



## **Cathedrals highlight Advent with candles and carols**

### **Down and Dromore women in South Sudan supporting young women's project with Mothers' Union**



Yesterday, December 1, a group of four women from Down and Dromore C of I diocese left for Entebbe, Uganda, to begin a short visit to their link Diocese of [Maridi](#) in South Sudan.

Jane Corbett and Nina Coffey (Dromore Cathedral), Liz Fleming (Carryduff) and Maureen Clarke (St John's, Kilwarlin) will spend about nine days on the ground in Maridi and they hope this will be a real encouragement to the people. The trip was originally planned for January of this year but insecurity in the country forced a postponement.

“One of our major objectives is to deliver a project with the girls in the schools and the MU,” says Jane. “It addresses issues brought to our attention by Bishop Justin’s wife, Mama Joyce.”

Some startling facts about girls and young women in Sub-Saharan Africa:

- Only 1 in 5 girls make it to secondary school and in Uganda, for example, a staggering 71% of girls drop out before completing Primary 7 and 85% do not complete secondary education.
- Menstruation is stigmatised with a lack of proper education and hygiene management causing girls to drop out of school
- Many regard menstruation as taboo and unclean while many girls consider it to be a disease.

One way to help is to provide education around the issue of menstruation and to supply reusable pad and panties.

Jane continues: “We head out now with about 60 kgs of ready made packs and each pack should be of use for three years. We hope to teach the girls and women how to make them and if possible set up micro-finance small businesses so that this initiative may grow across the Diocese and beyond! Our team is so grateful to the folk in our parishes who have been very generous with their time, materials and money.”

## **Irish speaking Church group’s concern at recent political comments**

Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise in a statement issued yesterday said it “is concerned at recent comments in relation to the Irish language made by a representative in the Northern Ireland assembly, Mr Gregory Campbell MLA.” The group stressed, “The Irish language is the common heritage of all traditions and peoples on the island of Ireland.” And it pointed to the growth in the number of services in Irish in churches of the reformed tradition.

The statement continues -

“Mr Campbell engaged in a parody of the phrase used by many deputies in the Assembly “go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle”, meaning “thank you, Speaker.” He has continued the parody at a recent party conference.

“These remarks, from a former Culture Minister in the Northern Ireland executive, have been greeted with dismay and concern by many people as demonstrating a lack of respect for Irish speakers. Although the remarks have

been presented as an expression of protest in relation to the alleged misuse of the Irish language for political purposes, Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise feels that to engage in a parody of the language in this manner cannot reasonably be regarded as other than offensive to Irish speakers in general.

“The Irish language is the common heritage of all traditions and peoples on the island of Ireland. Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise has for the past century been dedicated to its promotion in the life of the Church of Ireland, bearing in mind the strong association of the language with the reformed tradition since the early 17th century. The demonstration of respect for the cultural traditions of others, including language, is a fundamental principle in a diverse society.

“We note the heartening developments which have taken place through the long-standing cross community work of An tIonntaobhas Ultach and Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, and the more recent appointments of full-time development officers for both the Cumann itself and the East Belfast Mission. There has been a growth in the number of Irish language services in the reformed tradition (notably in St George’s Church, Belfast), allied to an increasing awareness of the Scots Gaelic heritage of many in the Northern Protestant community. Remarks of the kind recently made would rightly be regarded with grave concern in Scotland and Wales, and we believe that no less a standard can be applied in Northern Ireland. We reaffirm our commitment to the promotion of the welfare of the language in the reformed tradition, and call on all public representatives and party leaders to affirm support and respect for linguistic diversity in our shared society.”

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## **Advent challenge on world development from Chair of Christian Aid - a former Archbishop of Canterbury**

Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, was the preacher at Christian Aid Advent Hope Service in St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin on Sunday past. The service took place on the first Sunday in Advent but it was also the day before World AIDS Day.

This year Christian Aid was joined at the service by ACET Ireland (Aids Care Education & Training). ACET works to improve the lives of people living with, and affected by HIV and AIDS in Ireland. It also works to reduce the number of new cases of HIV in Ireland. ACET has partnered with Christian Aid on some of its overseas work in the fight against HIV and AIDS.



