



Two Romanian ladies whose home is on the streets of Belfast tuck into their lunch.

Launch of Church Army's 'Open Door Lunch' for Belfast homeless

A number of people for whom home is the harsh streets of Belfast were able to step away from that life for a short time and enjoy a warm bowl of soup in the comfort of St Anne's Cathedral Halls on Tuesday lunchtime.

Open Door Lunch is an initiative by Connor Diocese's Church Army Evangelists aiming to reach out to those who are homeless and sleeping rough on the streets of Belfast.

The project is based at the Cathedral Halls, accessed via Talbot Street, and offers a free hot lunch every Tuesday from 12 noon until 1.30pm.

Evangelists Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten are being supported in the initiative by staff from the Diocese of Connor, parishes in Belfast, and Cathedral staff. The project also has the support of a number of local businesses.

The project was inspired by a similar outreach project in Dundee, recently visited by the Connor Evangelists, where the Church Army, in conjunction with Dundee Cathedral, meet and feed the homeless community.

Among those who attended on Tuesday were two Romanian ladies who spend their days in Royal Avenue. When Karen first met them and told them about the Open Door Lunch, they were sitting, some distance apart, outside a business. One sat on a flattened down handbag, and was wrapped in an old sleeping bag, the other had just a towel around her shoulders. It was raining heavily at the time.

Over the soup, bread, buns and tea, the ladies spoke to Karen and volunteer Roy Totten, Glenavy Parish, and overcoming a language barrier they revealed they both had children still in Romania. They indicated they would like to return to the Open Door Lunch next week.

Meath and Kildare Diocese celebrates meeting "Good for the Sole" target

Meath and Kildare diocese marked the celebration of its 'Good for the Sole' project at a special service in Trim Cathedral. This diocesan project aimed to raise €25,000. That target was exceeded as €31,000 was raised across the diocese.

The Good For The Soul project set out to raise enough money to buy 10,000 pairs of sandals in Karigiri in Tamil Nadu, India. The project was run in partnership with The Leprosy Mission Ireland and Bishops' Appeal.

The Celebration Service in Trim Cathedral was led by Dean Paul Bogle and Bishop Pat Storey, with music provided by the Diocesan Choir. Rev William Steacy (Bishop's Appeal Diocesan



L to R: Ken Gibson (TLM Ireland), Canon William Stacey, Bishop Pat Storey, Lydia Monds (Bishops' Appeal), Emma Rothwell (Wilson's Hospital School Chaplain / Diocesan Youth & Children's Officer) & Dean Paul Bogle (Trim Cathedral).

Representative) updated the large congregation on how the fundraising target was exceeded. Ken Gibson (The Leprosy Mission Ireland) talked about how funds raised would make a tangible difference in people's lives. He also showed how the diocese intends to build on this effort. Prayers were led by Lydia Monds (Bishops' Appeal).

What inspired people across the dioceses to get involved was the knowledge that something as simple as a pair of sandals could make a positive

impact on someone's life! One of the effects of leprosy is often damage to a person's feet. The disease causes them to lose sensitivity in this area, making the individual more prone to injury. The Leprosy Mission has been involved in developing a cost-effective sandal that can protect the wearer from such harm. One pair of sandals can be manufactured and distributed at a cost of €2.50.

For the past year parishes and individuals across the dioceses have used great imagination to raise funds – knowing that every Euro would make a difference. Everything from coffee mornings, dances, quizzes and even sponsored dog walking all helped beat the target. Bishop Pat Storey said, “The Good for the Sole project captured our imagination. The fact that we have exceeded our financial target is the result of an amazing team effort across the diocese. We are all the more encouraged that funds raised will make such a practical difference in people's lives”. She continued, “I want to pay tribute to The Leprosy Mission Ireland and Bishops' Appeal. Our partnership with them in this project has been crucial.”

Setting and exceeding the target of raising €25,000 marks the end of phase one of the 'Good for the Sole' project. Members of the dioceses were struck by how much difference can be made by caring for the feet of those with leprosy. Therefore the dioceses is planning a second phase for the project – raising funds to supply medical intervention to alleviate foot problems in leprosy sufferers.

Stolen stations of the cross by Evie Hone recovered by Garda

Gardaí in Tullamore have recovered six valuable paintings from a series of stations of the cross which were stolen from a Galway church in 2013.

The parish priest, who was devastated at the theft of the oil paintings by the renowned artist Evie Hone, expressed his joy on hearing that they were recovered during a planned operation in Edenderry, Co Offaly on Tuesday (12 April).

“I had so many phone calls last night when the news broke, from people delighted to hear the good news,” said Fr Martin McNamara, PP of Kiltullagh, Co Galway.



