



## **The essential daily brief on the Irish churches**



### **Archbishop prays with Nigerian president during whistle-stop visit**

**The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby made a last minute visit to Nigeria yesterday to offer his heartfelt sympathy for the recent events affecting the country, including**

**the recent bombings in Jos and the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls who have now been missing for almost two months.**

Archbishop Justin paid a pastoral call on President Goodluck Jonathan in Abuja to express his personal pain and condolence about the ongoing terrorism affecting parts of North Nigeria. The Archbishop, the President, and the Primate of Nigeria, the Most Reverend Nicholas Okoh, then prayed privately together.

The Archbishop, who has visited Nigeria on many occasions – including Jos and other parts of Northern Nigeria, where he worked while leading the reconciliation work at Coventry Cathedral – has previously [condemned](#) the abduction of the schoolgirls, calling it an atrocious and inexcusable act, and urging for them to be released immediately and unharmed.

### **Differences, but ‘common decency’ is what binds the church together**

**Irish Presbyterianism is a broad church, but while there are differences at ministerial level and in the broad membership, there is “a common decency” that binds the church together.**

Billy Kennedy in News Letter - This was asserted on Tuesday by the Rev Dr Donald Watts, outgoing Clerk of the Presbyterian General Assembly, who stands down after 11 years in leadership at Church House in Belfast.



*Presbyterian Church in Ireland General Assembly 2014. Rev Trevor Gribben (left) will succeed Dr Donald Watts as the Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*

“Our church is going through a period of transition, as indeed is the whole of society in Ireland both north and south. Positions are being redefined and sometimes we have to speak boldly to be heard,” said Dr Watts.

“Where we do it does not always please everyone, but that is not really what the gospel is about.

“There have been times in my tenure as Assembly clerk when the darker side of cultural Presbyterianism has bubbled to the surface. But I have always maintained that in our church, while we may have differences, there is a common decency binding us together.

“That belief has been sorely tested at times, by people deliberately and persistently misrepresenting what has been said.

“However, despite the trials and frustrations of my job as clerk there is much for which I am grateful,” said Dr Watts, succeeded by Tandragee man Rev Dr Trevor Gribben, his deputy for five years.

Dr Watts, a Newcastle, Co Down man, said it was a privilege to work with many committed people in Church House.

“My job was to encourage those who have a traditional, commendable loyalty to Presbyterianism to widen their horizons and recognise a commitment to the whole church.”

Dr Watts said they needed to set their agenda in the public square. “We don’t need to be always playing catch-up in reacting to others. I am disappointed that having spent millions restoring Church House that we are not using it to its full potential in telling the story of Irish Presbyterianism and through it presenting the gospel of Jesus to the world.”

### **‘Exemplary’ leader praised**

Tributes to the work of the Rev Dr Donald Watts as Presbyterian Assembly clerk were led by the new moderator the Rev Dr Michael Barry.

The moderator, above, making a presentation of behalf of the church, praised Dr Watts for his “exemplary leadership” since taking up the role in 2003.

Tributes were also paid to the clerk’s sterling service by former moderators Rev Dr Stafford Carson and Rev Dr Godfrey Brown.

Dr Carson said Dr Watts, pictured above, had been particularly supportive of him in dealing with problems over the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

Dr Brown said: “As general secretary, Donald Watts had to handle some exceedingly difficult matters, decisions without precedent in the church. In face of controversy, he kept his head and sought at all times to serve the church faithfully.”

## **Assembly told New Girl Guide promise ‘a diminution of Christianity’**

**Presbyterian congregations, with affiliated Girl Guide groups, are to be advised by the church on what action may be appropriate over a new membership promise being introduced by Girl Guiding UK.**

News Letter - The



Presbyterian Church in Ireland has joined with the Church of Ireland and Methodist Church in making strong representations to Girl Guiding Ulster expressing concern over the new promise.

The promise, in a move seen by many within the youth organisation as “political correctness gone too far”, replaces to “love my God” with the words “to be true to myself and develop my beliefs”.

The Presbyterian General Assembly approved a motion from the Revs Frank Sellar and Bill Addley, from Bloomfield Presbyterian church in east Belfast, calling on the church to provide direction to concerned congregations who feel the rewording of the Guiding promise is a diminution of Christianity and faith.

