



Mrs Kathleen Lunn, Hon Churchwarden, Church of the Good Shepherd, Monkstown, with some of the teddies ready to be transported to their new owners.

Young parishioners send teddy bears to refugee children

Families from Newtownabbey Methodist Mission have joined forces with members of the Church

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of the Good Shepherd (COGS), Monkstown, in support of Project Paddington – a charity set up to send teddy bears to refugee children fleeing to Europe – with dozens of teddies donated by children, parents and grandparents in response to a recent harvest appeal.

Members of COGS – a joint Church of Ireland/ Methodist Covenant Church – together with their minister, the Rev Arlene Moore, have become Northern Ireland co-ordinators for the project

In response to the Parish Harvest Appeal, children, parents and grandparents prepared their much loved teddies for a trip to a new life – just like Paddington Bear!

Dozens of teddies have now been parcelled up and will be forwarded to children who had to leave everything behind when they fled their homeland. Families from Newtownabbey Methodist Mission have also donated teddies to the appeal.

Project Paddington was set up by Joy French, a friend of the Rev Arlene Moore, Priest-in-Charge of the Church of the Good Shepherd, and a trainee vicar in Sheffield.

Joy and a number of other mums from the parish parent and toddler group started the project early in September after seeing the shocking images of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi whose tiny body was washed up on a Turkish beach.

Joy said she thought her Facebook initiative would be a small-scale venture in Sheffield, but in less than a week 4,000 people had joined the group, scores of schools have got involved, 30 regional co-ordinators volunteered to collect the teddies across the UK, and people had pledged support from as far away as the US, Dubai, and New Zealand.

The idea was for children to give teddies with welcome messages attached to those who had fled the war in Syria, and youngsters posted pictures of their donations and messages on the Project Paddington Facebook page.

The project is now collecting money from people who are sponsoring the bears and has launched a 'bear selfie' campaign.

"The way that people have come together around this has just been unbelievable," said Joy. "We could never have known how this would have

taken off. So we're just humbled and shocked. The response has just been incredible."

The project has become so big Joy has partnered with Tear Fund, and Arlene and the Church of the Good Shepherd became Regional Coordinators for Northern Ireland groups. Arlene said: "I knew William Carson from Methodist Container Ministries in Lurgan as he had shipped literally tonnes of aid for me to Africa when I was a curate in St Mark's, Portadown. William agreed to help with the shipping of the teddies and to lend his expertise to Project Paddington.

"We sent our teddies out to join the consignment of some 30,000+ going from UK and our financial donations went to their partner Tear Fund to buy whatever supplies were needed on the ground including tents, clothes, water, food, medicines."

Among the parishioners who worked tirelessly to get the teddies ready for their journey were Mrs Kathleen Lunn, Honorary Churchwarden, Mrs Liz Feely, Honorary Steward, and Ms Laura Harris who helped laminate tags for all the teddies and sort them out. Mr Len Officer, a local preacher, delivered them to the warehouse of the Methodist Container Ministry in Lurgan.

Project Paddington has now closed for new teddy bear registrations. However, schools and groups throughout the UK are raising funds for refugees through teddy bears' picnics, onesie days, cake sales and other fundraisers. Project Paddington can support groups or schools with information about refugees and certificates

And anyone can share the bear love for refugee children and their families by posting a selfie of themselves with their bear. Visit the Project Paddington website (<http://projectpaddington.com/>) or Join 'Project Paddington' on Facebook to find out more.

Civil marriage - cease being dictated by fundamentalist beliefs Faith group tells NI politicians

Faith in Marriage Equality (FiME), an inter-denominational umbrella, has called on Northern Ireland Assembly to cease being dictated to by fundamentalist religious beliefs.

In a submission to politicians, the FiME states:

“On this Monday 2nd November 2015, the Northern Ireland Assembly will have an

opportunity to vote on a motion in support for making civil marriage available to same sex couples.

“We recognise that some members of the Northern Ireland Assembly are opposed to equal civil marriage on religious grounds.”

The submission is titled “Faith in Marriage Equality for Same- Sex Couples in Northern Ireland” and it is co-authored by Dr Richard O'Leary, Canon Charles Kenny and Mr Gerry Lynch. It presents faith based and other arguments in favour of extending civil marriage to same-sex couples.

Dr Richard O'Leary of Faith in Marriage Equality says, “We take this opportunity to remind our politicians that they are being asked to legislate for civil, not religious marriage. Furthermore, Northern Ireland's politicians and faith leaders should learn from our history when the state and the Anglican Church of Ireland establishment refused to recognise the legality of Presbyterian or Catholic marriages. Furthermore, Church leaderships who now oppose marriages between same sex couples have in the past opposed mixed Protestant-Catholic marriages.”

