering through to the Presbyterian Church from Syria has given reports of cold winter weather causing great hardship made worse by a severe shortage of heating oil.

In a recent email from Mary Mikhael of NESSL, she says, “the onset of winter storms and the severe cold now being experienced in Syria has frightened many. For those still living in their homes the situation is made worse by the fact that heating oil is not easy to obtain. As a consequence many are now cutting down trees to provide firewood to heat their homes.”

NESSL's Relief Programme is responding to requests for help from churches in Syria. On the ground, church pastors and their elders are liaising with the Director of NESSL's Relief Programme to ensure that relief aid is distributed according to each family's need.

Funds have been provided to allow every family to buy a small volume of heating oil. NESSL has also committed to help meet some of the cost of renting temporary accommodation in 2014 for those who have been displaced.

Meanwhile in the Philippines Tearfund are reporting that getting children back to school and providing trauma recovery are becoming a priority.

Giving children the routine of going to school helps recreate a sense of normality for them. While adults begin the work of rebuilding their homes and their lives, Tearfund partners are working to create safe spaces for children.

“There's a lot to do, says Girly Malitante, a primary school teacher in one of the affected areas. “We received some food and clothing from the Department of Education, and the government has said they will repair our school, but not until January. There are computers floating in the floods and we have to boil water to drink.”

As the shock of Typhoon Haiyan wears off there is growing evidence of trauma, particular in children and so Tearfund's partners are training

community volunteers from local churches in the Philippines in providing trauma recovery.

While it will take time to rebuild schools, places are being creating for children where they can play, make things, and express their emotions. On-site care providers look after the children and also ensure that any children showing signs of suffering from acute trauma can be treated by Filipino psychologists and receive the level of care that they need.

## **WELL.COM continues with Innovative Work**



**In 2014  
WELL.COM at  
Carlisle Circus,  
Antrim Road in  
North Belfast  
plans to  
continue its  
innovative work  
as a peace-  
making centre  
that works with  
both individuals  
and local  
communities.**

WELL.COM is a centre of Christian spirituality and psychological well-being. It is a safe place for healing, empowerment and hope. Its mission is to be a peace-making, reconciling centre which can help people reconcile as individuals within themselves through psychotherapy and spiritual direction; and with others through relationship building.

Whilst WELL.COM is an organisation based on Christian faith, it is open to all adults over 18 regardless of their religious belief. WELL.COM values every person as a unique and gifted individual with his or her own beliefs, culture and spirituality, and is committed to working in a holistic manner to ensure the physical, emotional, spiritual and moral well being of all its clients.

WELL.COM was officially opened in October 2013 by Rev Dr Heather Morris, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland. WELL.COM was developed and initiated by Alan Lorimer who is a Counselling Psychologist on the

Register of the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) and a Registered Psychologist with Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). He is also an Accredited Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist with The British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP) and a Minister in the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Throughout the developmental years of WELL.COM, Alan worked closely with Rev Bill Shaw and the 174 Trust and he became involved in the Together Stronger programme which is a cross-community project. It was through the 174 Trust that Alan met Briege O'Hare, who offered her expertise as a spiritual director to the WELL.COM project, and it was Breige's involvement which cemented the ecumenical dimension of WELL.COM.

WELL.COM can be contacted at: 7-9 Antrim Road, Carlisle Circus, Belfast BT15 2BE T: 077 1749 6686

E: [info@carlislecircuswell.com](mailto:info@carlislecircuswell.com)

<http://carlislecircuswell.com/>

## In Joyful Hope

**Gladys Ganiel on her web site “Building A Church Without Walls” reflected yesterday on the recent death of Fr Alex Reid and the “In Joyful Hope” inter church initiative which highlighted in a two page spread in the Irish News this week in a carefully researched and written article by William Scholes.**



*Fr Gerry Reynolds*

Gladys writes - The [ecumenical service of Thanksgiving for Fr Alec Reid](#), the Redemptorist priest who played such a pivotal role in the Northern Ireland peace process, was held shortly after his death in November. If there was anything lacking in that service, it was that those from the diverse religious traditions who had gathered in Clonard Monastery did not share Eucharist with one another.

