



***The Rector of Lisburn Cathedral, the Very Rev Sam Wright (Dean of Connor), pictured thanking Julie Harper (Musical Director of Lisburn Community Choir) for providing a great evening of Christmas Praise. See News briefs below.***

## **Presbyterian Moderator calls for support for Yemen Crisis Appeals**

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, yesterday called on Presbyterians and congregations to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Yemen, through PCI's relief and development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund.

Dr. Sellar said, "The devastating war in Yemen has been waged for the past 21 months and has resulted in over 18 million people, which is over three quarters of the Yemeni population, being left without access to safe water, food, healthcare or sanitation. I understand that over 7 million people do not know where their next meal will come from.

"It is distressing to hear of so many people in such desperate need of food, clean water and medical assistance in Yemen. Please pray for the people of Yemen and if you can, please help those who are clinging to life by a thread."

Located at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen was already one of the Arab world's poorest countries. Since July flooding and landslides have added to the nation's problems and caused many people to lose their homes.

Over 7,000 people have been killed and 35,000 injured since the conflict broke out in March 2015 between forces supporting the internationally recognised government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement. The majority have been civilians, killed by air strikes by a Saudi-led multinational coalition that backs the president.

The Moderator's call follows the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal on Yemen. The DEC brings together 13 leading charities in times of crisis including Christian Aid and Tearfund.

Dr. Sellar concluded by saying, "I am aware there are already many existing appeals for support of numerous good causes, but in the face of the current crisis largely ignored by the world's media, please do not close your hearts to this massive need in Yemen.

"May I encourage members of our congregations to pray earnestly for the people of Yemen who are experiencing such unimaginable hardship and distress. Please give generously, if you can, through PCI's relief and development partners' appeals. Both charities are working through local

organisations on the ground to bring food and aid to the people of Yemen.”

### **Christian Aid Yemen Crisis Appeal**

<http://www.christianaid.ie/emergencies/current/yemen-crisis-2016/index.aspx>

### **Tear Fund Yemen Crisis Appeal**

<http://www.tearfund.org/en/latest/yemen/>

## **Irish Sister and Pioneering advocate for children with special needs in Sierra Leone honoured by President Higgins**

An Irish Sister of St Joseph of Cluny who has pioneered care of children with special needs in Sierra Leone was presented with a Presidential Distinguished Service Award by President Michael D. Higgins last week.

Sr Mary Sweeney SJC hails from Dungloe and flew into Ireland to receive the honour at Áras an Uachtaráin.

Speaking afterwards Sr Mary said the award recognised the many people who have supported



***President Michael D. Higgins presenting Sr Mary Sweeney with her Presidential Distinguished Service award in the Peace, Reconciliation category at Áras an Uachtaráin.***

her missionary work in Sierra Leone over the past 44 years.

“Especially the people of Sierra Leone whose dedication greatly helps hearing impaired children. These people have helped me in every way through their financial and spiritual support. They have given me encouragement to continue

my faith-inspired work through many trials, including the civil war and Ebola, to support those on the margins of society.”

The Irish missionary has worked tirelessly for over forty years, often with limited support, in the extremely challenging environment of Sierra Leone.

By establishing St Joseph’s School for the Hearing Impaired in Makeni, she has given education, skills training and life opportunities to the most vulnerable of people – children with a disability in a developing country.

She remained in Makeni to keep the school open during the brutal civil war in the 1990s, and more recently she played a significant role in coordinating much-needed support for the Ebola response in Makeni.

Sr Sweeney has in recent years widened her focus and her energies on promoting the development of a curriculum for the training of teachers for special needs education in Sierra Leone.

Matt Moran, former chairperson of Mísean Cara and author of the recently published *The Legacy*

*of Irish Missionaries Lives On*, described Sr Sweeney's work as "typical of the pioneering development that missionaries have undertaken in the global south".

"Children with special needs there were treated very much as second-class citizens and indeed often abandoned by parents who couldn't care for them. Services to deal with their needs were non-existent."

He explained that the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny were pioneers in providing a special school for the hearing impaired in Makeni.

St Joseph's School for the Hearing Impaired in Makeni was set up by Sr Mary and the Cluny Sisters in 1979 in response to the great need for suitable provision for children with disabilities in northern Sierra Leone.

The school supports over 200 hearing impaired children, and has dormitory accommodation for those from long distances away.

It provides education, skills training and opportunities to children with a disability who have been excluded from education, and often from society as a whole.

Over the years the school has worked to dispel the deep-seated belief that children with disabilities are incapable of being educated.

