



Syria – all labelled ‘A group of helpers in Clifden with Rev Stan Evans, as they loaded a 40 foot container with bedding, clothes, wheelchairs, crutches and walking frames for From Ireland with Love’.

Connemara digs deep for Syria

Clifden has become the hub for providing humanitarian aid from the West of Ireland to regions currently undergoing conflict, thanks to

the efforts of a local cleric, community members and businesses throughout the Connemara area, The Connacht Tribune reports.

The campaign began through the work of local Church of Ireland member, Reverend Stan Evans, who is in charge of the Omev group of parishes in the diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry.

In a short period of time, the group have gathered three lorry-loads of winter clothing and bedding to be distributed in the war-torn areas of Syria and Iraq ahead of the difficult winter period.

Rev. Evans has been based in Clifden for over three years and his work was inspired by English-based Good Samaritan, Samara Levy, whose own aid work has seen over 70 truckloads delivered to territories in the most need during the last two years.

Speaking about the support drive so far, Rev Evans said, "We thought we were setting off on something which would probably create a couple of pallet loads to go over to link up with the "Samara Aid Appeal" in the UK. Nothing was further from the truth. We have had 5,000 boxes and bags of brilliant bedding. Some people

bought the stuff new such as winter clothes, bedding and shoes.”

The items were collected over a five week period by local businessman, Charles Wills, who made countless trips around the west of Ireland to gather the vital aid items. A group of tireless workers then formed to package the donations into banana boxes for storage and ease of transport.

See full story in this week's Connacht Tribune.

Irish Muslims condemn Syria's Grand Mufti's visit to Dublin

Questions remain unanswered over how and why the grand mufti of Syria, who has called for terrorist attacks in Europe, has been allowed to speak at the Irish government. Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun arrived in Dublin on Tuesday as part of a religious delegation from Syria and many of Ireland's Muslims have expressed anger over the decision, reports The New Arab on November 30.

"He's not welcome," said Dr Ali Salim, senior member of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland.

"This man is part of the regime in Syria and we see him as one of the war criminals that should be brought to justice.

"His hand has been stained with the blood of innocents in Syria and he is one of the people who shares responsibility for the killing and displacing of the Syrian people."

[Hassoun frequently makes messages of violence](#) during his Friday sermons. In May 2016, he demanded the "extermination" of rebels and civilians living in Aleppo.

"I call upon the Syrian Army to show us its rage and I also call upon our leader to show us their rage in exterminating those criminals," he said.

According to new terrorism legislation, Hassoun could possibly face arrest for his comments under the offence of "public provocation to commit a terrorist offence".

The Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2014 defines this offence as "a message to the public, with the intention of encouraging, directly or indirectly, the commission of a terrorist activity".

Irish police refused to comment on the possibility of arresting Hassoun, saying that they do not comment on individual cases.

The Irish Syria Solidarity Movement (ISSM) has also condemned the Mufti's visit and has asked the Irish police to arrest Hassoun for hate crimes.

"This terrorist should clearly not be let into the country, let alone inside the houses of the Oireachtas [the lower house of the Irish parliament] and shame on anyone who was involved in arranging the invitation to him," the ISSM said in an open letter to the Oireachtas. The mufti is visiting Dublin as part of a religious delegation from Syria, lobbying against European sanctions.

The delegation also includes Gregory III Laham, the leader of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church and Ignatius Aphrem II of Antioch, leader of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

The delegation will begin its tour with a visit of honour to the Trinity College Chapel for a "united prayer of peace for Syria", with choristers, senior academics, politicians and senior members of the diplomatic corps also in attendance.

The Muslim Student's Association at Trinity College did not respond to numerous requests to comment.

At 8pm this evening, Hassoun will be invited to sign an anti-extremist document drawn up by the Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council (IMPIC).

Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri, CEO of IMPIC told *The New Arab* that the document affirms the promotion of peaceful coexistence and prohibits the signatory from radicalising other muslims. "We did not write this document because of him," said Qadri.

"It's a template document used because of muslim speakers that come to Ireland to promote extremism."

