

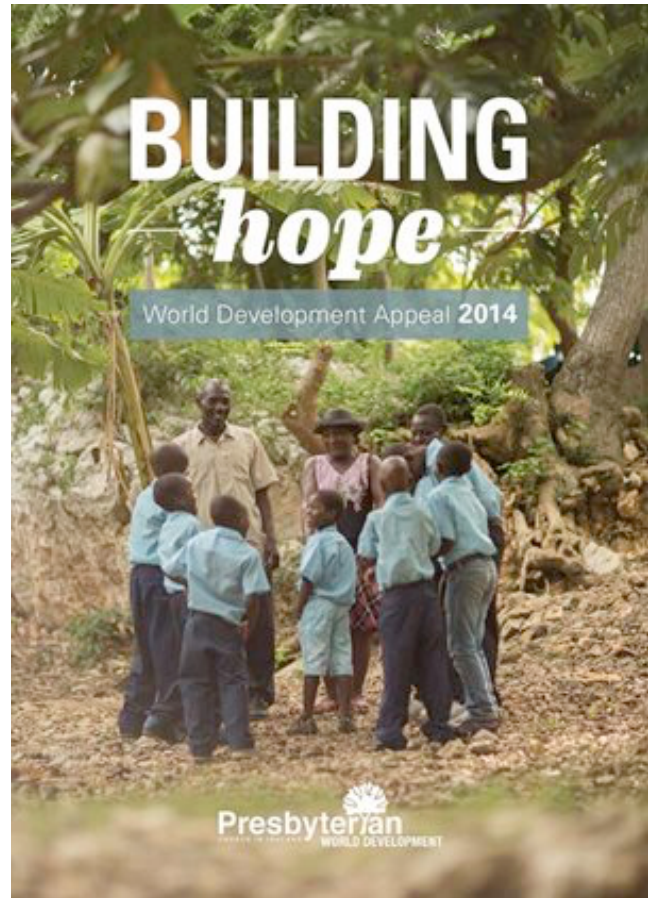


**Churches are best
social melting pots in
modern Britain**

Presbyterians 'Building Hope' in Haiti and Myanmar/Burma

The Appeal, entitled 'Building Hope', will highlight the ways in which barriers to sustainable development are being addressed and overcome in the aftermath of trauma, whether from environmental destruction or political repression. The projects being highlighted this year are in Haiti and Myanmar.

In January 2015, Haitians will be marking the fifth anniversary of the earthquake which so devastated their country. Their recovery is ongoing, but even in the most difficult circumstances, homes and hope for the future are being sustainably constructed.



“Presbyterians responded generously to the Moderator-supported Special Appeal for Haiti back in 2010 when over £900,000 was raised to help shortly after the disaster struck,” explains Rev Katherine Meyer, the Presbyterian Church's World Development Appeal convener, “We decided to focus our 2014 Appeal on Haiti, knowing that they still need financial support. It is estimated that it will take up to 20 years to get their infrastructure where it was. You have to remember that they lost a lot of their doctors, nurses, teachers and government officials in the earthquake and it will another generation to establish the same network of professionals.”

The Presbyterian Church campaign will direct its World Development support through Christian Aid and Tearfund and much of the money raised this year will go to our partners in Haiti MISSEH (Social Mission of the Haitian Churches), an evangelical mission network, and GARR (Support for Refugees and the Repatriated).

The 2014 Appeal will also support The Leprosy Mission's 7-Up Disability Advocacy Project, which is taking advantage of the recent political shifts in Myanmar to place the citizenship and dignity of people with disabilities at the heart of government policy and community development.

During the last eight years Presbyterians have donated over £9.5m to World Development projects around the world and various Special Appeals including responding to the typhoon in the Philippines and the floods in Pakistan.

"In this our year of service and outreach, I commend this appeal to help others, whom we may never come into contact with, in need as they seek to restore their homes, villages and livelihoods to what they once were," said the Moderator Dr. Michael Barry at the launch of the appeal. "Presbyterians in Ireland understand about building communities from a post conflict perspective. We are aware of the complexities and yet Haiti, as the poorest country in the western hemisphere, needs our support so that hope is built up both structurally and spiritually. I trust that the Church membership will contribute greatly to this year's appeal to give hope, through practical means, to many people in dire need in both Haiti and Myanmar."

