



## **‘Are Ye Wise’ video by three dancing clerics reaches thousands**

A series of Christmas videos created by dancing clergy in the town of Irvine have been watched tens of thousands of times over the past month.

‘Are Ye Wise’ followed the search of the Wise Men, played by the Shoes Brothers – aka the

Rev Neil Urquhart, minister of Fullarton Parish Church, and Father Willie Boyd of St Mary's Roman Catholic Church; joined this time by the Rev Tendai J Mbaserah, pastor at Kilmarnock Baptist Church – who found themselves in Irvine searching for the King. Eventually they realised that Jesus was everywhere people are caring and sharing for one another.

The story was told in three 'vlogs' (video blogs) released from mid-November to early December, with a final condensed version and a new song released on December 8.

The final video alone has been viewed nearly 30,000 times on Facebook.

Father Boyd said: "After all the hard work of filming, editing and song-making, the hope and prayer is that these films and the song will inspire Irvinites to further prove that Irvine is truly a 'Giving something Back' town, by the way we treat one another and go out of our way to help others."

Rev Tendai Mbaserah added: "The highlight of the filming for me was seeing Neil fall off his pogo stick, I couldn't stop laughing for hours after! It's been a joy and privilege to travel the 15

minutes from Kilmarnock many times over to join in with what God is doing in Irvine!”

Willie and Neil have been working together for years in an attempt to break down barriers in the community and fight sectarianism.

Neil said: “People are asking, “What next?” Come January I’ll start thinking about next Christmas, while walking my dog on Irvine Beach. For now though, let’s enjoy the ‘Are Ye Wise!?’ campaign and celebrate Advent & Christmas 2016 by going out of our way to light other people’s lives up, lives that may languish in depression and darkness otherwise. Shine on!”

You can view the videos on the YouTube channel [Fullonart](#) and the [Shoes Brothers Dance – SBD Facebook page](#) and download the song from [FullartonConneXions.co.uk](#)

## **Limerick diocese to promote leadership role for women in pastoral plan for future**

The Church is now much better placed to meet the future than it was in the past. This is according to Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy,

who spoke on the publication of a pastoral plan following a synod in the diocese.

The plan states that a leadership that depends almost exclusively on the priest cannot continue. It recommends that a working group on the leadership role for women in the diocese be established next spring.

Lay led liturgies of the Word, including Good Friday ceremonies; prayers for the dead and reception of remains at funerals; child-friendly spaces in churches and 'play and pray' during Masses; as well as equipping each parish church with modern technology, are among other recommendations.

There are 90 recommendations in the 'Moving Forward Together in Hope' pastoral plan, which the Bishop said is only the beginning.

"[We] still have a long way to go. As Pope Francis says, it's not just an era of change that we are in, it's a change of era. We must change with it and create a Church that is more ready and better prepared to meet the future than we have the past," he said.

He added that the coming together of clergy and laity to work out a pathway for the diocese was a “participative experience” in which they had looked together at challenges and opportunities involved in creating a more inclusive Church.

“We are moving in the right direction,” he said. The recommendations will be implemented over the 10-year lifespan of the plan, with some initiatives already under way.

Under the ‘Community and Sense of Belonging’ theme, initiatives include everything from the ‘cup of tea’/hospitality after Mass to lay parish teams visiting homes, hospitals and nursing homes. Welcoming groups are to be established to give newcomers to areas an immediate sense of belonging. A new emphasis is to be put on the Family Mass and on parishes examining how they can make a difference to safeguarding the planet.

Under ‘Pastoral Care of the Family’, the diocese is to network with other community groups and agencies to ensure a more inclusive Church in Limerick. A group will also be established in the spring at diocesan level comprising people who are aware of issues facing people on the

margins. This group will focus on people hurt by the Church.

There will also be a focus on mental health, including engagement with people who are homeless, prisoners, travellers and others, and encouraging a true missionary Church.

Under the 'Young People' theme, the diocese is to introduce a volunteer youth ministry leaders' training programme and a pilot programme of John Paul II awards. The use of music as a means of engaging young people in Church and liturgy will be explored, as will the establishment of Youth Cafés and developing ties between Church and local youth groups, including sport and culture groups.