The school costs over €100,000 a year to run and Sr Mary has opened new revenue streams including a guest house, a farm and a carpentry and tailoring business where some of the school graduates work and learn, providing essential employment and livelihood training.

## **Early Christmas present for Belfast church as £10,000 roof grant secures future**

A well-known Belfast place of worship has been awarded a £10,000 grant from the UK's church repair and support charity.

The money will be used to reroof May Street Presbyterian Church.

If the work is not carried out soon, the building could become unusable for the congregation within two years.

The project will allow the continued use of the building for worship and other activities.





***May Street Presbyterian Church dates from 1829 and is one of the few Georgian buildings in the heart of Belfast still being used for its original purpose.***

A total of 36 churches and chapels around the UK will benefit from the latest grants from the National Churches Trust. In total the churches have been awarded £596,000.

May Street will also receive a £2,000 National Churches Trust micro-grant towards a social action project to help local people.

It was built in 1829 for the famous minister the Rev Henry Cooke.

It is a classical Georgian building with the galleried church set over a basement, and is now Grade A Listed.

A Binns organ was installed in 1914 and is still in regular use.

The church is situated in the Linen Conservation Area of Belfast, which was designated in 1992.

But in recent times it has fallen into a state of disrepair.

The felt parapet wall gutters and valleys, which were installed in the 1960s, have failed.

The church plans to scaffold the roof, remove the slated perimeter together with the felt valleys and parapet gutters, and replace this part of the roof with natural slate pitched roofing, lead valleys and lead parapet gutters.

The work is urgently required to keep water out and avoid terminal decay of roof timbers, internal plasterwork and the organ.

Once the main roof is secure there are future plans to reopen the church's basement cafe, to reroof the lecture hall with a flat roof for a creche and fitness training for the adjoining proposed office development, and to use the building for conferences.

Broadcaster Huw Edwards, who is vice-president of the National Churches Trust, welcomed yesterday's funding announcement. "I'm delighted that this Christmas the future of May Street Presbyterian Church, which does so much to help the local community, is being safeguarded by a National Churches Trust grant to fund new facilities," he said.

"This funding will help ensure that this important place of worship, situated in the Linen Conservation Area of Belfast, continues to serve local people for many years to come.

"Churches and chapels are some of the UK's best-loved buildings. But their future is not guaranteed."

Mr Edwards added: "This Christmas, when people visit a church or chapel for a carol service or even just walk past a church on the way to do the Christmas shopping, I urge them to think

about how they can help ensure that churches can remain open and in good repair.

"Everyone can make a contribution to the future of the UK's church and chapel buildings. That could be by helping to clear drains and gutters to help keep churches watertight or by keeping an eye out for vandals or thieves.

"Churches and chapels may be historic buildings, but they can be part of our future too." - Belfast Telegraph

## **Dublin's Black Santa Sit Out at St Ann's Church begins tomorrow**

The 2016 Black Santa Sit Out at St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin, will be launched this Friday, December 16 at 2.00 pm by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Brendan Carr. They will be joined by the Choir of Kildare Place National School.

The annual sit out will continue right up until Christmas Eve. Canon Gillespie, joined by clerical colleagues from around the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough and teams of volunteers, will remain outside the city centre

church from 10.00 am until 6.00 pm each day collecting money for a number of charities.

This year they will be joined by a huge number of choirs who will sing festive songs and carols each lunchtime. These include Castleknock National School, St James Primary School, Francis Street CBS, St Stephens Church Choir, Catholic University School, Taney Parish Junior School, Alexandra College, Kildare Place National School, Cornucopia Brass Group, Irish Life Choir, Revenue Choir, AIB Choral Society, Permanent TSB Staff Choir, John Scottus School, Loretto College, Seafield Singers, Dublin Male Voice Choir, the Line Up Choir, Steadfast Band and the Brook Singers

The Black Santa sit out is modelled on a similar appeal, which has been run by successive Deans of St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast for forty years. It became known as the Black Santa appeal because of the long heavy black cloaks worn by the clergy to keep out the cold. This is the 16th year that the appeal has been held in Dublin and in that time well over €500,000 has been raised for local good causes.

Among the charities to benefit from the appeal are Trust, The Salvation Army, The Simon

Community and the Peter McVerry Trust all of which work with the homeless. Other charities supported include Protestant Aid, Barnardos, St Vincent De Paul, the Laura Lynn Foundation and Solas Project.

