

**Dublin and Glendalough's  
'Prepare a Place' emergency  
Advent Appeal for Gaza  
hospital**



*Archbishop Welby met and prayed with Children affected by Ebola in Sierra Leone while visiting the West African country this week with a message of hope and solidarity for all those suffering amid the health*

## **Thought-provoking drama at Connor youth Christmas Event**

More than 100 young people and leaders had a fantastic night of festive fun at the Engage Connor Youth Christmas Event in Antrim on December 13.

They came from all over the diocese for an evening of games, worship, drama, prayer and, of course, pizza. Our photo album (below) will give you a flavour of the evening.

The icing on the cake (or should be the ice on the footpath?!) was a constant flurry of snow as young people arrived at Antrim Parish Halls, courtesy of a

snow machine organised by the Engage Connor Youth team who wanted to make sure the atmosphere was just right!

Adding to the festive scene was the wide selection Christmas jumpers worn by the young people and their leaders – complete with flashing lights in some cases!!

The evening kicked off with games including a giant pass the parcel, musical statues, and horses, knights and cavaliers, and all the games were full of energy and fun.

The Event's Bible element took the form of three dramatic monologues ('Play it By Ear' Drama Productions). This involved three actors playing the part of Mary, a shepherd and Simeon, before the chair of Engage Connor Youth, the Rev Peter Ferguson, lead an epilogue on the theme of HOPE.

"You could hear a pin drop during the dramas," Peter said. "They were very powerful and meaningful."

Music was provided by Mark Ferguson and his band.

Peter is soon to leave Connor Diocese to take up his incumbency in Derg and Termonamongan, Diocese of Derry, and Engage Connor Youth be chaired by Zara Genoe and Sharon Hamill.

## **Dublin and Glendalough's 'Prepare a Place' emergency Advent Appeal aims to raise €150,000 fro Gaza city hospital**

Dublin and Glendalough's 'Prepare a Place' emergency Advent Appeal to raise funds for Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza City continues. The appeal aims to raise €150,000 for two projects at the hospital which is run by the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem.

The hospital, which is the only Christian hospital in Gaza and serves the entire community, has asked Dublin and Glendalough to support two projects: the installation of solar panels and the refurbishment of the staff on call room.



***A man being treated in the burns unit.***

The non-political appeal is being coordinated by a partnership between the diocesan Council for Mission, the United Society, Bishops' Appeal and Friends of Sabeel. It is part of a longer term programme to develop a link between the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough and Jerusalem.



*Children in the psychosocial services unit.*

In November, the Director of the United Society in Ireland, Linda Chambers, travelled to Gaza to visit Al Ahli Hospital with her husband and US volunteer, Jan de Bruijn. They witnessed the work the hospital is doing across the community in Gaza. As Al Ahli's mission statement puts it: "The hospital offers to serve all who seek treatment without prejudice to any religious or ethnic community and irrespective of social class, gender and political affiliation. These services are delivered in a spirit of love and service. Ahli Arab Hospital recognises the value of its staff and volunteers and promotes equal and compassionate treatment with dignity and respect to all".

The hospital director is Suhaila Tarazi. There are other, bigger hospitals, but Al Ahli is popular in the city, and provides services to all.

Linda describes the wide range of patients she saw while visiting the hospital from a young mother with her underweight baby and a father whose sons are suffering from skin complaints to women in the mammography department. The hospital aims to meet the needs of the local population and the highest cause of death in Gaza is breast cancer. The hospital has developed its programme in response to figures released by the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics.

They visited the burns unit which, along with the operating theatres, was very busy during the conflict but it remains busy now as the lack of cooking gas in Gaza means the people cook over open fires. While they were there, they saw a woman who had stepped on hot coals and a young man who had

burned his arm with boiling oil while deep frying over an open fire. They were both treated with a whirlpool – a tank of water like a mini jacuzzi which encourages blood flow into damaged tissue. The staff were awaiting the arrival of a tiny patient who, while learning to walk, sat on the cooking fire and had severe burns to his buttocks.



*Suhaila Tarazi, Linda Chambers and Samira Farah*

The psychosocial services unit, which was full of children playing a noisy game of follow the leader when Linda and Jan visited, meets another local need. The children had been identified by hospital-trained community volunteers as being in need of psychosocial services as a result of the recent war. The children are mostly resident in the inner city and the refugee camps. They come every day for two hours Monday to Thursday, when they play games to boost self esteem and benefit from art therapy. On Fridays they are taken out for “joyful days” to the beach or to some of the limited free space in Gaza. They are assessed each week, and offered another week if necessary, or one-to-one counselling if appropriate.

