



**Limerick bishop says
church of the future
must be inclusive**

Portadown Inter Church Christingle Event

Following on from the recent success of the 'All Things Family' Information and Fun Day (October 4th 2014), the Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP) in partnership with Churches across the

Portadown area, is organising a Christmas 'Christingle' event for families – 'Putting Christ back into Xmas!' The event is on Sunday 14th December from 3pm to 4.30pm in Portadown Town Hall and everyone is welcome to come along.



ICPP is a project supported by the European Union's PEACE III programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and exists to encourage churches to work together to build a peaceful and stable society in their localities. It is an initiative of the Church of Ireland, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches and the Irish Council of Churches.

The Christingle event is an opportunity for everyone to come together to celebrate Christmas and to have some family fun with carols, Christingles, crafts and some festive fayre!

Speaking on behalf of the churches involved in organising the event, Yvonne Breen from ICPP said, 'We were delighted with the response we received to the Family Day event in October and this Christingle event is being organised as a follow up to this. What we want to do is enable people from across the denominations in the town to come together to celebrate Christmas and to thank God for all his blessings to us as a community. The event is fully free of charge, it will be very relaxed and everyone will be made very welcome on the day.'

For more information on the event 'Putting Christ back into Xmas!' please contact the ICPP Good Relations Officer (Craigavon), Yvonne Breen on 07841 776869 or by email yvonne@icpp.info

'Call His name Jesus' - A Fivemiletown Festival of Flowers and Music

'Call His name Jesus' is a weekend long festival of music and flowers over this coming weekend celebrating the birth of Christ. The Flower Festival theme is based on the words spoken to Joseph by the angel, telling him that this child would bring salvation. The displays will represent the people who visited this new arrival, and the places where the events took place. The combination of flowers, music and scripture will allow visitors to reflect on the events of Bethlehem, and their influence on us today.

Special highlights of the weekend will be an Evening Of Music with local children and young people at 7.00pm on Friday 12th December, and a Carol Service and Nativity Play at 7.00pm on Sunday 14th December. Both will be held in St John's Church, Fivemiletown. Mrs Thelma Atwell is the flower display organiser. The Rector, Revd Kyle Hanlon and a team of church members are organising the weekend which promises to be a simple time for reflection in contrast to a busy Christmas season. Fivemiletown Church Of Ireland are hosting the events and are looking forward to welcoming friends and visitors to St John's Church from Friday 12th - Sunday 14th December.

Limerick bishop says church of the future must be inclusive

The church of tomorrow must be inclusive and regenerated by us all, Limerick Bishop [Brendan Leahy](#) said as the first synod in Ireland in 50 years was launched.

In his homily at the midday Mass at St. John's Cathedral, the Bishop of Limerick said there is now an opportunity to rebuild the Church and urged that it not be missed.

"It's undeniable that our Church has been rocked. It has stumbled badly but it has not fallen. Yet, while the Church reeled, faith remained precious. The Church is in need of repair. It's what the Lord told St. Francis in his time and tells us again now in our time.

“All of us together, clergy and lay, are being offered this opportunity to regenerate and build up the Church of the future in our diocese. Let’s not miss this appointment with history,” he added.

Ireland’s first diocesan synod in half a century will take place in the spring of 2016.

The synod will be a three day-meeting of 350 delegates that will set out a blueprint for the Diocese to meet the many challenges it faces going forward.

Between now and the synod itself, delegates will engage in a process of reflection and sharing, catechesis and prayer, out of which they will identify the issues that will be discussed at the synod.

Delegates, who are already selected, are drawn from clergy and laity, representing younger and older generations and all socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities.

In his homily to a packed Cathedral, Bishop Leahy said that the synod will be a time when we clearly commit ourselves again to do our part to come closer together at all levels of Church and indeed in society.

Bishop Leahy said that the synod would be the moment to draw up new plans for the Diocese so that it is ready for “what I believe can be a new dawn breaking for the Church, a dawn we will all greet together.”

Addressing delegates, he said, “There will be many paths to be made straight – paths of wounded hearts; paths of confused minds; paths of disappointed spirits, paths of rejected outreach. Through listening with your hearts full of mercy and patience, you can transform crooked pathways into opportunities to show something new is happening; Jesus is coming in a new way to heal wounds, bring light and clarity, sow seeds of hope and mercy.”

Prince Charles condemns Islamic State violence as "blasphemy"

The Prince of Wales has told Iraqi Christians that they “are quite literally following in the footsteps of the Holy Family” at a Mass organised by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

At the Mass in the Holy Family Church in Acton, west London, in which the Lord’s Prayer was said in Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, the prince spoke about his closeness to the persecuted Christians saying: “As Christmas approaches my

heart goes out to all Christians who are being persecuted on account of their faith.

