



Grosvenor Grammar School choir, teachers and judges at BBC School Choir of Year - report below.

Soweto Spiritual Singers at Londonderry's Waterside Theatre

Spiritual music fans are in for a treat when the Soweto Spiritual Singers take to the stage at Londonderry's Waterside Theatre on May 25. The group thrilled millions worldwide when they performed at the opening ceremony of the 2010 World Cup Finals in Johannesburg.

The Soweto Singers' performances combine inspirational Zulu music with fabulous dance moves. Their style is influenced by the South African a capella gospel tradition. The result is a moving and "truly infectious" feel-good experience for audiences of all ages.

Tickets cost £15/£10 (concession) and the price includes a development donation. They can be booked online at watersidetheatre.com or by ringing the theatre's booking office on 02871 314000.

Year of Consecrated Life marked in Derry

On the evening of Sunday 26 April, Vocations Sunday, over three hundred people from throughout the Diocese of Derry and beyond gathered in Saint Eugene's Cathedral to mark the Year of Consecrated Life. This marked a significant moment in this year for on this day the names of those in consecrated life present in the Diocese and of those men and women who originally come from this Diocese and now minister in other parts of the world were displayed in the Cathedral. These names were gathered over the last number of weeks from throughout the Diocese and beyond.

The service included a Floral Celebration in thanksgiving for the contribution of religious women and men in this diocese. It was an opportunity to show the support of the diocese to those in religious life.

Rector misunderstands Black Preceptory - MLA

Samuel Gardiner, Upper Bann MLA and high-ranking officer in the Black Institution, has entered a divisive row at Knocknamuckley Parish Church at Ballydougan.

Portadown Times - Mr Gardiner said that he had contacted both the Rector, Rev Alan Kilpatrick and the Bishop of Down and Dromore Harold Miller in a bid to resolve the decision to bar the regular 'Black' service from the church, one of many issues that have split the rural parish.

Mr Gardiner said, "It is sad that a minister should ban what is in effect a religious order from his church. Obviously the rector – who is from Scotland and has ministered in the United States and South Africa – misunderstands the Institution's ethos."

Mr Gardiner is Deputy Imperial Master of the Black Institution and a former District Master of Lurgan, which has held several services in Knocknamuckley. But the services are just one issue causing division in the parish, with a reported 60 per cent of parishioners being opposed to his methods.

The 'anti' brigade is angry that he wears stud earrings and rarely wears his clerical robes, except at funerals – he preaches robeless. Traditionalists in the church, which is more than 150 years old, insist that he has turned away from what is viewed as Church of Ireland ways, favouring the American Bethel School of Supernatural Ministries. It is a Charismatic Movement based on healing and the work of the Holy Spirit.

There was further controversy during the Easter period when a dancing troupe – the Portadown-based Zephaniah Dancers – gave a display of routines based on Bible stories.

More at -

<http://www.portadowntimes.co.uk/news/local-news/royal-black-service-barred-from-church-1-6712832>

God among the pots and pans

A one day workshop will be held on Saturday, May 9, exploring the presence and action of God at the heart of our busy, wonderful, stressful, funny and hectic family lives.

With a mixture of prayer, input, reflection and conversation this day will offer you an opportunity to recognise, claim and celebrate God at the heart of family life. Commences 10am, concludes 4pm. Cost €30 including lunch. Booking essential - please contact Ards Friary 074 9138 909 or email info@ardsfriary.ie .

Belfast lecture on Catholic Teacher Education in the Contemporary Church

Dr Leonardi Franchi, Head of the St Andrew's Foundation for Catholic Teacher Education and Director of Catholic Teacher Education at the University of Glasgow, will deliver a public lecture titled:

"Preparing for Mission: Catholic Teacher Education in the Contemporary Church"

at St Mary's University College, Belfast on Tuesday 12th May 2015 at 7.00pm.

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Church Mission Society Ireland makes two key appointments

Church Mission Society Ireland has announced the appointment of the Rev Roger Thompson, rector of Kilwaughter and Cairncastle with All Saints', Craigyhill, Diocese of Connor, as a CMSI Partnership Co-ordinator.

This is one of two new appointments announced by CMSI this week – Mrs Linda Abwa will return from Nigeria where she has been a missionary for the last 12 years to also take on a new role as Partnership Co-ordinator.

Roger has been rector of Kilwaughter and Cairncastle with All Saints', Craigyhill, since 2004. As rector of a CMSI Link Parish, a former CMS Mission Partner, the husband of a former CMSI Mission Partner (Fiona) and someone who has recently taken part in a Short Term Experience Placement, Roger is very familiar with CMSI.

