



*English actor Mark Topping as John Wesley*

## **Drama focus to Athlone Methodists 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

Celebrated English Actor Mark Topping will present “An Evening with John Wesley” at Athlone Methodist Church on Saturday 2May as part of the Church’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

The church was built in 1865 and an exciting programme of events will be staged over the May Holiday Weekend to celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The first event will be “An Evening with John Wesley” which will be held at Athlone Methodist on the evening of 2 May at 7.30pm.

Other events will be a united Sunday Service on 3 May with Birr and Tullamore Methodist congregations. At 7.30 on the Sunday evening Mark Topping will present “An Impossible God” passion play, depicting the death and resurrection of Jesus as experience by those who were there.

Methodism in Athlone began as a result of visits to the town by John Wesley in the middle of the eighteenth century. Athlone Methodist Church was built in 1865 and is situated in the heart of Athlone in Northgate Street. It is close to the town bridge and Church Street, the main thoroughfare and shopping area.

**Become a Facebook Friend of CNI**  
**Click on logo at CNI Home page**

## Choirs tune up for Ireland's biggest gospel music festival

With just a fortnight remaining, the final line-up of participants has been confirmed for the Gospel Rising Music Festival in Ennis, County Clare, which takes place this year from 8th to 10th May 2015.

Choirs from all around Ireland and beyond will perform in venues throughout the Clare County capital, while leading Irish and international choral experts will facilitate workshops in gospel music, performance and singing for choir and non-choir members.

Choirs that will be represented at the Festival include Gardiner Street Gospel Choir (Dublin), Ignite Gospel Choir (Galway), Bray Gospel Choir (Wicklow), Love Gospel Love God Gospel Choir (London), A Capella Knights & Tribal, Sligo Gospel Choir (Sligo) and St John's College Gospel Choir (Cork).

Meanwhile, the line-up for the gala event in glór on Saturday 9th May features The Really Truly Joyful Ennis Gospel Choir, Shannon Gospel Choir (Clare), A Glor Gospel Choir (Dublin), and the Speak Up Sing Out (SUSO) Gospel Choir

(Kildare) and Maynooth University Gospel Choir  
(both Kildare)

This year's Gospel Rising Music Festival is hosted by The Really Truly Joyful Ennis Gospel Choir, and is supported Failte Ireland and the Shannon Region Conference and Sports Bureau.

"This is a fun, energetic and inclusive event which calls on all music lovers who are interested in this growing genre of music in Ireland," explained Lindsay Rountree of the Gospel Rising Music Festival.

"The festival consists of a series of workshops with big and small groups, covering choir harmony singing in gospel styles, different solo singing styles and levels, choreography and big group singing. There are also of course numerous gigs over the whole weekend with many of the gospel choirs that attend the festival keen to get up on stage and show their style of gospel music which makes up this new cosmopolitan genre of music in Ireland," added Mr. Rountree.

This year's workshop facilitators are drawn from all over Ireland and UK and include Bazil Meade (founder and principal of the world-famous London Community Gospel Choir) and Karen

Gibson (one of the UK's most respected gospel tutors).

Irish contributors include Kathleen Turner (singer/songwriter and vocal tutor at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance), Edel Meade (award-winning Dublin-based jazz singer, composer and lyricist), Aisling McKenna (Soloist and member of the Gardiner Street Gospel Choir and Valley Gospel Singers) and Susan Hurley (Dublin based gospel and folk singer).

## **Larne Praise Band Open Mic welcome for young musicians**

The All Saints Praise Band, Craigyhill, is hosting an Open Mic event next Sunday April 26 from 8-10pm at the Linn Road Community Centre, Larne.

This newly-formed group of gifted musicians is inviting any young local musicians to come and listen, or better still, come and perform.

There will be a speaker and refreshments, and entry is free [although donations would be welcomed].

Jane Davison, All Saints Praise Band leader, said: "I'm really excited by this new venture.

There are six bands already booked to appear covering all styles of music from Ed Sheran and George Ezra to Guns N' Roses. If anyone else is interested in performing, please contact me via [Facebook](#).”

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintspraiseband?fref=ts>



***The Rev William Orr who leads the Flute Band Church in Muckamore.***

## **Flute Band Church prepares for mission visit to Paraguay**

Members of the Muckamore Parish based Flute

Band Church are preparing for a mission visit to Paraguay in July.

