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Bulletin includes -

Cathedral collects unwanted Christmas gifts; Kells to celebrate links with Columba/Columbkille; East Belfast church saved from wrecker's ball; New diocesan youth centre opened



Pictured receiving one of several boxes full of much-needed items is Ms. Alice Leahy, Director and Co-Founder of TRUST (centre) with Mr. Alan Best of TRUST (left) and the Revd Darren McCallig, Dean of Residence at TCD (right).

TCD Students and Staff help TRUST

Members of the Trinity College Dublin Chapel community spent the last weeks of term gathering items on the “Wish List” of a Dublin-based charity.

TRUST is a befriending health and social service for people who are homeless. Items collected included hats, scarves, gloves, coats and toiletries.

Kells to celebrate legacy of Columcille in 2014

The people of Kells are to celebrate the legacy of Saint Columcille in 2014 and pay homage to the founder of the north Meath Town.

The Meath Chronicle - A 'Kells 1200' committee has been set up comprising of the Church of Ireland, the Catholic Church, Kells Town Council, Kells Archaeological & Historical Society, Kells & District Tourism Forum, Kells Silver Band, Kells Local Heroes, Kells Chamber, Craobh Cholmcille de Chonradh na Gaeilge and Denis McCarthy.

Other noted bodies from Derry, Iona and relevant universities will be invited on board to help plan events.



During the year many events will take place including a weekend of ecumenical services, lectures, readings, tours, workshops, music and other events, which will take place from Friday 6th June – Sunday 8th June, culminating on the eve of Columcille's Feast Day of June 9th.

2014 will mark the 1,200th anniversary of the re-establishment of the monastery in Kells and the building of the great stone church by the monks of Columcille in 814 who had fled some years previously from the isle of Iona, due to increased raids by the Norsemen.

The importance of one of Ireland's patron saints, Columcille, also known as Columba, in both Ireland and Europe was of noted significance. In the troubled and often violent Dark Ages in Northern Europe, left bereft in the wake of the retreating Roman armies, monasteries served as centres of learning, sanctuary, inns and orphanages.

The light of civilisation might have gone out altogether in Europe had it not been for the monasteries.

Columcille/Columba was foremost in the monastic tradition, the building of monasteries and the spread of learning.

Columcille founded monasteries in Kells and Derry amongst others in his native Ireland, and eventually the island monastery of Iona off the coast of Scotland, which succeeded in becoming the head monastery of his monasteries in both countries, and became the most famous religious house in Scotland.

The noted English historian St. Bede says that Columba/Columcille led many to Christianity by his "preaching and example." He was much admired for his physical as well as spiritual prowess.

He was a strict ascetic and remained physically vigorous and unflagging in his missionary and pastoral journeys throughout his seventy-six years of life.

The memory of Columba lives on in Iona, Scotland and in Derry, which recently celebrated Columcille as part of its year as the European City of Culture in 2013.

Such is the importance of Kells and its contribution to Christianity that the Town is currently on UNESCO's tentative list as a World Heritage Site.

For further information visit www.visitingkells.ie

Unwanted gifts collection at Pro Cathedral

Before you start looking for the gift receipts to exchange unwanted presents from yesterday, why not put them to really good use, by supporting one of Dublin's busiest charities?

Staff at St. Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin are urging people not to exchange unwanted Christmas gifts this week – but to donate them to Crosscare who will give them to those most in need, young people living on the margins and the homeless.

Yesterday, hundreds of people without families or friends to spend Christmas with received gifts from Crosscare staff that were unwanted in 2012. Any surplus gifts, that were not needed for people in need, were sold during the year in Crosscare's, Blanchardstown service, and the money raised given back to the homeless services for essential supplies.

Fr. Damien O Reilly, administrator in the Pro Cathedral, said they were delighted to be able to facilitate this incredible appeal which every year

resulted in those most in need receiving some Christmas cheer – “This simple scheme allows Crosscare to give a gift to someone in their services who would not normally receive one, he said, “it is also a reminder to us all of how we can get needlessly caught up in wasteful commercialism at this time of year.” He stressed how Pope Francis has consistently preached about the need to control waste in our world – using gifts you don’t need to give to those who have little, is one small gesture of sharing that can help.

Fr. O Reilly said, that Dublin parishioners had already been extraordinarily generous to Crosscare this month with 70 tons of food collected for the Diocesan Food Appeal.

The unwanted gifts appeal will make sure that as well as the essentials, people who are struggling with life, will get a small token of cheer each Christmas. Unwanted presents can be brought to the crib in the Cathedral until January 6th

More information: Fr. Damian O’ Reilly, Administrator, Pro Cathedral 086 2588081

Prayers answered as east Belfast church is saved

An iconic east [Belfast](#) church has been saved from the wrecking ball after it was listed.

Belfast Telegraph - The congregation of Cregagh Presbyterian Church voted to knock down the church and rebuild it because of structural damage in June this year.

But the plan was opposed by Stewart Barbour, grandson of the church's founder, who told the [Belfast](#) Telegraph he would do anything he could to save the distinctive red brick building on Belfast's Cregagh Road.

Since he launched his Save Cregagh Church appeal on social media this summer, 1,081 people have signed an online petition



calling for the church to become a listed building.

