

Father Alec Reid inspired by the Gospel of peace

- Bishop Noel Treanor tribute to Father Alec Reid

I join today, together with the family of Father Alec Reid, his friends, church and public representatives, politicians and parishioners as we celebrate his funeral liturgy. With so many, we give thanks to God for a good and dedicated pastor who reached across boundaries as he served people.

Father Alec Reid's priestly service was a



Bishop Noel Treanor

ministry of consolation, mediation and reconciliation – from his early work with the travelling community here in Belfast, through his contribution towards the peace process and in his tireless endeavours in ecumenical engagement. He was an ambassador of God's peace, mercy and loving-kindness. That this son of Tipperary, of great hurling prowess in his youth, chose to be buried here among us speaks eternally of his

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bond with the people of Belfast and the generations he served during his forty years of priestly ministry here.

On behalf of the bishops, priests and parishioners of the Diocese of Down and Connor I offer my condolences to his family and to the Redemptorist community in Clonard. I thank the Redemptorist Congregation for Father Alec's work and priestly ministry among us for over 40 years. That ministry as a priest and Redemptorist was the source of immeasurable blessings for countless individuals in this city and beyond.

Father Alec was a dedicated priest. Inspired by the Gospel of peace, and



Fr Alec Reid

constant in his trust of the Holy Spirit, his was a ministry of immersion in the often tough and complex realities of God's people who, yearning and struggling for a

more just social order, looked to the message of Jesus for courage, comfort and hope. Like so many other priests, religious, lay faithful in this Diocese and beyond, as well as many Christian ministers of other denominations, Fr Alec sought that comfort and hope in practical initiatives and prayerful encounter.

In his Apostolic Exhortation on proclaiming the joy of the Gospel in Today's World, published yesterday, Pope Francis speaks of the 'ongoing process in which every new generation must take part: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.' (EG, n. 220)

As Father Alec knew only too well, the process of building peace after decades of violent conflict requires commitment to the often slow and arduous process of healing, encounter, dialogue and compromise. The wounds of violence and injustice are so visceral and deep that for many even the possibility of healing will inevitably and understandably be gradual and slow, if it is possible at all. Peace-building is a task and a call to Christians particularly, to which Fr Alec would ask us to remain alive and sensitive, allowing our hearts and minds to be touched and transformed by a shared commitment to love of neighbour and to that truth which ultimately sets us free (Jn 8.32).

Thankfully, through the patient efforts of people like Father Alec and all those who have set us on the journey to peace, to which the overwhelming majority of our citizens north and south are committed, we can glimpse the realistic hope of what Pope Francis calls a future of 'reconciled diversity' (EG, n.230). As he explains, this future is not limited to the peace brought about by a 'negotiated settlement, but rather the conviction that the unity brought

about by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity'. In these lines we hear, I suggest, an echo, timely and ever-challenging, of Father Alec's motto or mantra, his compass in the most difficult and uncertain moments of the journey to peace – that motto was: let us trust in the Holy Spirit!

In commending this artisan of peace to the mercy of God, we call on that small minority of people who continue to believe that violence, destruction and fear have any part in human affairs to think again. We call on them, not in the tired and blood-soaked rhetoric of the past but in the hope-filled and positive language of the future, to which the children and young people of

this generation attach their dreams, to stop their dark, futile and backward-looking violent activity now. Such activity has absolutely no basis in the will of the Irish people, and is completely contrary to

the will and call of God.

Let us pray for those who are still locked in the tragic, self-destructive pathology of conflict, as Father Alec would have prayed. In his memory and in the spirit of his life and work, in fidelity to the joy and peace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let us redouble of commitment to bringing about the peace, good will and 'reconciled diversity' to which Father Alec gave himself with such dedication and which is the hope and promise offered by God to humanity in the person of the Risen Christ, our Saviour.

Consecration - husband to read lesson

The Service of Consecration of the Rev Pat Storey as Bishop of Meath and Kildare, will take place at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin on Saturday November 30, the Feast of St Andrew.

The service gets underway at 2.00pm. It will be led by the Archbishop of Dublin, The Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson, and the preacher will be the Rev Nigel Parker (Rector of the Parish of St Comgall, Bangor).

The first Old Testament reading will be given by the Rev Earl Storey (the Bishop-elect's husband); the second reading, the Epistle, by Mrs Dierdre Amor, and the Gospel proclaimed by the Rev Trevor Holmes.

Presentation to Canon

Canon George Irwin will shortly celebrate the 25th anniversary of his appointment as rector of St Mark's Church, Parish of Ballymacash, in succession to Canon TWW Jones.



Having previously been rector of Movilla Parish in Newtownards and having served as a curate in both St Paul's and Seagoe Parishes, Canon Irwin came to Ballymacash on December 2 1988.

