

## The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

### Presbyterian African Church Leaders Learn about Irish Potatoes

Last week the Moderators of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan visited the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) at Crossnacreevy.



They are currently on a short visit to Ireland, having been invited as delegates from partner churches to this year's PCI General Assembly, held in Belfast earlier this week.

PCI's [Derek Roulston](#), accompanied Rev Dr David Githangu, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and Rev Peter Gai Lual, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan on their visit to AFBI.

Derek who has been serving in Kenya since 1998, has been in Ireland for the past year for a period of study and home assignment, and is currently studying with AFBI, with the hope of gaining valuable knowledge to assist in seed potato production programmes in Kenya.

Derek writes,

*"The Moderators had a very enjoyable visit to the plant testing station at AFBI Crossnacreevy where the trailing new potato cereals and grass varieties is taking place.*

*It was of great interest to the overseas visitors coming from countries where food security is of major importance.*

*Earlier this week, the PCEA Moderator conned a new phase at PCI's General Assembly 'Agri-Mission,' and the emphasised the need to feed the nation by teaching agricultural methods and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ at the same time.*

*Many thanks to AFBI and particularly to Dr Ethel White for hosting the visitors."*

**Derek**, along with his wife **Linda** worked for a number of years with ['WHEAT Foundation International'](#), a non-profit organisation registered in Kenya that exists to assist in community development, they are both undertaking further skills development.

Since 2009, Derek and Linda were based in Timau in Kenya, with WHEAT and were involved in a seed potato development project that uses cutting edge technology and has the potential to significantly impact food security for Kenya; contacts made with potato farmers through the project also opened open doors to share the Gospel.

## **Pride of Ireland Awards: Homeless campaigner Fr Peter McVerry honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award**

**In the midst of the glitz and glamour of the Pride of Ireland Awards, Ireland's most vulnerable people were remembered and honoured when Fr Peter McVerry lifted the Lifetime Achievement Award.**



*Fr Peter McVerry is presented with Lifetime Achievement Award by Taoiseach Enda Kenny*

Irish Mirror - At 11pm he walked

on to the stage in the beautiful Round Room at the Mansion House, and said thank you to those people who have no voice – the homeless.

The award was another victory for some of society's weakest, the people Fr Peter has spent his life supporting, encouraging and helping.

In fact, he IS the voice of homeless, the poor and hopeless and at the glittering awards ceremony, he ensured Ireland's often most forgotten people were remembered.

The poor changed Fr Peter's life and it's been his life's work to help change theirs.

The 70-year-old priest, the privately-educated son of a wealthy family from Newry, Co Down, stepped out of a life of privilege 40 years ago and into world where the treatment of the poor shocked him.

Living in Summerhill, North inner city Dublin, Fr Peter started out his life in the church helping young people who had dropped out of school, become involved in crime and prison life.

Since then he has challenged Ireland's attitude to citizens living on the edge of society, tirelessly helping the homeless find homes and the hopeless, hope.

He said: "It is a privilege to be given this award and I accept it, not for myself but for all the people who help me help others, the people who work tirelessly and without glory or thanks, without awards or ceremonies.

"They help others because it's the right thing to do.

"I also accept the award for all those people we help, the people the Government have not helped and refuse so often to see.

"The homeless in Ireland are not a problem, they are simply people who have come upon difficult times and circumstances.

More at

<http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/pride-ireland-awards-homeless-campaigner-3642387>

## **Thousands of people take part in an anti-racism march in Belfast**

**Saturday's march was led by Belfast's Lord Mayor, Nichola Mallon, Dr Donald Watts, president of the Irish Council of Churches and Dr Mazhar M Khan, a member of Northern Ireland's Muslim community.**

Amnesty International, the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU) and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) organised the event.



*The march passed through Belfast city centre on Saturday afternoon. Rev Dr Donald Watts second from left*

Patrick Yu of the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities said: "The message today is quite simple - say no to racism."

Amnesty International's Patrick Corrigan said the event was "an opportunity for people to stand with their neighbours of all ethnic origins and religious faith groups".