***Richard Carson of ACET, the Rt Revd Trevor Williams, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, the Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams, the Very Revd Victor Stacey and Rosamond Bennett of Christian Aid.***

People travelled from all over the island to join in worship, prayer, thanksgiving and reflection as part of Choral Evensong which was sung by the cathedral choir. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Michael Jackson was present, along with Christian Aid Ireland CEO, Rosamond Bennett and ACET CEO, Richard Carson. Dr Williams is chairperson of Christian Aid UK and Ireland.

In his sermon, Dr Williams drew on the Collect for Advent Sunday – ‘Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armour of light...’ This, he said, reminded us that for all our primitive terror of the dark, it was sometimes in the dark that we felt safest. Light shows us who we are who other people are and who God is.

He said that the darkness damaged us and light defended us from all the things we did to ourselves when we burrowed into the darkness and denied who we were, who others were and who God was. He referred to the Christian Aid exhibition at the back of the cathedral stating it was about witness and clear seeing and bearing testimony.

‘The work of Christian Aid and similar agencies, is about seeing what God wants to see in our neighbours and seeing their dignity and their presence in



God's eyes. It's about seeing their gifts as well as their needs. The light of grace drawing us out into the fresh air of relationship and interaction is the light in which we see something of the glory of God in those whom we work with and see those whom we work with not as dumb objects but as our partners, as those who give us gifts, as those God delights in,' Dr Williams said.

He said that Advent was a time when people thought about what they really wanted. Those who supported Christian Aid wanted for the people that they worked with what they wanted for themselves and what God wants for all of us, he stated.

After the service Dr Williams was interviewed in the Deanery by Gay Byrne for a programme which will be broadcast on RTE in the New Year.

## **Cathedrals highlight Advent with candles and carols**

Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, marked the beginning of Advent on Sunday with its annual Advent Procession Service at which Archbishop Michael Jackson presided with Dean Dermot Dunne.



***Christi Church Cathedral, Dublin marks Advent***

The cathedral was lit only by candles and the focus of the service was on paradox of Advent – the tension between the joyous anticipation of the birth of Jesus and the inevitability of the cross.

The evening's readings reflected the emphasis on Christ's second coming and included themes of accountability, judgement and the hope of eternal life. The course of the service traced the witness of the prophets, and of John the Baptist and Mary, all of whom pointed to the birth of Jesus.

Similar Advent light and carol services were held in St Mary's Limerick and St Columb's, Londonderry.

## **Portstewart doctor's third trip to support church in South Sudan**

Portstewart parishioner and family doctor Dr Frank Dobbs will make a third trip to Connor's partner diocese of Yei, South Sudan, in January.

Frank, of Atherton Parish and a Connor Diocesan Lay Reader, will travel with Jenny Smyth, CMS Ireland Partnership co-ordinator, the Rev Arthur Young and Naomi Kumar, Youth Alpha, both from Kill O' the Grange Parish, Dublin.



***Dr Frank Dobbs with staff at the Martha Clinic during training sessions he ran in Yei in 2013. He will return to the clinic in January.***

They will be in Africa from January 8-18, and Frank will have teaching input at the Martha Clinic and will attend the reopening of the Bishop Allison Theological College which is being relocated to Yei after many years in Arua, Uganda.

The group will see the development of the new church secondary school – Immanuel Model Senior Secondary School – which will have its second intake of students in January, and they will also take part in a diocesan youth conference.

Frank first travelled to Yei in March 2010, when he visited local health centres in Lainya, Roronyo and travelled with the mobile clinic which visits outlying villages each day.

He returned with the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and a Connor team in January 2013 and during this trip he held a number of meetings at Yei Hospital and ran training sessions for local nurses and staff of the Martha Clinic.

His next trip will again focus on the diocese-run Martha Clinic and the many thousands of patients who avail of the vital services it offers. The clinic has

recently opened a second children's ward.

"I am going to be looking at the medical records of the Martha Clinic," Frank explained. "All patients hold their own records in an exercise book which each patient brings to the clinic when they visit. In developing countries it is too complicated to keep records on a computer database.



***Pupils of the new Immanuel Model Secondary School established by Yei Diocese.***

"The patients look after the books because for most of them it is the only book they possess."

