

Team of Christian artists add creative touch to new Presbyterian vision for society



Rev. Stephen Johnston (left), minister of Kilkeel Presbyterian Church and convener of PCI's Good Relations Panel, which is responsible for promoting the Vision for Society Statement, unveils the unique

poster with Presbyterian Moderator Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar. The poster has been created by a team of Christian artists to support congregations across Ireland to live out its Vision for Society Statement in their own local communities. Produced by four Belfast-based artists, who worked in collaboration to create a beautiful hand drawn piece of art, it is just one element of a package of resources available to promote the initiative to PCI's 500-plus congregations across Ireland.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has unveiled a unique poster created by a team of Christian artists to support congregations across Ireland to live out its Vision for Society Statement in their own local communities.

The poster, which is just one element of a package of resources to promote the Vision for Society initiative, is available to all PCI's 500-plus congregations and has been produced by four Belfast-based artists who worked in collaboration to create a beautiful hand drawn piece of art.

The 146-word Statement itself, adopted by the Church at its General Assembly in June last year, seeks to continue to place peacebuilding firmly at the heart of Christian discipleship and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Launching the poster, which he described as 'inspiring' Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar said, "The Bible tells us that the first person to be filled by God with His Holy Spirit was man called Bezalel, a skilled craftsman who was commissioned by God to bring to life His plans for the Tabernacle.

"Today, our God is the same creative and loving Father who uses all believers to further His Kingdom with both their natural skills and God-given ability. This poster, which illustrates our Vision for Society Statement, is a wonderful example of this - I hope it will inspire."

Speaking about the Statement itself, Dr. Sellar said, "I would warmly commend its vital content to our congregations for careful and prayerful use. As a people who have been saved by grace, we are called to live grace-filled lives.

"We are not to be like everybody else, except a little nicer. We are filled by God's Holy Spirit to radically new attitudes that promote the counter culture of Jesus. When we don't do that, it is a dis-grace, but when we do the whole of society benefits.

Rev. Stephen Johnston, minister of Kilkeel Presbyterian Church and convener of PCI's

Good Relations Panel, which is responsible for promoting the Vision, said that the Statement is a “declaration of belief, confession, affirmation and aspiration for our members across Ireland as disciples of Jesus Christ and as peacebuilders.

“The Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ, calls us to be peacebuilders. He was unequivocal when He gave us the Great Commandment to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.’ Jesus then went further and introduced a radical counter cultural second element, and that is to ‘Love your neighbour as yourself,’ (Mark 12:30-31), the heart of peacebuilding.

“Peacebuilding, however, will look different in my own community of Kilkeel, County Down as it will in Belfast, Dublin, Londonderry or Cork, but its centrality to Christian discipleship remains the same wherever we are. It is my prayer that our Vision for Society Statement and our continued commitment to peacebuilding will bear much fruit,” he said.

You can read more about the Vision for Society Statement at www.presbyterianireland.org/visionforsociety, including five blogs on each of the statement’s five paragraphs.

You can watch a short film on the production of the poster, where each line is voiced by different people here:

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Vision-for-Society/Vision-for-Society-Videos.aspx>

Vision for Society Statement

The Vision for Society Statement was received by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in June 2016:

WE, MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND, saved by grace and called by God to grace-filled relationships, in the power of the Holy Spirit as ambassadors of Christ's Kingdom in a broken and divided world;

BELIEVE that the Good News of Jesus Christ challenges and equips us to develop radically new attitudes and relationships with our neighbours throughout the whole of Ireland.

WE CONFESS our failure to live as Biblically faithful Christian peacebuilders and to promote the counter culture of Jesus in a society where cultures clash.

ACCORDINGLY, WE AFFIRM Christian peacebuilding to be part of Christian discipleship and reassert the Church's calling to pursue a peaceful and just society in our day

WE SEEK a more reconciled community at peace with each other, where friend and foe, working together for the common good, can experience healing and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Statement is a revised version of the General Assembly's Peace Vocation that was adopted by the General Assembly in 1994.

Irish Columban missionary Fr. Shay Cullen, to receive prestigious Dutch Martin Buber award for international human rights work

It has been announced in the Netherlands that Irish Columban missionary, Fr. Shay Cullen is to be the recipient of the 2017 Martin Buber Award in recognition of his internationally acclaimed work on human rights undertaken through the PREDA Foundation which he established in the Philippines in 1974. He will be presented with the award in Kerkrade next November during the

annual International Festival of Dialogue - EURIADÉ.

Professor Martin Buber was a Jewish philosopher who advocated peace dialogue, mutual recognition of human rights and dignity, and a united Jewish and Arab Palestine. He became well known internationally for his “dialogical principle” – a way of thinking that implies that ONE human being - "I" - really perceives and accepts the OTHER as "YOU".

Buber died in 1965, and the prestigious award in his memory was initiated in 2002 with German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher as the inaugural recipient. Since then, recipients have included Queen Silvia of Sweden, President Klaus Johannis of Romania, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, Prince Irene of the Netherlands, and Karl-heinz Böhm, founder of the Austrian Menschen für Menschen Foundation for Ethiopia.

