

Church of England parish at heart of relief efforts following London inferno



In the hours since a massive blaze ripped through a tower block in west London early on Wednesday, nearby St Clement's Church has been rapidly turned into an emergency relief centre. It sheltered more than 100 residents as

the blaze raged and has subsequently been overwhelmed with donations. People have given clothes, bedding and toiletries for the residents of the tower, many of whom fled the block in their nightwear and have lost everything. Volunteers from churches throughout the area are running the relief operation.



Revd Alan Everett described how events unfolded in the hours after the devastating blaze: “I opened the church at half three in the morning and within minutes the local community started bringing in supplies – the tables are now completely overflowing. The response has been overwhelming” he said. St Clement's has now reached saturation point and has simply run out of room to store any more supplies.

Revd Alan says St Clement's has always had a strong emphasis on community outreach work and this tragic event has brought people together in a very strong bond: "Because of this church's longstanding community outreach work, it is a highly trusted place. We are trusted by people of all faiths. This response is the social gospel. In the wake of the tragedy people might ask where is God? God is present in the hands that are reaching out to help."

Area Dean, Revd Mark O'Donoghue, has been at St Clement's since dawn yesterday: "I have spent the time sitting with and listening to people who are desperately looking for friends and relatives. This is a church showing Christ like compassion and care." Revd James Heard from a neighbouring parish has been spending time in prayer with those in distress: "I was here most of yesterday. People have been coming in too shocked to speak."

Designated spaces have been created within the church grounds for prayer and clergy from throughout the area have come to offer support to grieving relatives. St Clement's is providing registration for missing persons.

It's a highly multicultural area with many nationalities represented; there's a high



population of Moroccans, Filipinos and Eastern Europeans as well as many people from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said the response from the community had been an “extraordinary sight.” Local Bishop, Graham Tomlin, says it’s crucial the clergy are visible: “It’s important to open the doors of our churches and of our hearts and to offer whatever help we can. This church is at the heart of the local community and we have here with us families anxiously awaiting news of relatives. There’s an Ethiopian family here who can’t find their five year old son. Our local Filipino Chaplain is also

very involved as there are a number of Filipinos in the tower block missing.”

Presbyterian Moderator congratulates May and Varadkar

Following his own formal election by the General Assembly last week as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely has written to the newly elected leaders of the UK and Ireland, assuring Theresa May MP and Leo Varadkar TD of his prayers.

In his letters to the Prime Minister and Taoiseach, Dr. McNeely congratulated both on their elections and assured them of his prayers “and those of many throughout our Church...”

The Moderator spoke of how the call to leadership was ‘a great honour and a great challenge’ and that followers of Jesus Christ “are called to pray for those in authority.”

Touching on some of the mutual issues facing Mrs May and Mr Varadkar, which include the outworking of the UK’s decision to leave the European Union and the political situation in Northern Ireland, he spoke of ‘uncertain’ and

‘challenging times’ writing, “There is also an urgent need to find a resolution in Northern Ireland that establishes good government based on good working relationships.”

In all the decisions that the Prime Minister and Taoiseach face, Dr. McNeely urged, “I hope that the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society and overseas will be at the forefront of your mind.”

C of I bishops take part uninstallation of Methodist President

The Methodist Church installed the Reverend Dr Laurence Graham as president in succession to Reverend Mullally.

The ceremony took place in Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast, and because of the close ties of the Methodists and the Church of Ireland under their joint covenant, three Church of Ireland Bishops took part in the ceremony.

The Reverend Dr Graham, who is 48, is one of the youngest presidents of the Irish Methodist Church.

He is the son of a former president and general secretary the Rev Winston Graham.

Dr Laurence Graham was educated at Dalriada School and Queen's University. He is currently the superintendent minister in the Dublin Central Mission.

In his presidential address, the Rev Graham outlined his hopes.

He said: "I am really glad that a lay mission strategy is coming to the Methodist conference this year, and that its vision is to promote and communicate effectively the Methodist Church's vision of every member ministry."

The theme of this year's Methodist conference, which is taking place in Trinity Methodist Church in Lisburn, is 'The Rhythm of Grace'.

Members and delegates are considering a wide range of issues affecting the Church and society.

On Sunday evening four people will be ordained to the Methodist ministry at a service in

Fisherwick Church, which marks the end of the four-day conference.

Church of Scotland to ditch policy requiring care workers to be Christian

The Church of Scotland is to drop its policy that prevents non-Christian from working for its social care service, amid a recruitment crisis.

Currently, the more than 2,000 employees of CrossReach - previously known as the Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility before it launched in June 2005 - must believe in the faith.

Bill Steele, convener of the Church's Social Care Council explained to The Herald why the move had been made: "Having consulted widely and having sought employment law advice, the Council does not believe that the requirement for all care and support staff to be Christian is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim."

"The change of policy had been the subject of a number of heart-searching discussions."

