



Newtownards Christian Aid Committee are warming their toes by the fire today after their annual 3-day sit-out (Thurs-Sat). This yr for the first time they accepted contactless payments. This is the 31st yr of the collection which has raised £85,000 for projects in poor countries.

**Presbyterian Church honours the silent witnesses...**

**December 24, 2018**

At a special ceremony held in Belfast, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has honoured the exceptional contributions made by staff and volunteers in its congregations, homes and support units in its Social Witness Recognition Awards.

Members of staff in the denomination's 16 homes and support units along with volunteers from its 500-plus congregations were asked to nominate individuals, or a team of people, who are making an outstanding contribution in the area of social witness. Across 12 different categories, the Awards included special recognition for volunteering, safeguarding, promoting good practice, leadership and team of the year.

Now in their sixth year, the Awards were organised by PCI's Council for Social Witness which has overall management responsibility for the denomination's homes and support units. Presbyterian Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, presented the Awards and praised the silent witness of the Church and the staff and volunteers who received their awards.

"As followers of Jesus Christ He asks us to demonstrate the love that he poured out on us by showing that same unconditional love for people. While we can do this in so many ways, at its heart it means the putting of our faith into practical action and simple Christian caring, which is a powerful social witness of the gospel," Dr McMullen said.

"Everyone who has been nominated and everyone who has received one of these awards has an incredible servant heart and has made an outstanding contribution to the life of

**December 24, 2018**

the Church in quiet and unobtrusive ways. The Lord sees all things, so He is very much aware of all they are doing for His sake and the advancement of His Kingdom.”

The winners came from congregations, support units and homes in Coleraine, Bangor, Belfast, Omagh, Banbridge, Magherafelt, Ballygawley and Newcastle, with a special award to going to Presbyterian Women.

The winners included:

- **Congregational Team of the Year**  
Yarn & Yarn, Ballygawley and Ballyreagh Presbyterian Church
- **Council for Social Witness Team of the Year**  
Thompson House, the denomination’s approved hostel for offenders in Belfast
- **Unsung hero (congregation)**  
Little Acorns Team, West Church, Bangor
- **Unsung hero (Council for Social Witness)**  
Brian Wilson, Harold McCauley House, residential nursing home, Omagh
- **Volunteer Award**  
Beth McLeod, Bannside Presbyterian Church, Banbridge
- **Leadership Award**  
Norma Pickering, Home Manger, Adelaide House residential care home, Belfast

Congratulating the winners and those who were nominated, Lindsay Conway, Director and Secretary to the Council for Social Witness, said, “In a climate of increased hardship, the Churches are having to fill the gaps left by the statutory

**December 24, 2018**

services, foodbanks for with increased demands, for example and more pastoral support being demanded as Welfare Reform starts to bite.

“These awards are a celebration of the caring and compassionate work that is undertaken by so many unsung heroes in our denomination who are responding to society’s needs and filling the gap,” he said.

“Social witness is a very special kind of witness. As people reach out to others in different hands-on everyday ways, we wanted to honour the contribution that they make. Every winner and every nominee is changing lives and bringing light in a sometimes dark world.

## **Rector appointed to Powerscourt**

The appointment has been announced of the new Rector of the Parish of Powerscourt with Kilbride in the diocese of Glendalough. The Revd Cathy Hallissey, who is currently a Curate in Taney Parish in Dublin, will be instituted in the new year.

Cathy began life in Glenageary Parish and moved to Dundrum at the age of 11. She attended St Ann’s Church on Dawson Street for the first 20 years of her life. Cathy brings with her a life time of experience. She worked as secretary/administrator with the PARC Group and Aer Lingus and was full time in the home prior to commencing training.



December 24, 2018

Fr Kevin Duffy is presented with the keys of the Sacred Heart Church in Irvinestown as he is formally installed yesterday as the new PP of Devenish by the Diocesan Administrator Mgr Joseph McGuinness.



She is married to Ed, who was recently appointed HR Manager with the Church of Ireland and they have three children, Claire (23), Robert (21) and Lizzy (19).

