

Church News Ireland



Image of the day Sherlock from Shandon

People and places

Belfast Black Santa Presentations of funding to 220 charities



Representatives of St Michael's Parish Church and Connor Youth Council who attended the Good Samaritans Service at Belfast Cathedral on February 6. They are pictured with Dean Stephen Forde, and special guests, Conor Burns, Minister of State for Northern Ireland, and Tim McGarry, comedian.

Representatives of more than 200 charities came together in Belfast Cathedral on Sunday February 6 for the annual Good Samaritans Service at which £150,000

raised by December's Black Santa Sit-out was formally distributed.

Welcoming the charity representatives along with special guests Conor Burns, Minister of State for Northern Ireland; comedian and actor Tim McGarry; and singer Peter Corry, the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, said it was a day for celebration.

“Today’s service is a celebration of everything that you, and the charities you represent, do day in and day out,” Dean Forde said. “The pandemic has been devastating for your ability to raise funds, and at the same time the pandemic has meant that the demands which you are each called to answer have risen dramatically.

Dean Forde’s Black Santa Sit-out, a Belfast tradition which began more than 45 years ago, took place on the steps of St Anne’s Cathedral from December 13 until Christmas Eve.

People made donations in Black Santa’s barrel, and online donations were enabled through a dedicated Black Santa website, facilitated by Price Waterhouse Cooper, whose representatives were among the guests at Sunday’s service.

In January, when he announced that the 2021 appeal had raised £150,000, Dean Forde said this had exceeded his expectations in a year of restricted footfall, with many of the Cathedral’s major events cancelled because of Covid-19 restrictions.

He told guests at the service: “My thanks to every single person who contributed to the 2021 Black Santa Appeal.

February 8, 2022

Some donated bags of coins collected over the past year and some wrote cheques for thousands.

“Without the amazing generosity of the people of Belfast and across this province, there would be no Good Samaritans Service, and there would not be £150,000 to give away today.” - Dean of Belfast

He thanked the team behind the sit-out and the service, including the Canons who joined him on the steps, the people who counted and banked the donations, and those who put together the awards letters.

Introducing the special guests, Dean Forde said: “Conor Burns spent a chilly afternoon with me on the steps of Belfast Cathedral, learning the skills of being one of Black Santa’s assistants. This not only involved knowing how to operate the credit card machine, or cross the road to receive money from a passing bus driver, but this year also side-stepping some challenging questions about Covid vaccine policy and lockdown regulations. Political skill, along with warm socks, are definitely included in the Black Santa kit list!”

He described Tim McGarry as a long-standing friend of the Black Santa Appeal, and said Peter Corry had supported the appeal through his pre-Christmas concerts in the Cathedral.

During the service, Peter sang ‘The Long and Winding Road,’ and Tim hit all the right chords himself with an entertaining talk which touched with great wit on all things

February 8, 2022

political. Finishing, Tim said he was proud to be a supporter of Black Santa.

“This appeal represents the real spirit of Belfast, the real spirit of generosity, and that is why I am proud to be a supporter of this service,” Peter Corry

Guests also enjoyed anthems from the Cathedral Choir. The organist was Tristan Russcher.

This year, in accordance with Covid-19 precautions, charity representatives were seated in a socially distanced manner around the Cathedral and did not come forward to receive their award as funds were transferred electronically. But the name of each of the 220 recipient organisations in the different categories were read aloud by Cathedral clergy. At the end of each section, the representatives of the charities named were asked to stand and were warmly applauded by all present.

The Dean’s focus for the 2021 sit-out was on organisations which work with refugees and those supporting people with a disability.

Charity representatives had travelled from as far away as Fermanagh and the north coast to take part in the service, with grants awarded to groups working with children, young people, groups which serve the community, organisations working with families, some involved in medical research and support and, on an international level, Christian Aid.

Wonderful week for Kilkenny College sports

As well as past pupil Charlie Tector making a 6 Nations debut, there were other successes during the week.