Frank believes the books could be used more effectively if each has a summary of any long term illnesses at the front and a list of regular medications the patient receives at the back, along with a new structure for staff when assessing a patient. He plans to offer staff training to bring about these changes.

Frank will also hope to revisit Yei Hospital and meet its Director.

He is looking forward to the opening of the Bishop Allison Theological College now that it is back in Yei. "The College has been operating in Arua since the start of the civil war, so its relocation to Yei is a very exciting development," Frank said.

Jenny Smyth emphasised the significance of the return of the college to Yei. "The reopening of Bishop Allison Theological college in Yei is a big landmark, the result of years of praying towards this goal. A CMS Britain mission partner couple are going to Yei and will help with some teaching input for the college and some admin input at the diocesan level," Jenny said.

Frank will also be keen to meet the students at the Immanuel Model Secondary School, which does not yet have permanent buildings but is about to take in its second year of students.

And he hopes to bring greetings from Connor Diocese to the young people attending the Youth Conference. The conference programme covers topics such as basics of Christian beliefs as well as the liturgy during the daily

sessions, and in the evenings the young people will take part in discussions about relationships and Christian living.

A visit to Yei by a Connor team was due to take place in January 2014, but was postponed indefinitely because of civil unrest which broke out in the South Sudan capital Juba in December 2013 and spread to other parts of the country. For a time, the Diocese of Yei had to feed and accommodate several hundred internally displaced people in its buildings. Connor Diocese supported a CMSI Appeal for funding for the church to help it meet the needs of the people who had turned to it for shelter.

Frank said that all internally displaced people are now being cared for by the UN in camps in Yei, taking the pressure off the resources of the diocese.

The Diocese of Connor and the Diocese of Yei have been in partnership since 2007. The Bishop of Connor and Bishop Hilary of Yei signed a second five-year partnership agreement in January 2013.

## Film draws crowds to cemetery

Large crowds have been descending on one of Ireland's most historic cemeteries after a documentary about its occupants and the living who care for their graves.

Aoife Kelleher's award-winning film *One Million Dubliners* tells the story of Glasnevin Cemetery, the state's largest non-denominational graveyard.



Built in 1832, it is the final resting place of some of the most famous and influential people in Irish history including Daniel O'Connell, Charles Stewart Parnell, Michael Collins, Eamon de Valera, Kevin Barry, Countess Markievicz and Maude Gonne McBride.

The documentary, which hit cinemas in Dublin last month and was also aired on RTE, is available on [www.rte.ie/player/ie](http://www.rte.ie/player/ie).

Historian and guide Shane MacThomais was a major contributor to the film, revealing how he brought to life the stories of the 1.5 million people buried in the cemetery for members of the public from all over the world.



Mr MacThomais, who first visited the cemetery as a child, said he would have "given anything" to work as a guide there and his dream finally came true in 2010 when he took up a full-time position.

The historian worked at the cemetery until his death in March at the age of 46 and he is commemorated in a plaque erected in his honour during the summer.

Glasnevin Trust chief executive George McCullagh said the documentary had sparked a major interest in those buried in the graveyard, with "colossal amounts" of visitors turning up for weekend tours.

## **Nine priests spotted in Irish gay bar**

Belfast Telegraph - Ground-breaking new research into the sexual lives of Irish Catholic priests has revealed many of them are or have been sexually active, that the bishops are aware of the situation, and that there is a gay scene within the church.

Thirty-Three Good Men: Celibacy, Obedience and Identity' publishes new analysis of priests' views from a series of interviews conducted by Dr John Weafer, a former seminarian who is now married with children.

The book, which has just been published by Columba Books, reveals that one parish priest interviewed confidentially by Weafer is in a long term gay relationship.

Speaking to the Irish Independent, the author said 'Fr C' was "very happy with his life as a priest and a person".

Another priest interviewed, 'Fr L' was ordained in the 1990s. It was only when he was ordained that he finally ended up 'sleeping' with another priest.

"Although we both vowed it would never happen again, it did and I was really very confused," he said.

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/republic-of-ireland/hells-bells-nine-priests-spotted-in-irish-gay-bar-30782348.html>