Her appointment to Powerscourt with Kilbride is the culmination of eight years of study and training beginning with the Archbishop's Course, through selection, study for the MTh and three years of curacy in Taney Parish.

**December 24, 2018**

“I have been privileged to work with many fine Rectors during my training, with particular thanks to Canon Robert Warren, the Revd Nigel Pierpoint; the Revd Bernie Daly and Mrs Trilly Keatinge and the people of Christ Church Taney and St Nahi’s churches for their guidance and support and for the joy in ministering with and to them as well as being a parishioner of Taney for almost 20 years,” Cathy commented. “I look forward with enormous gratitude and excitement to my incumbency in the beautiful united parishes of Powerscourt with Kilbride while acknowledging the hands that have cared for them in the past.”

Cathy is a creative spirit and loves writing poetry, songs and music. This feeds into the preparation of courses for adults as well as plays, poems and songs to bring the Scriptures to life for children. She has just finished her book ‘Piccolo Topo’ (Little Mouse) which uses contemplative prayer and sound effects to encourage children to sit with God and imagine the Scriptures.

She is also interested in ecumenism, reconciliation, contemplative prayer and guidance as well as CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) training for chaplaincy and the gentle accompaniment of those who are ill or at the end of life.

“Now more than ever I am aware of God’s grace and guidance in my life along with his strength and peace. We need to be proud of the treasures we hold within our tradition, brave enough to enrich what already exists by thoughtful creativity and bold enough to reach out into secular society and through ecumenism to encourage the recognition of God’s constant presence within individual lives,” Cathy said.

December 24, 2018

## Bishops set to boycott CofE transgender guidance



It's reported up to ten bishops are urging the Church of England to rethink its guidance on celebratory services marking a person's gender transition.

Earlier this month, the Church issued a documents encouraging clergy to use liturgy "to enable people to mark a major transition in their lives".

The guidance suggests a person can renew the commitments they made in baptism in a public setting marking their new identity.

The Church said water or oil could be used in the service which should be "celebratory" in nature.

According to the Sunday Times, a number of bishops, led by Bishop of Wakefield Rt Rev Tony Robinson, are now said to

**December 24, 2018**

be calling for a conscience clause to be introduced for those who feel they couldn't lead a service like this.

The original guidance was released with a commendation from Bishop of Blackburn Rt Rev Julian Henderson.

He initially said: "This new guidance provides an opportunity, rooted in scripture, to enable trans people who have 'come to Christ as the way, the truth and the life', to mark their transition in the presence of their Church family which is the body of Christ."

However Bishop Julian later released a second statement as part of the Church of England Evangelical Council, contradictory to the first, in which he warned the guidance was "both highly divisive and theologically and pastorally questionable."

The Church of England says there is no obligation on clergy to offer this service.

## **Archbishop of Canterbury pays tribute to Paddy Ashdown**

Former leader of the Liberal Democrats Paddy Ashdown died on Saturday at the age of 77 after being treated for bladder cancer.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, was among the leaders paying tribute to Lord Ashdown.





'Paddy Ashdown was an advocate for those others forgot, full of courage, integrity and immensely gifted. He served the people of the Balkans with passion and inspiration, an agent of reconciliation. He will be greatly missed,' he said.

Lord Ashdown, whose real name was Jeremy John Durham Ashdown, was diagnosed with cancer in October. He led the Lib Dems between 1988 and 1999.

Current party leader, Sir Vince Cable, said he would be 'sadly missed'.

'This is a hugely sad day for the Liberal Democrats and for the very many people across political and public life who had immense affection and respect for [@paddyashdown](#).

**December 24, 2018**

He was famous for his politics but his talents extended well beyond that arena. RIP,' he said.

Lord Ashdown, also the former MP for Yeovil, was the longest serving Liberal Democrat leader in the party's history and is credited with establishing it as a major political force in the UK.

Sir Nick Clegg, former Lib Dem leader and former deputy Prime Minister, also paid tribute to Lord Ashdown.

'Paddy was the reason I entered politics,' he **said**.

'He was the reason I became a liberal. And he became a lifelong mentor, friend and guide.'