The College Senior Girls won the South East Cup, the Badminton Team won Leinster and a place in The All Ireland . And the good news came that three past pupils Elva Kerr, Luke Kerr and Ruby Millet (all in the Class of 2019) were awarded sports scholarships by UCC. Finally, a well done to Amy Handcock and Emma Simmons who have be called into a 26 girl Ireland U16 squad.

“The Shandon Mystery” – Bishop launches appeal at Saint Anne’s, Shandon

On Sunday, 6th February, Bishop Paul Colton visited Saint Anne’s Church, Shandon, Cork, where he and members of the parish launched ‘The Shandon Mystery’.

The Bishop writes:

The mystery is straightforward; we do not know the exact dates of when the building of the church began, or when it was consecrated. We are appealing to people who may have the answers – in original records in their custody or in sources we do not know of – to help us to find out the exact dates. Even pieces of the jigsaw of information may help us. Come what may, just as the 250th anniversary was



celebrated in 1972, we are making plans to celebrate the 300th later this year.

Bishop Derry and Raphoe praises Queen's 'faithful witness and dutifulness'

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Right Reverend Andrew Forster, marking the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday, 6th February, said:

Seventy years ago, today, bulletins printed on letterheaded paper were posted on the railings of Buckingham Palace and Sandringham House, announcing to the world that King George VI had passed away in his sleep.

February 8, 2022

It was a life–
changing
moment for his
eldest daughter,
Princess
Elizabeth, who –
in keeping with
her whole life –
had been
fulfilling her royal
duty at the time,
in Kenya,
deputising for
the ailing King
on a
Commonwealth
tour.



At the precise
moment her
beloved father
died, the young
princess ascended to the throne. When the news of the
King’s death was broken to her by Prince Philip, it must
have been a daunting moment.

Six months before her coronation, the Queen asked the
nation and Commonwealth to pray “that God may give me
wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I will
be making and that I may faithfully serve him and you all the
days of my life.”

God has clearly answered those prayers.

The words faith and duty are important and recurring ones in Her Majesty's life. Whether as an 18-year-old princess joining the women's branch of the British Army – the Auxiliary Territorial Service – during the Second World War, or a 94-year-old sovereign, complying with Covid restrictions and sitting alone at her beloved husband's funeral, the Queen has unerringly done the right thing.

The words of one of her Christmas speeches resonate today: "I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God. I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian Gospel."

Queen Elizabeth II is spending Accession Day at Sandringham, the country retreat where her father died. At the age of 95, she has become the first British monarch to mark a Platinum Jubilee. As her subjects celebrate this remarkable milestone, the Queen, I imagine, will be reflecting privately on more than nine decades of life and service, remembering her dear father and mother, and her devoted husband.

Last year, the Queen said Christ's teachings, which had been "handed down from generation to generation," had been the bedrock of her faith. Two Christmases ago, she said that those same teachings had served as her "inner light".



Now and again, that inner light has been evident to us all, lighting the way for others to follow. Eleven years ago, during the first State visit to the Republic of Ireland by a British monarch since partition, she pointed to the ties of friendship between the people of Britain and Ireland; acknowledged the complexity of our shared history; and emphasised the importance of forbearance and conciliation.

Last year, in a centenary message to the people of Northern Ireland, she hoped that the building of an inclusive, prosperous, and hopeful society, strengthened by the gains

February 8, 2022

of the peace process, would be “our guiding thread in the coming years”. She had some words of caution, though: “It is clear that reconciliation, equality and mutual understanding cannot be taken for granted, and will require sustained fortitude and commitment.” Those qualities are needed in abundance now.

In celebration of the Platinum Jubilee, more than fifteen hundred beacons will be lit throughout the United Kingdom, in British Overseas Territories and in Commonwealth countries.

The Queen has been a beacon for all of us. Hers has – and continues to be – a life well lived: an example of faithful witness, selflessness, commitment and dutifulness. We thank God for her long life, her good health, her exemplary service and her impeccable example.

News reports

New Zealand churches urge support for Tonga eruption recovery

Leaders of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia have joined with Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches and the Religious Society of Friends asking for financial support a people in Tonga respond to the impact of the volcanic eruption and tsunami.