Under 'Liturgy and Life', parish volunteers are to be trained to lead liturgies in the Limerick diocese on designated dates when priests are not available. Two representatives have been assigned for liturgy training in Maynooth. There's also an intention for more general and imaginative use of the second rite of confession.

Under 'Faith Formation and Education', recommendations range from enhancing children's sacramental preparation to helping

adults who have had positive experiences tell their story. There will be a Sunday School model for children and a faith development strategy specially for adults, as well as an evaluation of existing catechesis and religious education of young people.

Creative ways to engage with people – such as a ‘Mission with a Difference’, a ‘festival of faith’ with open air events – will take place from 2018 onwards.

With regard to Catholic schools, home-school-parish links will be developed, as will a parish programme for children’s sacramental preparation. Secondary schools will be encouraged to engage with the Catholic Schools Partnership’s process titled ‘Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School.’ Third level education will be engaged through the chaplaincy team.

Under the sixth and final theme, ‘New Models of Leadership’, additional leadership roles will be explored including the role for women in the diocese.

The diocese of Limerick is to redouble efforts to encourage vocations to the priesthood and

religious life by establishing a forum to promote vocations. Separately also, it will establish a working group to examine its current communications structures.

In April 2016 Limerick held what was described as the first Irish synod in half a century and the first ever with such major participation of lay women and men. It included 400 delegates considering 100 proposals.

## **Local causes benefit from Eglinton church's Christmas Tree Festival**

The organisers of this month's Christmas Tree Festival in St Canice's Church, Eglinton, have presented cheques totalling £3,000 to local groups and organisations. The money was raised in donations by visitors to the festival over the first weekend in December.

More than 60 "trees" – both traditional and quirky – were displayed at the festival, all decorated by local businesses, organisations and families.

Among the groups which benefitted was MS Research (Strabane Branch). It was the nominated charity of Mr Willie O'Brien, whose tree was voted the festival's favourite.



Other beneficiaries included Eglinton Community Project, which provides a wide range of services to the community in Greysteel; Mission to Seafarers, which has a local branch serving those who use the port at Maydown; and Jennifer's Journey, a group which aims to help Jennifer Smyth realise her ambition to walk again after an accident 3 years ago.

Local parishioners Carole Hinchliff, Lynne Gillen, Iris Burns and Hazel Gardiner served on the Festival's organising committee, alongside the local Rector, Rev Paul Hoey.

Mary Watson (Manager) and Rev Lindsay Blair (Chairman) collected a cheque on behalf of Eglinton Community Project; Sam Gardiner received the contribution to the Mission to Seafarers group; and Jennifer Smyth and her mother Pamela collected the donation to Jennifer's Journey.

## **Tory islanders express relief as priest is confirmed for Christmas Mass**

Residents of the remote Irish island have had their prayers answered when it was confirmed

they would have a priest to celebrate Christmas Mass.

Fr Kieran Creagh had spent more than four years living on Tory Island, nine miles off the coast of County Donegal, but was reassigned in September.

Since then, the island's 150-strong community has been without a full-time clergyman, even though temporary arrangements have since been in place for a substitute Catholic priest to be ferried over to the isle on weekends.

Although the Diocese of Raphoe still has not assigned a permanent replacement priest for the island, residents expressed relief on learning that arrangements had been made for a priest to travel from the mainland to celebrate Christmas Mass.

Patsy Dan Rodgers, nicknamed the "king of Tory," said he was delighted with the news.

"We miss not having a full-time priest over here and were sad to see Fr Creagh leave," he said. "But we've been lucky enough to have had cover on the island for Sunday Mass ever since, and

we're extremely grateful for this, because priests are so scarce these days."

"Christmas on Tory Island is like nowhere else. It starts on December 23 when Santa is flown over here in a helicopter. It's a magical occasion for the children here, because he arrives with gifts.

"There's another tradition which goes on here on Christmas Eve, where the older people are given gifts, like boxes of chocolates. And then of course, there's the Christmas Mass, which is hugely important to us all."

Rodgers, 72, who makes a point of personally greeting every passenger ferry that lands on the three-mile-long island, said religion still plays as important a role in the community as the flourishing Irish language. He said the remnants of a sixth-century monastery, founded by St Columba, demonstrate the outpost's strong Christian tradition.