He said he is really looking forward to joining the staff team.

Linda, originally from Co Antrim, is a trained nurse and midwife, who has spent the last 12 years working in Nigeria in the area of HIV/AIDS as a missionary with Mission Africa.

In 2006, she married Billy, whom she met in Nigeria. They have two children, Nathaniel and Niah. The family are currently packing up their home in Nigeria and saying their final farewells before returning to Ireland.

An announcement of the appointments on the CMSI website stated: "Following the appointment, in January, of Jenny Smyth to the role of CMSI Mission Director, the Society recently made two significant appointments to the staff team.

"In light of Ronnie Briggs' departure from the staff team in February (to return, with Maggie, to Kenya) and Jenny's change of role, there was an urgent need to recruit two new Partnership Coordinators. These are key positions on the staff team, particularly at a time when CMSI's priority is the development of Partnership Links. It was a huge encouragement, therefore, to see such a positive response to the recruitment process, with a strong field of candidates interviewed on 14th and 15th April."

Lough Derg - Hope and Encouragement for a New Beginning

Lough Derg will hold a special Day Retreat 'Hope and Encouragement for a New Beginning' on Wednesday 20th May. Fr Ben Hughes, who promotes healing and well-being, will facilitate the day which will be beneficial to anyone who is living with or struggling with any issue that is holding them back or hurting their life.

Advance booking is essential. To find out more or to book please contact Maureen or Sharon in Lough Derg T: 00353 (0) 719861518 or email info@loughderg.org

The Day Retreat also includes a prayerful Service of Healing and Anointing. Retreat admission includes boat service, refreshments and light lunch €40/£35.

Quakers in Britain gather for Yearly Meeting

Around one thousand Quakers will be heading to Friends House in London this week (1 – 4 May) for Yearly Meeting.

This is the first major gathering of Quakers in the newly refurbished Large Meeting House, which was recently nominated for a Royal Institute of British Architects award.

Recording Clerk Paul Parker said: “The theme of Yearly Meeting, 'Living out our faith in the World', goes right to the heart of what it means to be a Quaker today. What use is our faith, if we don't do something with it?

“At Yearly Meeting, we may ask what commitment can we make to heal the world? Are we prepared, am I prepared, to follow our guide wherever it may lead us? To do whatever it takes? To live faithfully, and to remain faithful? We have the gift of three days together, to work and worship and to prayerfully listen for the will of God for our community.”

One of the Yearly Meeting sessions on social inequality and injustice will focus on housing, drawing on the experience of Quaker Housing Trust.

Yearly Meeting 2015 includes imaginative programmes for 130 young people from babies to 18 year olds; including 14 under-fives; 33 five to 11 year olds; 32 aged from 11 to 15; and 51 aged 15 to 18. Co-operative games, storytelling and quiet worship will link to the issues being considered at Yearly Meeting.

Grosvenor Grammar and Pond Park Primary are top choirs

Two schools are celebrating after they hit the right note with the judges and were named the top choirs in Northern Ireland.

Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast, won the prize for the best senior choir and Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn, won the junior award.

The BBC Radio Ulster School Choir Of The Year was broadcast live from Belfast's Ulster Hall on Sunday.

It was presented by John Toal and Kerry McLean.

A total of 64 choirs battled it out to win a place in the final.

Twelve schools took part in the live final.

In the junior category, St Conor's Primary School, Omagh, were runners-up and Sullivan Upper, Holywood, came second in the senior category.

The competition is produced in association with the Ulster Youth Choir, and supported by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland (ACNI).

The two winning choirs will now help BBC Radio Ulster celebrate its 40th anniversary by taking part in a variety of programmes and events.

Knock mass for Christians who have died in persecution in the Middle East and North Africa

A Mass to commemorate Christians who have died in persecution in the Middle East and North Africa will be held in the newly refurbished Basilica in Knock on Saturday, May 2nd at three o'clock. Prayers will be offered for all those still suffering religious persecution. The Mass will be celebrated by the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr Michael Neary.

Archbishop Neary said, "There has been an appalling lack of protest about the ongoing and severe persecution being faced by Christian communities in the Middle East and North Africa. In some cases, this persecution has taken the form of ethnic cleansing that has seen Christian communities, some of whom have existed for

almost two millennia, being driven from their lands through violence, intimidation and murder.

“It is essential that we uphold our fellow Christians through prayer and that we seek to raise awareness of their plight in our national media. The aim must be to prompt political action to bring this persecution to a halt.

“Ireland has a long and proud history of peacekeeping and charitable work throughout the Middle East and Africa. Our government can exercise a moral leadership in attempting to bring the EU’s focus to bear on this issue.