One of the stolen paintings

The discovery was made by Gardaí attached to Edenderry and Tullamore during a search of wasteland near Edenderry.

The paintings have been removed from the scene to Tullamore Garda Station for forensic and technical examination.

No one was arrested during this phase of the investigation and enquiries are ongoing.

Fr Martin McNamara said that the paintings are in good condition but need some work.

“The frames were missing so we’ll have to get frames made and then we will decide (whether to hang them in the church again),” he said on RTE Radio 1 News.

The stolen paintings included the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 10th, 11th and 12th stations out of the set of 14 stations of the cross at the Church of St Peter and Paul at Kiltullagh, near Athenry.

In June 2013, Fr McNamara noticed the paintings were missing when he went to lock up the church which is left open during the day for people to pay a visit.

Speaking to Miriam O’Callaghan on RTE Radio at the time he expressed his shock and sorrow.

“I was hardly able to say Mass I was so shocked,” he said.

Miriam O Callaghan tried to reassure Fr McNamara and later expressed her concern about how devastated he was.

People used to visit from all over the world to see the paintings which have hung on the walls of the church since 1946 and were never touched. The paintings were commissioned by a local benefactor.

Evie Hone was born in Dublin. A Cubist painter and stained glass artist she was one of the earliest abstract painters in the history of Irish art.

One of her most important works was the East Window for the Chapel at Eton College.

She worked mainly in stained glass, so her paintings are quite rare. Some early sketches for the Stations in Kiltullagh fetched over €40,000 at auction the year before the theft.

Presbyterian Church to email daily devotions

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is getting ready to launch a brand new rhythm of daily devotions. In its essence, “Tides” is a daily email that will arrive each weekday morning to those who sign up that will help them to read a short passage of Scripture, reflect on through a brief

commentary from a wide range of contributors, and give them one simple way to respond.

The devotions will launch on Monday 25th April. The organisers hope new of Tides will be shared across the congregations to encourage individuals to sign up.

English Bishop who shaped American Methodism commemorated

Hundreds of people attended a day of special events at the Black County Living Museum, Dudley, on Saturday 9 April to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the death of a local man who helped shape modern America, Bishop Francis Asbury.

A day of costumed choirs, special services and talks were held at the museum, attended by hundreds of Methodists from across the UK in addition to the museum's regular visitors.

Also present were special guests from the United Methodist Church in America, where Asbury is revered as one of those who helped define the nation.



Story teller, Ken Luxon, told stories on the day dressed as Francis Asbury

A humble metal worker from the Black Country who became an itinerant Methodist minister, Asbury answered a request by John Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist Church, for preachers to serve in America.

Asbury's passion and determination meant that Methodism survived the American War of

Independence and become an important part of the founding of the young country.

From fewer than 1,200 members, the Church grew to more than 210,000 thanks to Asbury's efforts.

A variety of celebrations were held in Asbury's honour at the Black Country Museum, including:

- Special services held in the Museum's former Methodist New Connexion Providence Chapel, led by the Revd Steve Wild, President of the Methodist Conference and Dr Jill Barber, Vice-President.
- A flash-mob choir of around 30 singers from two local choirs, all wearing period costumes, singing rousing hymns.
- Guest talks from Methodist minister, the Revd Ward Jones, a member of the Methodist Heritage Committee, and representatives from the United Methodist Church in the USA - Bishop Mary Ann Swenson; the Revd Fred Day, General Secretary of the UMC General Commission on Archives and History, and Mr John Strawbridge, Vice-President and Development Chair of the United Methodist Historical Society.

- Exhibition of portraits and personal memorabilia of Asbury from Methodist Heritage sites in the UK and USA.
- Heritage busses, which took visitors from the museum to nearby Newton, Great Barr, and the small eighteenth-century cottage where Asbury spent his childhood.

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The Revd Fred Day commented: "This has been a wonderful and exciting day for us. Asbury is not as well-known as he should be given how important he is to US history. He travelled around 270,000 miles on horseback, telling people about faith, and was even a friend to George Washington."

Jo Hibbard, the Methodist Church in Britain's Director of Engagement, added: "The day was a great mixture of fun and history, with a lot of us discovering how one man from the Black Country influenced, what went on to become, one of most powerful nations on earth."

News briefs

Wilfred Baker who is the C of I play representative at **ACC 16** commented on its opening, "Tonight the Diocese of Lusaka hosted

a welcome dinner for the ACC. All the clergy and representatives of all the parishes in the diocese were there so it was a large event held in a marquee in the Cathedral grounds.

“It's very obvious that people here are really delighted to have the ACC meeting in their city and country and the welcome for all the visitors is warm and genuine. We were all presented with a small present of a carving made by members of the diocese - each one different. A very nice and generous touch.”

