



Gift wrapped cathedral promotes blood and organ donation

For the first time ever in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, a Cathedral was gift wrapped in a giant red ribbon to highlight blood and organ donation and marks the first cross border partnership between churches and health services. St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral in Armagh agreed to host the ribbon around the iconic building to mark the launch of the 'fleshandblood campaign'. The ribbon itself,

which took four hours to install, measures 200 metres long and 2.5 metres high with a giant four metre high bow at the front.

The wrapping of the Cathedral was designed to profile the All-Ireland launch of the fleshandblood campaign. This unique initiative aims to encourage Church congregations and parishes to see blood and organ donation as a part of their giving. It also seeks to equip people as advocates for blood and organ donation, enabling them to raise awareness of the need for donors with their family, friends and community, potentially helping to save thousands of lives each year.

The Cathedral also hosted a presentation which focused on the purpose of the campaign and the need for more people to give blood and agree to organ donation across Ireland. The presentation included speeches by Archbishop Eamon Martin (Catholic Church), Archbishop Richard Clarke (Church of Ireland), Dr Eddie Rooney (Chief Executive, Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland) and Paul McElkerney (Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service).

Dr Rooney says “In Northern Ireland and the Republic, around 800 people are currently waiting for an organ transplant, with 96,000

people receiving blood transfusions every year. We hope that many more lives will be saved and transformed through the generous commitment made by the Churches in Ireland to raise the profile of blood and organ donation, placing it on the agenda for the Church.”



The two most senior clerics in Ireland were both existing advocates for donation before their participation in today’s event. Archbishop Richard says, “The Church is an organism that is characterised by its giving nature; its people are characterised by being giving people. So, when there is need across Ireland for more people who would give the gift of blood in life, or of organs after earthly death, this is an opportunity for giving of which all should

become aware.” Archbishop Eamon adds, “The challenge of the fleshandblood campaign, to see blood and organ donation as a part of our giving within the Church, is one I encourage us all to consider; that we might mirror God’s perfect gift to us in His Son by giving the gift of life ourselves.”

Today’s event kicks off a week of activity by the Churches, culminating in a further event at St Patrick’s Church of Ireland Cathedral, Dublin on Friday hosted by Cathedral Dean, Very Revd Victor Stacey, who will welcome the Archbishops and health service representatives to the historic Lady Chapel. The Dublin reception will feature contributions from Stephen Cousins (Irish Blood Transfusion Service) and Colin White (Irish Kidney Association) alongside the inspirational story of Colin Clare, recipient of two separate organ transplants.

Mr Cousins says “As blood donation services, both the IBTS and NIBTS have been very fortunate to benefit from the strong values and altruistic beliefs of donors, regularly giving of themselves to help others. We are particularly pleased to have the support of the Churches across Ireland to raise awareness of the constant need for blood donation and enable us to reach

into communities to help us maintain supply for all our hospitals.”

The two events follow the Christmas Day message broadcast on RTÉ, from the Archbishops who, as part of their commitment to raising the awareness of donation, dedicated their annual joint message to meeting blood donors and people whose lives have been transformed by organ donation.

Founded as a partnership between Kore and NHS Blood and Transplant in 2013, the fleshandblood campaign has already witnessed widespread support across churches, community groups and from government ministers in England, Wales and Scotland, with over 35,000 local church leaders having been resourced. The impact has been so great that other faith groups working on similar concepts are also being supported by the organisers of the campaign.

The fleshandblood campaign has been sponsored by [Give.net](#) in association with denominations and organisations including the Church of Ireland, Catholic Church in Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland, Church of England, The Salvation Army, Methodist Church, Catholic Church of England and Wales, United Reformed

Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain, Church In Wales, Church of Scotland, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Hope and Evangelical Alliance.

First Q Commons Dublin Encourages Participants to Examine Faith and Society

The first Q Commons Dublin took place in Christ Church Cathedral on Friday evening, February 27. Dublin was more than 60 cities around the world to host Q Commons this year and the event was facilitated by, Greg Fromholz of Dublin and Glendalough's Young Adults' Ministry.

Hosted by a partnership of Dublin and Glendalough Young Adults Ministry, Rubicon, the Young Adults Leadership Programme and Innovista, Q Commons involved people in cities all over the world gathering to consider how to advance good in their local communities.