Such an action would, of course, be forbidden by the “discipline” of the Catholic Church. But at the same time, the opening and conclusion of the service was marked by reflection on this fundamental act of Christian Unity and

reconciliation. [As I wrote on my blog:](#)

Fr Gerry Reynolds, who lived and worked with Fr Reid for many years, opened the service by sharing how that night he has missed a long-standing



*Gladys Ganiel*

commitment to attend another event across town in Knock Methodist Church: the latest in the series of services called [‘In Joyful Hope.’](#)

... Fr Reynolds said that the people of Knock Methodist had told him that he must speak at the service for Fr Reid, but added ruefully that ‘Alec would have told me to go to Knock.’

Similarly, the last words spoken before the final blessing and hymn were by a young woman reading from the Inter-Church Commitment: to work toward and look forward to the day of sharing Eucharist.

**“In Joyful Hope” is one of the latest in innovative initiatives to emerge from Belfast’s ecumenically-minded Christians. I have always thought that it has the potential to serve as an inspiring example of an incomplete – but desired – reconciliation between our divided communities.**

Since its beginnings in 2010, “In Joyful Hope” has been publicized primarily through church bulletins and notices, remaining relatively under the radar. The organizers did not seek media publicity or use social media to advertise their events, although my blog has featured several posts about the initiative over the years, including [reflections by Fr Reynolds](#) and [descriptions of some of the services](#).

**Yesterday’s [Irish News](#) featured a two-page spread about the initiative, carefully researched and written by William Scholes.**

It described the origins of the initiative, which are rooted in the friendship between Rev Jim Campbell, emeritus minister of Cooke Centenary Presbyterian in south Belfast, Rev Ken Smyth, one-time rector of St Mark’s Church of Ireland in Newtownards, Rev David Cooper, retired Methodist chaplain at Oxford University, Rev Dennis Cooke, retired principle of Edgehill Methodist College, and Fr Reynolds. It also charted the development of the events and their incorporation in services in varied denominations across the city.

Scholes stresses that the initiative continues to honour the discipline of the Catholic Church, but that the events give Christians of diverse traditions an opportunity to be present with each other in a new and meaningful way. This is expressed well in a supplementary column by Fr Dan Whyte, who writes that through “In Joyful Hope” he discovered:

... that limiting Christ’s presence to the bread and wine consecrated at Mass is attempting to limit God – and God refuses to be limited.

There is more to the Eucharist than the real presence of the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. That is not the whole picture.

The whole reality of the Eucharist is also recognising and experiencing God’s presence in each other, in Christians everywhere and in the world.

Or as Fr Reynolds says in Scholes’ main article: “We have taken a truly new step in Eucharistic communion.”

But when challenged that “nothing has changed – Catholic Eucharistic discipline remains the same,” Fr Reynolds responds:

The liberating truth is that we have moved away from polemical attitudes and drawn closer to one another through these shared celebrations of the Eucharist.

Through In Joyful Hope we have promoted deep mutual respect and undermined divisions.

In view of our history that’s a significant and worthwhile achievement.

For me, In Joyful Hope has been a prophetic experience pointing towards the longed-for day of a common Eucharist.

### **In Joyful Hope events will continue to be held throughout 2014.**

The failure of the Haass-O’Sullivan Talks may seem to send the message that we all just can’t get along. But it’s important that people at the grassroots of our communities continue to come together in initiatives like “In Joyful Hope” and the many others that are so often buried in a barrage of “bad news” stories.

For me, the “good news” is that Christians like those involved with “In Joyful Hope” have been faithfully meeting for the last three years and their resolve to do so has not wavered.