The Presbyterian general board has recorded its appreciation of the work of Girl Guide leaders over the year and it has recommended to ministers and kirk sessions that the promise should not be used by Guiding organisations operating within the church.

The Guiding promise has changed 11 times in the organisation’s 100-year history.

In Northern Ireland, 93 per cent of the 293 Guiding groups, with a 12,000 membership, are linked to mainstream Protestant churches – 47 per cent Church of Ireland, 35 per cent Presbyterian, seven per cent Methodist and five per cent by other church groups.

## **Expert Group to Explore Clergy Care Needs in Dublin and Glendalough**

**An expert group on Clergy Care Needs has been established in Dublin and Glendalough. The group has been set up by Archbishop Michael Jackson in response to research undertaken by the Revd Bruce Pierce and Canon Daniel Nuzum which was presented at the diocesan clergy conference earlier this year and following individual meetings between clergy and the Archbishop.**

Aimed at working towards a greater sense of wellbeing and personal fulfilment in ministry for all clergy of the dioceses, the group will listen, gather information and report on a range of issues regarding clergy core needs. Membership of the group, which is chaired by the Revd John Tanner (pictured), includes clergy with a track record in caring for lay and clergy alike in a wide range of contexts.

The group is being asked to investigate existing interventions available and operative in Dublin and Glendalough. It is also to review existing models of clergy support available in other dioceses and explore if these can be adapted to the urban and rural settings of the United Dioceses. They are also to look at supports offered in other caring professions and especially how these are funded and sustained by the relevant institutions.

The group will report to the Archbishop, the Revd Bruce Pierce and Canon Daniel Nuzum in October and their report will be combined with the initial pilot research.

The initial research highlighted four main stressors for clergy: administration and management, the challenge of parish and family commitments, financial insecurity and operating within a changing culture.

The members of the expert group are: the Revd John Tanner (Chairperson), Archdeacon David Pierpoint (Honorary Expert Senior Consultant), Canon Aisling Shine (Chaplain to the Expert Group), the Revd Alan Ruffli, the Revd Ian Gallagher, the Revd Sonia Gyles, the Revd Gary Dowd and the Revd Ruth Elmes (External Consultant). Between them, the clergy involved have a vast range of experience in different types of ministries and parishes.

More at -

<http://dublin.anglican.org/news/2014/06/Expert-Group-to-Explore-Clergy-Care-Needs-in-Dublin-and-Glendalough.php>

## Cheques presented to charities in St Anne's Cathedral

**Cheques totalling almost £6,000 were presented to four different charities in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, recently.**

St Dominic's Girls' Grammar School presented a cheque for £4,000 to Trocaire from a collection taken at their annual Spring Concert, held this year in St Anne's. Rachel Brady, who is a member of the Cathedral Choir and who was a soloist at the concert in the Pie Jesu from Fauré's Requiem, was also present at the handover of the cheque.





Aoibheann Fearon, NI representative of the charity Bóthar, of which the Dean of Belfast is a patron, received a cheque for £675 which was raised by Cathedral parishioners, largely at a Lent Lunch on April 6. The money will be enough to purchase three Irish goats which will be sent to Africa to help three families build a new future.

‘Such a relatively small input makes a very large difference in moving a family out of poverty to a position from where they can become self-sufficient,’ said Dean Mann.

Jerome and Mary Munyangaju received a cheque for £375 for ‘Bird of Paradise Ministries,’ a charity working for the relief of those who continue to suffer as a result of the genocide in Rwanda 20 years ago.

The funds were raised at a service to mark the 20th anniversary of this atrocity.

Deborah Doherty from Christian Aid received £540 raised by the Dean of Belfast and his wife Helen who walked part of the Belfast Marathon route on May 5.

## **C of E Archbishops call church to pray for new disciples of Jesus Christ**

**This Pentecost the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are calling on the Church to pray for those who have not yet encountered the love of God in Jesus Christ.**

The call to prayer for evangelism at Pentecost, which is celebrated on Sunday (8th June), was the first task given to the Archbishops’ Evangelism Task Group by the General Synod of the Church of England in November last year. The Task Group was set up by the Synod to facilitate the outworking of the priority of “Intentional Evangelism.”

Members of the Archbishops’ Evangelism Task Group have put together online prayer resources, which are available at [www.usewords.org](http://www.usewords.org). There is also a short video (see below) which explores the question, “What is evangelism?”