During the evening three video interviews were played in venues around the world. But there were also panels of local speakers and opportunities for participants to discuss what they had heard.

he first international speaker was New York Times best selling author Malcolm Gladwell, Addressing the subject of legitimacy, he talked about what it meant to be an effective leader of society. “True leadership begins not with leaders imposing their will but through them understanding that people join and obey because of legitimacy... the core notion of legitimacy is that how you carry out those ideas are more important that the ideas themselves,” he said.



The Q Commons Dublin team – The Revd Rob Jones, Sam Moore, Paul Keegan, Orla Reynolds, Greg Fromholz (city leader) and Gerard Gallagher.

The first of the local panel discussions featured the Very Revd Dermot Dunne, Dean, Christ

Church Cathedral, Dr Ali Alsaleh: Imam, Ahlul-Bait Islamic Center, Nick Park, Executive Director, Evangelical Alliance Ireland; and the Very Reverend Kieran McDermott: Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation & Ecumenism for Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. The discussion was based on a quote from Archbishop Richard Clarke and asked 'Have we as faith communities lost our legitimacy in the public square and how can we regain our voice? It was chaired by Greg Fromholz.

Fr McDermott suggested that the Christian voice clamoured among other voices and would only really be heard if it was legitimate. He added that the word 'church' was difficult for young people today but the message was still fresh and valid. Nick Park said the Church had lost its privileged voice which was a good thing meaning that it had become more authentic. Dean Dunne felt that the Church had a club mentality and suggested the Church must constantly express the Gospel in different ways to avoid becoming stagnant. Dr Alsaleh said that the needs of people were the same and that mankind needed religion but he added that if that religion did not respond to mankind's need that he would leave.

In the next video presentation award winning journalist Soledad O'Brien spoke about race in

America. She said conversations about race were difficult but stated “You cannot advance good if you do not confront bad. What will bring about renewal is digging into those tougher moments in our own story”.

The final video instalment was from television producer Mark Burnett (The Voice, Survivor, Shark Tank, Dragons Den). He spoke about how his Christian faith influenced the programmes he produced. He said that Christians tended to hold back but he stated that it was important that the Christian community work together in unity, as one Church and one set of brothers and sisters in Christ speaking with one voice against Christian persecution.

The final local panel discussion was on faith in the media and featured Roger Childs of RTE Religious Programming (Director and Producer of the “Meaning of Life”) and Michael Kelly, Editor of The Irish Catholic. Asked by Greg how much people of faith should engage with the media Roger Childs said religion had a place in the national conversation but broadcasters should aspire to be guided by morality but not be a source of morality. In answer to a question from the audience about the source of morality in the media, Michael Kelly suggested that society had been cut from its moorings and a lot

of the things that bound Irish people together were no longer present. He said as a society we were struggling to find a relationship with faith.

Cancer treatment pioneer to address Newtownards Men's Fellowship

On Thursday 12 March at 8.00pm Professor Manuel Salto-Tellez, the consultant pathologist largely responsible for Belfast leading the way in the UK and beyond in developing the 'personalised treatment' of cancer, will speak to Movilla Abbey Men's Fellowship. Manuel is Chair of Molecular Pathology at Queen's University Belfast and Director of the Northern Ireland Molecular Pathology Laboratory (NI-MPL). He will take as his subject, 'Recent Cancer Developments in Northern Ireland'.

The main task of NI-MPL is to improve the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of many patients suffering from cancer in Northern Ireland and across the world. Manuel's talk will encompass many aspects of his work, but will have a slant towards men's health, making it particularly relevant to the audience on the evening. Visitors are very welcome to attend.

March 3

Movilla Abbey Church is located in Newtownards

Importance of Friendship Highlighted at Mothers' Union Breakfast



Joy Gordon, Jacqui Armstrong and Sandra Knaggs.

Mothers' Union members from every corner of Dublin and Glendalough converged in Leixlip on Saturday morning (February 28) for a diocesan Mothers' Union women's breakfast. Old friendships were renewed and new ones were made, which was appropriate as the theme of the gathering was friendship.

Members were welcomed by diocesan MU President, Joy Gordan, who was delighted with the large numbers of women who had turned out for the breakfast. She welcomed their guests Sylvia Quinn of GFS and Major Gillian Dicker of the Salvation Army.

The guest speaker was Jacqui Armstrong from Donegal spoke on the theme: 'Friendship – How full is your bucket'. Following a game of signature bingo, Jacqui talked about the qualities of friendship and the importance of being positive.