<http://www.gladysganiel.com/irish-catholic-church/the-good-news-of-in-joyful-hope-feature-in-irish-news/>

## **Sacrilege: Thugs spray paint church and desecrate the graves of two priests**

**Sick thugs vandalised a church and desecrated the graves of two priests on St Stephen's night. Disgusted parishioners in Piltown, Co Kilkenny, awoke to find their local church doused in red spray paint just two days after Christmas.**

Irish Mirror - The graveyard was also targeted as the vandals sprayed vulgar messages on the graves of two former parish priests.

The Calvary statue depicting Jesus dying on the Cross was damaged and the front door of the Church of the Assumption was covered in red paint. The St Stephen's night attack has been described as "despicable" and "cowardly".

Parish priest Father Pascal Moore condemned those responsible and said locals were horrified by the act.

He added: "Whoever did this came well prepared in the cover of darkness. I am numbed by it and find it hard to find the words.

"It is despicable and I am sickened by it. It is a horrendous and cowardly act. Volunteers worked on Friday to remove the paint and the damage done to the graves will be restored.

"The people of the parish are in complete shock and there is a lot of anger over it.

"It is also extremely distressing for the families of the deceased people whose graves were attacked."

Councillor Tom Breathnach said whoever was behind the attack should be ashamed of themselves.

He added: "This was an attack on three areas of the church. It looks as if it was all planned out. But it's a horrible thing to have happened.

"This is where people lay their loved ones to rest. The gardai are involved in it but nobody has been spoken to about it though.

“It happened on St Stephen’s night and it looks like it was one or two people involved. The first reaction of the people was shock and you can’t blame them.”

But Cllr Breathnach said he was so proud of how the community came together in the aftermath of the attack.

He added: “By the time it was all found, I’d say within 24 hours it had all been cleaned up.

“If you were to walk by it now, you would never know anything had happened.

“It was great to see everyone out cleaning together. It was all just simply removed.

“This was a desecration of the graves, of the dead. Families were coming through to visit their relatives and had to see this stuff. It’s just not on.”

Gardai in Mooncoin are investigating the incident.

## GB NEWS

### **Withhold aid from regimes that persecute Christians, argues senior Conservative**

**Britain should withhold aid to countries that persecute Christians, a senior Conservative has said.**



Liam Fox, former Defence Secretary, said that it was “unacceptable” for taxpayers’ money to go to regimes that do not “represent our values” and refused to tolerate other religions.

“A lot of people find it increasingly



unacceptable as we look round the world and we see persecution of Christians, for example, or persecution of other religious

minorities. They say, 'Why should our money be given to regimes and governments who are extremely intolerant when it comes to other people's religions?'"

The Times reported that he singled out Pakistan and Somalia as countries that fell short of British "ethical values".

A number of MPs have spoken out for Christians in the Middle East after Prince Charles last month warned of a "crisis" of organised persecution in the region.

The Prince of Wales said at a reception for Middle Eastern Christian leaders at Clarence House that "Christians in the Middle East are, increasingly, being deliberately targeted by fundamentalist Islamist militants."

Days later the shadow foreign secretary, Douglas Alexander, in an article in the Sunday Telegraph, accused British politicians of having "forsaken" the cause of Christians in the Middle East.