Since then he has seen many changes, not least in the fabric of the church which

has just completed a major refurbishment of both the church and parish halls. Two of the original parochial nominators, Mrs Kaye Somerville and Mr Hilary Morrison, paid tribute to Canon Irwin on his service to parishioners over the years and in particular to his pastoral care which has been of the highest order and on Sunday November 24 a presentation was made to Canon Irwin and his wife Deirdre.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin receives the Vincentian Charism Award

Speaking at All Hallows College, Archbishop Martin said, "I am very honoured to receive the All Hallows College *Vincentian Charism Award* this evening, but I have to say immediately that I am wary of awards.

"Church awards rightly wish to identify a person who represents something positive in Church life, but at times they end up putting too much attention on the 'awardee' and not enough attention on the good things that have been achieved.

"On Sunday last, I held a Mass in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Dublin Diocesan Child

Safeguarding and Protection Office. The aim was simply to register and to recall the immense work that has been done in the parishes and in the agencies of the Archdiocese of Dublin over these past ten years in attempting to make the Church the safest possible place for children.

"I know of the anger which was aroused in people, especially parents, by the responses of the past to the horrible abuse of children that took place in the Church of Jesus Christ in Dublin. The fact that so many members of our parish communities committed themselves to tackle a scandal, for which they bore no responsibility, is a true sign of their genuine love of the Church. It is the work of these men and women which has rendered the Church a safer place for children and has helped to restore a climate of confidence which will enable the work of evangelisation to flourish."



The Archbishop continued, "The past ten years have seen a real change of culture regarding the safeguarding of children in the Church in Dublin. But Dublin is not an isolated diocese. That cultural change is repeated right across the country in the work of Diocesan Child Safeguarding Offices and in the vital work of the National Board for Safeguarding Children

"The Church in Ireland can rightly be proud of what has been achieved in these ten years. But the work is not over. The sexual abuse of children continues in our society. Sexual predators will seek out our weak points and break through the weaknesses of our systems. We cannot afford to let our guard down.

"If there is one area where I know we need to do more, it is that of reaching out to survivors, beyond the great work of *Towards Healing*, to create an open door

and a safe space for those survivors who have still fear telling their story and who still live alone with their anguish.

"Children are the first beneficiaries of all this effort as they now have a greater opportunity to enjoy their childhood in a society where there is so much societal and commercial pressure to turn children all too prematurely into small adults.

"I enjoyed a happy childhood and that was one of the greatest gifts that I have ever received. If I have done anything in this area it is thanks to those survivors who shared with me their stories and their hurt, their frustration and their anger and thus allowed me to have some small insight into what they have endured and what they still endure. I enjoyed a happy childhood; they were robbed of their childhood."

Belfast parish link to Philippines

A Belfast parish is collecting donations for an orphanage in the Philippines which is opening its doors to children in need following the devastating Typhoon Haiyan on November 7.

St Stephen and St Luke's C of I parish has been supporting the charity Global Reconciliation Project, which runs two orphanages on Mindanao Island, for the past 14 years.

Parishioner George McGrand is the charity's programme co-ordinator, and he is appealing for other parishes in the Diocese of Connor and the greater Belfast area to support this appeal.

George has lived in the Philippines and visits every year. He said: "Before the economic downturn we ran outreach projects in the community, mainly in agriculture, but we have reduced those programmes and are focusing on the two orphanages, the House of Joy which is for older children and Angel House which is



for

babies and younger children.

“Our island was not affected by the typhoon, but because of the situation in other parts of the Philippines, both

One-year-old baby J who has arrived at the Angel House Orphanage since the typhoon. The orphanage Facebook page reports that he is still adjusting to his new environment and cries every day.

“Our island was not affected by the typhoon, but because of the situation in other parts of the Philippines, both orphanages have opened their doors to take in children from the Island of Leyte which is in the midst of the disaster zone. Things are still very confused but we understand the children should be arriving in the next week.”

Items required include clothing, blankets, bed linen, shoes, and especially summer clothes for children and babies. The orphanages also need powdered baby food, nappies, children’s toothbrushes, toothpaste and bars of soap. The charity does not require liquids, liquid soaps or toys.

“Cash donations are very gladly received and there are no administrations costs, so all money will be forwarded to the orphanages and will be with them within 24–48 hours,” George said.

“If any donated items are unsuitable for tropical climates such as winter clothing these will be sold for recycling within Northern Ireland to help cover the shipment costs, so anything that is of little or no value to you can be made into great value for the children in the Philippines.”

George is willing to collect bulk donations from parishes around the diocese, please contact him on **07850 695479**. He is also happy to attend churches, clubs and organisations to give a presentation on the work of the charity.

To see more of the work carried out by the orphanages supported by parishioners at St Stephen and St Luke, visit the Facebook page of the Angel House Orphanage, Philippines.