New care employees will now only be required to pledge that they will not undermine the charity's Christian ethos. They will, however, be unable to rise to managerial or supervisory level unless they subsequently make a Christian commitment.

The organisation is one of Scotland's largest providers of social services and it supports some of the country's most vulnerable people using its annual expenditure of £51 million.

CrossReach, whose mission statement includes "Christ's love moves us to reach out to those who are the greatest need - the marginalised, the poor, the frail, the hurting and the disadvantaged", receives most of its funds from local authorities. It also relies on donations to help people including those with learning disabilities, the elderly and people with drug and alcohol addiction.

Steele explained the charity is working on putting together a brief introduction to Christianity for future non-Christian employees, to help them better understand the Christian faith. He added: "We've been advised and we're happy to do that.

"What remains important to us is that all CrossReach staff, including those who do not

share our faith, are required to respect our Christian ethos and values which we believe fundamentally underpins the quality of our care and support."

Kilkee church available as cultural or commercial venture

A major renovation, and in a listed property at that, is not for every person. But the opportunity to own and make over a 19th century church of beautiful build and heritage in a prime slot in Dough, Kilkee will surely appeal to some.

We write of St James Church on Church Road, which offers 336 sq mt and currently, double height ceilings as only the choir gallery occupies its upper reaches. Built in 1845 to a design attributed to James Pain (179 to 1843), this stonework gem is placed on the market by Billy Gabbett of John Shaw Auctioneers.

The site is close to half an acre, which will afford fine gardens and parking, should Clare County Council be amenable.

"St James is a Church of Ireland property that has not been open in five to ten years," notes Billy Gabbett. "It's design is attributed to that of the Pain brothers who were two English

architects who came to Ireland and were behind some gems such as Adare Manor, Dromoland and the Tontine buildings of Pery Square, numbers 1 to 6 all facing People's Park.

“George Pain went to Cork, James worked in Clare and in Limerick”.

Noting the attractiveness of this Kilkee limestone and pitch-pine roofed heritage build to travellers of the Wild Atlantic Way, his surmise is that future life as a gallery/ café or restaurant will be explored by an entrepreneur.

Architectural details include dressed stone walls with cut-stone buttresses, hood mouldings to the chancel and entrance gable windows. Lancet openings with ashlar dressings and cast iron and timber traceried windows finish that inimitably ecclesiastical look.

Accurately predicted: Our Lady appears to thousands in Knock

A miracle has been reported in Ireland, and it has been witnessed and filmed by thousands of people. According to a 14-year-old boy who visited Fatima, the Virgin Mary told him she would appear at 3 PM in Knock, Ireland. Something miraculous has happened.

The footage is emotional and difficult to believe, but it is genuine and verified by the cameras of hundreds of other eyewitnesses. A crowd of people gathered in Knock, Ireland at 3 PM, June 10, saw a promised vision of the Virgin Mary in the sky.

The sun appeared as an elongated shape in the videos, not as a circle. Rays of light were also captured on camera. As clouds passed before the sun, filtering out the brightest light, people were able to look directly at the vision. They reported the vision moved, and spun, a classic miracle of the sun, often associated with apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

The sight alone is moving and astounding. There is no evidence on video that is so clearly genuine or so remarkable. But what makes this apparition even more compelling is that it was predicted by a 14-year-old boy.

As we can gather, the boy visited the shrine at Fatima, Portugal and met one of the visionaries from Medjugorje. The visionary spoke in Portuguese, but the boy was able to understand, despite not speaking the language. He told his father of the pending apparition.

The father then posted on social media: "For two days our son seen Our Lady in Fatima and he seen the visionaries.

"The visionary from Medjugorje was speaking to him in Portuguese and (he) was able to understand every word out of her mouth.

"On the tenth of June we will be going to Knock and whoever wants to come is welcome. Our Lady will appear...

"Whoever wants to be there at three o' clock Our Lady will come down, I can't say if the three visionaries will be there, but I know Our Lady will be there.

"It's out there for everybody who believes in it."

Right on cue, the apparition took place, astonishing believers and skeptics alike.

According to widespread belief in Ireland, Our Lady appeared in Knock in 1879, along with Jesus Christ and several saints. A shrine has been built in the town.

Is there a meaning behind the latest apparition? The answer is always yes. And the meaning is always the same, we are called to conversion.

Conversion of the heart away from the things of this world and to Jesus Christ is the timeless call of Our Lady. And while no words were spoken or messages reported from the miracle at Knock, we know what Our Lady seeks. She continually points us towards her Son, Jesus Christ, that we may come to believe in Him and know Him, and through Him enjoy salvation.

Today in Christian History, June 16

June 16, 1846: Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti is named Pope Pius IX. Roman Catholics remember him for his 31-year pontificate—the longest in history—for his declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and for the First Vatican Council's declaration of the infallibility of the pope.

June 16, 1855: William and Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army, marry, having fallen in love the first night they met. William had escorted Catherine home, and she later wrote, "Before we reached my home, we both felt as though we had been made for each other"

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