**Read the full story on [thetablet.co.uk](http://www.thetablet.co.uk)**

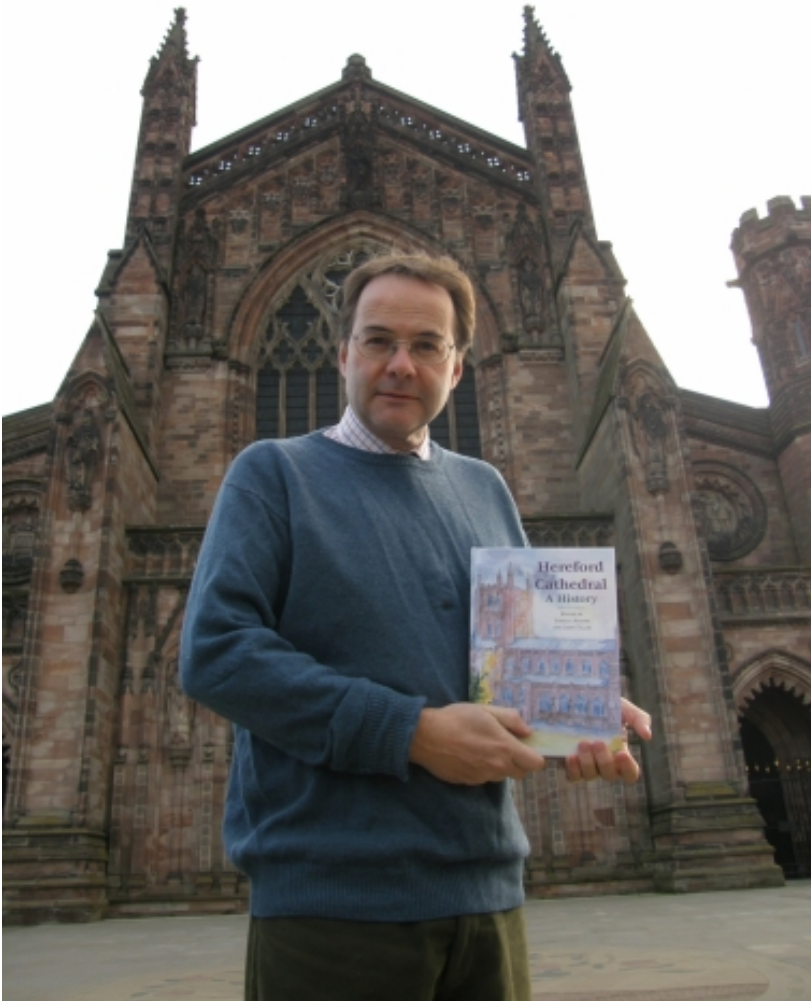
<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/288/0/withhold-aid-from-regimes-that-persecute-christians-argues-senior-conservative>

## **Quentin Letts takes Hereford Cathedral as his specialist subject on BBC Celebrity Mastermind**

**Journalist and broadcaster Quentin Letts takes Hereford Cathedral as his specialist subject when he appears on the Christmas edition of BBC Celebrity Mastermind on 10 January.**

Letts lives in the diocese of Hereford and is a worshipper at How Caple parish church and at the cathedral, describing himself as a "middle-stump Anglican, frequently prey to doubts but frequently comforted by church visits - and an enthusiastic blaster-outer of the great hymns of the CofE".

In addition to regularly attending church, Letts is a columnist with the diocesan newspaper and is an active member of the Hereford Diocese branch of the Prayer Book Society.



***Quentin Letts outside Hereford Cathedral***

"We are delighted that Quentin chose to take the cathedral for his specialist round," said Glyn Morgan, Chief Executive of Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust. "It will be tremendous coverage for the cathedral and, as Quentin has generously donated his appearance fee to the Trust, we will be getting our own Christmas present!"

Letts, who is a political sketchwriter and theatre critic for the Daily Mail, said: "England's cathedrals are among our greatest architectural and cultural gems, and they do not come much more glorious than Hereford's. I am glad to have been

able in a tiny way to support the cathedral at Christmas - although Mastermind was a nerve-wracking ordeal for an intellectual plodder like me."

The show has already been recorded and Letts was up against the actress and singer Clare Grogan, the paralympic champion Richard Whitehead and the singer-songwriter Newton Faulkner, although he is staying tightlipped about who won.

## **Prayer for Today**

**Ever-faithful God,  
whose being is perfect righteousness:  
reconcile us in your Son with the helpless and the needy,  
with those we would ignore or oppress,  
and with those we have called enemies,  
that we may serve all people as your hands of love,  
and sit at the feet of those  
who need our compassionate care. Amen.**