A Festive Forest In The Inner City

Willowfield Parish Church in East Belfast will be celebrating the festive season creatively through its Christmas Tree Festival next week.

The festival will start with a Big Switch On – on Tuesday, 3rd December at 7.30 pm – in the company of the Ulster Youth Orchestra.

The Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Reverend Richard Clarke, will be among our guests at the opening.

It will then be open from 10.00 am to 10.00 pm from Wednesday to Saturday.

The building will be filled with an indoor ‘forest’ of 60 trees, decorated in two different ways.

More than twenty artificial trees will focus on common Christmas traditions such as

advent calendars, snowmen and Santa.

Forty natural trees will then show scenes and characters from the Christmas story, as well as other illustrated Bible verses and themes of Christmas carols.

Visitors can enjoy tea, coffee and traybakes and a range of crafts, jams and chutneys will also be on sale in our market.

All donations raised from the festival will go towards the redevelopment of the church hall, which is extensively used for youth, community and children's work.

Originally built in the 1950s, the hall requires a major renovation to meet the future needs of the community.

This project is likely to cost £1 million and £250,000 has been raised to date.

With new facilities, the church hall would offer a sports space, good quality meeting rooms and kitchens where healthy eating can be promoted.

Willowfield sees the gospel as the catalyst for improvement in the community.

The rector Archdeacon David McClay said: "The church's task is to see lives transformed and when the church is doing what the church is supposed to do, then society gets changed as a result. We want to see the DNA of East Belfast transformed through the power of the gospel as we live it, declare it, preach it and demonstrate it".



Belfast mayor signs up for CS Lewis

The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, this week signed the C.S. Lewis 'Chapter One' book which is on display at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. Belfast Cathedral is marking the 50th anniversary of the death of C.S. Lewis by providing a special book allowing members of the public to inscribe their reflections on the impact of Lewis' work on them.

C.S. Lewis has family links with St Anne's Cathedral as his uncle Sir William Ewart and several of the Ewart family are commemorated in the Cathedral, as well as family members serving on the cathedral board.

Lewis saw death as beginning "Chapter One of that great story". The project is about celebrating his enduring legacy and people are invited to contribute a line or an essay, a comment or a quotation, which captures for them how Lewis' legacy has enriched their lives and fed their imagination.'

The book has been crafted to resemble a leather bound book referred to in the Lion,

the Witch and the Wardrobe. ('...a whole series of rooms that led into each other and were lined with books – most of them very old books and some bigger than a Bible in a church').

All ages are welcome to come and write in the book 'because all ages read Lewis'. The book will now be available to sign for a year and people are encouraged to read a C.S. Lewis work during the year and write their responses.

Bishop warns of further decline in religious freedom

The Bishop of Wakefield, Right Reverend Stephen Platten, has called upon UK government ministers to tackle the decline in religious freedom worldwide.

Speaking in a debate in the House of Lords tabled by Lord Alton of Liverpool, he asked the Government to consider the appointment of a special ambassador for religious freedom.

"Over the past decade every region in the world has seen marked declines with regard to religious freedom," he said.

"Christians in Egypt and Syria, Baha'is in Iran, Shi'ite Muslims in Indonesia, and Sunni Muslims in Thailand and Burma face serious threats to their viability and even survival.

"If freedom of religion and belief is a primary barometer of the social health of a nation, the palpable decline in recent years in respect of this most fundamental right suggests a worrying state of affairs regarding the health of the global common good."

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The bishop criticised the Government for making religious freedom "too low a priority", asserting that it "is not about protecting the rights of one religious community over another but about providing for the human flourishing of all, irrespective of whether they have a religious belief".

However, he praised Baroness Warsi, the Minister for Faith and Communities, for her devotion to the issue. The Baroness spoke at Georgetown University in Washington earlier this month, where she warned that Christians and other religious minorities are experiencing a "global crisis" amid a rise in attacks against them.

She stated that in some parts of the world, Christians are facing "discrimination, ostracism, torture, even murder, simply for the faith they follow".

Bishop Platten called Baroness Warsi's speech "the latest example of the forthright engagement that we have come to expect from her".

He spoke of the importance of committing to "the

underlying value of freedom of religion or belief", and said that these values need to be supported by "proactive policies".

He admitted that a great deal of work is already being done to secure religious freedom, but argued that the focus needs to be shifted onto ensuring peace and security for individuals.

This, he said, could be helped by the appointment of an ambassador for religious freedom, who would help to "enhance the voice of the UK as the champion of an inclusive approach".

He concluded with the warning that "unless we are prepared to give this issue the urgent attention it requires, we cannot

be surprised if respect for religious freedom continues to decline markedly".

"The existing strategy across our world is not working, and it is time to think again," he said.