The musicians, who are all members of the innovative Flute Band Church led by the rector, the Rev William Orr, fly out on July 16 for the trip facilitated by SAMS (the South American Mission Society).



The members have organised a series of fundraising events, which included a Big Breakfast in March and a table quiz on May 15.

Two big events coming up on their fundraising calendar are -

- A Three Ball Scramble golf tournament at Kilkeel Golf Club on Monday May 25 3-5pm. Cost £25 per person + Golf Fee (Estimated £15)
- Go Karting night at Doagh Racing on May 28 from 7-10pm. Full Grand Prix programme. Cost £40 per person.

The team will be commissioned for their visit to Paraguay by Bishop Ken Clarke, mission director of SAMS on Sunday July 5 at 10am.

You can find out more about Flute Band Church on [Facebook](#) at

<https://www.facebook.com/FluteBandChurchStJudes?fref=ts>

See feature -

<http://connor.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Flute-Band-Church-feature.pdf>

## **Justice Minister Addresses Christian Aid 70th Anniversary Service**

‘Everything that Christian Aid does is, in truth, about the search for justice’ - With these apt



words Northern Ireland's Minister of Justice, David Ford, began his sermon at Christian Aid's 70th Anniversary Thanksgiving service in St Anne's on 19 April. As the Minister explained, 'Because fundamentally, the provision of decent standards of life is an issue of justice.'

Around 400 supporters and friends filled St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast along with representatives from all of Ireland's main churches. They were marking seven decades since British and Irish church leaders came together at the end of the Second World War to establish the Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service, in response to the refugee crisis in continental Europe.

As the work of the churches' agency expanded around the world in the years that followed, so it changed its name to Christian Aid.

Mr Ford, a long-time supporter, was the guest speaker. He made the argument that campaigning is as important as giving money in the struggle to end world poverty.

"Of course much of the work of development agencies, including Christian Aid, involves practical work at the grass roots, providing basic services to meet day to day needs," he said.

“It is easier to motivate donors at times of crisis, to provide the basic needs of food, clean water and shelter, than it is to talk about long-term development goals, sustainability and justice.

“As we look at how society is changing in these islands and throughout the world, it seems clear to me that we cannot carry out our Christian duties solely by individual acts, or by individual giving.

“Of course they are important, but we will only bring justice to the world’s poor by a mixture of charitable action, political action and public campaigning.

“There is no justice if people are unfairly imprisoned, but equally there is no justice if they go to bed hungry and thirsty, if they do not have access to education and healthcare, if they have no prospect of real and meaningful employment.”

## **Derry scout leaders recognised**

Scouts and guides, past and present, gathered in St Augustine’s Church on Sunday, for a special service to mark the centenary of the visit

to the city by the Scout Association's founder, Lord Baden-Powell.

The Founder's Day Service was led by the Rector of St Augustine's, the Revd Malcolm Ferry, assisted by a former member of the church's scout troop, Revd Canon John McKegney. They were joined by cubs, beavers, scouts and guides from throughout the city, wearing full uniform. Relatives and friends also took part.

Mr Ferry delivered his sermon from the same pulpit as Lord Baden-Powell used when he visited St Augustine's 100 years earlier. His address had a modern twist, though, as Mr Ferry urged the congregation to turn to the Bible with the same frequency with which they used their mobile phones.

During the service, two local men, Noel Bogle, MBE, and Albert Smallwoods, were honoured for their 60 years' service as scout leaders; Noel's brother, Ernest, received a special presentation to mark his retirement after 30 years as Group Scout Leader of 6th Londonderry (Eglington) troop. His certificate was signed by Lord Baden-Powell's successor as Chief Scout, Bear Grylls.

## **Down and Dromore General Synod members information evening**

General Synod representatives of The Diocese of Down and Dromore have met together ahead of the start of a new three year term.

The diocese sends 90 members to Synod – 30 clergy and 60 laity – and for some this will be the first time that they have been elected. In recognition that the new members may not be familiar with the workings of General Synod, the Archdeacons of Down and Dromore invited all the representatives to an information evening in The Downshire Centre in Hillsborough Parish on Monday 20 April.