Dr O'Leary added "It is a worrying development in our democracy that the Democratic Unionist Party has said it will use a petition of concern to block any majority in the Assembly on Monday for marriage equality. It is time that our political parties cease being dictated to by fundamentalist religious beliefs at the expense of providing equal rights and responsibilities for all under the civil law in Northern Ireland"

Faith in Marriage Equality is supported by a range of faith organisations including the Catholic groups 'We are Church Ireland' (WACI) and 'Gay Catholic Voice Ireland' (GCVI) and the Anglican/Church of Ireland group 'Changing Attitude Ireland' (CAI).

Faith in Marriage Equality may be contacted at
1st Floor Memorial Building, 9-13 Waring Street,
Belfast BT1 2DX

‘Time to work again for the common good’ - PCI on political talks

As the political talks process enters what is expected to be its final phase, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has encouraged all participants

to reach an accommodation for the common good.

Speaking about the ongoing negotiations, the Very Rev. Dr. Norman Hamilton, Convenor of the Council for Church in Society, said, “This is a critically important week for Northern Ireland.

“As is the nature of any negotiation, those involved are unlikely to achieve everything that they set out to achieve, so as a Church we would encourage all the participants to work resolutely to find an accommodation for the common good of all the people of Northern Ireland.

“As a Church we also hope that both the British and Irish Governments would play their part by positively contributing to an agreement that will both deal with the outstanding issues, and lay a foundation on which trust and confidence can be rebuilt.

“All those involved in the negotiations will be in our prayers and the prayers of many other people this week,” he said.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence - All-Ireland Prayer Vigil

In a powerful gesture of solidarity with women in Ireland and across the world who are suffering gender based violence, Mothers' Union is spreading the word and calling on women all over Ireland to stand together in prayer and in person on Saturday, 28th November, in the form of an All-Ireland Prayer Vigil.

With gatherings in all 12 dioceses of the Church of Ireland it is hoped that this simple action will contribute to raising awareness among the general population and encouraging governments to take action.

The '16 days' is based on the period between 25th November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and 10th December, Human Rights Day.

Figures from the World Health Organisation show that, globally, an estimated 23–37% of women suffer violence from an intimate partner, and that 38% of all women murdered across the world are killed by their partner. '16 Days' provides the opportunity to raise awareness of this issue,



demonstrate solidarity against violence and put pressure on governments to take action.

MU says - Please join us in our call to end gender-based violence at a venue near you.

Armagh: Armagh City Hotel, 11.15am

Cashel, Ferns and Ossory:

St. Edan's Cathedral, Ferns, 3–5pm

St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, 3–5pm

Cashel Cathedral, 3–5pm

Clogher: Hillard Room, Cathedral Hall,
Enniskillen, 3–5pm

Connor: St. Anne's Cathedral, 3–6pm

Down and Dromore: St. Anne's Cathedral, 3–6pm

Derry & Raphoe: St. Columb's Cathedral, 3–4.30pm

Dublin & Glendalough: Christ Church Cathedral, 3–6pm

Cork, Cloyne & Ross:

(21st November) Celtic Ross Hotel, 3pm

(28th November) St. Peter's Church, Carrigrohane, 3–4pm

Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh: St. George's Church, Carrick on Shannon, 3–6pm

Limerick & Killaloe: St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, 3–4.30pm

Meath & Kildare:

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Trim, 3–5pm

Castro Petri, Edenderry, 3–5pm

Tuam, Kilalla & Achonry: (21st November 21st) Bishop's House, Breaffy Woods, 12 midday

About Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union is a worldwide Christian membership organisation that demonstrates the Christian faith in action through the transformation of communities through 4 million members in 83 countries. MU works with people of all faiths and none to promote stable marriage,

family life and the protection of children through praying, enabling and campaigning.

For more information please go to -

www.mothersunion.ie or www.mothersunion.org

MCI Develops Partnership with Upper Myanmar Methodist Church

For the past 18 months the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland) MMS(I) has been exploring the possibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) partnering with the Methodist Church of Upper Myanmar (MCUM). This has involved dialogue and much thinking on how a mutually beneficial relationship can be shaped. How can both the MCUM and the MMCI learn and grow as a result?

The developing partnership between both churches is very much about sharing resources with each other in order to further God's Kingdom. The resources may be experience, skills, funds or worship.

It is already clear that MCI has much to learn from its brothers and sisters in Myanmar in

relation to Methodist identity, zeal for evangelism and commitment to marginalized communities.



The MCI also has blessings to share. In September 2015 MMS(I) transferred £48,000 to MCUM. The grant is being used to:

- fund indigenous missionaries in remote areas,
- provide income-generation projects for poorer churches
- set up pre-school nurseries
- provide relief to those affected by recent flooding and landslides.

The sum also contains a grant from the Irish Methodist World Development & Relief for the churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Wesley Hospital (formerly Clinic) which was set up in 1987 in a town called Kalay and which has attracted international Methodist volunteers and support over the years.

Pope condemns priests and bishops who 'defamed' Oscar Romero

Pope Francis has strongly denounced the Catholic priests and bishops who “defamed” Archbishop Oscar Romero even after his murder in a campaign that delayed his beatification.