Presbyterians mark beginning of Advent with Christmas Tree Festivals

With Advent beginning next Sunday, 1st December, two Presbyterian congregations are marking the beginning of the festive season with Christmas Tree Festivals.

These are displays of Christmas trees decorated to tell the story of the nativity and will take place in First Dunboe Presbyterian Church near Coleraine and Eglinton Church in north Belfast next weekend.

Plans are well underway in First Dunboe, situated in the north coast village of Articlave, where local schools, congregational groups, businesses, community groups and individuals have used their artistic skills to create an extraordinary range of trees which will interpret the festival's theme "Born to be King".

Against the backdrop of a beautiful church building those visiting will be treated to a display of light and colour along with many of the traditional symbols of Christmas.

Minister of First Dunboe, the Rev. Jim McCaughan says, "We invite everyone to come and join with us to celebrate the Good News event that happened over 2,000 years ago with the birth of a baby who was born to be King. The festival offers an opportunity to step back from the busyness of the Christmas season and reflect on the true meaning of that first Christmas night."

The festival begins on Thursday, 28th November at 7.00 pm and runs for three days, on Friday, 29th November from 10.00 am to 10.00 pm and on Saturday, 30th November from 10.00 am to 10.00 pm. On Sunday, 1st December the festival will be open from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm with a closing celebration at 7.00pm. Throughout the weekend visitors will be able to enjoy light refreshments in the Mark Memorial Hall, opposite the church.

Admission to the festival is free but donations are welcome and will be divided equally among the Causeway Hospital Patients' Comfort Fund, the Bible Society of Northern Ireland, and First Dunboe Presbyterian Church.

In Eglinton Presbyterian Church on Belfast's Ballysillan Road the theme is '75 Christmas trees to tell one story' with the added significance that Eglinton is currently celebrating 75 years of ministry.

Christmas trees made of books, brides' shoes and decorated with baby items aren't common place in the usual nativity story, but these trees, and 72 others, will tell the Christmas story in the festival which runs from 28th November to 1st December.

Carol singers and choirs, along with mince pies will add to the festivities each day from 4.00pm until 10.00pm and is free of charge with an opportunity for those who wish to donate to the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice and the church's refurbishment fund.

Rev. Colin Morrison, Eglinton Presbyterian Church's Minister said, "The Christmas story is one of the most special in the Bible. With all today's worries, pressures and children's Santa orders, it is very easy to forget the real meaning of Christmas. Through the Christmas tree festival, our aim is to provide the local community with the opportunity to relax, learn more about

the Christmas story or simply enjoy viewing the 75 uniquely decorated trees.

Cadenza Musical Director, Michael McCracken.

Choir CD benefits cancer support

The success of a choral CD, involving singers from a number of Church of Ireland parishes, will be marked by a donation to a cancer charity at their annual Christmas concert, to be held in Bangor next week.

Cadenza is one of Northern Ireland's most popular chamber ensembles. Their recording of *Nearer, my God, to thee*, a CD of 22 popular hymns, is dedicated to colleague Jean Christie, who died in May last year.

And on Saturday, 7 December, the choir will donate a further cheque for £500 to Macmillan Cancer Support, who did so much to help Jean in the last year of her life.

The gift will take place during Cadenza's Christmas Festival of Carols and Readings in Bangor Abbey. The concert begins at 8.00 pm, and tickets (available at the door) are £10.

Cadenza spokesman Derek Gallop said: "It is extremely gratifying, of course, that the CD has proved so popular and continues to be in demand. As singers, we cherish and love having a CD of our work.

"But, more importantly, it is proving a fitting tribute to Jean, who was such a popular and vibrant member of this choir and her church in Banbridge, and we are delighted to be able to support Macmillan in this way.

"Their nurses and carers were such a comfort to Jean when she needed it most."

The cheque will be presented to Macmillan representative Margaret Young by

Trinity orchestra at Christ Church

Trinity Orchestra will present its annual Michaelmas Term Concert in association with Trinity Fringe Festival, December 3rd at 8pm in Christ Church Cathedral.

Under the baton of conductor Eoghan Cooke and featuring soloist Mairead Lochrie, the orchestra will perform its first major classical concert of the year.

As part of this year's programme our ensemble will include the incredible Christ Church organ, presenting a unique opportunity to hear the orchestra accompanied by the organ in one of the most ambient settings in the city.

Performing an exhilarating repertoire including Schubert's Rosamunde Overture, Chopin's Piano Concerto No.2 and the infamous Saint-Saëns 'Organ Symphony', this promises to be a wonderful evening for all in attendance.

Conductor: Eoghan Cooke
Soloist: Mairéad Lochrie

Doors 7.30pm, performance begins 8pm

Tickets will be available at 10 a.m. at the Trinity Orchestra stand in the Arts Block, from November 27th.

Adults €10 / Students €5 / Society members €3