



CNI



Methodist Women in Ireland (MWI) to promote gender equality in Sri Lanka

This year the Methodist Women in Ireland (MWI) will be fundraising to promote gender equality and to improve the health of women and children in Kudaoya village, Sri Lanka through the Wings of Hope Lanka Project.

Kudaoya is a small tea plantation village in the rural hills of Hatton, 130Km north of Colombo. The MWI will be working with the local church and Health Clinic in Kudaoya to deliver the project.

Through their fundraising and support the MWI hope to provide the following:

Water Tank and Sanitation Project:

- To set up two water tanks along with motor pumps and pipelines
- To supply tap water directly to the village
- To build basic toilets

An Education Program for both Single Mothers and their Children:

- To deliver courses in Basic Health and Hygiene; Nutrition; First Aid; Prevention of Disease, and Child Protection
- To supply school uniforms, shoes and books for six of the neediest single mothers

Mother and Baby Program:

- To supply nutritional supplements for ten of the neediest pregnant and nursing mothers and their babies.

- To provide ante-natal and post-natal Health Care and Baby Care Training Programs .

The MWI will be fundraising to provide over £10,000 towards the above projects.

The MWI became involved in this project via their membership of the World Federation of Methodist Women and United Church Women (WFM&UCW) whose aims are to promote global gender equality and to empower women.

The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFM&UCW) is a fellowship of officially recognized groups of Methodist women organized on a national basis. In over 80 countries around the world the World Federation is a symbol of spiritual ties, unity, sisterhood and the opportunity for the development of international understanding. This worldwide group of women working towards the betterment of people is a source of inspiration in a world divided by political, social and economic barriers. Through study programmes, international assemblies and seminars, through ecumenical activity and as a Non-Governmental Organisation at the United Nations, the movement widens the horizons of individual women. Cultural differences begin to be understood.

Wings of Hope Lanka is a non-profit organisation which seeks to empower women and children to develop an understanding of their own personal worth and realise their own potential to live a purpose filled life.



Mini Retreat for C of I Readers and lay ministers

“Communicating your Vocation in a changing world” is the theme of a mini retreat for Diocesan and Parish Readers and other lay ministers across the Church of Ireland next month. The mini retreat will be facilitated by Bishop Richard Henderson (pictured) at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute in Dublin on February 20 and 21.

Designed to allow Diocesan and Parish Readers or those who exercise a lay ministry authorised by a Diocese (such as a Healing Ministry) an opportunity to reflect on their vocation amidst a changing world, the mini retreat will provide time

and space for Biblical reflection, discussion and prayer.

The retreat costs €50/£40 per person (Residential) or €25/£20 per person (Non-residential). All bookings should be made through the Church of Ireland Theological Institute Lay Training Coordinator, David Brown via davidbrown@theologicalinstitute.ie. Reservations must be received by 12.00 noon on Tuesday February 16.

£100,000 grants available for Northern Ireland's listed churches

Grants of up to £100,000 are available for urgent roof repairs to places of worship at listed buildings in Northern Ireland.

BBC Ni - The money is part of a £15m UK fund organised by the government's Department of Culture at Westminster.

The deadline for applications is the end of this month.

Organisations, trusts and congregations of all faiths and denominations can apply for a grant from £10,000 to £100,000. Limited funding can also be provided for structural investigations, specialist reports and bat surveys.

Culture Secretary Sajid Javid, said: "Our places of worship are wonderful examples of our heritage that we're proud to invest in.

"This fund will help conserve and maintain these historic buildings so they can continue to play a vital role in the communities they serve, for years to come."

Poots' gay blood ban 'influenced by religion'



Former health minister Edwin Poots

Former Health Minister Edwin Poots' ban on gay men giving blood in Northern Ireland was

influenced by his religious beliefs, the High Court heard on Tuesday.

Lawyers for a homosexual man claimed Assembly comments by the Democratic Unionist MLA show he wrongly allowed his Christian morals to impact on his stance.

They are now seeking a ruling that Mr Poots displayed apparent bias in maintaining the lifetime prohibition on gay donations.

Even though a judge has already held that the ban is irrational, he reached no conclusion on allegations that the decision was prejudiced by religious views.