The funds will be distributed at a special service in St Ann's on Sunday 12th of February at which the preacher will be the Dean of Belfast, the Very Revd John Mann.

## **Pope to celebrate birthday with Mass and meetings**

Pope Francis will mark his 80th birthday on Saturday with a morning Mass with his cardinals and an otherwise "normal" day of back-to-back meetings and audiences.

The Mass will take place in the Paoline Chapel of the Apostolic Palace, where Francis spent his first minutes in prayer after being elected in 2013.

The Pope then has a series of audiences, including with the president of Malta and the head of the Vatican's office for bishops, among others.

## **C of I library's Archive of the Month focus on Conservation Fund**

At the start of 2017 in the RCB Library in Dublin – which serves both as the Church of Ireland's repository of records and its theological reference library – there is focus on the Conservation Fund for its records.

January's Archive of the Month (which is compiled by the Assistant Librarian Bryan Whelan) will tell of the story of one particular conservation project recently completed for the Library by the specialist craftsman Declan Browne of Liturgical Book Restorers. Declan is a well-known public face as he regularly appears in the television broadcast of the Angelus from his studio in Athlone, see:

[www.rte.ie/player/ie/show/the-angelus-30003636/10481455](http://www.rte.ie/player/ie/show/the-angelus-30003636/10481455)

The Library, which serves the whole Church, relies on the Church's central funding of the Church together with donations from individual dioceses and other supporters to resource its needs. Much of this funding is

used to buy new books and other vital materials to facilitate and support the needs of students in ministerial training at the adjacent Theological Institute.

This leaves relatively little surplus available to devote to the highly-specialized, time-consuming and expensive process of conservation. Yet the Library is responsible for keeping safe and making available to an ever-increasing and inquisitive public a wide variety of unique and distinctive collections: thousands of parish records, including registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials; diocesan and cathedral archives; the manuscripts of individuals and organizations associated with the Church of Ireland; architectural drawings, and rare books. Such items comprise multiple media including vellum, paper, leather, glue, or cloth and are vulnerable to changes in the environment, particularly light, temperature, and humidity. Before materials have been transferred from the local custodies where they were created to the permanent safe-keeping of the Library,



they have, almost inevitably, suffered some wear and tear.

It can be easy to forget the work that goes on in the background of small record repositories such as the RCB Library to ensure that the manuscripts and records that are held for the Church of Ireland community and the wider world will still exist in generations to come. As a small record repository, specialist expertise is sometimes required to stabilize and conserve damaged records.

Illustrated with photographs, the online presentation takes viewers through the process of repairing and conserving one particular volume – a vestry minute book covering the period 1710 to 1806 – showing the painstaking steps undertaken by a specialist team to bring such a unique record back to its former glory.

Conservation of the featured item in the Archive of the Month presentation cost the Library €1,600.

With public support, the Library will be able to undertake other projects and thus ensure future public access to these materials, and donations are invited via a secure online payment link here: <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/donations/donate?appeal=general&subappeal=RCB+Library+Conservation+Fund>

## **‘Rebel Prods’ available from C of I online bookshop**

The new book by the late Dr Valerie Jones entitled *Rebel Prods: The Forgotten Story of Protestant Radical Nationalists and the 1916 Rising*, is now available for sale through the Church Ireland online bookstore, priced €25 (at the link below). Any profit from the author royalties of the book (which was launched last month by the Rt Revd Walton Empey, at the Treasury in the crypt of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin) are being donated to the Irish Cancer Society.

The book which includes photographs is published by Ashfield Press Limited, and is the first overall study of the role of Protestant radical

# REBEL PRODS

The Forgotten Story of  
Protestant Radical Nationalists  
and the 1916 Rising



VALERIE JONES

nationalists in planning, and participating in, the Easter rebellion and reveals that a far larger number were involved than previously known. Rejecting the unionism of their communities, Protestant nationalists were radicalised in similar ways to their Catholic counterparts before 1916, through kinship and friendship networks and the Gaelic League, and held important roles in the

IRB, the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan. The revolutionary generation of 1916 spanned the deep religious divisions in the Ireland of the time – while still a predominantly Catholic uprising, the 1916 rebellion was more religiously diverse than its later historical image suggests. Based upon a range of detailed sources, this study reveals the significant collective contribution of Irish radical Protestants to the Rising and their fate in the new Irish Free State.