"It's also a chance to send a message to politicians that the lack of political action on this issue is no longer acceptable," he added.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-27744882>

## **Finale for Bandon Organist after 20 Years' Service**

**After over two decades of outstanding dedication and service in St. Peter's Church, Bandon, Antoinette Baker has stepped down from her position as organist.**

During her time in the parish she has shown dedication well beyond the ordinary commitment of a parish organist. Her hard work has meant that the liturgical life of the parish has been enriched again and again and again. The parishioners wished her well for the future and look forward to welcoming her back for occasional services.

*Bandon Organist, Antoinette Baker (third from left front row) with the Rector and Choir of St Peter's Church, Bandon.*



## How Justin Welby found God in Africa

**A biography about the Archbishop of Canterbury claims being confronted by suicide started the then 18-year-old on a journey to become the leader of the Anglican Church**

It is difficult to imagine a more brutal way for a teenager to be confronted by the reality of life and death.

But as an 18-year-old gap year student, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, found himself having to cut down the body of a fellow teenager who had hanged himself.

A new biography of the Archbishop singles out the moment in the early summer of 1974, while he was volunteering as a teacher at a boys' school in Kenya, as marking the beginning of an unlikely journey to becoming one of the world's most influential spiritual leaders.

Within days of the tragedy, about which he is not believed to have spoken previously in public, the future leader of the 80 million-strong worldwide Anglican Church told a close friend how he had begun to find faith in God.

The incident is recounted in a newly updated biography of the Archbishop, by the Rev Dr Andrew Atherstone, an Oxford academic.

Archbishop Welby, who did not come from an overtly religious background, has spoken frequently of his “conversion” to Christianity through the influence of evangelical students at Cambridge.



But the book, which draws on letters and interviews from family and friends, argues that the original trigger for his spiritual awakening came a year earlier in Kiburu, a village around 80 miles north of Nairobi.

It was through a chance conversation at a party in London, hosted by a friend of mother, Jane, as he neared the end of his time at Eton, that the young Welby was persuaded to enrol as a gap year volunteer through an Anglican missionary organisation.

His father, Gavin, who by then was an alcoholic and with whom he had a difficult relationship, was against the idea and refused to fund the trip.

But his mother, Sir Winston Churchill’s former secretary, sold a diamond ring she had inherited from her godmother to enable him to go.

He flew to Kenya on his 18th birthday in January 1974 and found himself teaching mathematics.

He shared a small house with Phil Kelly, another British volunteer three years his senior. Mr Kelly, who is still a teacher, had become a committed Christian as a student.

But his letters home mention how his younger housemate had spoken of himself as, if anything, “agnostic”.

It was on a Sunday afternoon around the beginning of June, when the two volunteers were the only teachers on site, that they were called to take charge when one of the students had hanged himself in some woods nearby.

“Justin and I, since I was on duty, had the melancholy task of dealing with the affair,” Mr Kelly wrote to his parents.

“The police came at about six, found no conclusive evidence for a motive, took his belongings, statements etc, and when the photography unit failed to turn up they took his body to Kerugoya hospital mortuary at about 10pm.

“All the while the students followed the actions of myself, Justin and the police from a safe distance, mortally horrified at the whole thing.”

When, exactly two weeks later, Mr Kelly wrote again to his parents, he mentioned a change in his friend.

“Justin is trying to write a letter to his Dad, a rather special letter in which he is hoping to put things right between them – relations have never been very good,” he explained.

He went on to recount what he called “rather strange and heart-warming story”.

“Justin says that for the last 11 months or so his Christian faith has been in decline so much so that a fortnight ago he reckons that he was more agnostic than Christian.

“But he felt that I had got something which he hadn’t so he began praying again ... and a couple of days ago re-dedicated his life and accepted Christ as Lord, since when he has felt much better and also had the growing feeling to write to his Dad about their mutual relations.

“This is all a little overwhelming for me.”