Being chosen for this internationally focused award indicates the reputation and acclaim that Fr. Shay Cullen’s human rights work is attracting internationally. PREDA is active in the rescue and caring of abused children from jails, abusers and brothels and giving victims of abuse a safe home with protection, education, values formation,

affirmation, empowerment and healing therapy and restoring their self-esteem. It is engaged in defending human rights and promoting justice for the marginalised, as well as running Fair Trade to support mango-growing farmers. Fr. Shay was an early board member of the International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT).

He is a popular international speaker, campaigning advocate, media commentator, and writer. In 2006, he published a book – *Passion and Power* – with an introduction by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, and an endorsement by the Hollywood actor and human rights supporter, Martin Sheen.

Numerous newspaper articles and television documentaries have reported the success of his work protecting children and campaigning for human rights. He was an invited delegate to the conference drafting the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Helsinki, and has addressed the US House of Representatives Committee on International Relations on the issue of street children. In 2015, he addressed MPs in the Bundestag about the need for advocacy and support for people whose human rights are being violated in the Philippines where a lucrative sex industry operates.



During a short holiday in Ireland, Fr Cullen will address TDs and Senators in Leinster House on 17 May about human trafficking, child prostitution, and the increasing human rights violations in the Philippines

Fr. Shay has been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize by MPs in Germany and in Canada, and has received numerous recognition awards in several countries. These include the Human Rights of the City of Weimar Award in Germany in 2000, the Human Rights Award of the City of Ferrara in Italy in 2001, the Prix Caritas in Switzerland in 2003, and the International Solidarity Prize by Matres Mundi in Spain in 2008. He is in Germany this week to receive the A.K. Shalom Award from the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

At home in Ireland, he received the Hugh O'Flaherty International Humanitarian Award in

2016, an International Person of the Year Award in 2008, and the Irish Music Awards' Humanitarian Award in 2009.

Now in his 70s, Fr. Shay remains a humble man deeply dedicated to his missionary work. Humbled by his many recognition awards, he says: "I accept awards not for myself but on behalf of all those who are working and risking their lives to defend the rights and dignity of oppressed people and to win freedom for those who are victims of human rights violations".

Matt Moran, author of recent book - *The Legacy of Irish Missionaries Lives On* - says: "Fr. Shay represents the very best in the life-changing work of our missionaries throughout the world. Preventing the abuse of women and children at the hands of human traffickers and their own governments is his life's work. His mission for justice and peace is ecumenical in reach. It is based on taking a stand for human rights and protecting the dignity of every person, in particular exploited women, children and youth. It is wonderful to see his efforts being recognised internationally".

During a short holiday in Ireland, he will address TDs and Senators in Leinster House on 17 May about human trafficking, child prostitution, and

the increasing human rights violations in the Philippines where over 8,000 people have been killed by police and agents of the state in a campaign against illegal drugs use. On 22 May, he will be accorded a civic reception by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council.

Further information about the inspiring work of PREDA can be found at www.preda.org. Donations to support its work can be made to Permanent TSB Account No. 87930352, Sort Code 99 06 04.

Divine Healing Ministries Day of Prayer for our Land at Clonard Monastery, Belfast

Divine Healing Ministries has announced that there will be a “Day of Prayer for Our Land” in Clonard Monastery, Belfast on Saturday 20th May 2017 between 1pm and 5.00pm.

DHM state - “ This follows very blessed Days of Prayer which took place at St Anne's Cathedral in September and at Lisburn Cathedral in February. This day will be an opportunity to help people to find God’s peace personally and also to pray for the nation as we approach another

**Day of Prayer
to find God's
Peace and Healing**

**Clonard
Monastery**

★★★

**Saturday
20th
May
1pm-5pm**

**Come and go
as you
please!**

**Opportunity
to pray
for the
future of
our
country!**

- *Are you carrying burdens from the past?*
- *Have you been hurt by the words or actions of others?*
- *Are there things you need to say sorry for and put to rest?*

 Divine Healing
Ministries
divinehealingministries.org

election. With all of this in our minds and hearts, this is a very significant time for people to come together and to seek God's help and direction.

“For some people, their peace may have been disturbed during the years of “The Troubles”. For others it could be anxieties, fears, and hurts that have arisen in recent times.

Saturday 20th May will be an opportunity to lay down those burdens, to forgive, to say sorry, and to pray for the future of our Country.

“The focal point will be a large plain wooden cross right at the front of the church. All the prayer will be in silence with short reflections every 30 minutes. There will be a particular opportunity for clergy to gather around the Cross at 1pm and women at 3pm. This Day is for people to come as individuals before God, and through that encounter, however long or short, to find His peace.”

People may come and go they please and everyone is welcome. The hours of prayer will be 1pm to 5. 00 pm.

- Personal prayer will be available for anyone who wishes to receive it
- There will be refreshments available throughout the day

DHM concludes, “The witness of clergy and leaders gathering together around the Cross at 1pm is deeply impacting and your presence on the 20th May will be greatly appreciated.”

For more information, Divine Healing Ministries (02890 311532).