## **New Chair of Connor Youth Council**

The Rev Philip Benson, curate in the Parish of Larne, Inver, Glynn and Raloo, is taking on the



***The Rev Philip Benson will take over the Chair of Connor Youth Council in 2017***

role of Chair of the Engage Connor Youth Council.

He takes over from Sharon Hamill from Church of the Resurrection who co-chaired the Youth Council in 2015 with Zara Genoe and since has chaired the Council through 2016.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "Sharon has led the Youth Council through

several events, prayerfully planning and engaging with young people across the diocese.”

She added: “The Youth Council would like to say a massive thank you on behalf of all the young people across Connor to Sharon for all she has done, in addition welcome Philip to this new role from 2017.”

## **Anti-Christian persecution is being overlooked, says Prince Charles**

Prince Charles has said that the scale of anti-Christian persecution is “not widely appreciated”. Speaking on Radio 4’s Thought for the Day, the Prince of Wales recalled meeting a Jesuit priest from Syria who gave him “a graphic account of what life is like for those Christians he was forced to leave behind”.

Persecution, especially by ISIS, has led many Middle East Christians to flee their homes. Iraq’s Christian population has decreased from 1.4 million to 250,000.

Last week, Barack Obama signed the International Religious Freedom Act, which will make combatting persecution a bigger part of US foreign policy.

The Prince said religious freedom was an urgent problem around the world. “Clearly for such people religious freedom is a daily stark choice between life and death. The scale of religious persecution around the world is not widely appreciated, nor is it limited to Christians in the troubled regions of the Middle East.

“A recent report suggests that attacks are increasing on Yazidis, Jews, Ahmadis, Baha’is and many other minority faiths, and in some countries even more insidious forms of religious extremism have recently surfaced which aim to eliminate all types of religious diversity.”

He added that widespread violence and intolerance had “echoes of the dark days of the 1930s”.

Prince Charles has previously [warned](#) that Christianity in the Middle East is “under threat like never before”.

Elsewhere in the talk, he said that both “the Holy Family” and “the Prophet Mohammed” had been forced to flee in order to escape persecution.

## Pope names first woman to head Vatican Museums



Pope Francis has chosen, for the first time, a woman to head the Vatican Museums.

Barbara Jatta, 54, is an Italian art historian and graphic arts expert, who had been serving as vice-director of the museums since June.

The Vatican announced the appointment earlier this week.

She will begin her new role as director of the museums January 1, 2017, replacing 77-year-old

Antonio Paolucci, who had been director since 2007.

Each year millions of people visit the Vatican Museums, which include the Sistine Chapel and more than 50 different galleries. It is one of the largest museums in the world with 200,000 objects in its collections — 20,000 of which are on public display — 27,000 square feet of frescoes, and 4.35 miles of exhibition space.

Jatta started working at the Vatican in 1996 when she was hired to head the Vatican Library's departments of prints. In 2010, she was named curator of the artwork in the prints department at the library.

She has degrees in literature, archive administration and art history, specializing in the history of drawing, engraving and graphic arts. She also taught history of graphic arts at the Suor Orsola Benincasa University in Naples.

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



## **Social values winning the DUP more Catholic voters, says MP**

Belfast Telegraph

Report on Jeffrey Donalson interview with The Irish Catholic

[http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/social-values-winning-the-dup-more-catholic-voters-says-mp-35312980.html?utm\\_source=ipad\\_share&utm\\_medium=ipad\\_app&utm\\_campaign=clickbacks](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/social-values-winning-the-dup-more-catholic-voters-says-mp-35312980.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks)

## **'Gay cake' case: Supreme Court bid rejected**

BBC News

Northern Ireland's top law officer cannot refer the "gay cake" case to the Supreme Court, senior judges rule.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-38392063>

## **Ashers to take gay cake discrimination case to UK Supreme Court**

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ashers-to-take-gay-cake-discrimination-case-to-uk-supreme-court-35314307.html>

## **Guard (Wed)/Times**

Report in the Guardian on the 'digital revolution' that is connecting the Church of England to a wider audience, citing the website [A Christmas Near You](#) with details of more than 34,000 carol services across the country as the latest stage in this work. The article also features the series of

four films released by the CofE this month for the #JoyToTheWorld campaign (see above). The *Times* reports on the work of St Wulfram's church in Grantham, which hosted a pre-Advent Beer Festival and held 16 carol services this month.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/21/o-click-all-ye-faithful-church-expands-online-in-paradigm-shift>  
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pints-and-pies-draw-in-the-new-faithful-fhtql68d0>