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said: “The task before us cannot be overestimated. We could easily be disheartened. We cannot do it alone. But. . . Allelulia! For we are not thrown back on ourselves, but in, by and through the power of the Holy Spirit, God brings forth life. It is right that as the

Evangelism Task Group considers how it may resource the Church to bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ, the commitment to pray is the essential first step. Prayer has to be our first priority, if we are to call more people to follow Christ, and to invite others to share in the story of God's love for the world. The wonderful news is God is always ready to hear our prayers and to send his Spirit that we may proclaim the good news afresh. I urge every church community and individual to set aside time to pray and to share God's heart for all his people."

The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu said: "Recently all the Bishops of the North of England met with a group of young adults from across the Province of York to pray and take counsel together 'towards the re-evangelisation of the north of England'. It was wonderful to tread in the footsteps of St Aidan and St Cuthbert, who in their time told the people of the north the good news of Jesus Christ, rooting their proclamation in the practice of fervent prayer and praise. Praying for others to come to know Christ is a privilege and a joy – and loving our neighbours and making disciples of Jesus is exactly what we are called to do. At Pentecost we recall the wind and flame of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples, so let's commit ourselves afresh to pray, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and for boldness, simplicity, wisdom, and compassion in the proclamation of the Gospel."

In calling the church to pray the Archbishops are reaffirming, for all Christians in all times and in all places, the priority of prayer for new disciples of Jesus, and encouraging many ways in which this prayer takes shape.

For the Task Group this is just the beginning of a process to encourage everyone in the Church, young and old, to consider how best to witness to the love of God in Christ amongst families, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and to hold them before God in prayer.

The call to prayer is not a one-off, but a call to a continuing openness, dependence upon, and imploring of God to work among us for the sake of others. Rather than launching a programme or a campaign, the Church is seeking to respond obediently afresh to the last words of Jesus, in both the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-30) and his charge to wait on the empowering presence of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

## **Church Music Dublin Releases New Video for Organists**

**Church Music Dublin has released a second video aimed at those who play the organ in church, whether regularly or occasionally. The new video is entitled Essential Hymn Playing and is available to view on the Church Music Dublin website [www.churchmusicdublin.org](http://www.churchmusicdublin.org).**

The latest video features renowned organist, David Adams, who is organist at Taney and St Nahi's. He reminds musicians of the important points to consider when leading congregational singing from the organ. The video will also be of general interest and can be found at: <http://www.churchmusicdublin.org/Essential-Hymn-Playing>

Church Music Dublin is an agency of the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. The organisation aims to support church music in local churches by providing information and training and by fostering a sense of community among musicians. They seek to serve all involved in the music of worship: congregations, instrumentalists, choir directors, cantors and clergy and focus particularly on churches where the musical resources and opportunities are limited.

### **Strengthen for Service - New Music course for clergy and laity**

**The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) is launching a new course for clergy and lay worship leaders to give them more confidence in managing music in their parish churches. *Strengthen for service* will take place in mid-September in Salisbury, Wiltshire.**



It is a three day course for those in training or in the early stages of their ministry. This particular course, which is Anglican in content, would also be relevant for anyone wanting to boost their knowledge and confidence in parish music matters. DIARY: Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Sarum College, 19 The Close, Salisbury, SP1 2EB



During the course, delegates will be given guidance on the running of music from week to week, including the effective *musical* selection of hymns, songs and regular items through the church year. The main element will be training in church music management including the leading of a team, as well as up-to-date advice on safeguarding procedures for choirs where children are likely to be involved. There will be a number of practical sessions, a range of study options, and clinics to address specific issues. The course will also include a timeline of church music history, and an overview on different types of psalms, and how to sing them.

*Strengthen for service* has been devised by Rosemary Field, the RSCM's Head of Education, who as a former diocesan music adviser, believes there is a need for some clergy to understand how music and liturgy can work effectively. "For a long time, the syllabus for theological training has been packed with subjects such as Pastoral and Biblical Studies as well as Ministry and Mission, and often there's little, if any, time left for Music and Liturgy," she said. "It's not only about being able to sing '*O Lord open thou our lips*' – this crash course is intended to give those who attend more confidence and knowledge in dealing with an important aspect of worship." She speaks further in a short video on the RSCM's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/RSCMCentre>

Support for the new course has come from the Rt Revd Nicholas Holtam, the Bishop of Salisbury, who is a Vice President of the RSCM. "St Augustine of Hippo said that when we sing we pray twice. Music and worship go together," he said. "Music is often the key to the culture and style of worship which is the core of all Church life. The RSCM has tremendous expertise in helping clergy and worship leaders gain confidence and knowledge in this area. Worship done well strengthens us all and is the most compelling ministry and mission."

