

New Songs of Praise presenter announced



Opera star Katherine Jenkins is the new main presenter on Songs of Praise.

The mezzo-soprano, singer will join hosts including Aled Jones and Pamela Rhodes on the BBC One show.

Jenkins, 37, shared her joy after landing a new job: "Having watched Songs Of Praise for as long as I can remember and after the many appearances on the show over the past twelve

July 14



years, it is wonderful to officially become part of the family.

"I am hugely excited about my new role, about working with my friend Aled again and about meeting and worshipping with new people across the country."

The classical star first learnt to sing in her hometown parish church of St David's Church in Neath, which she still attends when she returns to Wales to visit family and friends.

She shot to fame aged 23 and later revealed how she had experimented with cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis before hitting the big-time.

Earlier this year, BBC Studios lost the right to produce the long-running programme, leading to

July 14

concerns from the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James.

He said: "I do fear that there will be a loss in the BBC of specialist expertise in broadcast worship, which has been a core element of its public service remit."

The BBC said that the show will "continue to work with its full roster of well-loved hosts", including Jones and Rhodes.

The mother of one will make her debut as a main presenter on the Sunday worship show on 23rd July, when she will explore the Sussex seaside town of Hastings and listen to "inspiring and uplifting stories of faith in the area".

Forge links with local churches of other denominations, Rev Ken Newell tells major conference

Rev Ken Newell encouraged the more than 300 participants at the Focolare Mariapolis to forge links between their own churches and those of other denominations in their local area.

July 14

The 150 yards between the Presbyterian and the Catholic Church on Fitzroy Avenue in Belfast was one of the longest walks that Rev Ken Newell has ever made.

He told participants at the *Focolare summer meeting last weekend that over his many years working in conflict resolution and building healthy and peaceful communities he has found that: "There is nothing wrong with difference, division is the problem."

He was brought up in a divided society where he never even entered a Catholic Church until he was 25 years old. On that first visit he realized there was something special about the Mass even though he had been taught the opposite all his life.

That was the beginning of change for him which saw him walk from his church where he was the new Presbyterian Minister to the other end of the avenue to greet the priest in the Catholic church.

Later he became part of the cross-community Clonard/Fitzroy Fellowship with Fr Gerry Reynolds. He stated that a key element that underpinned their work was friendship and sense of family. He said that Jesus was raised by a mother and father in a family for 30 years

July 14

before going out to others and it was a case of “live first and talk later.”

In the past he has been chaplain on Orange Order parades, and is a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In more recent years he has worked as a conference speaker and in faith-inspired reconciliations in Ireland and areas of conflict around the world.

He encouraged the more than 300 participants at the **Mariapolis to forge links between their own churches and those of other denominations in their local area. For example, they could pray for the success of each other’s events, or get involved in joint projects or include intentions for both churches in prayers of the faithful.

There were many present from Northern Ireland at the Mariapolis. Roisin Lynch, a South Antrim SDLP candidate for the Northern Ireland Assembly and Westminster General Election, spoke of how people of faith can be involved in politics. She explained how she would never have left her own sofa and felt she has something to contribute except for her desire to live a life with Christian and gospel values at its centre.

July 14

She has found over the years that even those on polar opposite ends of the political divide can work together for the common good.

“I can be a small part in a positive move forward,” she explained.

For example, she is working with the community and local politicians of all persuasions to ensure that the needs of the elderly are being met by providing supported living facilities.

At the Focolare event there was an opportunity to support with prayer the work of peace and community building in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the world with an Ecumenical Vigil for Peace in St Laurence’s Catholic Church, Ballinroad.

The Mariapolis was held in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, and local Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, welcomed participants by celebrating Mass at St Mary’s Parish Church on the first morning. Bishop Brendan Leahy DD, Bishop of Limerick was also present and spent some time with the young people answering their questions as well as addressing the adult participants and celebrating Mass on the final morning.

July 14

Lorna Gold, who has worked as Head of Policy and Advocacy with Trócaire, spoke on the theme of the event, 'That's How the Light Gets In'.

Sarah and Declan O'Brien spoke about the World Meeting of Families 2018 and a special resource by Focolare to help families prepare. The Family Cube incorporates six gospel based phrases based on The Art of Loving by Chiara Lubich and Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) by Pope Francis.

Family members of all ages can roll the cube every morning and try to put the gospel based phrase into practice for the day. They then share about how they got on at the next family meal time or in the evening.

There was a multitude of workshops and other events ranging from dance to baking to discussion on spiritual and social justice issues during the four-day event which ran from Thursday to Sunday (5–9 July).

There are plans for a follow-up meeting on Sunday 24 September at the Focolare Centre, Prosperous, Co Kildare.

July 14

*Focolare, an Italian word meaning 'fireside', is recognised as an ecclesial movement of the Catholic Church. See www.focolare.org/ireland

**Mariapolis is the summer gathering of the Focolare, an international movement which seeks to build a united world taking its inspiration from Jesus' prayer, "may they all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Cleric slams legal bill for ex-Hyde Park suspect as victims get nothing

A cleric who was bereaved by IRA violence has denounced as "despicable" the fact that a man who was suspected of a notorious bombing received more than £50,000 in legal aid, whilst families of his alleged victims got nothing, the News Letter reports.