A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, Dr Valerie Jones (1943–2014) was a lecturer at the Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, and Diocesan Communications Officer for the Church of Ireland Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. Further details and how to order the book are available here: <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/store/product/120/rebel-prods-the-forgotten-story-of>

## **Irish Inter-church tribute to Bishop Gerard Clifford**

Bishop John McDowell of the Church of Ireland and Bishop Brendan Leahy of the Catholic

Church who are the Co-Chairs of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM) paid tribute to Bishop Gerard Clifford, who died this week and who was a long-term member of the IICM and its associated committees. They stated -

“With great sadness we offer our condolences to the family and friends of Bishop Gerard Clifford, and to Archbishop Eamon Martin and the Archdiocese of Armagh.

As Co-Chairs of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, we give thanks for the legacy of Bishop Gerry’s faithful witness to Christian unity. As a priest, and later as a bishop, he was at the heart of inter-church relations in Ireland from the early days when the first tentative steps in ecumenical relations were being taken against a backdrop of violence and fear.

Over the years, his unwavering commitment to this work was a source of reassurance and encouragement for many. His gentle words of wisdom helped pave the way for deeper understanding, shaping the context in which change can happen. He valued dialogue, reflection and respectful listening, yet was always ready to push boundaries and try new initiatives.

As a long-term member of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, and its associated committees, Bishop Gerry worked tirelessly to ensure that dialogue was accompanied by practical action that visibly demonstrated the commitment of churches to working together on issues of shared concern. The support, encouragement and guidance he gave to staff as a member of the Joint Management Committee was always greatly appreciated.

Significantly, one of his final contributions was as a member of the working group which shaped a new vision for the inter-church structures as ‘Churches in Ireland – Connecting in Christ’. His leadership has left a lasting impression on the landscape of Irish ecumenism. May the Lord console all those who mourn his passing and inspire those who will continue his work.”

Rt Rev John McDowel is Bishop of Clogher and Most Rev Brendan Leahy is Bishop of Limerick

## **Episcopal bishops write to President-elect Donald Trump about environmental concerns**

The Episcopal bishops in Massachusetts [have written to President-Elect Donald Trump](#), reminding him that while Episcopal congregations pray regularly for their national leaders, they also pray for the environment and the earth.

As those who “respect the facts of science,” they expressed serious concerns over the selection of Scott Pruitt, “a person who has consistently and adamantly opposed all laws and policies that provide even minimal ‘protection’ to the environment,” to head up the Environmental Protection Agency.

“We will pray for a better choice,” the bishops write.

The [full text of the letter](#) follows.

Dec. 12, 2016  
Donald J. Trump  
President-Elect of the United States of America  
Trump Tower  
735 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-Elect Trump,

We, the bishops of the Episcopal Church in Massachusetts, are glad to let you know that all of our 235 churches pray for you regularly in our liturgies with these or similar words: “For those in positions of public trust, especially Barack our President and Donald our President-Elect, that they may serve justice, and promote the dignity and freedom of every person.”

We also pray: “Give us reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.”

The Episcopal Church stands strongly for the protection of the environment. We respect the facts of science. We support laws and policies that address the reality of climate change. We are in the process of divesting our financial interest in fossil fuels. Most recently our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Curry, joined Native Americans at Standing Rock in their effort to protect their water and their sacred land. Numerous other Episcopal Church leaders have likewise traveled to Standing Rock.

Our respect for our government leaders and our reverence for the earth as God’s creation impel



us to write you to express our dismay about your selection of Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency. We wonder why a person who has consistently and adamantly opposed all laws and policies that provide even minimal “protection” to the environment should be entrusted with leading such an agency.

President-elect Trump, you have promised economic development. Like you, we value a stable and prosperous economy. However, a thriving economy depends on a healthy environment. The more we weaken and dismantle the E.P.A.’s vital protections of our natural world, the more we threaten the common good.

You have also promised to strengthen our national defense. Like you, we value national security. However, our country’s top military intelligence have concluded that climate change is a “threat multiplier” that is already creating instability around the world and will likely create significant security challenges in the years ahead. If someone who casts doubt on the reality of climate change becomes the head of

the E.P.A., our national security will be compromised.

As citizens of this beloved country, we intend to write our members of Congress, urging them to block the nomination of Scott Pruitt to lead the E.P.A. We will pray for a better choice.

And we will continue to pray for you as you assume this office of tremendous responsibility for the good of all.