“This persecution is now part of a wider problem that has resulted in one of the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War. The Mediterranean has been turned into the world’s largest graveyard, with thousands of our fellow human beings, men, women and children, drowning in the face of what is still a significant public and political indifference to their plight.

“Finally, individuals, too, have a role in addressing these issues. Support through prayer, charitable donations and lobbying for action are all needed. Greater yet though is to work on our

own attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. We must challenge our own stubborn hardness of heart in that regard.”

Persecution against Christian is intensifying. Only in the last week, there was the brutal murder of at least 30 Ethiopian Christians in Libya. A couple of months ago, 21 Coptic Christians were similarly beheaded.

The persecution of Christians has been ongoing for well over a decade. In 2003, prior to the US and allied invasion, there were over 1.5 million Christians in Iraq: in just over a decade this figure has fallen below 400,000. Churches that date from 200 A.D. have been destroyed.

The city of Mosul, one of the oldest Christian cities in the world, once had a Christian population of 60,000. Christians there were faced with the choice of forced conversion, death or to flee from their homes. The population fell to 3,000 before the last of that community were driven out last year.

Since the start of the civil war in Syria, almost half of the Christian population has now fled. The series of revolutions in Egypt has seen Coptic

Christians murdered and their Churches destroyed.

The persecution extends beyond the Middle East. The Pew Institute in Washington has found that Christians face varying degrees of persecution in 139 countries. The International Society for Human Rights has found that 80% of religious discrimination in the world today is directed at Christians.

Church burnings and violence towards Christians, including imprisonment, torture and murder, is occurring in countries as diverse as Nigeria, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia and China. The most violent event so far this century was the murder of 500 Christians in Orissa, India, who were hacked to death with machetes. 50,000 were made homeless.

Presbyterian Church launches special appeal for Nepal

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has launched a church-wide special appeal for Nepal and is immediately releasing £60,000 (€83,740) to

support the international relief effort in the wake of Sunday's devastating earthquake.

In a letter to all ministers across Ireland, launching his special Moderator's Appeal for Nepal, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Barry said: "The magnitude of this disaster is still being assessed with cities badly damaged, hillside villages decimated, and some rural areas still completely cut off by avalanches. With more than 5,000 people killed, it is estimated that some 8 million people have been directly impacted by the earthquake.

"Given the scale of this disaster and having consulted with colleagues, I have launched a special Moderator's Appeal towards the emergency relief effort, and would take the opportunity to encourage our members to respond in a generous and timely way, just as they have on many previous occasions.

"In anticipation of their generous response, as a Church we are immediately releasing £60,000 (€83,740) to be distributed to our partners, Christian Aid, Tearfund, and the United Mission to Nepal. Each of these agencies are already actively engaged in deploying emergency response teams on the ground, working with a range of local partners well placed to ensure that

your contributions are used wisely to provide medical assistance, food, clean water, emergency shelter and blankets to the most vulnerable.

“In addition to providing this emergency response, PCI’s partners are committed to the longer-term challenge of supporting the Nepali people in rebuilding their lives. Please do continue to pray and contribute generously that we may play our part in saving lives and restoring hope to the people of Nepal,” Dr. Barry said.

Collections will be taken in churches across Ireland over the next few weeks. Donations can also be made via www.presbyterianireland.org/giving/donate

C of I initial response to Nepal

The Church of Ireland’s Bishops’ Appeal has released £10,000 and has directed these funds towards search and rescue efforts, the setting up of makeshift medical centres, water purification and shelter. All funds channelled through Bishops’ Appeal will be in support of the efforts

of Christian Aid and Tearfund partners in the most affected areas of Nepal.

Bishop Patrick Rooke, Chairperson of Bishops' Appeal said: 'We urge individuals, parishes and dioceses to give generously to help the eight million people who have been affected by the earthquake. We pray that those responding on the ground gain access to the resources that they need to bring hope and healing.'

Bishop Rooke also requests that donations to the earthquake victims are given over and above general giving to Bishops' Appeal so that other impoverished communities do not suffer at this time due to redirected funds.

Christian Aid have highlighted that as little as £5 or €6.85 can provide a hygiene kit and £100 or €137 can provide a waterproof temporary shelter for 4 families.

Donations can be sent to: Bishops' Appeal, Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

Electronic donations can be made to Bishops' Appeal Euro or Sterling accounts with the word 'Nepal' in the subject line. If you wish to receive an acknowledgement of funds donated, please email: bishopsappeal@ireland.anglican.org. Bank

details can be found on

www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/donate

Pope Francis donates 100,000 dollars to Nepal relief efforts

After Saturday's massive earthquake devastated the Southeast Asian country of Nepal, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum has offered financial assistance to the local community as a sign of solidarity.