Prior to departing from office Mr Poots launched an appeal against the verdict. British Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt is also contesting the ruling.

But the gay man who brought the original challenge, identified only as JR65, still wants a finding of apparent bias to be made.

Before the appeal can be heard the case has been referred back to Mr Justice Treacy to make a determination on that point.

The gay blood ban, put in place during the 1980s AIDS threat, was lifted in England, Scotland and Wales in November 2011.

It was replaced by new rules which allow blood from men whose last sexual contact with another man was more than a year ago.

But Mr Poots maintained the prohibition in Northern Ireland on the basis of ensuring public safety.

In October 2013 Mr Justice Treacy ruled that his position on donations from men who have had sex with men deviated from the rest of the UK.

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/poots-gay-blood-ban-influenced-by-religion-1-6506245>

Carlow school saddened by deaths of four former pupils

Saint Leo's College in Carlow has issued the following statement in relation to the road traffic accident near Athy, Co Kildare on 6 January:

“It is with great sadness that we learned of the tragic accident involving five of our past pupils.

The staff and students of Saint Leo's College are devastated at the loss of four beautiful young girls. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to their families and friends at this awful time. May their gentle souls rest in peace.

"We pray for their friend who was injured in last night's crash and ask God to extend his healing grace to her. We also think of the driver and passenger in the van and ask God to be with them and their families."

Saint Leo's College is an all-girls voluntary secondary school founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1839. It is situated on the Dublin Road in Carlow.

Bishop Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, has asked for prayers for all of those affected by the road traffic accident near Athy.

Bishop Nulty said, "I was deeply shocked to hear of the deaths of the four young women and the injuries suffered by others involved in the road crash.

"I ask the faithful of the diocese to pray for the deceased, the injured, the bereaved, friends,

colleagues, the emergency services, and all those affected by this tragedy.

“It is a dark day for the people of Carlow, Rathcoole and Athy and there is very little any of us can say at this time to comfort those bereaved by this tragedy. I pray that the families will receive all the support they need at this time and that they will be given privacy to mourn their loved ones.”

Cork schools Epiphany celebrations



The Magi arrive

Last year was the first year in Ireland when many schoolchildren returned to school before the end of the 12 days of Christmas. This was a result in changes by the Department of Education and Skills' in the standardised school year. Children returned to school on the Feast of Epiphany itself last year, so the patron of primary schools in Cork, Cloyne and Ross – Bishop Paul Colton – asked parishes and schools to find ways of marking the day. The same happened again this year, although on the second day of the new school term, 6th January (Epiphany).



Stars were distributed to each class group from St Luke's National School in Saint Luke's Church, Douglas, Cork

Services were again held in schools across the Diocese. In Saint Luke's Parish, Douglas, Cork, school-children attended a Service in the parish church, at the end of which a representative from each year group was given a star to lead each class back to school. The stars were then displayed in each classroom.

Voting details of Presbytery vote on gay ordination



The final decision will be made at this year's General Assembly in May.

The Church of Scotland has confirmed the final figures showing how Presbyteries voted on the overture on gay ordination.

The majority backed the proposal to allow Kirk Sessions the possibility of allowing ministers and deacons who are in a civil partnership to apply for vacant charges.

The final decision will be made at this year's General Assembly in May.

32 Presbyteries voted in favour and 13 against. This equates to 71.1% in favour and 28.9% against. 1391 members of Presbyteries voted in favour and 1153 against. This equates to 54.6% in favour and 45.4% against.

Services for suicides could be legalised in Church of England

Centuries-old Church tradition could be changed as the Church of England is set to debate the burial of suicides in Canon Law next month.

According to current Church law, clergy must bury "the corpse or ashes of any person decease

within his cure". However, article B38 of Canon Law stipulates that those who have "died unbaptised, or being of sound mind have laid violent hands upon himself, or have been declared excommunicated" are exempt.



Members of the General Synod will call for Canon law to be reformed so that those who take their own lives can be 'legally' buried using Church rites.

Ministers are instead asked to use an alternative burial service in these cases. However, no such service has ever been approved by the General Synod and so clergy are forced to create their own versions or use the approved service – an act which is in breach of Canon Law.