As well as an opportunity to meet with others representing the diocese, the meeting outlined the procedures and major items of business at General Synod and how members could best engage with them.

The Archdeacons reinforced the importance of this, the main business meeting of the church, and the responsibility of elected members to fully and prayerfully participate.

## **Moderator of Church of Scotland calls for humanitarian action on migrant crisis**

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has urged the UK Government to take meaningful humanitarian action to help solve the migrant crisis.

The Rt Rev John Chalmers says the Government must give its support to European Council proposals to tackle the unfolding tragedy in the Mediterranean. As well as more effective action to combat the people smugglers, the Moderator wants to see the Government commit to humanitarian assistance including participation in the proposed resettlement initiative to offer sanctuary to refugees in need of protection.

Mr Chalmers says "Like many people I have been devastated by the news of the hundreds of deaths of refugees seeking peace during the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean from Africa into Europe. The decision by EU Governments, including the UK Government, last year to cut back the humanitarian search and rescue mission was roundly criticised at the time.

It saddens me greatly that the unheeded warnings about the consequences of not helping those in desperate need have been proven right."

The Moderator says migrants seeking to reach Europe from Africa and the Middle East are fleeing from man-made disasters including war, desperate poverty and persecution and deserve our help. "These innocents are seeking sanctuary. As human beings, made in God's image, they have equal value as you or I, and so we must do all we can to offer love and practical support."

The Moderator is calling on the UK Government to work with partners in:

- Providing unconditional humanitarian aid to refugees
- Developing a long-term strategy to combat the criminal gangs who are smuggling people
- Actively building peace and safety throughout Africa and the Middle East

He said: "For too long we've wilfully ignored the cries of those in the world who are at the very bottom. It is a tragedy that it takes deaths on such a scale to get us to realise what is going on. May it also give us hope that there is a possibility

that something can be done. I urge the Government to contribute to meaningful action when the European Council meets on Thursday."

The Church of Scotland's St Andrew's Scots Kirk in Valetta in Malta runs a project supporting migrants who reach the island. The Church of Scotland Guild has been supporting the 'Out of Africa...Into Malta' project since September 2012. Over the past two and half years the Guild has raised £107,000 to help fund its work.

\* Church of Scotland <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/home>

## **'Our country is burning' says South African Church leader as migrants are driven out**

Churches have condemned the wave of violence directed at immigrants to South Africa which has shamed the country.

Attacks on immigrants from other African countries have been taking place in Durban and Johannesburg, with the fatal stabbing of Mozambican Emmanuel Sithole captured by a

passing photographer. [James Oatway's pictures](#) led to the arrest of the assailants.



More than 300 people have been arrested for the attacks, which have seen eight people killed and more than 1,000 forced from their homes. The violence is fuelled by the country's poverty and the perception that migrants are taking jobs from South African citizens.

Protests outside a hostel during the anti-immigrant violence in Johannesburg, April 17, 2015.

The Methodist Church has led marches in protest at the tide of xenophobia. The president bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa,



Bishop Zipho Siwa, called for a unanimous rejection of violence.

He said: "We appeal to all people in leadership and influence to refrain from using inflammatory language in a volatile situation. Our country is burning and all hands need to be on deck in putting out the fire."

Siwa added: "Ending xenophobia must take precedence. The violence and bloodshed must stop!"

Churches have opened their doors to serve meals and give shelter to displaced people.

The Archbishop of Cape Town, Most Rev Thabo Makgoba, is to lead a silent vigil today on the steps of the cathedral organised by the Western Cape Religious Leaders' forum. On Friday a "One Million March Against Xenophobic Attacks" will be held in Pretoria at which speakers will include Graça Machel, widow of former president Nelson Mandela.

"Please pray for an end to xenophobia and for tolerance," the archbishop said. "Let us be voices of reason, acknowledging the anxiety and

desperation which leads to attacks on foreigners."

## **‘World is silent over missing bishops,’ says Syrian Christian leader**

A Greek Orthodox patriarch has lamented global indifference towards the fate of two Syrian bishops kidnapped two years ago.

Speaking ahead of the anniversary of the abductions on April 22, 2013, Orthodox Patriarch John X of Antioch, the brother of one of the kidnap victims, said: "We hope that the bishops are alive, but unfortunately the world is silent and nobody has provided physical evidence."