Lenten Lunches for charity in Whitehead

Lent is upon us and the parishioners of St Patrick's, Whitehead and St John's Islandmagee are busy getting people together for some conversation and good wholesome grub.

Larne Times - Every Wednesday lunchtime until Easter, St Patrick's Church Hall will be filled with the sound of happy chatter as folk enjoy freshly prepared vegetable or lentil soup, salad rolls, wheaten bread and a selection of home-made desserts.



A statement from the organisers of the Lenten Lunches, continued: “The menu is very reasonably priced and the proceeds go towards church buildings restoration as well as a different local charity every week.

“Items can be ordered beforehand for collection or delivery in Whitehead by our happy band of runners.

“We are very grateful for the customers who encourage us by returning every year and we are delighted by the generosity of parishioners and also the local traders who so kindly donate many of the ingredients for the lunches or provide money to purchase items required every week - we use gallons of custard!

“A big thank you to Jack Reid Cars, Jackie Wright of Whitehead Spar, McMasters Butchers, Whitehead, Sainsbury’s

and Tesco - we could not do it without your continued support.”

The opening lunch was in support of NI Children to Lapland Trust followed by one in aid of RNLI.

The programme continues as follows: March 4 - Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI; March 11 - NI Hospice; March 18 - Chest Heart & Stroke ; March 25 - Church of Ireland Summer Madness ; April 1 - Cancer Research. All are welcome during lunch-time 12 noon - 2.00pm.

New canon of Down

Bishop Harold Miller has appointed a new canon for Down Cathedral. He is the Revd Mark Harvey, rector of Ballybeen and Clerical Honorary Secretary for the Diocese of Down.

Mark, who will have served in Ballybeen for 10 years this year said:

“I’m delighted to accept Bishop Harold’s invitation to become a canon of Down Cathedral. It’s a real privilege to be joining the Chapter at such an exciting time in the history of our diocese in this Year of Mission. I think it’s also a recognition for the Parishioners of St Mary’s who have faithfully lived out the gospel in the heart of Ballybeen for the past 50 years!”

The new canon will take the seat vacated by Revd Canon Francey McCrea, former rector of Sydenham, who has just retired.

Rare stained glass window returned after 40 years

A rare and valuable stained glass window has been returned to a rural community in Limerick 45 years after it disappeared from the parish in controversial circumstances.

UTV News - The stained glass window was commissioned for the church in Old Kildimo, Co Limerick, for just £20 and was crafted in 1926 at the Harry Clarke studios under the supervision of the master himself.



But the piece was lost to the community when the old church was deconsecrated in 1970 and the stained glass was gifted to the architect of the new church.

The piece is a rare depiction of three generations of Jesus' family, with Jesus, his mother Mary and grandmother St Anne.

A number of families were quite upset over the old church and the way it was closed and sold off and the parish priest at the time was taken to the High Court over it. It was a lot of upset and a lot of conflict," Fr Donworth told UTV Ireland.

The stained glass window recently went under the hammer at an auction in Kilkenny and the Kildimo parish priest Fr Donworth successfully bid €12,500, after securing church funds for the purchase.

“It will mean a lot to the old families of Kildimo to have it back here again. The plan is to put it here in the church someplace, but exactly where and how, we haven’t decided on that yet. It has to be displayed and it has to be safeguarded, [so] that it doesn’t vanish again. We couldn’t afford that,” he added.

A garage now stands on the site of the old church building where the piece was originally located.

Local historian Derek Cahill said: “It raises [the] whole question of church artefacts – several issues safeguarding them, and also having a register of them. I think lots of clergymen aren’t aware of what’s in churches. But on the other hand if there are things of value it’s a problem of guarding them.

<http://utv.ie/News/2015/03/02/Rare-stained-glass-window-returned-after-40-years-32702>

Derry rector instituted

The parish of Derg and Termonamongan welcomed a new rector on 26th February with the arrival of Rev Peter Ferguson and family. Peter is married to Amy and together they have

three children, Rebecca (8), Daniel (4) and Caleb (1).



From back left: Archdeacon George Davison (Preacher), Archdeacon Robert Miller (Bishop's Commissary), Canon David Crooks (Diocesan Registrar). From front left: Very Rev Raymond Ferguson (The new rector's father), Rev Peter Ferguson (Newly instituted rector), Rev Naomi Quinn (Curate in the parish), Canon Robert Clarke (Rural Dean).