After follow the leader, they settled into a large circle and were handed out worksheets and colouring pencils. “The task this day is to draw something that frightens them, something they would like to run away from. Almost all make reference to the war. Some draw very accurate helicopters and tanks. Some draw missiles hitting buildings, and one draws a dismembered body. They all draw from personal experience,” Linda recalls.

The provision of solar panels will directly meet a need at Al Ahli Hospital. Currently in Gaza all homes, businesses and hospitals have only four hours electricity per day. Areas are scheduled on and off, and sometimes the four hours will be during the night. Al Ahli Hospital has generators as back-up, and these allow operating theatres and electronic equipment to continue to be used. But fuel for generators is expensive, and one of the generators is 15 years old.

The cost of providing solar panels is €150,000, but this is a very cost effective project as the annual saving on fuel for the generators will be €80,000. It will also be more environmentally friendly.

The second proposal is for the refurbishment of the on-call doctors' residence – an apartment on the top floor. It hasn't been refurbished for more than 15 years. It is in poor condition, and has no hot water. It also needs to be enlarged to provide more beds.

Donations to Dublin and Glendalough's 'Prepare A Place' Advent Appeal for Al Ahli Hospital can be made via Bishops' Appeal either by using envelopes which are available in all parish churches or by electronic transfer to IBAN: IE BOFI 9000 1749 8394 99 BIC: BOFIE2D (reference Gaza).

Keep up to date with the campaign and let people know what you are doing by posting on the 'Prepare a Place' Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/prepareaplace](http://www.facebook.com/prepareaplace)

## **Joint Christmas Message from the Bishops of Clogher**

Bishop John McDowell and Bishop Liam MacDaid state -

One of the remarkable aspects of this little Christmas and New Year Message which the Catholic and Church of Ireland bishops of Clogher have been circulating for the past 33 years is that it appears in exactly the same form in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Christmas is Christmas wherever you go. In both North and South most people look forward to Christmas and find great pleasure in its rituals in Church and home. It is a time of very hard work for many, perhaps for most of us, but we wouldn't miss it for the world.

There is a special intensity about Christmas in those families whose sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and even husbands or wives come home from working or living overseas. Skype and FaceTime are wonderful blessings but nothing compares to meeting those we love in the flesh. The hugs and kisses will be mighty.

For some reason which Theology can never quite explain Christmas brings hope. In theory Easter as the feast of the Resurrection should do so even more, yet Christmas remains the great season of hopes and dreams. It is the time when we look towards the end of an old year looming not far ahead and hope that the New Year just out of sight around the corner will be brighter and warmer and better than the one just past.

Perhaps, important as it is, Theology is just words; and words have a habit of disintegrating into dust when we encounter difficulties. When you find yourself in difficulties, remembered words or dear familiar things might help but not as much as a friend in the flesh. When we are surrounded by our family and friends at a Service of Lessons and Carols or at the First Eucharist of Christmas, or even sitting at the dinner table in a silly paper hat, we feel in those lovely words of the old saint, 'that all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well'. Christmas is the embodiment of hope. And Christmas is the embodiment of God.

'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth....for all the rules came from Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'

## **Archbishop of Canterbury visits Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone**

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, visited Sierra Leone on Tuesday with a message of hope and solidarity for all those suffering amid the Ebola outbreak across West Africa.

The Archbishop [preached](#) at St George's Cathedral in the Sierra Leonean capital of Freetown before visiting a church-run centre for children affected by Ebola.

He also met and prayed with faith and community leaders, including the Bishop of Freetown, the Rt Revd Thomas Arnold Ikunika Wilson.

Sierra Leone has the highest number of Ebola cases in West Africa, with more than 8,000 cases and nearly 2,500 deaths since the start of the outbreak. Latest figures show that 1,258 people have survived the virus and recovered.

[In his sermon](#) Archbishop Justin told those gathered that "your suffering and endurance across the afflicted countries have echoed around the world", adding that "you are remembered at every moment by God".

Stressing the solidarity of Christians and Muslims in England for those suffering in West Africa, he said: "In our churches and mosques... we pray for you, long for good news, and are in pain because of your pain.