And on Christmas Eve, Stewart announced on Twitter that the campaign had been successful and Cregagh Presbyterian Church had been listed by [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#).

His grandfather, the Rev Dr David Stewart, founded the church in 1903 and the present building was built 25 years later.

Stewart's father, the Rev WAJ Barbour, took over leadership in 1944 and played a key role in refurbishing the church in 1963.

Since then, the structure of the building has deteriorated, with the iconic bell tower having been condemned and 90% of the bricks needing replaced, and it will cost an estimated £800,000 to bring it back up to standard.

Minister Rev Paul Dalzell said if the 1,000 people who had signed the online petition were each to donate £800, it would cover the cost of the restoration.

"We were in the process of choosing an architect to draw up plans, so the listing has saved us that cost," he said. "The vast majority of the congregation are happy with keeping the building. We've gone down that road, God closed it and we will look at it again in the New Year. We're in the job now of restoration."

The congregation had voted in favour of refurbishing the church in 2008, but its funds were frozen when the Presbyterian Mutual Society went into administration.

In June this year the Presbyterian Church in Ireland said the church was fast becoming not fit for purpose.

But, this week, the Save Cregagh Church campaign announced that the church had officially been made a listed building. The DoE listing said the church and its hall retained a wealth of original material.

Diocesan youth centre makes dream a reality

A 15-year-old dream for a vibrant youth centre in Belfast's inner city has become a reality with the opening of a purpose-built diocesan youth centre in St Malachy's parish this month.

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down & Connor, NI Education Minister, John O'Dowd and Belfast's Lord Mayor, Cllr Mairtin O'Muilleoir joined youth groups, cross community organisations, parents and young people at the official opening ceremony for the centre in the Markets area of the parish at Lower Stanfield



NI Education Minister, John O'Dowd and Bishop Noel Treanor with pupils from St Malachy's PS at the official opening of the new St Malachy's Youth Centre in Belfast. Photo: Hugh Russell/ The Irish News

Street. The state of the art building, which has been in use since June, houses a full-size sports hall, a modern kitchen, a dance studio, a social area, an IT facility, an art room and a counselling room, with a flood lit MUGA pitch outside.

“We are committed to creating a welcoming home for all young people who come through the doors of our youth centre,” said Fr Michael McGinnity PP.

“We also look forward to further opportunities to collaborate with other youth service providers across the city.”

Bishop Treanor said he hoped the youth centre will be of service of “all young people in the parish and beyond” and a “welcoming home for young people of all races and of different religious backgrounds”.

The funding package for this £1.6m project was provided by the Department of Education, a Belfast City Council grant and St Malachy's Parish.

Moderator calls for prayer for South Sudan

In a letter to all Presbyterian ministers the Moderator says, “With Christmas almost here, news is reaching us from the fledgling nation of South Sudan that the threat of civil war, primarily between the Dinka and Nuer tribes, is very real with 500 people having already lost their lives,

and many more unaccounted for, in the violence that has erupted there in the past few days.

“On behalf of the people of South Sudan, I am therefore imploring you to join with me in urgent prayer for this fledgling state and its people. On Christmas Day, and again on Sunday, 29th December, I ask you please to lead your congregations in prayer for South Sudan, and to encourage your members to continuing praying daily for the precarious situation there.”

Earlier this year Dr. Craig witnessed first hand the devastating effects of tribal conflict when he visited Rwanda, a country still living in the aftermath of the genocide of twenty years ago and he hopes and prays South Sudan will be spared such cruelty.

“In Rwanda I heard about and saw personally some of the devastating effects of inter-tribal conflict. I visited two Catholic Churches where people, who had fled for sanctuary, were massacred. The accounts I heard were brutal and will stay with me. May South Sudan be spared such cruelty,” added Dr. Craig.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has close links with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS) and last month Rev. Uel Marris, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Mission Overseas visited South Sudan and met with PCOSS’s Secretary General, Rev. John Yor Nyiker.

“During my visit I travelled to Malakal where I was moved to witness 1,500 school children from different backgrounds sing with so much passion and optimism, the national anthem of the newly independent South Sudan,” says Rev. Marris.

“It is vital in this land with so much potential, that the political differences of a few national leaders should not be allowed to plunge its people into widespread tribal conflict. Let us cry out to God that such a tragedy be averted.”

In his letter the Moderator urges prayers to be shaped around the following points:

- Prayer for key political leaders to be committed to dialogue for the sake of the Peace of South Sudan.
- Prayer for the Christian Church, not least our partners, the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, that she may be an agent of reconciliation, care, comfort, healing and understanding.

- Prayer for the international community to act quickly to avert a tragedy.
- Prayer for the bereaved, stricken by the grief of loved ones recently killed, that they will be comforted and will resist the temptation to seek revenge.
- Prayer for the more than 60,000 internally displaced civilians seeking protection and humanitarian assistance at UNMISS Compounds.

Last weekend Dr. Craig endorsed an appeal from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Moderator of the Church of Scotland Rt. Rev. Lorna Hood to leaders in South Sudan to lay down their weapons and cooperate in seeking peace through dialogue and negotiation.

Further information about the situation in South Sudan can be found online at www.pcimissionoverseas.org/news/item/643/