Rev Alan Irwin, chairman of the advocacy committee of the South East Fermanagh Foundation victims' campaign group, was reacting on Thursday to news that publicly-funded defence bill which John Downey racked up as he prepared to fight charges that he bombed London's Hyde Park in 1982, totalled

July 14

£52,761.26. The convicted IRA man had walked free from court in 2014 after his trial collapsed.

Whilst he had been given legal aid, the families of the soldiers killed in the bombing were refused legal aid to bring their own prosecution against him.

Mr Downey was accused of murdering four soldiers and injuring 31 in the attack – something which he denied.

Rev Irwin, an Anglican minister whose own father Thomas – a sewage worker and part-time UDR soldier – had been shot dead by the IRA in 1986, told the News Letter it was “disgusting”, “despicable”, and “degrading in many ways” that he had been given legal aid whilst victims of the bombing had not.

“There’s something seriously wrong, morally wrong, with that,” he said. He described the sum of over £50,000 as seeming “quite high”.

“£50,000 is quite huge in this day and age, you know?,” he said. The Co Fermanagh man added: “Many of the victims of terrorist atrocities wouldn’t have the financial capabilities to be able to take a case on their own. I think they deserve the same rights as anyone else.”

July 14

He said victims' relatives who have just heard the news about the scale of the legal aid award will be "justly angered by it all".

"They [their dead soldier relatives] have given a service to the protection of the country against terrorism and terrorist atrocities and trying to keep a peaceful society, and yet that service is now almost taken for granted," he said.

Read more at: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/minister-slams-legal-bill-for-ex-hyde-park-suspect-as-victims-get-nothing-1-8055053>

Ex-Vatican hospital bosses charged with diverting funds

Two former senior figures at the Vatican-run children's hospital have been charged with diverting fundraising money totalling 422,000 euros (£372,000). The ex-president and former treasurer at the Bambino Gesù in Rome are accused with using the cash to fund a renovation of a senior cardinal's apartment.

Giuseppe Profiti and Massimo Spina have been ordered to stand in a trial which is scheduled to begin on Tuesday next week.

July 14



It is alleged they took the sum of money from the paediatric hospital's fundraising foundation to fund improvements at the home of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone when he retired as the Vatican's secretary of state.

The cardinal has denied knowing about the payment. Mr Profiti's administration was recently the subject of an Associated Press investigation into quality of care at what is referred to as the "pope's hospital". He has admitted to the payment but argued it was an investment to allow the foundation use of the apartment for fundraising events.

July 14

Bambino Gesu recently caught the attention international news media, after bosses offered to take in terminally ill baby Charlie Gard.

'The Message' author Eugene Peterson backs same-sex marriage : Christian retailer plans to stop selling his books

Influential evangelical scholar Eugene Peterson, the author of *The Message* translation of the Bible, has said that he would officiate at a gay wedding ceremony if asked, appearing to affirm same-sex marriage. The comments have divided progressive and traditionalist Christians, with the conservative publishing company LifeWay now preparing to stop selling Peterson's books in response.

Peterson, who is now retired from teaching and speaking at age 84, made the comments in an interview with Jonathan Merritt of RNS, published on Wednesday.

'I wouldn't have said this 20 years ago, but now I know a lot of people who are gay and lesbian and they seem to have as good a spiritual life as I do,' Peterson said when asked about the

July 14



Acclaimed author Eugene Peterson has come out in support of same-sex marriage.

morality of same-sex relationships, or if he had changed his mind on the issue.

'I think that kind of debate about lesbians and gays might be over. People who disapprove of it, they'll probably just go to another church. So we're in a transition and I think it's a transition for the best, for the good. I don't think it's something that you can parade, but it's not a right or wrong thing as far as I'm concerned.'

Asked if he would perform a same-sex wedding for a gay Christian couple in his church, Peterson responded simply 'Yes'.

Peterson is a renowned scholar and theologian who has authored more than 100 books, most famously various editions of *The Message*, a

July 14

paraphrase translation of the Bible that has become vastly popular particularly in the evangelical world. Now however, the Southern Baptist affiliated distributor LifeWay Christian Stores may drop Peterson's works because of his change in view.

A lifeway spokesperson told Christianity Today: 'LifeWay only carries resources in our stores by authors who hold to the biblical view of marriage.

'We are attempting to confirm with Eugene Peterson or his representatives that his recent interview on same-sex marriage accurately reflects his views. If he confirms he does not hold to a biblical view of marriage, LifeWay will no longer sell any resources by him, including *The Message*.'

Peterson's denomination Presbyterian Church (USA) now supports same-sex marriage and welcomes gay clergy, so some have called his 'change' unsurprising.

This is the first time Peterson has publicly spoken on this issue, but it's believed that he has suggested similar sentiments supportive of the LGBTQ community in private gatherings.

July 14

The news has been celebrated by progressives and largely decried by conservatives. Russell Moore, the president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, called the news 'so disappointing'.

