



Trócaire appeal asks to give the gift of love for Christmas 2017

Overseas development agency Trócaire has launched its Christmas 2017 appeal with a new video titled “Until Love Conquers Fear”. The video highlights all those across the world facing fear this

Christmas, and the work of Trócaire in responding to those in need.

Trócaire director Éamonn Meehan explained that the campaign highlights the different ways ethical donations from Ireland can help people facing daily battles for survival:

‘The people we work with face lots of challenges – hunger, human rights violations, extreme poverty,” he said. “At the heart of it, they all face fear, whether it is the fear of watching your child starve or the fear of being a victim of violence. People in Ireland respond to that through a genuine love of humanity. By supporting our Christmas appeal, you are helping to offer love and support by providing food, water, shelter and safety to those desperately in need.’

As part of the appeal, Trócaire has highlighted the stories of people it is supporting this Christmas. Those helped include Nofa Dergham and her four

children from Syria are now staying at a Trócaire shelter in the region, where Nofa is receiving skills training and her children attend a school in the camp; Athanasie Nirere and her family from Rwanda, whose Trócaire-supported farm and shop now supports 15 other people; Consuelo Soto and her community in Honduras who are supported in lobbying against the destruction of their homeland; and mother and child Nancy and Meshak, who is one of the 13,000 children receiving food aid in Kenya. Their stories and the “Until Love Conquers Fear” video can be viewed on the Trócaire website, www.trocaire.org.

To support Trócaire’s work this Christmas people are asked to donate at www.trocaire.org, by calling 1850 408 408 or by visiting Trócaire’s centres in Dublin, Cork and Belfast. Donations can also be made through Trócaire’s ethical Christmas gifts.

Eamonn Meehan continued, ‘I have seen the real difference these gifts can make. It is no exaggeration to say that they are

having an immediate, practical impact on families throughout the developing world. For example, millions of people in east Africa are still fighting for survival in the face of drought and crop failures. The gift of chicks for families in Kenya and Ethiopia can give them a critical extra source of income from their eggs and it is also a vital source of protein for the family. A simple gift like chickens can help parents to keep their children in school even during difficult months and give them important nutrition.'

This year's ethical Christmas gifts include chicks for families in Kenya and Ethiopia (€7), solar lamps for families in the DRC (€15), school lunches for children in Somalia (€30), goats in Kenya and DRC (€50), beehives for Kenya (€65), care for mothers and their new born babies in Somalia (€85), water pumps and irrigation around the world (€100), land for a family home in Myanmar, Honduras and Guatemala (€150), a farming kit for families in the DRC (€200) and support for

women's small businesses around the world (€250).

'One4All' Trócaire cards are also available in post offices countrywide. Priced from €15 to €100.

Celebrating 175 years of Groomsport Parish Church

Advent Sunday 2017 was a significant day in the life and history of Groomsport Parish as the congregation and guests celebrated the 175th anniversary of the building of the Church.

The Church was designed by the noted Irish architect Sir Charles Lanyon and was established in 1842 as a Chapel of Ease for the Perceval–Maxwell family of Finnebrogue, who summered in Groomsport. Within 10 years Groomsport had been granted Parish status.

The 175th celebrations brought together the great, great, great grandson of Robert Perceval–Maxwell, Bill, and his cousin Norrys, as well as a previous Rector, Canon Derek Tyney and his wife Gwen. Also at the service of celebration and the Parish Lunch was Patrick



Left to right: Patrick Freeman, Bill Perceval-Maxwell, Helen Parkinson (Peoples' Warden), the Revd Faith Cully (Assisting Priest), the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, the Revd Duncan Pollock (Rector), Norrys Perceval-Maxwell, Lady Sylvia Hermon (MP for North Down), Gwen Tyney, Canon Derek Tyney, and Hester Kelly (Rector's Warden).

Freeman, the son of another previous Rector, the Revd George Freeman who died suddenly in 1944, and Mary Moore, the widow of Bishop Jimmy Moore who was Rector of Groomsport

from 1969 to 1975. The congregation was delighted to welcome the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, who preached at morning worship.