A full range of resources for the appeal including videos and background briefings on Haiti and Myanmar are available at www.presbyterianireland.org/world-development

Donations to this year's World Development Appeal will be received in Presbyterian congregations over the next number of Sundays during Advent and the Christmas/New Year period.

Prestigious award for Black Santa

Belfast's Black Santa, the Dean of Belfast, has received a prestigious award for 'reflecting the true, unquenchable spirit of Christmas.'

The name of the Very Rev John Mann has been added to an impressive list of recipients of the Roll of Honour at the annual Aisling Awards. Previous winners include Linda Ervine, Baroness May Blood, the Macmillan Nurses and Alan McBride.

The Awards were presented at a glitzy ceremony, with the Roll of Honour winner unveiled at the end of the evening.



A citation in the Awards brochure reads: "The Black Santa is among Belfast's proudest and most-loved institutions." It describes the annual sit-out on the steps of St Anne's as 'a selfless and gruelling vigil.'

"Bus drivers taking impromptu collections on board have been known to stop on Donegall Street to boost the Dean's coffers, taxi drivers visit frequently to hand over their day's tips, while whip-arounds at office parties and donations from generous parents and children setting out on the Christmas shop all go into the kitty," the brochure states.

The citation ends: "For reflecting the true, unquenchable spirit of Christmas - and of Belfast - and for making the largest single contribution to charity by any individual in the city, we are proud to add the Very Rev John Mann to our Aisling Roll of Honour."

Dean Mann, who begins his fourth and Black Santa's 38th Sit-out for charities on Friday December 12, said he was honoured to receive the award which recognised the dedication of all his Black Santa predecessors - Dean Sammy Crooks, Dean Jack Shearer and Dean Houston McKelvey - and the unfailing generosity of the people of Belfast.

The original Black Santa, Dean Crooks, will be honoured this Friday (12th @ 11.45am) when the Ulster History Circle unveils a Blue Plaque outside St Anne's Cathedral in his memory. Dean Mann will begin the 2014 Sit-out after the unveiling - extending the length of his Sit-out from one week to 10 days.

Guest speaker at the Aisling Awards was Thomas P DiNapoli, who, as New York State Comptroller, holds one of the highest political offices in the state of New York, overseeing the financial practices of a number of public bodies.



Worshippers at Choral Eucharist in Trinity College Chapel who were present for the last service of the Rev Darren McCallig as chaplain and Dean of Residence. After seven years in TCD Mr McCallig is moving to Denmark where he will be Chaplain of St Alban's, Copenhagen, in the Diocese of Europe

Inter churches group review unity in Mission and Evangelism in a changing Irish landscape

The 27th Irish Inter–Church Meeting took place in Mount St. Anne's Retreat Centre, Portarlington, Co. Laois on Thursday 27th November. Delegates representing 15 Christian denominations across Ireland gathered to reflect upon the theme *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in a Changing Irish Landscape*.

Following a formal welcome by Rev Dr Donald Watts, ICC President and Co–chair of the IICM, the keynote address was delivered by Professor Kirsteen Kim, Professor of Theology and World Christianity at Leeds University. In her capacity as Vice–Moderator of the WCC's Commission for World Mission and Evangelism, Professor Kim was instrumental in the drafting of the WCC *Together Towards Life* document from which the Meeting's theme was derived.

Delegates spent the remainder of the day attending a choice of workshops to consider the following:

- Ecumenism as Mission, led by Dr Mary McCaughey
- Mission as the Pursuit of Justice, led by Kate McQuillan, Trócaire
- Mission as Evangelism, led by Rev Andy Carroll
- Mission and the Reconciliation of Creation, led by Kathy Galloway, Head of Christian Aid in Scotland and formerly of the Iona Community

Insights gained during the workshops were then fed back and further discussed at a plenary session in the afternoon, before the meeting was officially brought to a close by Most Rev Dr Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick and IICM Co–Chair.

Scout Troop Celebrations At St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis

A night of celebration was held to mark the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the 81st Belfast Scout Troop at St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis.

The evening began with a Service of Thanksgiving in the church which was filled with squirrels, beavers, cubs and scouts, who were joined by past members, family members and the District Commissioner Ian Stewart.



District Commissioner Ian Stewart, scout group leader Ian Berryman, and rector of St Bartholomew's, the Revd Kevin Graham, with representatives of the scout groups at St Bartholomew's for the anniversary celebration.