### **BBC/Tel/Premier**

Further coverage following the appointment of the new Suffragan Bishop of Woolwich, Dr Woyin Karowei Dorgu, the first black bishop to be appointed in 20 years. The BBC online article highlights remarks by the Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin, about the lack of ethnic minority clergy at senior levels in the church. An interview with BBC Radio 4 Today programme by the Bishop of Rochester, James Longstaff, is quoted. The *Tel* highlights remarks by Revd Dorgu about British awkwardness to direct approaches to making new converts. He said some British people were reticent about speaking to strangers.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38387302>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/21/british-christians-held-back-cultural-embarrassment-talking/>  
<https://www.premierchristianradio.com/News/UK/CofE-admits-it-has-a-problem-after-ethnic-minority-treatment-criticism>

## **Guard**

Reports that a historic church in the City of London is to be reunited with a magnificent 16th-century carving that was stolen from it decades ago. The 80cm-high alabaster carving was returned to St Katharine Cree after it was bought in good faith by an art specialist in Belgium last year. He agreed to return it unconditionally after being approached by a lawyer and director of Art Recovery International. The churchwarden of St Katharine Cree is quoted.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/dec/21/city-london-st-katharine-cree-church-reunited-stolen-16th-century-carving>

## **BBC**

Reports that a group of retired clergy has vowed to fight plans announced last month to close a Church of England nursing home. The Manorhead home in Hindhead, Surrey is scheduled to shut in March. The Church of

England Pensions Board has said it is having difficulty recruiting and retaining staff and has said no-one will be financially worse off as a result of moving to a different home. A spokesman for the Church of England is quoted. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-38382706>

### **Guard/Tel/Mail/Metro/ITV**

Further coverage that university leaders have been accused of giving in to student campaigners by removing a picture of a former Archbishop of Canterbury from the front of a campus building. An image of Lord Carey of Clifton has been taken down from the “wall of fame” of King’s College London alumni at the entrance to its campus in The Strand, central London. The action comes after a five-year campaign by a group of students who objected to his opposition to same-sex marriage.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/dec/21/kings-college-removes-photo-of-ex-archbishop-opposed-to-gay-marriage>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/21/former-archbishop-canterburys-picture-removed-kings-college/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4056430/King-s-College-London-removes-photo-former-Archbishop-Canterbury-wall-fame-amid-student->

[anger-views-gay-marriage.html?ITO=1490&ns\\_mchannel=rss&ns\\_campaign=1490](http://metro.co.uk/2016/12/21/london-uni-strips-former-archbishop-of-canterbury-picture-amid-concerns-on-his-gay-marriage-views-6338293/)  
<http://metro.co.uk/2016/12/21/london-uni-strips-former-archbishop-of-canterbury-picture-amid-concerns-on-his-gay-marriage-views-6338293/>  
<http://www.itv.com/news/london/2016-12-21/former-archbishop-of-canterburys-image-removed-over-concern-about-his-views-on-gay-marriage/>

## **Premier**

Further coverage of the fourth and final [C of E #JoyToTheWorld](#) film featuring Revd Kate Bottley who shares her moments of Christmas joy (see above).

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/I-wear-pyjamas-under-Midnight-Mass-robos-says-Googlebox-star-Rev-Kate-Bottley>

## **Northern Echo**

Report that the Revd Dr Philip Plyming has been announced as the new warden of Cranmer Hall in St John's College, Durham. He succeeds Mark Tanner, who held the post from 2011 until earlier this year when he was consecrated Bishop of Berwick.

## **Comment**

**Times:** Religion still matters, whatever your beliefs, writes Tim Montgomerie.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/comment/religion-still-matters-whatever-your-beliefs-tthn22vpv>

**Christian Today:** "Why does the Church of England have so few black clergy?", asks Ruth Gledhill.

**Telegraph:** In the wake of Kings College have removed an image of Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, the paper's opinion team write, "Universities are wrong to indulge student censorship".

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/12/21/universities-wrong-indulge-student-censorship/>