Qadri condemned any and all violence in Syria, but argued that he wanted to meet Hassoun in order to help promote a peace process.

"The situation in Syria is very complex and everyone there has handled blood - they are all

in my view a part of this crime against humanity," he said.

"But the only way to promote peace is through dialogue."

The delegation will then address the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade at the Irish parliament on Thursday at 9am.

Committee Chairman, Brendan Smith TD, said "This meeting is one in a series of meetings held by the Joint Committee in their deliberations on the ongoing atrocities in Syria, atrocities which have been repeatedly condemned in the strongest possible terms by the Joint Committee.

The committee will subsequently receive the novelist Robin Yassin-Kassab to hear his views.

Yassin-Kassab called Hassoun a "genocidal criminal" in a tweet on Wednesday.

Pro-Assad Syrian mufti rejects terrorism claims on Ireland visit

Yahoo7 News

Hassoun arrived in **Ireland** on Tuesday as part of a **religious** delegation of Syrian **religious** leaders and visited Trinity College Dublin on Wednesday.

Archbishop of Jerusalem's visit to Dublin & Glendalough begins

The Archbishop of Jerusalem, the Most Revd Suheil Dawani and his Chaplain, Canon David Longe have begun their seven-day visit to the Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough. The visit is part of the link partnership between the two dioceses.



Canon David Longe, Archbishop Suheil Dawani, the Revd Norman McCausland and Archbishop Michael Jackson outside the Department of Foreign Affairs.

On Thursday afternoon they met officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs along with the Archbishop of Dublin and the Revd Norman McCausland. Yesterday they had a full programme of visits to schools and care facilities before attending a Service of Evening Prayer in St Doulagh's Church, Balgriffin, Malahide.

This evening (Saturday) at 5.00 pm there will be a further opportunity to meet Archbishop Dawani and Canon Longe as they attend a special ecumenical service of Late Evening Office in Christ Church Cathedral.

The service will include reflections by Archbishop Dawani and Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of the UK and Ireland. This service is organised in partnership with the Diocesan Council for Mission and the Dublin Council of Churches. All are warmly welcome to attend.

Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland says Déarbhla Clarke's story highlights need to examine celibacy issue

The organisation representing Catholic priests has praised a woman for speaking publicly about her life as the child of a Catholic priest, the Irish News reports.

The Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland said Déarbhlá Clarke's story might "encourage others who may be in similar circumstances".

In an exclusive interview with The Irish News Ms Clarke told the loving relationship she enjoyed with her father, Armagh-born Fr Arty McAnerney and said she believes he benefited from the "love of a child".

The Drogheda woman (33) told her remarkable story in a bid to highlight why priests should be allowed to have children.

"He had what a lot of priests wouldn't be able to have, he had his God that he loved and respected and did all his work but then he also had the love of a child and a lot of priests cannot say that," she said.

"Quite honestly I think the rules in the Church at the moment are extremely archaic - you cannot expect a man to spend 60/70 years on their own, total celibacy, it is extremely cruel."

When joining the Catholic priesthood, clerics take a vow of lifelong celibacy.

But Fr Gerry O'Connor from the Association of Catholic Priests said they believe the issue of celibacy should be examined by the Church.

"I think firstly, we would recognise that there are very good priests, many of whom feel the rules on celibacy should be examined, but also there are very many more who feel that it should be accepted as part of the package of being a priest," he said.

"There are many who give much thought to it, but on the other side there are many who don't.

"You have to recognise that for hundreds of years there was a married priesthood within the Catholic Church, but there were also those who chose to be celibate.

"We, in the association, are interested in the Church addressing the issue and examining views.

"There are many priests who have left the Church to get married and have children and we believe they should be welcomed back. They



A stained glass window in a church in County Kerry, shows a priest's hands during the Eucharistic Prayer. Irish priests' ever-increasing workload is threatening to turn this demoralized and declining group into "sacrament-dispensing machines," says Fr. Brendan Hoban.

could offer much support and guidance to parishioners, in particular many young people.