Rev Sally Hitchiner, chaplain at Brunel University and founder of Diverse Church, tweeted in November: "I don't know a single priest who doesn't bury suicides. Can find you lots of examples of equally outdated civil laws."

This is all despite calls over several decades to reform the law. A campaigner for change, Canon Michael Parsons, **told the Mail on Sunday** that the change would shift the perception that the Church is "hostile" towards those who commit suicide, and would give clergy freedom to perform ceremonies which are already common practice. He added that most clergy are primarily concerned with looking after the families of those involved, and making sure they are aptly cared for.

However, though reforms are expected to receive majority support next month, they do face some opposition.

According to the Mail, an unnamed senior member of Synod said: "The Church has always opposed suicide on the basis of the commandment Thou Shalt Not Kill, and that includes yourself."

Former Government Minister Lord Tebbit, who has been vocal in his opposition of assisted suicide, told the Mail that the Church "is in danger of getting into a muddle".

"We can take a merciful view of people who kill themselves while the balance of their mind is disturbed. But we are now looking at cases in which people who appear to be quite sane want to take their own lives," he argued.

"The Church should think again."

Scots missionary Mary Slessor to be honoured across two continents

The remarkable achievements of Scots missionary Mary Slessor will be celebrated across two continents at the 100th anniversary of her death.

The Aberdeen-born missionary followed in the footsteps of fellow Scot David Livingstone to take the teachings of Christianity to Africa in the last quarter of the 19th century.

She died on January 13 1915 at 67 after spending 38 years working in Calabar, Nigeria.

She is credited with saving the lives of hundreds of people during her time in west Africa, by stopping sacrifices, brutal punishments and the killing of twins.



The remarkable achievements of Scots missionary Mary Slessor will be celebrated across two continents at the 100th anniversary of her death.

Now, 100 years on from her death, plans are in place for a series of centenary events in Nigeria and Scotland, most notably in Dundee where she lived and worked from the age of 11.

Among the events is a plaque-unveiling ceremony in Dundee on the anniversary of her death, and in April the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland will give a service at the same spot.

The Rt Rev John Chalmers praised the way Ms Slessor got close to the people she wanted to help and said she was remembered as one of the most significant of all the Scottish missionaries.

“What is remarkable is that at the end of the 19th century she was in so many ways ahead of her time,” he said.

“She was a woman in a man's world and was quite prepared to make the rules for herself.”

Ms Slessor worked hard to educate herself despite poverty, a violent, drunken father and a lack of formal education.

She went to Nigeria in the mid-1870s with United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

In Calabar, she was horrified to find there was a local superstition against twins - which meant hundreds of babies were being murdered or left to die each

year. She saved the children by adopting a number of them in the village where she settled.

Mr Chalmers said the saving of the twins was “one of her great achievements”.

He said: ``She reached some of the local people no-one had ever reached before, those whose suspicions and habits were deeply ingrained.

``The only way she was ever going to make a difference there was if she learned the language and became completely familiar with the tribal traditions and with the way in which the hierarchy of the tribe worked.

``She didn't just dismiss the local culture, she tried to understand it and then she tried to find ways to overcome some of the injustices."

The Scot went on to serve in various places in the region over the years and had several visits home during that time.

She gained the respect of the tribal chiefs to such an extent that they appointed her as a quasi-justice of the peace, a judge-like figure who would settle disputes.

She was also passionate about education, particularly of girls, and was keen to develop trade opportunities with a view to stemming the slave trade.

Mr Chalmers is preparing to head out to Nigeria later this month to take part in commemorations there.

His programme of events begins on January 17 with a visit to a centenary service in Akpap Okoyog, the village where Mary lived and where her house still stands.

He will later witness the laying of wreaths at Ms Slessor's grave in Calabar and mark Mary Slessor Day at St Peter's Presbyterian Church in Umuahia parish.

The Moderator said: ``There are huge services taking place in all the places where she lived and worked. We're expecting hundreds of people at these services.

``She's still remembered at local churches but she's also very much remembered in the political world of Nigeria as a very significant figure. It's a big big deal, she holds a prominent place in Nigeria across the country."

In Scotland, the plaque-unveiling in Dundee will take place on January 13.