February 8, 2022

The Aotearoa New Zealand-based church leaders have released a joint call that asks church members to offer prayers and send financial support to Tonga through Christian World Service and the churches' own partner agencies working in Tonga.

The church leaders' statement opens with an exhortation to courage from Joshua 1:9 "...Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

The statement, which was signed by Archbishop Don Tamihere and Archbishop Philip Richardson goes on to acknowledge those who have died and the concern that they feel for Tonga.

"We are watching the news reports from Tonga with great care and concern for the people of Tonga.

The eruptions of Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai have caused considerable harm and we are only beginning to see the extent of the damage.

So far we know three people have lost their lives. Acid rain, ash and other debris cover the land and sea. Water supplies, food crops, homes and infrastructure have been damaged and destroyed. Many are worried and anxious but people are looking after each other. They are praying, singing and cleaning up – as they do after every disaster."

The church leaders, which included national Baptist Church leader Charles Hewlett, Presbyterian Moderator Hamish Galloway, Methodist President Andrew Doubleday and

February 8, 2022

Religious Society of Friends Co-Clerks Anne and Alistair Hall, goes on to encourage friends of Tonga in Aotearoa New Zealand.

“In Aotearoa New Zealand and in many places, people with family in Tonga are anxiously awaiting news. Our prayers are also for you and for the speedy restoration of full communications.”

“We know the people of Tonga will need help to get through this period, to recover and rebuild their lives and livelihoods.”

Church leaders urged supporters in Aotearoa New Zealand to send financial support to church agencies that partner with churches in Tonga and come with strong records of delivering effective and accountable aid through local Tongan organisations.

“If you can make a donation, please give generously to Appeal for Tonga supported by the: Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia (Anglican Missions), Methodist Church of New Zealand, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Baptist Churches of New Zealand, and Christian World Service.”

The church leaders’ statement ends with a call to prayer and solidarity with Tongans now facing the massive task of recovery - rebuilding properties, replanting food crops and rebuilding livelihoods.

February 8, 2022

“Your prayers, consideration and support of those affected by the eruptions, tsunami and their aftermath are so important and we thank you for showing your compassion to the people of Tonga at this time.”

The leaders’ statement includes each of the churches' own agencies, including the two official agencies backed by the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia: The Diocese of Polynesia (via Anglican Missions) and Christian World Service.

In the media

Finally DUP does something to show gravity of Protocol predicament

News Letter

Owen Polley: writes - The DUP made two decisive moves this week in protest against the Northern Ireland Protocol. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/owen-polley-finally-dup-does-something-to-show-gravity-of-protocol-predicament-3556055>

Game of Thrones studio opens door to Westeros, in Northern Ireland

BBC News

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-60243681>

The uniqueness of St Anne's Church Shandon

Irish Examiner

February 8, 2022

An Inclusive Church planning for its 300th Anniversary, including the launching The Shandon Mystery. A report by Eoin English

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-40801347.html>

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

A 360 Photo puts you high in the chancel of Bangor Abbey

Take the full high resolution 360° tour here:

<https://bit.ly/3H21h3j>

By the time the Ulster-Scots arrived in Bangor, nothing except the old tower survived of the once Augustinian monastery here. In the early 1600s, Sir James Hamilton, a Scotsman from Lanarkshire (who later became Viscount Clandeboye) rebuilt the ruined church.

Perspective

Archbishop Justin Welby - Resurrection life and reconciliation

The Archbishop of Canterbury's address to the concluding event of the Four Corners Festival in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast last week. The opening event

February 8, 2022

in St Anne's Cathedral in the city included a video presentation by Pope Francis

It is an honour to be here, to be part of this festival. But nobody told me when I agreed to do this that I'd be following the Pope. His Holiness is a tough act to follow, to put it mildly. I am privileged to call him a friend and brother.