The rector of St Bartholomew's, the Revd Kevin Graham, spoke about reflecting God's light through our lives and thanked the boys and girls for their generous contributions to the South Belfast Foodbank collection which had

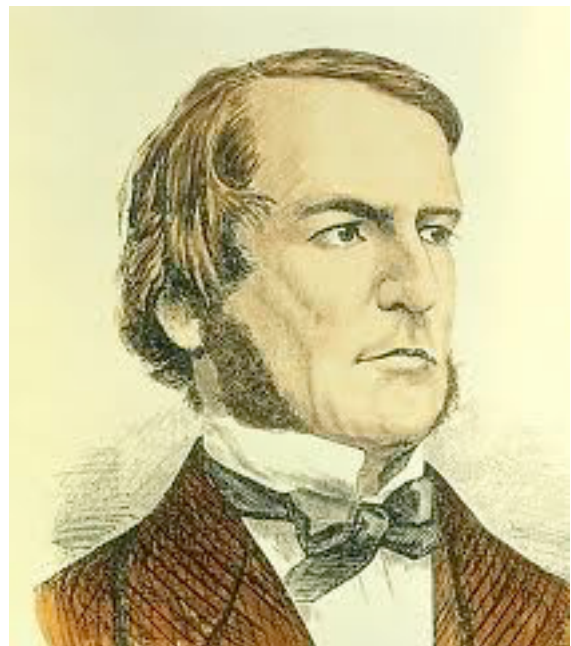
filled the church trolley to overflowing. He said this was a great example of reflecting God's light in our lives.

Following the service a birthday party was held in the Parish Hall where photos from the past and a poster exhibition of the Scout movement since its foundation were on display.

Kevin said afterwards: "We are all looking forward to celebrating 65 years in 2019 which coincides with the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Parish."

Cork Choral Evensong marks anniversary of a father of computer science

Yesterday was the anniversary of the death 150 years ago of George Boole, first Professor of Mathematics at University College Cork, and one of the fathers of computer science. The Service of Choral Evensong took place at Saint Michael's Church, Blackrock, Cork, the church attended by Boole and his family; he is buried in the adjoining churchyard.



George Boole

The Bishop of Cork, the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton, presided at the Service which was taken by the rector, the Venerable Adrian Wilkinson and sung by the Clerks Choral. The preacher was the Reverend Canon Dr Mark Hucknall, Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral (Boole was originally from Lincoln) who holds doctorates in both science and theology. Among the distinguished guests were Dr Michael Murphy, President of University College Cork; the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Mary Shields; the Mayor of Cork County, Cllr Alan Coleman; and the British Ambassador to Ireland, Dominick Chilcott, CMG.

Churches are best social melting pots in modern Britain

By John Bingham, Telegraph:

They teach that people should love their neighbour but a major new study shows that churches are one of the few places most modern Britons might even meet them.



Ground-breaking new analysis of the friendship networks of almost 4,300 people aged from 13 to 80 has identified churches and sporting events as the last bastions of neighbourliness and integration in Britain.

Overall, it found that churches and other places of worship are more successful than any other social setting at bringing people of different backgrounds together, well ahead of gatherings such as parties, meetings, weddings or venues such as pubs and clubs.

But while places of worship proved most potent at mixing people from different social classes and races, spectator sports events were the most successful at bringing people of different ages together.

The conclusions emerge from new findings, seen by the Sunday Telegraph, from the Social Integration Commission, a unique social experiment which has attempted to map thousands of people's social networks to determine how closely people of different classes and generations mix in modern Britain.

More at Media Digest below.

Communion alone is 'not the solution' for divorced and re-married Catholics, says Pope Francis

Holy Communion is not the solution to the pastoral challenges facing divorced and re-married Catholics, Pope Francis has said.

In an interview with the Argentine daily newspaper, La Nacion, in which he discussed the family synod, the challenges of his papacy and reforming the Roman Curia, Pope Francis said: "In the case of divorcees who have remarried, we posed the question, what do we do with them? What door can we allow them to open? This was a pastoral concern: will we allow them to go to Communion? Communion alone is no solution.

“The solution is integration. They have not been excommunicated, true. But they cannot be godfathers to any child being baptised, mass readings are not for divorcees, they cannot give Communion, they cannot teach Sunday school, there are about seven things that they cannot do, I have the list over there. Come on! If I disclose any of this it will seem that they have been excommunicated in fact. Thus, let us open the doors a bit more.”