As members of the RSCM, many clergy and lay leaders already take advantage of the charity's information and training resources, by receiving the popular liturgy and music planner *Sunday by Sunday*. This course is the RSCM's latest initiative to expand musical knowledge among clergy and lay leaders. It will take place from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Sarum College (which is also where the RSCM's Administrative Centre is based) in the majestic and beautiful setting of the Cathedral Close. Worship will be scheduled to take place in the college chapel and the cathedral. For further information and online booking, go to [www.rscm.com/courses](http://www.rscm.com/courses); telephone 01722 424843 or email [education@rscm.com](mailto:education@rscm.com). Please book by 25<sup>th</sup> June.

## Church attendance in Britain has been propped up by immigrants, says study

Mass migration of Christians to Britain from countries such as Poland and Romania is among the factors helping to stem the decline in church attendance, according to new figures.



*Falling attendances at churches have been ameliorated by large numbers of Christian migrants to the UK.*

Guardian - The latest analysis of church membership shows a growth in black-led churches and the mainstream churches' so-called ["fresh expressions"](#) movement have also helped curb the rate of decline.

The fall in church membership previously anticipated for 2020 will now not be evident until 2025, according to the research by Peter Brierley, whose second edition of UK Church Statistics, is due to be published soon.

Brierley said that the alleviation in the rate of decline was due partly to "the large number of new black and other immigrant churches which have been started" and "the increasing success of new gatherings" in the fresh expressions movement.

Fresh expressions has become a generic name for what Brierly describes as "fairly informal gatherings like "messy church", pub groups or café churches,

mission-minded churches, Churches Without Walls (especially in Scotland) as well as those specifically named as fresh expressions".

Every one of nearly 300 Christian denominations in the UK was surveyed in mid-2013 and the results referenced against the 2011 census results with the questions on [religion](#), ethnicity and immigration.

Brierley said: "Since many of the immigrants have come from 'Christian' countries, the flow of new people into existing congregations has been notable, as well as resulting in the formation of hundreds of new churches."

The black majority churches explosion has been significant, particularly in London, where of the 700 mostly Pentecostal new churches which began between 2005 and 2012, at least 400 were BMCs. The Redeemed Christian Church of God alone has started 296 new churches in the UK in the last 5 years, the largest number for any single denomination.

The main denominations boosted by the influx of immigrants are Roman Catholics mostly from Poland, the orthodox largely from Romania, the Pentecostals and the many overseas protestant churches that typically have roots in Africa.

More at - <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/03/church-attendance-propped-immigrants-study>

## **Jesuit priest working with former refugees kidnapped in Afghanistan**

**A Jesuit priest from India was kidnapped on Monday as he was leaving a school serving children who were recently returned to Afghanistan after living as refugees in Iran or Pakistan.**

Catholic Herald - The Rome headquarters of the Jesuit Refugee Service confirmed that its Afghanistan country director, Jesuit Father Alexis Prem Kumar, "was abducted by a group of unidentified men" as he was leaving a JRS-supported school for returnee refugees in Sohadat village, about 15 miles from the city of Herat in



western Afghanistan.

“We are deeply shocked by Prem’s abduction. We are in contact with all the relevant authorities and doing everything possible to ensure his safe and speedy return,” said Jesuit Father Peter Balleis, international director of JRS.

Church officials in India expressed concern for the safety of Father Prem Kumar, 47, who has worked in Afghanistan since 2011.

“We are worried and concerned about the kidnap of Father Alexis,” Father Edward Muduvassery, Jesuit provincial for South Asia, told Catholic News Service on Wednesday from his office in New Delhi.

Father Joseph Chinnayan, deputy secretary-general of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, appealed to the Indian government to quickly seek the Jesuit’s release.

Syed Akbaruddin, spokesman for the India’s External Affairs Ministry, said via a Twitter post that Indian officials in Herat were pursuing the matter with local authorities, Asian church news portal ucanews.com reported

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the abduction, Father Muduvassery said.

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