"What we feel is that celebrating the Eucharist is so important, but the way things are going we won't get to celebrate the Eucharist, the crisis is so large with numbers of priests decreasing that

we will soon have nobody to celebrate the Eucharist.

"The whole question is that compulsory celibacy should be explored."

Fr O'Connor said he believed it was important that Ms Clarke was able to tell her story.

"From what I have heard, it sounds like a healthy family relationship," he said.

"I think this is something that is good for us all to hear and encourage others who may be in similar circumstances.

"Her story shows that they were able to overcome the potential difficult issues, they were able to overcome the rules and still be able to maintain a relationship.

"For that to not be able to happen, is far less healthy and it is good that Déarbhlá has been able to tell her story."

Irish priest warns of depression among overworked clerics

National Catholic Reporter

A stained glass window in a **church** in County Kerry, **Ireland**, shows a priest's hands during the Eucharistic Prayer. Irish priests' ever-increasing ...

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<https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/irish-priest-warns-depression-among-overworked-clerics>

Bishop Michael visits Carlow Mart

Bishop Michael Burrows, Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory visited Carlow Mart last Monday.

Carlow mart is located in the parish of Killeshin Union, one of the parishes in his diocese.

Rector of the parish, Canon Peter Tarleton, regularly visits the mart on a Monday and as the Bishop happened to be planning a visit to Killeshin parish that day he was told where the Rector could be found and that he was very welcome to call in if he wished!

Carlow Mart is a farmers' co-operative managed by James Walsh.

"I regularly visit Carlow Mart on a Monday to connect with many of my parishioners," says Canon Tarleton, "AND to see how much they are earning from the sale of their cattle!

As a meeting place particularly for men – some of whom live on their own in quite remote rural

areas – Carlow Mart fulfils a role way beyond the commercial exchange of cattle and sheep.

It is a place of fellowship and communication, where the regulars share a sense of belonging with the animals they have nurtured.”

Canon Tarleton adds that he visits the mart as an interested human being and is welcomed into this fellowship where he is encouraged and supported in his wider social and ecumenical commitments.

“There is a hope, too, that one day I’ll bring my cheque book and enter fully into the Mart experience!” he says.

Bishop Burrows was impressed with his first visit.

“I went to the Mart as part of a parish day in Killeslin. The Mart is where you meet a wonderful cross – section of those who work on the land,” he says, “learn of their problems and of their joys and truly tune into the farming life which is so much the backbone of this diocese.”

The Mart ‘family’ made the Bishop very welcome, the Rector says.

News briefs

+++ Church response to catastrophic wildfires in USA - Episcopalians in the path of catastrophic wildfires that have destroyed a large swath of the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in the southeastern U.S. are working to help their communities in the aftermath. In devastated Gatlinburg, it appears that Trinity Episcopal Church survived the flames.

+++ Europe's faith leaders meet - The Church of England's Bishop in Europe, Robert Innes, joined an interfaith delegation at the European Union's (EU) annual "high-level meeting" of religious leaders from across Europe. The meeting was hosted by the European Commission – the EU's politicized civil service – to discuss "migration, integration and European values." The commission's first vice president, Frans Timmermans, convened the meeting "for an open exchange of views between EU institutions and important parts of European society on EU policies."

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Church of Ireland clergy express 'concern' after allegations of sexual assault at Dublin school

Irish Times

Church of Ireland clergy have expressed their “sincere concern” for a ... on Thursday afternoon read: “Following **news** of an alleged sexual assault at ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-of-ireland-clergy-express-concern-after-allegations-of-sexual-assault-at-dublin-school-1.2889127>

Church of Ireland 'express sincere concern' following alleged sex assault of student at prestigious ... -

Irish Independent

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/church-of-ireland-express-sincere-concern-following-alleged-sex-assault-of-student-at-prestigious-dublin-school-35259009.html>

King's Hospital board to discuss alleged sex assault of pupil

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/king-s-hospital-board-to-discuss-alleged-sex-assault-of-pupil-1.2889847>

Bishops' concern over alleged sexual assault at Dublin boarding school

[RTE.ie](http://www.rte.ie)

<https://www.rte.ie/news/2016/1201/835701-alleged-assault-dublin-boarding-school/>

Fears evidence tampered with in five-day school 'sex assault' delay

[Herald.ie](http://www.herald.ie)

The school is a co-educational **Church of Ireland** secondary school, whose alumni include well-known figures from the worlds of politics, broadcasting, ...