The Holy Father has a passion for reconciliation, by which I mean for enabling people to disagree well, to relish the vast and beautiful diversity of our humanity while loving one another and living in peace. A few years ago, we hosted a retreat at the Vatican for leaders of South Sudan with the Pope and the former Moderator of the Church of Scotland. These are churches that have been separated for half a millennium. South Sudan is a country that has been torn apart by violence, by war, by conflict.

And on that retreat, something miraculous happened. Well actually, many miraculous things happened, and I will mention two. The first was the profound sense that God was present, and that meant that these leaders could not just speak to each other as fellow human beings but truly see each other as fellow human beings – people just like them who knew suffering, grief and loss, who were deeply affected by the events of the last decade.

And the second miraculous, astonishing thing was something Pope Francis did at the end of this retreat. He got on his knees, and he begged the leaders of South Sudan to make peace. And the journey of peace took on a new dimension. For peace requires risk and sacrifice.



The Archbishop at the Dock cafe with Bishop of Down & Dromore

Peace sometimes seems totally unattainable – whether it’s a war, or a familial conflict, or even within yourself. You may have seen so many attempts at peace that you have given up hope it can ever happen. But we believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead, and so death and evil is overcome and we are invited to live a resurrection life. We can believe in finding peace, in disagreeing well and seeking the abundant life and flourishing of all. We must take risks and make sacrifices for such peace.

We can see that resurrection life in the witness of people who have themselves made the long and painful journey from enemy to friend, a people who have allowed themselves to be living stones, built into a different and new community.

If there is anyone who knows this, if there is any community who has walked this journey and made the hard choices of forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation, it is here on the island of Ireland. There remain, of course, huge challenges but the people of Northern Ireland have begun hesitantly to walk together. With enormous courage you offer us this gift of witness to the God who can turn any dead end into a turning point.

It is for the people of Northern Ireland to witness to your experience, rather than for me to tell you about reconciliation – many people in this city will remember the devastation of conflict and will have far more to tell me than I have to tell you about the fragile flower of peace. Given the audience, I do not presume to instruct, but to encourage. First with some examples of reconciliation and secondly with some of the principles I draw.

Years ago, I worked as the Canon for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral. You may know the story of the Cathedral: it was bombed during World War Two. In the following days and weeks, powerful symbols emerged from the ruins. Two burnt roof beams – which had fallen in the shape of a cross in the rubble – were bound together and placed where the altar had been. Three medieval roof nails were formed into a cross, which became the original Cross of Nails. The words ‘Father Forgive’ were written on the wall of the ruined chancel. Some wondered whether it meant “Father, forgive them”: the enemy who had bombed their city, ended lives, and destroyed livelihoods. But the Cathedral Provost reminded them of the Epistle to the Romans: “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

February 8, 2022

At Christmas, six weeks later, he vowed that when the war ended, they would work with those who had once been enemies to 'rebuild a kinder, more Christ child-like world'. They took the thousands of nails strewn over the floor of the Cathedral and turned them into crosses. After the Second World War they took these crosses to Germany, to Japan, and to Italy – and then as the years went by, they took them around the world as symbols of reconciliation. There are some in Northern Ireland, at Lagan College for example.

Since then, the new Coventry Cathedral, rebuilt next to the ruins has continued this legacy and become a centre for peace-making and reconciliation around the world. The partnerships that emerged from the war became the international Community of the Cross of Nails, which continues to grow globally.

The remainder of the address is available at -

[[] <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/archbishop-justins-speech-four-corners-festival-belfast>]

Poem for today

Afternoon in February by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The day is ending,
The night is descending;
The marsh is frozen,
The river dead.

February 8, 2022

Through clouds like ashes
The red sun flashes
On village windows
That glimmer red.

The snow recommences;
The buried fences
Mark no longer
The road o'er the plain;

While through the meadows,
Like fearful shadows,
Slowly passes
A funeral train.

The bell is pealing,
And every feeling
Within me responds
To the dismal knell;

Shadows are trailing,
My heart is bewailing
And tolling within
Like a funeral bell

Speaking to the soul

See daily post on the CNI site

February 8, 2022

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