“I was anxious to share with you the grief that is experienced in this region and especially in Sierra Leone, a country that has already faced such grief and suffering over the years.”

Just as Jesus was born and lived among the poor and suffering, he said, “so must the world come alongside you to support the doctors, hospitals, and volunteers and people of this land who seek to love those caught by Ebola.

The Archbishop also praised medical volunteers travelling to West Africa and urged the British government to continue its “courageous” response to the outbreak.

After the Cathedral service the Archbishop met with children affected by Ebola being cared for at the Don Bosco Interim Care Centre in Tintafor.

The centre, which is run by the Catholic order of Salesians of Don Bosco, provides services including trauma healing, stress reduction, musical and sport therapy, and individual and group counselling. It also provides non-formal school lessons, family tracing and appropriate reunifications with follow-up visits.

Archbishop Justin said he prayed that communities afflicted by Ebola would find comfort and hope from each other – and from God who is “especially faithful” to those “suffering unjustly through the events of life”.

Looking ahead to Christmas, the Archbishop said that if asked what the most important part of the Advent season has been for him, he will say it was being with people in Sierra Leone and in South Sudan, which he visited last week.

“Your presence is a generous gift, of which I am entirely unworthy. Your faces will be before me in my mind on Christmas day. Your needs will be in my prayers.

“But far more importantly you are remembered at every moment by God, who is faithful and will bring comfort.”

[Read the Archbishop's sermon in Freetown](#)

*Throughout Archbishop Justin Welby's short visit to Sierra Leone he followed appropriate infection control procedures. As with others returning from the affected countries, his risk of exposure to Ebola has been carefully assessed by a clinician in accordance with Public Health England's latest guidelines.*

*In light of this, having been allocated to the lowest category of risk, he has been advised that no restrictions on his movements or activities are*

*necessary and he will be continuing with his planned commitments over the coming days.*

- Find out more about the churches' response to the Ebola crisis by visiting [the Anglican Alliance website](#).

## **Leaders failed to give the process a boost - Christian Aid's response to Lima climate deal**

Nations at the UN climate summit in Lima have failed to respond to the call of the public, scientists and investors said Christian Aid - but there is still time to change the course of history.

Countries will now move on to the summit in Paris next year, where a global deal will be agreed, but leaders failed to give the process a boost, instead stumbling out of the gate.

Christian Aid's Senior Climate Change Advisor, Mohamed Adow, said: "The countdown clock to Paris is now ticking. Countries had the chance to give themselves a head-start on the road to Paris but instead have missed the gun and now need to play catch up.

"Despite not getting off on the right foot the good news is the transition to a low carbon world is already happening. This is a fight between those profiting from the dirty energy of the past and those with the prophetic vision of a clean and prosperous future. And it's a fight we will win.

"On one side are the fossil fuel companies and the governments that protect them, on the other are the world's poor, civil society, switched-on investors, innovative businesses, concerned global citizens and leaders who actually lead.

"We've seen this year hundreds of thousands marching on the streets of New York and other cities, we've seen investors like the Rockefeller oil dynasty ditching fossil fuels and scientists showing the science is clear. We're moving towards a world free of fossil fuels and those countries which refuse to embrace that will ultimately be left behind.

"Political leaders at the UN talks need to be reminded that they can't negotiate with the climate. Human actions are changing it rapidly and governments need to come to their senses. Otherwise we're in danger of sleepwalking into a failed deal in Paris.



Highlighting the lack of progress made in Lima, Mr Adow pointed out there were some positive elements left out of the Draft Paris Agreement which must make up a part of next year's deal.

He said: "The Paris deal needs to be more than just about carbon cuts. Both climate finance and support for poor countries to adapt must form part of the agreement. These need to be included in the Paris deal because those suffering cannot wait. For the people of the Philippines recovering from a third super typhoon in three years they can't afford us to drag our feet."

Responding to the role of the UK at the summit Mr Adow praised the efforts of the Government's Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Ed Davey.

He said: "As the first country to have benefitted economically from industrialisation the UK has a responsibility to take a leading role in tackling this problem. The UK deserves credit for trying to move the EU bloc in the right direction. As a whole we need more ambition to be shown from developed countries, after all the convention itself states clearly that richer countries are required to lead."

"Whoever heads up the next UK government needs to seize the opportunity that 2015 presents and continue leading from the front, because a lowest common denominator approach will not protect the UK from serious climate impacts on society and the economy."