For the past four and a half years Rev Peter has been the curate in St Nicholas' Parish, Carrickfergus in the diocese of Connor. It was his rector, the Venerable George Davison who preached at the institution service, choosing to focus on his pastoral sensitivity, engaging sermons and passion for youth work as evidence of the sort of rector who had been instituted in Derg and Termonamongan.

Peter is a Music graduate of Queens University, and the son of the former Dean of Kilmore, Very Rev Raymond Ferguson. He served 6 years in Portadown as a youth pastor as influential on his journey towards becoming a Church of Ireland Priest. During his training he served in a variety of parishes, including a summer placement to Ibiza with the 24-7 prayer movement. Away from the rigours of Parish life he is a VW enthusiast, sings in various choirs and loves spending time with his family.

GB Churches call for urgent review of benefit sanctions

A new report from a coalition of major UK Churches, including the Church in Wales, has revealed that around 100,000 children were affected by benefit sanctions in 2013/14. It also shows that in the same period a total of nearly seven million weeks of sanctions were handed out to benefit claimants. The new data, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, featured in yesterday evening's episode of [Channel 4's Dispatches](#), entitled Britain's Benefits Crackdown.

The report, entitled [Time to Rethink Sanctions](#) was published yesterday by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Church Action on Poverty, the Church in Wales, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. It contains new data on the severity and length of sanctions under Welfare Reform, and on how sanctions affect vulnerable groups such as children and those with mental health problems.

The Churches are calling for a full and independent review of the regime and for urgent reform of the hardship payments system to avoid the deliberate imposition of hunger. In the meantime, they are urging the Government to suspend all sanctions against families with children and those suffering from mental health problems. Most importantly, they say, there needs to be a change of culture, from one of enforcement and punishment to one of assistance and support.

The Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, said: “The findings of this report are disturbing. It exposes a system that is harsh in the extreme, penalising the most vulnerable of claimants by the withdrawal of benefits for weeks at a time. Most worryingly, it appears from DWP guidance, quoted in the report, that deprivation and hunger

are knowingly being used as a punishment for quite trivial breaches of benefit conditions. Employers would not be allowed to stop someone's wages for a month the first time they were 10 minutes late for an appointment, but this is the kind of sanction that is being imposed on some of the most vulnerable people in our society, including those with mental and physical health problems.

“We are concerned that the problem may be even worse in Wales, recognising the higher levels of poverty in this country. No Welsh data, however, is included in the report because despite submitting a Freedom of Information request to the DWP three months ago, we are still waiting for a reply. There is supposed to be a 20-day turnaround period for Freedom of Information requests. We are pursuing this.”

Paul Morrison, Public Issues Policy Adviser for the Methodist Church and one of the authors of the report said, “Those who already have the most difficult lives are those most likely to be sanctioned. Sanctions impact disproportionately on young people, care leavers, homeless people, single parents, the mentally ill and those with long term illness. This system causes problems for the very people that most need help.

“But sanctions don’t just have a financial impact. The people we’ve spoken to have told us of the shame, demoralisation and loss of self-worth caused by this system. As Christians we believe that everyone is loved, valued and made in the image of God, and we have a responsibility to challenge any structure or system that undermines that dignity.”

The report features the stories of people like James* who have had their benefits sanctioned: “During the first three weeks of my sanction I continued to look for work as I was required to. By the fourth week however I was exhausted, unwell and no longer had it in me. I was not eating as I had no food and was losing a lot of weight. I told the Jobcentre I was unwell through not eating but was sanctioned for another three months for not looking for work properly.”

“If you commit a crime, no criminal court in the UK is allowed to make you go hungry as a punishment,” added Niall Cooper, Director of Church Action on Poverty. “But if you’re late for an appointment at the Jobcentre, they can remove all your income and leave you unable to feed you or your family for weeks at a time. Most people in this country would be shocked if they knew that far from providing a safety net, the benefit sanctions policy is currently making

thousands of people destitute. This policy must be reviewed urgently.”

*Not his real name.

Christian politics is not about defending Judeo-Christian values - Rowan Williams

Christian Aid Chair Dr Rowan Williams has called on the public to reject the political and media rhetoric that fosters an environment of panic and mistrust in the UK and instead choose to have greater faith and love for all members of society.