Respectfully,

The Rt. Rev. Douglas J. Fisher, Bishop Diocesan of Western Massachusetts

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates, Bishop Diocesan of Massachusetts

The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, Bishop Suffragan of Massachusetts

The Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris, Bishop Suffragan of Massachusetts (retired)

The Rt. Rev. Roy F. Cederholm, Bishop Suffragan of Massachusetts (retired)

## **News briefs**

### **+++ Lisburn community carols uplifting -**

Lisburn Cathedral was packed to capacity for an uplifting evening of lessons and Christmas praise

featuring Lisburn Community Adult Choir and Children's Choir on Monday December 12. The choirs, with Julie Harper (Musical Director) sang a great selection of Christmas songs and carols including 'Good news,' 'No room at the inn' and 'This is the season' (children's choir) and 'Christmas lullaby,' 'Christmas Joy' and 'Have yourself a merry little Christmas' (adults choir). The congregational carols included 'Joy to the world,' 'Away in a manger' and 'O come all ye faithful.' Report and pictures by John Kelly.

### **+++ Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland**

-The PHSI Library and Archive will be closed from Wednesday 21 December 2016 - Tuesday 3 January 2017 and will be re-opening on Wednesday 4 January 2017.

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

### **Watch: 'Have you no shame?' Irish American ambassador delivers powerful speech on Aleppo**

Irish Independent

<http://www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/watch-have-you-no-shame-irish-american-ambassador-delivers-powerful-speech-on-aleppo-35293547.html>

## **Rev Mervyn Gibson appointed as new Grand Secretary of the Orange Institution**

Belfast Newsletter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/rev-mervyn-gibson-appointed-as-new-grand-secretary-of-the-orange-institution-1-7734058>

## **St George's still going strong after surviving the Blitz and Troubles**

Brian Walker writes in Belfast Telegraph

[http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/archive/st-georges-still-going-strong-after-surviving-the-blitz-and-troubles-35285114.html?utm\\_source=ipad\\_share&utm\\_medium=ipad\\_app&utm\\_campaign=clickbacks](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/archive/st-georges-still-going-strong-after-surviving-the-blitz-and-troubles-35285114.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks)

## **BBC/ITV/Jersey Post**

Reports on [yesterday's announcement](#) that the Dean of Jersey is step down in February. Articles note that that Bob Key, who has been the Dean since 2005, has been given permission by the Queen to give up his position in the Island and will take up a role within the Archbishops' Evangelism Task Group as an advocate between Cathedrals and larger churches for the beacon events as part of the national initiative "Thy Kingdom Come 2017."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-jersey-38299928>

<http://www.itv.com/news/channel/update/2016-12-13/dean-of-jersey-to-leave-the-island-in-february/>

<http://jerseyeveningpost.com/news/2016/12/13/dean-is-to-step-down-in-february/>

### **Tel/Kent News/Kent online**

Reports on [release yesterday](#) of addendum to the Kendall House Review which was originally published in July.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/13/dribbling-zombies-drug-induced-hallucinations-astonishing-glimpse/>

<http://www.kentonline.co.uk/gravesend/news/i-wanted-to-kill-myself-117309/>

### **Christian Today**

Reports that the UK's first multi faith homeless shelter started in Leicester on Monday with more 200 volunteers from six different faith groups taking part. *One Roof Leicester* will move around different faith venues over the next 11 weeks as it provides food and emergency accommodation for ten rough sleepers each night. The shelter brings together Anglican, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh groups across the area. The project is funded by the charities *Human Appeal* and *Housing Justice* and *Near*

*Neighbours*, administered by Church Urban Fund.

### **Exp/Mail**

Reports that a medieval church has had a complete renovation – thanks to a masterpiece that hung on a wall for 60 years. The painting of Jesus was donated to 12th-century Holy Trinity, Bradford on Avon in the 1940s and left in a side aisle. After being identified as a work of influential Flemish master Quentin Metsys it sold for £1.5 million at auction, allowing the church to undergo a revamp.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/743135/>

[Church-complete-renovation-forgotten-masterpiece-painting-million-Metsys](http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/743135/)

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4029152/>

[Medieval-church-undergoes-2million-revamp-forgotten-Flemish-masterpiece-15th-century-discovered-wall.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4029152/)

### **Metro/Star/Mirror**

Reports that a young Christian couple, hoping to move into a house, have decided to loan it to refugees instead. Matthew and Steph Neville will continue living in a community flat at a church in Birmingham.

<http://metro.co.uk/2016/12/13/couple-spent-years-saving-to-buy-their-dream-house-then-handed-the-keys-over-to-asylum-seekers-instead-6320526/>

<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/570064/Devout-Christians-life-savings-house-asylum-seekers>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/couple-scrimp-save-lives-house-9449482#ICID=nsm>