Church of Ireland General Synod to debate same-sex marriage

The Church of Ireland is to debate and vote upon a motion on same-sex unions at its general synod in Co Limerick this week., the News Letter reports.

The general synod is the main decision-making body of the Church of Ireland, meeting once a year.

A private member's motion is set to be debated on Friday, calling for the church to acknowledge the "injury felt by members of the church who

enter into loving, committed and legally recognised, same-sex relationships, due to the absence of provision for them to mark that key moment in their lives publicly and prayerfully in church”.

The motion also “respectfully requests the House of Bishops to investigate a means to develop sensitive, local pastoral arrangements for public prayer and thanksgiving with same-sex couples at these key moments in their lives, and to present their ideas to general synod 2018, with a view to making proposals at general synod 2019.”

The 2017 general synod, due to be held at South Court Hotel, Limerick from Thursday to Saturday, will not be the first time the Church of Ireland has formally debated and voted upon same-sex marriage. In 2012 the general synod passed a resolution affirming the church’s understanding of marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Meanwhile, the church has for the past three years had a select committee looking at human sexuality in the context of Christian faith. The committee itself did not bring forward the motion for the general synod, but both the proposer, Dr

Leo Kilroy, and the seconder, Rev Brian O'Rourke, were members.

Canon Ian Ellis, editor of the Church of Ireland Gazette, a weekly and editorially independent church newspaper, told the News Letter the motion “ does not seek to change the Church of Ireland’s traditional teaching on marriage”, a position Canon Ellis said he supports.



Primus responds to GAFCON communique

In response to a communique from the GAFCON Primates, The Most Rev David Chillingworth,

Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church says:

“In June, the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church will reach the final stage of consideration of changes which would make possible same-sex marriage in our churches. The news that GAFCON intends to send a missionary bishop to Britain is regrettable. The Anglican Communion functions as a global communion on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity of each province. This move is a breach of that understanding.

“The outcome of the synodical process which will take place in June is not a foregone conclusion. The voices of clergy and lay people from across Scotland will be heard both in debate and in the voting process. The Scottish Episcopal Church is working closely with those who find this proposal difficult to accept. Whatever the outcome may be, it is our intention to be and to remain a church which honours diversity.”

See also: CNI News bulletin yesterday and CNI Press Watch, April 29

<http://www.churchnewsireland.org/news/cni-press-watch-gafcon-considers-a-missionary-bishop-for-uk/>

Whitehead & Islandmagee Lenten lunches generosity to charities

The Parish of Whitehead and Islandmagee once again held a series of very successful Lenten Lunches.

This initiative began as a fund raiser to help pay for some major repairs to both churches 14 years ago, but even then it was recognised that the parish should be reaching out to help others as well.

In the early years a percentage of the monies raised each week went to one of seven local charities. As the years went on the amount given to the charities increased every year. For the last couple of years each charity has received £400 (£2,800 in total), almost 47 per cent of the total monies raised over the seven Wednesdays in Lent this year. This brings the total donated to charities to more than £26,000 since the Lunches began 14 years ago.

A dedicated team of parishioners works very hard to make and serve lunches of freshly made soup, wheaten bread, filled rolls (the rolls supplied fresh by McKee's local bakery), a range of homemade desserts and tea or coffee and biscuits. They cater for those who come along



Representatives of the charities who received cheques from the Parish of Whitehead and Islandmagee Lenten Lunches

for lunch but also provide a carryout service and a delivery service to people in their homes and businesses. With the average lunch costing £5.00 there are a considerable number served to raise an average of just over £800 per week!

The rector, the Rev Canon Mark Taylor said: “We are blessed to have a great deal of community support within Whitehead and from further afield. One lady travels from Belfast each week to enjoy her lunch with us, and we had people coming from as far away a Newtownards to meet up with friends and have lunch.

“We are hugely thankful to the many local businesses who support us each year, with their help and generosity we are able to keep our expenses down ensuring more money is available to support the charities.”

This year the charities supported were the Northern Ireland Hospice; Leukaemia and Lymphoma NI; Chest, Heart and Stroke; Cancer Research UK; Royal National Lifeboat Institution; Down Syndrome Association; and Northern Ireland Children to Lapland Trust and Days to Remember.

Today in Christian History, May 3

May 3, 1512: The Fifth Lateran Council, the last attempt at papal reform before the Lutheran revolt, opens in Rome.

May 3, 1675: A Massachusetts law goes into effect requiring church doors to be locked during services. Officials enacted the law because too many people were leaving before sermons were over.

May 3, 1738: English preacher George Whitefield, the most famous religious figure of the 1700s, arrives in America for his first of seven visits. In his lifetime, Whitefield preached

at least 18,000 times to perhaps 10 million hearers.

May 3, 1814: Thomas Coke, the first English bishop of the Methodist Church, dies. John Wesley sent him to oversee the American branch of Methodism in 1784; he later handed that responsibility to Francis Asbury.

May 3, 1861: The Southern Congress approves a bill installing chaplains in Confederate armies. The American military did not normally employ chaplains, but they became a permanent fixture during and after the Civil War. Between 100,000 and 200,000 Union soldiers and approximately 150,000 Confederate troops converted to christianity during wartime revivals

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