“Throughout my life I have appealed for greater understanding between people of faith, for greater tolerance and for harmony between the great religions of the world.



“For me, it is utterly inconceivable that a person of one faith could find it in themselves to persecute a person of another faith. Surely to do so brings nothing but dishonour on the faith of the persecutor?”

Prince Charles met members of Iraqi Chaldean Christianity community, some of them with first-hand experience of persecution in their homeland. The Chaldean choir sang to the prince, and talks were given by Fr Nadheer Dako, parish priest of the Chaldean Catholic mission in London, and Archbishop Habib Bacha of Basra, who read a letter from Patriarch Louis Sako, calling for a safe haven for minorities in northern Iraq. John Pontifex, ACN’s head of press, also spoke about his recent experience in Iraq.



The prince said: “Like so many of you, I have been deeply distressed by the horrific scenes of violence and persecution coming out of your beloved Iraq. It seems to me that all faiths to some extent shine a light on the divine image in every human life. If that is so, then surely to destroy another human being is to desecrate the image of the Divine, and to do so in the name of faith is nothing less than a blasphemy.”

He continued: “As we see these truly dreadful images

of executions and beheadings transmitted around the world via the internet, I cannot help but feel that we are in serious danger in this so-called modern age of descending into the dark ages of public executions.

“At this most agonising of times we have to struggle not to forget that Our Lord called upon us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute. But by being with you this Christmas time I wanted to assure you of my constant thoughts and sympathy. As you know, the story of the Nativity ends with the Holy Family fleeing for refuge from persecution. You and your families are quite literally following in the footsteps of the Holy Family.”

Christian Aid is training hundreds of local volunteers to offer psychosocial care to Ebola hit communities



Christian Aid is training hundreds of local volunteers in Sierra Leone to offer much-needed psychosocial support to individuals and families affected by the Ebola outbreak.

Funded by UK aid from the UK Government, Christian Aid's ENCISS programme has trained 310 people across six districts to provide critical psychosocial counselling for those affected by virus, which has so far killed over 1,500 people and infected an estimated 7,700 in Sierra Leone alone.

The local volunteers will give face-to-face support to Ebola survivors and their families, bereaved individuals, and relatives of suspected or confirmed Ebola patients, helping to tackle the growing levels of stigma surrounding the disease. Saio Momoh Kintor, Christian Aid's ENCISS National Programme Manager, based in Freetown, said: "There is a desperate need for psychosocial support and training in Sierra Leone. Stigmatisation has become a serious problem, pushing Ebola survivors and families out of their communities and adding to their pain.

"We need to encourage the acceptance of medically cleared survivors and help communities understand the facts about Ebola transmission. It is important that communities and survivors stand in unity to successfully combat Ebola in Sierra Leone."

The training has been coordinated by ENCISS partners, who have also trained 370 volunteer 'contract tracers' across seven districts. These volunteers are helping to identify individuals who have come into contact with Ebola patients, ensuring symptoms are reported to district health teams so they receive appropriate care.

Lahai Galiwa, Team Leader of ENCISS partner Movement for Resettlement and Rural Development (MORRD) based in Kenema – one of the original Ebola hotspots – said: "Although government and other partners are providing support, it's not reaching rural areas, especially contact tracing and training. The more contact tracers we have, the better our Ebola response will be."

The psychosocial and contract tracing training has been given to community volunteers as well as representatives of local councils, the police force and civil society groups in areas such Bombali, Bo, Kenema and the Western Area (which includes Freetown). Some of the training has been delivered in partnership with Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health and Sanitation.

Speaking at a training session in Freetown, Alfred Dumbuya, Director of ENCISS partner Sierra Leone Social Aid Volunteers, said: "The ongoing Ebola crisis has demanded an extraordinary relief effort by the Government of Sierra Leone, international agencies, local communities and civil society organisations.

"The training by the Ministry of Health and ENCISS is teaching individuals important skills necessary for securing a rapid victory against Ebola, and will help allow our communities a swift to return to normality."

Christian Aid's ENCISS programme has also been working through its civil society partners to deliver radio broadcasts on local stations, featuring a variety of content that can reach quarantined households. These include counselling-based radio programmes, discussion shows designed to promote Ebola prevention measures, and broadcasts that can educate listeners on the regional regulations currently in place as part of public health measures.

As part of its vision to improve governance in Sierra Leone, ENCISS is working through its partners to hold 'accountability platform' radio shows with local

councillors and other government representatives, in a bid to promote transparency around the use of Ebola funds.

Figures released by the World Health Organisation this week indicate that Sierra Leone has now overtaken Liberia as the country with the highest number of Ebola cases.

To find out more about Christian Aid's Ebola crisis response, visit www.christianaid.org.uk/ebolacrisis.