The Parish is marking this significant milestone by undertaking a major programme of refurbishment in 2018, work that is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Bishop Fintan Monahan to lead third 'Mercy on the Mall' in Skycourt Shopping Centre, Shannon

Bishop Fintan Monahan, Bishop of Killaloe, will be among twenty priests present in the Skycourt Shopping Centre, Shannon, for the third annual 'Mercy on the Mall' day on Friday 8 December next, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

From 1.00pm to 6.00pm, twenty priests from the diocese of Killaloe will be available to shoppers and visitors to Skycourt who wish to avail of the Sacrament of Penance, or, indeed, simply for a blessing or a chat.

The 'Mercy on The Mall' first took place in Skycourt Shopping Centre in Shannon in 2015 at the start of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The day proved so successful, that both management and priests were invited to continue the tradition. The initiative comes from the call of Pope Francis for priests to bring the Gospel to the market place and for priests to make themselves available to people who wish to avail of the Sacrament or to those who wish make a connection with the Church.

Last year, all twenty priests were kept engaged with shoppers throughout the day. One woman who availed of the sacrament described her experience as 'liberating,' another visitor remarked that it was 'a new beginning'.

Priests will be present in different locations in the mall if people wish to engage with them. Seasonal music and songs on the day will be provided by the school choir from Saint Conaire's Primary School in Shannon.

Saintfield Parish sit-out raises £1,600 for Clic Sargent

Saintfield Parish's Annual Sit Out Appeal has raised £1,600 so far for Clic Sargent, the UK's

leading cancer charity for children and young people, and their families.

The vicar, Chris Pollock, sexton, Ian Gordon, churchwarden, William Drury and youth worker, David McIlroy, sat out in Saintfield Main Street from midday to midnight on Friday 1 December.

“William, Ian, David and I, along with all the people who served tea, coffee and shortbread, felt that this charity hit a chord with the many folk who were in Saintfield that day, said Chris Pollock.

“From passers-by, to motorists rolling down their windows and those who came across from the Saintfield Street Fair to donate, the generosity on display was heartwarming on a cold December night.

“Clic Sargent also were superb in their support and encouragement. Tee-shirts, hoodies, posters and badges all made the sit out much more visible. It allowed people to see what the charity was and its core work providing clinical, practical, financial and emotional support.

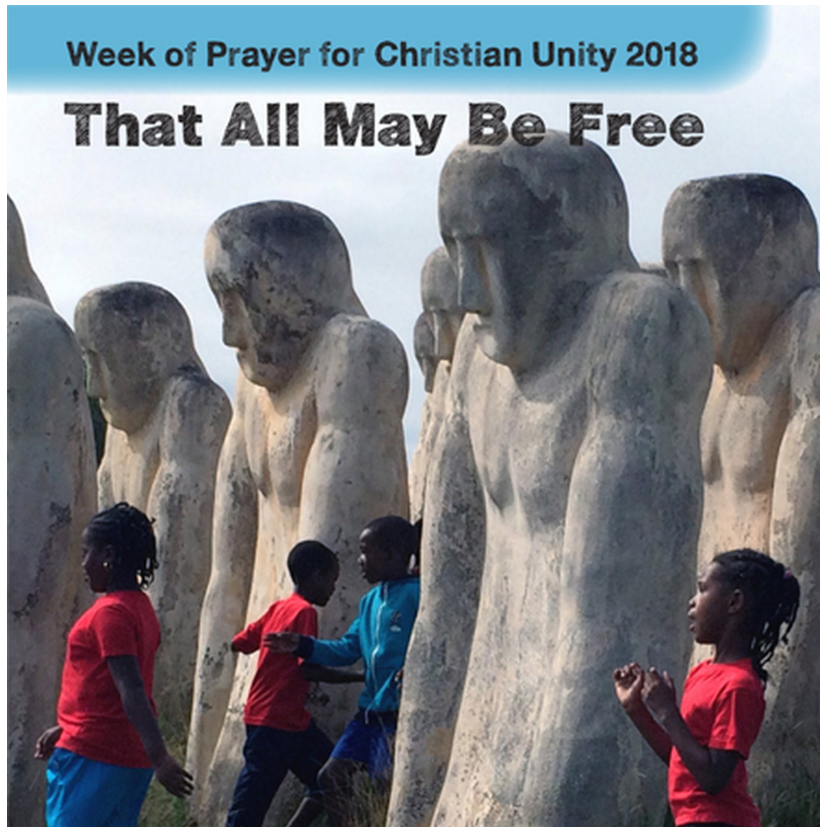
“We’re so grateful to everyone who gave or helped in any way.”