The Pope spoke off-the-cuff on Friday to a group of Salvadoran pilgrims who had travelled to Rome to thank Pope Francis for beatifying Salvadoran Oscar Romero, who is seen as a hero to the continent's poor and oppressed.

Pope Francis said that Romero suffered martyrdom not just by his murder on March 24, 1980, but afterwards.

The Pope said: “I was a young priest then and I was a witness to this: he was defamed,

calumnied and had dirt thrown on his name — his martyrdom continued even by his brothers in the priesthood and episcopate.”

He said Romero was “stoned with the hardest stone that exists in the world: the tongue.”

Romero was gunned down by right-wing death squads as he celebrated Mass in a hospital chapel in San Salvador. He had spoken out against repression by the army at the beginning of El Salvador’s 1980-1992 civil war between the right-wing government and leftist rebels, a conflict that killed nearly 75,000 people.

Romero’s sainthood case was held up by the Vatican, apparently due to opposition from some Latin American churchmen who feared his association with liberation theology would embolden the movement.

After a 35-year delay, Romero was beatified in May earlier this year.

Pope Francis, speaking to the pilgrims, said he hoped God would continue what Romero had hoped would come to El Salvador: “the happy moment when El Salvador’s terrible tragedy of suffering of so many of our brothers thanks to hatred, violence and injustice, disappears.”

In a message sent for the beatification, Pope Francis said Archbishop Romero “built the peace with the power of love, [and] gave testimony of the faith with his life”.

Cardinal Angelo Amato, head of the Vatican’s Congregation for Saints’ Causes, who celebrated the beatification Mass, said that while those who persecuted him had died or are in obscurity, “the memory of Romero continues to live in the poor and the marginalised”.

His homilies often pleaded for better conditions for the poor, for a stop to the escalating violence in the country and for brotherhood among those whose divisions ultimately led to a 12-year conflict.

Media digest

BBC

Almost six million UK workers are paid less than the living wage, a study suggests. The data showed a "worrying trend" of part-time, female and young workers being most likely to earn below the figure. The voluntary living wage is currently £7.85 an hour and £9.15 in London.

Professional services firm KPMG said its research showed that the proportion of workers earning less than the living wage had risen for three years in a row.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34691404>

Guard

Reports the government is facing a fresh confrontation with the House of Lords over its housing policy, which campaigners claim will deprive rural communities of affordable housing. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is demanding that country areas should be exempt from the latest right-to-buy plans. The Bishops of St Albans and Manchester Alan Smith and David Walker are quoted.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/oct/31/government-lords-showdown-right-to-buy-threat-rural-areas>

Ind

A profile of Canon Andrew White, the “Vicar of Baghdad”, under the headline “Leading the church in Iraq and being in the crosshairs of Isis”.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/canon-andrew-white-vicar-of-baghdad-on-leading-a-church-in-iraq-and-being-in-the-crosshairs-of-isis-a6716616.html>

BBC

Funding has been secured to restore tombs in a Grade I listed village church in Berkshire. St Mary's in Hampstead Norreys has been given £57,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve its nine 18th and 19th Century churchyard tombs. Plans include restoring and replacing stonework on the tombs, which, in some cases, are beginning to collapse.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-34687604>

Mail/Tel/BBC

Report on research to be presented at next month's General Synod (see News from CofE above) which presents a range of findings on people's attitudes to Jesus, Christians and evangelism in England. Both the Bishop of Bristol, Mike Hill and William Fittall, Secretary General to the Synod, are quoted.

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3297748/Don-t-preach-Church-tells-Christians-Research-suggests-talk-beliefs-likely-friends-colleagues-God-turn-faith.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3297748/Don-t-preach-Church-tells-Christians-Research-suggests-talk-beliefs-likely-friends-colleagues-God-turn-faith.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3297748/Don-t-preach-Church-tells-Christians-Research-suggests-talk-beliefs-likely-friends-colleagues-God-turn-faith.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11966960/Talking-about-Christianity-could-just-put-people-off-Church-of-England-signals.html>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34686993>

Times

Report on the Church Buildings Review, to be discussed at General Synod, focusing on the proposal for Festival churches, where some in rural areas would only open for services at certain times of year. Sir Tony Baldry, chair of the Church Buildings Council, is quoted.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article4600995.ece>

Tel

Report that RBS spin off Williams and Glyn is at deaths door before it has even begun saying it will be unable to be a substantial challenger bank. Article notes that the Church Commissioners were part of the consortium of buyers.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/11966388/RBS-spin-off-Williams-and-Glyn-is-at-deaths-door-before-its-even-been-born.html>

Times

Simon Rocker writes on why Jewish-Christian relations are a beacon of hope.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/life/courtsocial/article4600821.ece>

Guard

Editorial on Hallow'een, saying it has become disorganized and irreligious and is all the better for it and it is pointless to talk about the religious roots of the festival.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/30/the-guardian-view-on-halloween-disorganised-and-irreligious-and-all-the-better-for-it>

And finally ...

Christian Today

Feature on priest being sought for the Ascension Islands, asking if this is the best vicar-posting in the world?

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