Patriarch John X of Antioch, speaking at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery, near Tripoli in northern Lebanon, called for "the whole community and international organizations to mobilise" to search for the missing bishops.

Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna and Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Boulos Yazii, both of Aleppo, were kidnapped two years ago near to the city.

Patriarch John is the brother of Metropolitan Boulos, or Paul, and said: “We tried to negotiate with those who can help in this matter, but unfortunately there was total silence.”

## **Pope Francis to visit Cuba, Vatican confirms**

The Pope will make a stop in Cuba prior to his visit to the US in September

Pope Francis will visit Cuba in September before his trip to the United States.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told reporters on April 22 that the Pope has “received and accepted the invitation from the civil authorities and bishops of Cuba” and has decided to visit the island before going to the United States.

The Pope is tentatively scheduled to arrive in Washington on September 22 and will visit Washington, New York and Philadelphia from September 23 to 27. However, details such as the dates and itinerary for his trip to Cuba would come at a later time, Fr Lombardi said.

Visiting Cuba and the United States on the same trip abroad signals Pope Francis's continuing interest in encouraging the normalisation of relations between them.

In December, US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced their nations were working toward re-establishing official diplomatic relations.

Both leaders credited Pope Francis with helping to secure the deal.

The Pope had been following and supporting the talks. He had also written personal letters to both leaders, and the Vatican hosted a secret meeting between representatives of the countries last fall.

The US first imposed a trade embargo on Cuba in 1960 in reaction to the repression and human rights abuses that followed the Marxist revolution that put Fidel Castro in power the previous year. President John F Kennedy expanded the embargo, and subsequent presidents maintained it.

In his annual address to diplomats serving at the Vatican, Pope Francis hailed the agreement as

“one example close to my heart of how dialogue can build bridges.”

The Popes continually voiced hopes that the embargo would be lifted and that the strained relations would be healed.

In 1998, not long after he became archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, then-Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio published a booklet focused on the speeches and homilies St John Paul II made during his historic visit to Cuba a few months earlier.

The text made two major points: Dialogue is not only possible, but it is necessary; and, a sincere and honest dialogue would benefit both the US and Cuba.

At the same time, Archbishop Bergoglio repeatedly argued for the full freedom of the Catholic Church in Cuba to preach the Gospel and minister to the poor and denounced ideological systems that offended the transcendent dignity of the human person.

During his 2012 visit to Cuba, Pope Benedict XVI made the same points. Once he returned to

Rome, he said he had gone to show support for Cuban church's mission "to proclaim the Gospel with joy despite the lack of means and difficulties still left to overcome so that religion may carry out its spiritual and educational service in the public realm."

## Media digest

### Belfast Telegraph

#### **Parishioners call on 'entertaining' church minister Alan Kilpatrick to leave**

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/parishioners-call-on-entertaining-church-minister-alan-kilpatrick-to-leave-31161956.html>

#### **Songs by Star Trek enthusiast played in court in bid to clear loyalist flute band members of playing sectarian tune outside Catholic church**

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/songs-by-star-trek-enthusiast-played-in-court-in-bid-to-clear-loyalist-flute-band-members-of-playing-sectarian-tune-outside-catholic-church-31163537.html>

### Ekklesia

#### **Breakaway Anglicans' 'narrow way'**

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/21619>

**Longkesh Inside Out**  
**When Did Protestants Lose Out? Gareth Mulvenna**

<http://www.longkeshinsideout.co.uk/?p=1796>

**Eamonn Mallie**  
**Universities and Freedom of Speech**

<http://eamonnmallie.com/2015/04/universities-and-freedom-of-speech-by-eamonn-mallie/>

**Irish Times**  
**Thinking Anew: God's promise of hope that turned fear into courage**

Archdeacon Gordon Linney writes

[http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/thinking-anew-god-s-promise-of-hope-that-turned-fear-into-courage-1.2179867?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/thinking-anew-god-s-promise-of-hope-that-turned-fear-into-courage-1.2179867?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

**Guardian**  
**View on religious liberty: Christians in the west have nothing to fear**

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/17/guardian-religious-liberty-christians-west-nothing-fear>