## **UK funding courts similar to those which prosecuted Asia Bibi**

The UK government is being accused of funding prosecutions in Pakistan which have led to dozens of death sentences.

According to the Observer, the Foreign Office is supporting specialist civilian courts aimed at tackling terrorism.

Around £10 million has been spent since 2016. In that time 59 death sentences have been handed down.

While the aim is to tackle terrorism, Pakistan's legal system defines terrorism as any crime designed to create a "sense of fear or insecurity in society".

December 24, 2018

Critics claim people who have no connection to extremism are being caught by the system.

Harriet McCulloch, the deputy director of human rights charity Reprieve, told the Observer: "It is deeply troubling that Britain is assisting in the investigation and prosecution of crimes that carry the death penalty in Pakistan, particularly as those crimes are being tried in courts that do not uphold basic standards of due process and where the rates of wrongful conviction are alarmingly high."

Christian mother Asia Bibi was sentenced to death in 2010 (before British money was introduced) after being accused of blasphemy. She was acquitted at the Pakistani Supreme Court earlier this year after spending 8 years on death row.

The Foreign Office says it's confident all funding for programmes has been delivered in a way consistent to its opposition of the death penalty.

## News links

### [Church leaders reflect on uncertain times in their Christmas messages](#)

Belfast Telegraph

In a joint statement, the **Church of Ireland** Bishop of Armagh, Richard Clarke, and his Catholic counterpart, Archbishop Eamon Martin, focused on the ...

### [Ireland: Group launched to advance mission of Women Religious](#)

Independent Catholic News

Sisters in **Ireland** are celebrating becoming an established regional group of 'Communicators for Women **Religious**' - an international network offering ...

### [Simon Harris: New maternity hospital to be free from religious influence](#)

Irish Examiner

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)

**December 24, 2018**

Responding to the **news** that the project is proceeding in light of concerns that new EU building rules would force its redesign if first phase funding was ...

## Death Comes to Ireland

Church Militant

The radical abortion law titled "Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018" was signed into law Thursday by **Ireland's** pro-abortion president, ...

## 'I'm touched but not surprised by the generosity of parishioners'

Derry Journal

Canon Paul Hoey, the rector of St. Canice's **Church of Ireland** in Eglinton said the charitable gesture was both typical of the local people and ...

## Pope's plea to child abusers is 'a non-runner'

[BreakingNews.ie](http://BreakingNews.ie)

However, Andrew Madden, the first person in **Ireland** to go public about clerical child sexual abuse in 1995, tweeted yesterday that the Pope has "not a ...

## The Times We Lived In: High jinks plus a little star at Donegal nativity play

Irish Times

... commissioned to illustrate an article about preparations for the annual nativity play at Killaghtee **Church of Ireland** national school near Killybegs.

## Lynn Ruane: In remembrance of my friend, Graham Jones

[thejournal.ie](http://thejournal.ie)

He began training to be ordained within the **Church of Ireland** in 2016 after being called, and his ordination was brought forward to November after he ...

## Irish National Opera To Embark On 2019 Tour

OperaWire

There will also be concert performances in Drogheda at the St Peter's **Church of Ireland** and Celbridge at the Castletown House. In a press statement ...

## TV glory for Moate's GLÓR Choir

Westmeath Independent

GLÓR Youth **Choir** from Moate had the privilege of being invited by RTE, as their chosen **choir**, to perform on RTE1 Christmas Day Service 2018.

## Here's who's on the last Late Late Show of 2018

Irish Examiner

2018 was a tumultuous year for the Irish **news** agenda, with the Beast from the East, a heatwave, two referenda, a presidential campaign and Brexit ...

[This week's Late Late Show guests are revealed - RTE.ie](#)

[Guests revealed for this Friday's Late Late Show](#) - Longford Leader

## Journalist Vincent Kearney joins RTE

**December 24, 2018**

The experienced BBCNI journalist Vincent Kearney has joined RTE as the Irish state broadcaster's Northern Ireland correspondent.

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/experienced-bbcni-journalist-joins-rte-1-8749356>

**Pope Francis: Make space for wonder this Christmas**

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-make-space-for-wonder-this-christmas-76920>

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