The parish hopes to present a cheque to Clic Sargent at the 10.30 am SPACE service on 10 December.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018 – That All May be Free

The Rt Revd John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher and Chair, Church of Ireland Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue, has highlighted the forthcoming Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the resources which are available on its theme of victory over oppression.

‘Although its popularity may have fallen off a little in recent years, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has the enormous advantage of being recognised as a time of prayer and reflection throughout the Christian West and beyond,’ Bishop McDowell commented. ‘In my own Diocese, I have found that the involvement of schools and young people can add a new vigour and perspective to our events while still making use of the material and ideas made available by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). The week helps us to re-focus on our vocation to be reconcilers and peace-makers within the Church and in the world. The theme of this year’s resources, modelled on material from the



Church in the Caribbean, is victory over oppression – *That All May Be Free* – and should help us to remember that ecumenical activity has a purpose beyond itself, in this case proclaiming the great gospel values of liberation and justice.’ The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from 18th to 25th January – the octave of St Peter and St Paul. Material for 2018 has been produced in the

Caribbean and uses Exodus 15, a song of triumph over oppression, as the motif of the Week of Prayer.

Resources are now available, and printed versions can be ordered online (<https://tinyurl.com/ybzr5ruh>) by phone from Norwich Books and Music on ++ 44 (0) 1603 785925. They are also available as downloads from www.ctbi.org.uk

The themes of the daily material raise some of the contemporary issues addressed by the Churches of the Caribbean. Abuses of human rights are found across the region and participants are challenged to consider our manner of welcoming of the stranger into our midst. Human trafficking and modern-day slavery continue to be huge issues. Addictions to pornography and drugs continue to be serious challenges to all societies. The debt crisis has a negative impact upon the nations and upon individuals – the economies of the nations and people have become precarious. Family life continues to be challenged by the economic restrictions which lead to migration, domestic abuse and violence.

The Caribbean Churches work together to heal the wounds in the body of Christ. Reconciliation demands repentance, reparation and the healing

of memories. The whole Church is called to be both a sign and an active agent of this reconciliation. Each year Christian Aid provides the *Go and Do* action points for each of the daily reflections – linking into the important work of Christian Aid in the relief of poverty and advocacy of justice. These are available online at <https://tinyurl.com/y83hxfcg>

Participants can show their support for Christian Unity by posting unity messages and details of events to our Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Twitter wall – by adding the #wpcuwall hashtag to a Twitter post (please note that posts take 15 minutes to appear). Updates about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity can be found on Twitter by following the #wpcu2018 hashtag.

Paper-based social-media campaign links Anglicans against gender-based violence

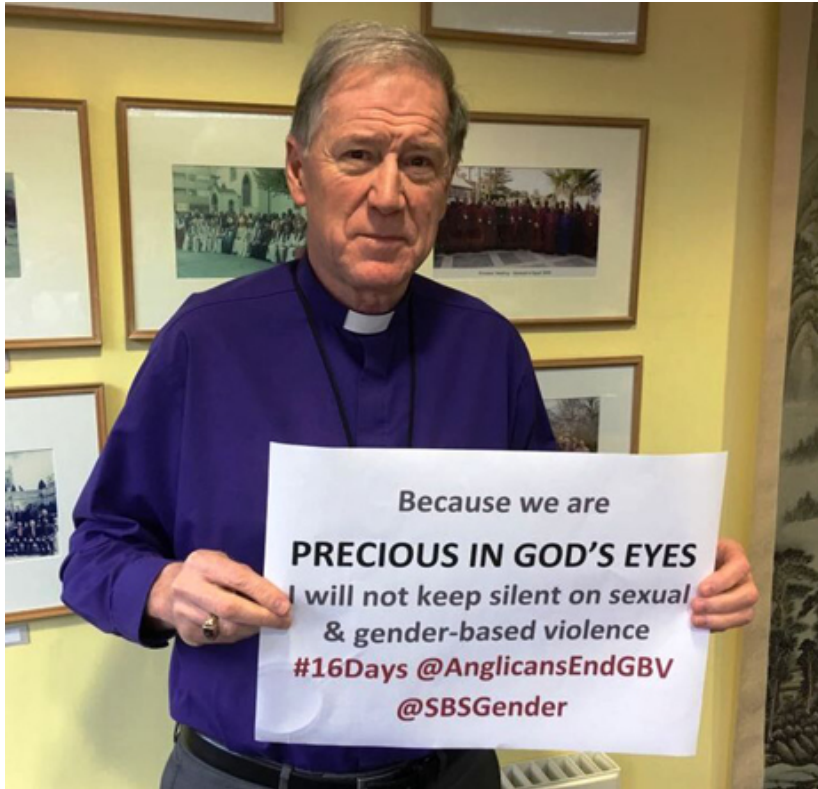
Anglicans around the world are marking the 16-Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in a simple social media campaign – that is based on paper! They are taking photos holding a poster with a simple pledge: “because we are precious in God’s eyes, I will not keep