St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, will host a **Service of Commemoration** to mark the events of **Easter 1916** as a contribution to the ongoing historical commemorations on behalf of the Church of Ireland on Sunday April 24 at 3.15 pm.

An Irish participant posted on Facebook -
Stunning golf course at Dun Laoghaire for the Principal's Jug - **annual Church of Ireland v Church of England** standoff. Great to give them a good hammering!

**News links to reports on faith,
politics and education**

30% of Irish children living in deprived circumstances, says UNICEF report

Irish Examiner

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/30-of-irish-children-living-in-deprived-circumstances-says-unicef-report-729568.html>

Irish homeless numbers up by 49% in February

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/homeless-numbers-up-by-49-in-february-1.2609697>

Dublin's heroin problem

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/dublin-s-heroin-problem-1.2608877>

Northern Teaching unions shock at delay in teacher replacement scheme

News Letter

An indefinite delay in implementing a £33 million teacher replacement scheme has left the profession facing a major crisis, the main teaching unions have said.

Just 11 per cent of Ministry of Defence staff in north are Catholics

the Irish News

Asked by The **Irish News** if recruiting Catholic staff is a priority, the MoD replied: ... No distinctions are made on **religious**, ethnic nor sexual grounds.".

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/2016/04/12/news/just-11-per-cent-of-ministry-of-defence-staff-in-north-are-catholics-482583/>

Spectator

Charles Moore writes, "Justin Welby could teach David Cameron a thing or two about PR."

<http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/04/justin-welby-could-teach-david-cameron-a-thing-or-two-about-pr/>

Times

Short diary item about Nicholas Coleridge, managing director of the Condé Nast magazine who was at school with Archbishop Justin (scroll down).

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-times-diary-aitkens-fame-bypassed-jail-7wtsp2xpv>

Mail

Peter Hitchens blogs under the headline, "A further riposte to my critics on the Justin Welby Affair."

<http://hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/2016/04/a-further-riposte-to-my-critics-on-the-justin-welby-affair.html>

Christian Today

Reports that the Church Commissioners have won widespread support for a move to put pressure on energy giant ExxonMobil to disclose the impact of climate change policy on its business. The Commissioners co-filed an AGM shareholder motion with the New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. It asks Exxon to disclose the effect on its business if measures to restrict global warming to two degrees are successful.

Premier

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Reports that church leaders are being given more support to encourage congregations to take up clergy roles within the Church (see News above). It wants to find new role models, increase the number of minority ethnic vocations and encourage more women to take up leadership roles. Catherine Nancekieveill, Head of Discipleship and Vocation for the Ministry Division of the CofE is quoted.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Fresh-push-to-find-new-clergy>

Times/Exp/Mail/BBC

Reports comments made by the Revd Jim Percival who was arrested for the alleged murder of his newborn grandson. He has told friends that he felt vilified after spending 18 months on bail before the case was dropped. In January this year Mr Percival and his daughter, from Lancashire, were told that charges of murder and conspiracy to conceal the birth of a child would not be pursued, but it was not until yesterday that both were told that the investigation was closed and they would not be prosecuted for child neglect.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ive-been-vilified-says-accused-vicar-as-police-close-murder-case-027vpst7x>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/660840/police-hounded-vicar-17-months-suspicion-killing-stillborn-grandson>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3538368/Vicar-accused-rape-murder-child-neglect-says-felt-vilified-charges-against-DROPPED.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-36038732>

Sun

Reports that pensioner Joyce Burton left three cottages to All Saints' church, in Dulverton, Somerset in 2009, hoping they would be rented out cheaply in order to help young locals. The church sold her house in 2012 to renovate the two other Grade II-listed properties, one of which has also now been placed on the market. The paper reports the anger of Mrs Burton's friends and relatives. A spokeswoman for Bath and Wells diocese is quoted explaining the situation and saying the properties had been left to the church to use as it saw fit.
<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/7072091/Thats-not-very-Christian-Church-of-England-puts-home-left-to-it-by-a-pensioner-for-the-use-of-struggling-young-couples-on-the-market-for-nearly-200k.html?redirect=true>

Ind

Reports that the world is going to become more religious, with the number of people who identify as non-religious shrinking as a percentage of the world's population, according to a report published by the Pew Research Centre. Christianity, currently the dominant religion in the western hemisphere, is expected to remain the world's most popular religion. By 2050, if current trends continue, four out of 10 Christians will live in sub-Saharan Africa.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/what-are-the-largest-religious-groups-around-the-world-and-where-are-they-a6982706.html>

Mail

Reports that Baroness Warsi says that British Muslims are more progressive on some social issues than the Conservative party or the Church.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3538896/Muslims-progressive-Tories-says-Baroness-Warsi.html>

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