<http://www.herald.ie/news/fears-evidence-tampered-with-in-fiveday-school-sex-assault-delay-35261768.html>

Christian Today/York Press

Reports that the Archbishop of York has warned that the Government must not scapegoat migrants for failures in housing and jobs. The Archbishop was speaking at the [launch of his new book](#) *Agape Love Stories* in York yesterday

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

featuring 22 stories of God's love changing people's lives.

<http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/14941486.Archbishop-launches-book-of-love-stories/>

Express/Mail

Reports on an interview with the Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, commenting on remarks by Theresa May at Prime Minister's Question Time this week when she said Christians must have the right to speak freely about their faith at work and about Christmas. In the interview, Bishop Nick said relations between different religious communities in the UK are good, but that some secularists are intolerant of Christianity.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3989728/Bishop-Leeds-Some-Christians-scared-talk-faith-public.html>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/738822/Theresa-May-Christmas-Christians-Bishop-celebration>

BBC/Times/Mail/Christian Today/Schools Week

Reports on research by the Education Policy Institute which says that plans to allow new faith schools to increase the share of pupils they take on religious grounds will not improve standards

and is unlikely to boost social mobility. The Times and Christian Today articles quote separate figures from the Catholic Education Service showing more than 26,000 Muslim and 63,000 atheist children attend Catholic schools in England and Wales,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-38172113>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/1-in-3-catholic-school-pupils-is-not-a-member-of-church-0ltv3bbxb>

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3992350/Faith-schools-selective-grammars-little-poor-pupils.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3992350/Faith-schools-selective-grammars-little-poor-pupils.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3992350/Faith-schools-selective-grammars-little-poor-pupils.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

<http://schoolsweek.co.uk/more-faith-schools-unlikely-to-boost-social-mobility/>

BBC

Report that an average of 80 child sex abuse cases a month have been referred to the police over the last year following survivors' testimony to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. (IICSA). IICSA said the referrals to a dedicated police team were the result of written submissions and reports received by the inquiry as well as evidence given to the inquiry's Truth Project. The Anglican Church in England and

Wales is one of 13 strands of investigation by IICSA.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38170143>

Express

Report that Rev Simon Tillotson and his congregation at St Peter's Church in Whitstable have stepped in to give the town's post office a new home. Around 40,000 residents had faced travelling more than a mile to the nearest post office after theirs shut and a temporary one opened in a car park. The four counter fully-functioning shop has been set up in the church and is open six days a week.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/738820/vicar-local-post-office-in-church-Whitstable>

ITV

Report that Durham Cathedrals' LEGO cathedral, which raised £300,000 towards the Open Treasure exhibition experience, has won a national fundraising award. Durham Cathedral in LEGO had an initial fundraising target of £100,000 but exceeded its target by raising £300,000 over a three year period.

<http://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2016-12-01/durham-cathedral-lego-project-wins-national-fundraising-award/>

BBC (video)

Reports that Canon Joanna Penberthy, elected as Wales's first female bishop and who is due to take up the post of Bishop of St Davids in the New Year, has warned that domestic violence is widespread and that everyone must play a part in tackling gender-based violence.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-38168633>

Comment

Guard/Times/Ind

Various articles, one satirical, by columnists following Theresa May's remarks at Prime Minister's Question Time this week that Christians should be able to speak about their faith at work and speak freely about Christmas. Columnist Gaby Hinsliff, writing in The Guardian, argues that Christmas isn't being banned – but we should 'play along' with those who think it is.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/talking-about-christmas-we-can-t-stop-l1nk3vj7x>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/01/christmas-banned-save-santa-campaign-left-voters>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/christmas-theresa-may-standing-up-for-equalities-human-rights-standing-up-for-christians-a7450286.html>