The Pope continued: “Why can’t they be godfathers and godmothers? ‘No, no, no, what testimony will they be giving their godson?’ The testimony of a man and a woman saying ‘my dear, I made a mistake, I was wrong here, but I believe our Lord loves me, I want to follow God, I was not defeated by sin, I want to move on’. Anything more Christian than that? And what if one of the political crooks among us, corrupt people, are chosen to be somebody’s godfather. If they are properly wedded by the Church, would we accept them? What kind of testimony will they give to their godson? A testimony of corruption? Things need to change, our standards need to change.”

During the interview, Pope Francis also said people should pay closer attention to what he says rather than what the media reports.

He said: “In general people don’t read about what is going on. Somebody did say to me once, ‘Of course, of course. Insight is so good for us but we need clearer things’. And I answered, ‘Look, I wrote an encyclical, true enough, it was a big job, and an Apostolic Exhortation, I’m permanently making statements, giving homilies; that’s teaching. That’s what I think, not what the media say that I think. Check it out, it’s very clear. Evangelii Gaudium is very clear’”.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori’s Christmas message 2014

The following is the Presiding Bishop’s message -

The altar hanging at an English Advent service was made of midnight blue, with these words across its top: “We thank you that darkness reminds us of light.” Facing all who gathered there to give thanks were images of night creatures – a large moth, an owl, a badger, and a bat – cryptic and somewhat mysterious creatures that can only be encountered in the darkness.

As light ebbs from the days and the skies of fall, many in the Northern Hemisphere associate dark with the spooks and skeletons of secular



Hallowe'en celebrations. That English church has reclaimed the connection between creator, creation, and the potential holiness of all that is. It is a fitting reorientation toward the coming of One who has altered those relationships toward new possibilities for healing and redemption.

Advent leads us into darkness and decreasing light. Our bodies slow imperceptibly with shorter days and longer nights, and the merriness and frantic activity around us are often merely signs of eager hunger for light and healing and wholeness.

The Incarnation, the coming of God among us in human flesh, happened in such a quiet and out of the way place that few noticed at first. Yet the impact on human existence has been like a bolt of lightning that continues to grow and generate new life and fire in all who share that hunger.

Jesus is among us like a flitting moth – will we notice his presence in the street-sleeper? He pierces the dark like a silent, streaking owl seeking food for hungry and defenseless nestlings. He will overturn this world's unjust foundations like badgers undermining a crooked wall. Like the bat's sonar, his call comes to each one uniquely – have we heard his urgent “come and follow”?

God is among us, and within us, and around us, encountering, nudging, loving, transforming the world and its creatures toward the glorious dream the shepherds announced so many years ago, toward the beloved community of prophetic dreams, and the nightwatch that proclaims “all is well, fear not, the Lord is here.”

May Christ be born anew in you this Christmastide. May his light burn in you, and may you labor to spread it in the darkness. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and it is the harbinger of peace for all creation.

Media digest

Mail

Report on the Archbishop of Canterbury's comments in the Christmas edition of *Radio Times*, where he said people can show they care about loved ones by buying Christmas presents from charity shops or simply showing kindness with offers of babysitting, dinner invitations to the elderly or giving

time to the local community. It states Justin Welby said that although gifts have become an essential part of the festive period, it is not all about financial outlay and people should not feel pressure to match what others give them.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2864833/Gifts-dont-cost--Welby.html#ixzz3LHZRJUBA>

Tel (yesterday)

Report on how new analysis of the friendship networks of almost 4,300 people aged from 13 to 80 has identified churches and sporting events as the most effective centres of neighbourliness and integration in Britain. The conclusions come from the Social Integration Commission, which has attempted to map thousands of people's social networks to see how closely people of different classes and generations mix in modern Britain. It found churches and other places of worship are more successful than any other social setting at bringing people of different backgrounds together and could play a leading role in promoting social integration. Includes CofE comment.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11276878/Churches-are-best-social-melting-pots-in-modern-Britain.html>

BBC

Report on how a church mission worker from Carlisle is to appear on *Songs of Praise* after his online Christmas carol rap was spotted by producers. Andy Dykes remixed the traditional carol *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, last year to give it a more hip hop feel. It got more than 4,000 hits on YouTube. Mr Dykes and his friends have recorded a version of *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, which will be shown later.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cumbria-30367389>

BBC

Report on how churches in Gloucestershire have been given an early Christmas present in the form of a share of £60,000. It states 14 churches have been awarded Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust (GHCT) grants to help protect historic artefacts and improve facilities.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-30342529>