In an April 28 communique, it was emphasized that the donation is "a first and immediate concrete expression of spiritual closeness and paternal encouragement for the people and the affected areas" on behalf of the Pope.

Given directly to the local Church, the funds will be used to support initiatives aimed at helping displaced persons and victims of the earthquake.

Cor Unum is the Vatican council tasked to organize and coordinate humanitarian aid in the face of natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

Pope, UN secretary general push for worldwide action on climate change

Pope Francis welcomed Ban Ki-moon to the Vatican on April 28, as the UN secretary general arrived to address an interfaith conference on climate change.

Participants in the conference-- ranging from scientists to political and religious leaders-- issued a statement expressing their conviction that the world's climate is changing because of human activities. They suggested that talks in Paris late this year, scheduled to produce agreements on addressing global warming, "may be the last effective opportunity" to avoid disasters.

Ban Ki-moon told the Vatican audience that "climate change is the defining issue of our time." He said that he is looking forward to the release of an encyclical on the topic by Pope Francis. That encyclical, which is scheduled for publication in June, could be an "unprecedented opportunity" for cooperation between religious and political leaders in addressing climate change, the UN official said.

The purpose of the Vatican conference, which was sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, was “to help build a global movement across all religions for sustainable development and climate change throughout 2015 and beyond.” The conference did not hear arguments from scientists who dispute the evidence of human-induced climate change.

“Climate change is intrinsically linked to public health, food and water security, migration, peace and security,” said the UN secretary general in his address. “It is a moral issue. It is an issue of social justice, human rights and fundamental ethics.”

“Science and religion are not at odds on climate change,” he added. “Indeed, they are fully aligned. Together, we must clearly communicate that the science of climate change is deep, sound and not in doubt.”

The Vatican conference also heard an address by Cardinal Peter Turkson, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, who has emerged as the Vatican's leading spokesman on the topic of climate change. Cardinal Turkson, too, insisted on the "moral imperative" of addressing ecological concerns.

New Zealand: Church ejects tai chi group

A New Zealand church has told a group of elderly people that they can no longer practice tai chi there because it conflicts with worshippers' "spiritual wellbeing".

Twenty women, some with arthritis, had for years been using the Central Southland Presbyterian Parish hall to practise the martial art, known for its slow and gentle movements. But the parish council says they can no longer do so because tai chi doesn't fit with the church's values, [The Southland Times reports](#). "As church leaders we need to look after everyone in the parish, and their spiritual wellbeing," John Willis, the parish council's clerk, tells the paper. "The first commandment is that we must honour God and have no other God before us, and having come from Taoism tai chi is promoting another God."

That doesn't fly with the group's teacher, who says while the martial art may have been developed by Taoist monks, it's now just another form of exercise. "The classes I teach are for older ladies and arthritis sufferers and have absolutely no religious significance," the woman, who isn't identified, tells the paper. While parish

council suggested the women could stay put if they stopped calling their classes tai chi, that idea was apparently rejected by their teacher. The women have now moved their classes to a different venue.

In 2012, a priest [banned a yoga class from using a church hall](#) in the English town of Eastleigh after saying it was "not compatible with Catholicism". The local Catholic Diocese said at the time that banning "non-Christian activities" was a matter on which individual priests should decide.

Media digest

RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Faith Focus: The Evangelical Alliance on spreading the Word - News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/faith-focus-the-evangelical-alliance-on-spreading-the-word-1-6716832>

Atheist Stephen Nolan challenged by live caller - News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/atheist-stephen-nolan-challenged-by-live-caller-1-6717482>

Causeway Coast and Glens councillors row over saying prayer - News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/causeway-coast-and-glens-councillors-row-over-saying-prayer-1-6715831>

SEXUALITY

Ashers bakery 'gay cake' verdict expected on day of General Election

The verdict in the case against a Christian bakery which refused to make a cake carrying a pro gay marriage slogan is understood to be expected on May 7 - the day of the General Election

Gay marriage vote 'not the answer' - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/gay-marriage-vote-not-the-answer-31181879.html>

Gays '40 times more likely to abuse children', claims election candidate Susan-Anne White - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/gays-40-times-more-likely-to-abuse-children-claims-election-candidate-susananne-white-31183880.html>

American Christians split on gay marriage as Supreme Court begins historic case - Christian Today

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/american.christians.split.on.gay.marriage.as.supreme.court.begins.historic.case/53029.htm>