Speaking at the Faith in Politics event on Saturday 28 February, hosted by Christian Aid, The Children’s Society and Greenbelt, the former Archbishop of Canterbury said that without becoming naïve people needed to have greater faith in the ‘other’.

He said: “Our politics and our media really thrive on mistrust. It seems the basic emotion we’re encouraged to feel by quite a lot of political and media rhetoric is a sort of mild, subdued panic. But mild subdued panic is not the climate in which the New Testament works.

“The panic that simply looks constantly for more and more people to mistrust, that seeks ‘scapegoat groups’ wherever you look is a very dangerous environment to live in. Not only the encouragement to regard the ‘other’ in our midst as not trustworthy, that’s bad enough, but there comes to be a corrosive, circular, enclosed world in which what you are always longing for is a good reason to not trust someone. Whether it’s a politician, a person in public life, an organisation or a charity. I don’t think that can be good for us.”

He went on to say that the radical foundation of Christian political engagement was the encouragement found in the Bible that our faith in God carried with it God’s faith in us.

He said: “Christian politics is not about defending ‘Judeo-Christian values’ or those forms of religious culture, it is about pressing again and again on these areas where trust is shrinking and humanity is shrinking with it and asking ourselves, so how do we carry our vision forward into every area of political discussion.”

He said that in the New Testament there was a lot about injustice, love and Jesus Christ. He added that for the poor and marginalised, the

slave or widow in those days to be told by Jesus that the maker of the universe had faith in them would have been a startling and transforming message. “I think that is where Christian politics begins,” he said.

More than 250 people filled City Temple Church in London to hear speakers including Canon Giles Fraser, Commons Chaplain Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin and Directors of Christians in Politics, Colin Bloom Claire Mathys and Andy Flannagan. Workshops about how best to engage in politics and effectively campaign were held by staff from the organising charities and Sarah Corbett of the Craftivist Collective.

Details about how to become a Christian Aid Local Lobbyist and engage your MP can be found at christianaid.org.uk/locallobbyist.

WCC condemns attacks against a mosque and Christian centre

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has condemned recent attacks against a mosque in the West Bank and a Christian center in Jerusalem that appear to be part of the series of so-called “price-tag” attacks by extremist elements.

According to media reports, a group of Jewish settlers stormed Al-Jaba'a village, near Bethlehem, and set fire to the Al-Huda Mosque, leaving anti-Arab slogans on its walls. The following day, in another apparent arson attack, a building belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem was set on fire and vandalized with anti-Christian graffiti.

In a statement issued on Feb. 27, the WCC acting general secretary Georges Lemopoulos said that the WCC "calls for swift and concrete measures to ensure those responsible for these and other similar attacks are in fact brought to justice, and further such attacks prevented."

He also expressed gratitude for the "clear and unequivocal response" by the President of Israel Reuven Rivlin in a phone call to Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III, in which the president denounced the Jerusalem attack, calling it "a heinous crime" and affirming that "those responsible must be brought to justice."

The statement from the WCC also acknowledges a response from the Israel's Foreign Ministry and U.N. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process condemning these attacks.

Media digest

Belfast Telegraph

Businesses flee UVF extortion in east Belfast, reveals MP Long

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/businesses-flee-uvf-extortion-in-east-belfast-reveals-mp-long-31032332.html>

Loyalists to join Sinn Fein event

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/loyalists-to-join-sinn-fein-event-31034217.html>

Irish News

Catholics skeptical of DUP's bone fides

<http://www.stakeholdergroup.com/news/catholics-sceptical-of-the-dups-bone-fides/>

Guardian - I'm a client escort outside a Belfast abortion clinic – here's why I do it.

I am sick of women in Northern Ireland being treated as second-class citizens. This is why I volunteer as a client escort for [women attending the Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast](#). Northern Ireland has the [harshest criminal penalty for abortion](#) anywhere in Europe – life imprisonment both for the woman and for anyone assisting her. That sentence even applies in cases where the pregnancy results from rape or incest, or in cases of fatal foetal impairment. The only

exception is a [medical abortion](#) – an alternative to surgical abortion where you take two sets of pills to end an early pregnancy.

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/02/client-escort-belfast-abortion-clinic-northern-ireland?CMP=share_btn_tw

BBC News

Abortion: Doctors tied to 'apron strings' of legal profession

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-31661981>