Rachel Held Evans said she was 'grateful' for Peterson's voice, while LGBTQ affirming writer Matthew Vines tweeted: 'Eugene Peterson is without a doubt the most influential Christian to date to say he affirms same-sex unions. The impact will be significant.'

Mothers' Union's "Summer of Hope" Campaign launch at Southward Cathedral

Southwark Cathedral grounds will be transformed into a summer-themed garden party with a difference on Wednesday 19th July when Mothers' Union (MU) launches its annual summer appeal.

Entitled "Summer of Hope", this year's appeal target is to raise £125,000 for community based projects. Last year MU members from across the UK helped raise £102,000 for the charity's "Big Summer Appeal". Projects funded ranged from

July 14



helping mums in South Sudan learn to read and write to giving imprisoned dads in the UK the chance to reconnect with their families.

This year Mothers' Union is calling on its members to organise garden parties, barbecues, cake sales, fêtes, raffles, face painting and bouncy castles – no event is too large or too small. Hosting an afternoon tea for a few friends could raise £60 and help three people learn to read and write. A summer BBQ could raise £180 and help 30 mums and dads become better parents by funding one of MU's parenting skills groups. Finally, a summer fête could raise £1,000 and fund 10 churches to begin programmes that achieve a positive and lasting change in their communities.

July 14

“What better way to celebrate the start of summer than by coming together with friends, family and neighbours to enjoy the sunshine?” says Mothers’ Union Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey. “It doesn’t matter whether you want to host an afternoon tea for a few friends, or welcome a whole community to a grand summer fête. Whatever you do will help to make it a ‘Summer of Hope’ for families around the world,” she continues.

At Southward guests will be invited to learn more about the people and projects Mothers’ Union’s ‘Summer of Hope’ will be supporting and find out more from MU staff about how you can get involved. A gallery of images will be displayed showcasing how the campaign will actually change the lives of individuals. “We are delighted to host this event with Mothers’ Union. The world needs hope, as do many of our communities at home. A ‘Summer of Hope’ will help us all lift our eyes and hearts to the God in whom we are forever hopeful,” says The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark.

Mothers’ Union has provided a resource packed full of ideas, information and templates for invites, posters and case studies to help people organise their event. [Click here](#)

July 14

Church leaders in Canada help fire stricken communities

As wildfires rage across British Columbia's Central Interior, Anglican leaders in the region are doing what they can to support their communities, says Bishop Barbara Andrews of the Central Interior-based Territory of the People.

After weeks of hot, dry weather, a lightning storm sparked fires that have spread across the Central Interior, forcing thousands to leave their homes and causing the province to declare a state of emergency. Of the 14,000 people who have been evacuated so far, Bishop Barbara estimates roughly 1,000 are Anglicans.

All 2,000 residents of 100 Mile House have been evacuated, including the Revd Keith Dobyns, the Revd Kristen Dobyns and Canon Thelma Sharkey, deacon of St. Timothy's Anglican Church, as have the residents of Cache Creek. The 10,000 citizens of Williams Lake are currently on evacuation alert, and the fire has already destroyed houses on the reserve of the Ashcroft Indian Band, according to media reports.

July 14



But Bishop Barbara said the roughly 220 active fires are having an impact on every single member of every congregation in her territory, regardless of whether they have been evacuated or not. “Every community within the Central Interior...has a fire near the community,” she said. “As far as we know, we’ve had no loss of property, and no loss of life, but it is affecting every Anglican in the Central Interior of British Columbia right now.”

Bishop Barbara noted that even those who have not had to flee their homes are dealing with heavy smoke, the threat of evacuation and, in some cases, loss of livelihood. Cattle ranching is a major industry in that part of B.C., and while efforts are being made to move

July 14

livestock to safety, the sheer number of animals in the region means some must be left behind.

“People are anxious, stressed out. In many of our communities, there is no gas (petrol) left, so even when they are able to evacuate, there is trouble finding enough gas to get anywhere,” Bishop Barbara added.

So far, there is no end in sight. There is no rain in the forecast, and the vast forests of the Central Interior have been turned to kindling by a long heat wave.

“We’re in it for the long haul here,” said Bishop Barbara, noting that the Territory of the People has responded by registering its buildings with emergency services as overflow, should the number of evacuees increase. She has also assured the parishes in the territory that their bills will be paid and payroll will be maintained. “We may need to ask for help from the larger church if this goes on too long, but at this point, we are just saying to the churches, ‘We will take care of what we need to take care of for you, and sort it out at the end of the day,’ ” she said.

Bishop Barbara said her own headquarters, St. Paul’s Anglican Cathedral in Kamloops, will be one of the first places the province turns to in

July 14

housing evacuees because it is equipped with a large kitchen and mattresses that are used during the out-of-the-cold programme in winter. St. Paul's is also providing spiritual support to those affected by the fires.

Bishop Barbara asked Anglicans across the country for prayers, keeping in mind the people of the Central Interior, their leaders, the firefighters who have been battling the conflagrations around the clock, and the evacuees. "I think anyone that is living in emergency shelters is living under extreme stress and uncertainty, and needs our prayers," she said. "Pray for rain."

See CNI's WWW Reviews for additional news

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