European Court of Justice rules lifetime ban of gay men giving blood “may be justified” - Journal.ie

http://www.thejournal.ie/court-gay-men-blood-donation-2074476-Apr2015/?utm_source=twitter_self

Polygamy 'is bad for the heart' - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/11570638/Polygamy-increases-the-risk-of-heart-disease-study-finds.html>

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Assisted suicide case highlights ethical and moral divisions - News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/assisted-suicide-case-highlights-ethical-and-moral-divisions-1-6715270>

Helping a person to die – why new compassionate laws are needed - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/helping-a-person-to-die-why-new-compassionate-laws-are->

[needed-1.2192306#utm_sguid=152048,b6632e5b-f4ac-1580-01bf-f5ec77d7a2f7](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/loyalist-famine-song-bandsmen-convicted-outrageous-sectarian-behaviour-outside-catholic-church-31183254.html)

SECTARIANISM

Loyalist Famine Song bandsmen convicted 'outrageous' sectarian behaviour outside Catholic church - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/loyalist-famine-song-bandsmen-convicted-outrageous-sectarian-behaviour-outside-catholic-church-31183254.html>

No prosecution over band's Ardoyne 'hate speech'- News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/no-prosecution-over-band-s-ardoyne-hate-speech-1-6717514>

Loyalist band guilty of playing 'Famine Song' outside church - Irish Times

http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/loyalist-band-guilty-of-playing-famine-song-outside-church-1.2193843?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Mix 'n' match: Crossing the religious divide for love - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/books/mix-n-match-crossing-the-religious-divide-for-love-31130380.html>

PUBLIC CONCERNS

Leaving Cert exam papers 'not very predictable', says Minister - Irish Times

[http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/leaving-cert-exam-papers-not-very-predictable-says-minister-1.2194358?
utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/leaving-cert-exam-papers-not-very-predictable-says-minister-1.2194358?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

FF Senator says gardaí defending communities being spat at and bitten - Irish Times

[http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/ff-senator-says-garda%C3%AD-defending-communities-being-spat-at-and-bitten-1.2194377?
utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/ff-senator-says-garda%C3%AD-defending-communities-being-spat-at-and-bitten-1.2194377?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

Mail

Report that restoration work has now begun to transform the 13th century triforium at Westminster Abbey into a new public viewing and gallery area, and says plaster statues currently stored there are being removed. It states the new £19million space, 70 ft above the Abbey, will exhibit many historical objects from the church and give visitors impressive views down over its buildings. It will be the abbey's most significant addition since 1745.

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3061260/
Packed-preserve-generation-Statues-historical-items-removed-Westminster-Abbey-restoration-
churchnewsireland@gmail.com](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3061260/Packed-preserve-generation-Statues-historical-items-removed-Westminster-Abbey-restoration-churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

[work-begins-transform-13th-Century-Triforium-new-public-viewing-gallery.html#ixzz3YIXVeIY2](http://www.work-begins-transform-13th-Century-Triforium-new-public-viewing-gallery.html#ixzz3YIXVeIY2)

Times

Item on a service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Baroness James of Holland Park at the Temple Church in London, yesterday. It states the service was conducted by the Rev Robin Griffith-Jones, Master of the Temple Church; the Rev Dr Peter Groves of St Mary Magdalen Church, Oxford; and the Right Rev and Right Hon Richard Chartres, Bishop of London.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/life/courtsocial/article4426357.ece>

Guard/Mail

Articles that Pope Francis has said the wage gap between men and women was a "pure scandal" that Christians ought to reject - supporting equal pay for women internationally. *Mail* also states he has said young people are afraid of divorce and prefer cohabitation because they 'have so little faith in marriage and the family'.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/29/pope-francis-christians-should-support-equal-pay-equal-work-gap-men-women>

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3060886/Pope-decries-scandal-lower-salaries-women.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3060886/Pope-decries-scandal-lower-salaries-women.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3060886/Pope-decries-scandal-lower-salaries-women.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3061433/Pope-Francis-says-young-scared-divorce-married.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

Obituary

Tel

Obituary report on the **Rev Dr Philip Potter**, who has died in Lubeck, Germany, aged 93, was general secretary of the World Council of Churches from 1972-84 and one of the foremost and most admired international church leaders of his time. Potter, a Methodist minister from Jamaica, who had a deep and lasting commitment to the cause of church unity was given a dynamic edge by his passionate belief that unity was integral to the Church's contribution to the quest for justice, equality, freedom and peace.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11571580/The-Rev-Dr-Philip-Potter-clergyman-obituary.html>

May 1