Rachael Fraser from the Scottish Episcopal Church takes part in the #AnglicansEndGBV campaign.

silent on sexual & gender-based violence.” The photos are being uploaded to Facebook and Twitter. They are being shared by a dedicated Twitter account: [@AnglicansEndGBV](https://twitter.com/AnglicansEndGBV).

“All Anglicans can get involved in the social media campaign,” the [Inter-Anglican Women’s Network](#) (IAWN) said. “Posting our 16 Days photos and pledges is just one way of letting the world know that we want to change the environments we live in where gender-based violence is still allowed to diminish and destroy



Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

people's lives, most often those of women and girls.”

To take part, take a photo of yourself with a sign (which can be [downloaded here](#)) and post it on Facebook and Twitter or any other social media. On Twitter, users are encouraged to send them to to [@AnglicansEndGBV](#) and [@SBSGender](#) with

the hashtag [#16Days](#) so that they can be re-tweeted.

If you do not have a social media account, you can email your photo to [Chris Curry at the Anglican Communion Office](#) who will post the photos on social media for you.

In addition to the Anglican Communion, the campaign is supported by the Church of Sweden, Finn Church Aid, Islamic Relief Worldwide, the Lutheran World Federation, Mission 21, Norwegian Church Aid, Side by Side, UNFPA and World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Connor MU vigil marks 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence

Connor Diocese Mothers' Union has held a vigil as part of the MU's 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence.

The vigil took place in Mid Belfast area, and was hosted by the Belfast Cathedral branch. Members from other branches and the Diocesan Trustees attended.



At the MU vigil are, from left: Rosemary Burnside, Joan Allen, Cathy Doig, Diocesan Social Policy Contact, Alberta Miskimmon, Area Chairman and branch leader, Karen Douglas speaker from The Rowan, Valerie Ash, Diocesan President, and Geraldine Montgomery.

They were welcomed by the Area Chairman Alberta Miskimmon, who explained about the Mothers' Union campaign and the various forms this kind of violence can take.

The guest speaker was Karen Douglas from The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) which is located in the grounds of Antrim Hospital. This is a one stop centre which will deliver a comprehensive and coordinated inter-agency response to all victims of sexual assault and rape, irrespective of their age, gender, sexual identity/orientation, ethnicity, or geographical location.

Mrs Valerie Ash, Connor Diocesan President, said: “Karen opened our eyes to the extent of this kind of violence and to how much support can be offered to victims. Hopefully members will pass on this information to others.”

Back in September some members from Connor attended the MU General Meeting in Edinburgh where they saw an exhibition entitled ‘These were the shoes I wore when...’

“This was Edinburgh’s contribution to the campaign against gender violence,” Valerie said. “It was an exhibition of about 40 pairs of shoes, each with a caption which really enabled me to feel as if I was in the shoes of the victims. A very powerful exhibition which is taken round prisons and schools etc to raise awareness of sexual violence.”



‘These were the shoes I wore when...’ Seeing the shoes with their captions really helped us imagine the people who had worn these shoes and made their suffering very real, without a single word being spoken - Valerie Ashe

Valerie thanked Geraldine Montgomery who expanded this idea into an exhibition for the vigil in Mid Belfast. “The members found it very emotional and thought-provoking,” Valerie said. “The shoes and the captions said so much more

that a talk would. This could be a great idea for other branches to follow.”

The meeting concluded with the Vigil service provided by All Ireland. Each branch from the area was included in the service.

Valerie said: “The vigil was a wonderful event, well attended, and members were informed of the Mothers’ Union Campaign 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence and gained an insight into one aspect of this violence.

“Perhaps one of the best things branch members can do for this campaign is to inform themselves and then inform others.”

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