The Mary Slessor Foundation, which commissioned the piece, hopes to increase awareness of the "remarkable" woman, who, they say, is little known in her own city despite her huge achievements.

In March, the McManus Galleries will be hosting a Mary Slessor-themed evening and the chairman of the Foundation will give a lecture on her work at the Dundee and Angus College.

From April, the foundation will also be organising a six-month exhibition telling the story of Ms Slessor at Verdant Works: Scotland's Jute Museum.

US Methodists End Case Against Bishop Who Performed Gay Wedding

The United [Methodist church](#) is settling a complaint against a retired bishop who performed a same-sex wedding in Alabama, and a church leader said the agreement showed the denomination doesn't have to be divided by differences over gay marriage.

Church statements issued Monday said the case against retired Bishop Melvin G. Talbert had ended with a settlement that the denomination calls a "just resolution."

Official Methodist teaching doesn't allow same-sex marriages, and there's been discussion of splitting the denomination over disagreements about whether the position should be amended as society changes. Talbert is retired, but he still holds the title of bishop and could have faced sanctions including the potential loss of ministerial privileges in the denomination had the complaint gone forward.

Colorado-based Bishop Elaine J. W. Stanovsky, who handled the complaint against Talbert, said the settlement showed Methodists can work together on the issue.

"The Just Resolution Agreement ... is a reminder that United Methodists don't have to be divided by their differences," Stanovsky said in a statement. "The conflicted parties came together, prayerfully listened to one another, challenged one another, and searched for God's guidance for themselves and for the church."

Talbert, who maintains the Bible teaches that pastors should perform ministry services for everyone, said the settlement doesn't prevent him from performing more same-sex marriages.

"I cannot say I will not do it, but I have no plans to do so at this time," Talbert said Tuesday in an interview from his home near Nashville, Tennessee.

In the agreement, Talbert expressed regret that some felt harmed when he performed the wedding ceremony for Joe Openshaw and Bobby Prince in Birmingham in October 2013. But Talbert also said he still believed his actions were correct.

United Methodists are among the religious denominations struggling with how to balance biblical teachings and same-sex marriage. One of the men wed by Talbert said he was glad the bishop wouldn't face penalties for his actions.

Media review

Ind

Report on how the Bishop of Croydon, Jonathan Clark, is backing a drive by Citizens UK calling on all prospective MPs to pledge a time limit on the detention of migrants. He is quoted saying: "Detaining people indefinitely in prison-like conditions without judicial oversight is unjust, ineffective and inhumane."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/detention-the-black-hole-at-the-heart-of-british-justice-9961576.html>

Times/Ind

Reports that retired vicar, the Rev Michael Roberts, has had his complaint about a misleading campaigning leaflet on fracking upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). He said the leaflet, produced by Residents Action on Fylde Fracking (RAFF), carried false claims about the risks from fracking. The ASA, which investigated his complaint, said that RAFF had agreed to stop issuing the leaflet and said several of RAFF's claims were misleading and breached its code.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article4315912.ece>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/anticuadrilla-groups-fracking-protest-leaflet-misleading-says-watchdog-9961373.html>

BBC

Report on a service to mark the relocation of a memorial to the Hillsborough disaster at Liverpool's Anfield stadium as [construction begins on expanding the Main Stand](#). As part of the service, a specially commissioned temporary memorial was unveiled. It states Canon Myles Davies, Vice Dean of Liverpool Cathedral, transferred the memorial's Eternal Flame to the cathedral, where it will remain during the interim period.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-30704062>

Guard

Article on new guidelines for school exclusion policies cites the example of [a six-year-old who was excluded](#) from a Church of England primary school for having a bag of Mini Cheddars in his packed lunch after the introduction of a healthy eating policy.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jan/06/pupils-lower-threshold-school-exclusions>

BBC

Report that the reconstruction of the church of Saint Nicholas at Ground Zero started last month after 13 years of negotiations. It states the Greek Orthodox church will be the only non-secular building at Ground Zero and many believe it will become one of the most visited churches in the US. It is planned to be completed by Easter 2017. The original St Nicholas Church - a tiny townhouse standing right below the Twin Towers - was destroyed when the South Tower collapsed after the attacks of 11 September, 2001.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30691875>