**\* Archbishop Justin Welby: Risk-taker and Reconciler, is published on June 26 by Darton, Longman & Todd.**

**More at -**

**<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10883679/How-Justin-Welby-found-God-in-Africa.html>**

## **Do you want to help shape church, politics and culture in Northern Ireland?**

**Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland is offering places in an internship program**

The press release states :

What does a peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland look like?

Jeremiah 29:7 has been a key text for the Evangelical Alliance team here in Northern Ireland over the last couple of years. As we have wrestled with this challenge we have been engaging in the following issues: human trafficking, marriage, abortion, charity law, welfare reform, pornography, adoption and reconciliation.

Do you have a passion to see Christians take the lead in the public square?  
How about an internship with Evangelical Alliance?

We are in the third year of our successful internship program and we are looking for two interns in Northern Ireland for 2014/15.

The internships will run from early September 2014 until the end of June 2015. They will operate 4/5 days per week and may involve some evenings and weekends. We are also interested in those seeking a short summer internship.

The ideal candidate will have:

- A passion for Christian influence in the public square.
- A relevant undergraduate degree or equivalent experience.
- Good oral and written communication skills.
- An eye for design and computer skills to match.
- Excellent organisational skills.
- A personal Christian faith and be able to support the ethos and aims of the Evangelical Alliance.

The successful interns will receive a bursary of £5,000 each and will have their normal workplace expenses covered.

Think you might like to join us?

On two sides of A4 paper tell us the following:

- Who you are?
- What sort of education you have had?
- Your God story – how did you meet Jesus?
- What you think you can bring to the post?
- What you would like to achieve through this internship?
- What is your dream for Northern Ireland?
- Describe yourself in five words.



Email it to [nireland@eauk.org](mailto:nireland@eauk.org) before the end of July to be considered for September 2014. (For a short summer internship, simply email us your dates and we will get in touch).

## **Archbishop invites Pope Francis to Glasgow to remember Jesuit martyr**

**Archbishop Philip Tartaglia of Glasgow has written to Pope Francis asking him to consider visiting the Scottish city next year to mark the 400th anniversary of the martyrdom of St John Ogilvie.**

Archbishop Tartaglia suggested the Pope could visit Glasgow on March 10, the saint's feast day and the date of his execution in 1615.



In his letter the archbishop said: “I know that this is short notice for the visit of a Pope ... I present this request to you without any expectations or sense of entitlement. I do not even know if it is practical! However a visit would be such a grace.”

He said such a visit would be “wonderful” and of a “purely religious-pastoral nature”.

The archbishop’s letter was quoted in this month’s edition of Flourish, the archdiocesan newspaper.

St John Ogilvie, a convert to Catholicism from Banffshire who became a Jesuit priest, was hanged in Glasgow at the age of only 36. His last words were apparently: “If there be here any hidden Catholics, let them pray for me but the prayers of heretics I will not have.”

St John was canonised in 1976 and is Scotland’s only post-Reformation saint.

If it were to go ahead, a visit by the Pope would be the third papal visit to Glasgow, after the Masses of St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI at Bellahouston Park in 1982 and 2010.

## Religious people "are more charitable" - Methodist Church response to BBC stats

**According to statistics released by the BBC, people who practise a religion are more likely to say they have given to charity in the last month than those who don't.**



The ComRes survey, commissioned by the BBC showed that:

- Three quarters of people living in England who practise a religion (77%) have given to charity in the past month. This compares to only two thirds of English people who do not practise a religion (67%).
- They are also more likely to believe their friends or family donate. 73% of religious practitioners believe their friends or family have donated to charity in the past month, compared to 64% of those who do not practise a religion.

This year, the Methodist Church is encouraging people to rethink what it means to be generous in their local contexts as part of the [A Generous Life](#) campaign.

Responding to the statistics, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church, said: "Religious faith should motivate people to acts of generosity and it's good to see this reflected in these figures. Of course, financial giving is only part of the picture. For some people a simple act of kindness, or the very fact that someone has made time for them, can mean more than any financial gift. But every act of generosity, however small, bears witness to a generous and loving God and helps to change the world for good."

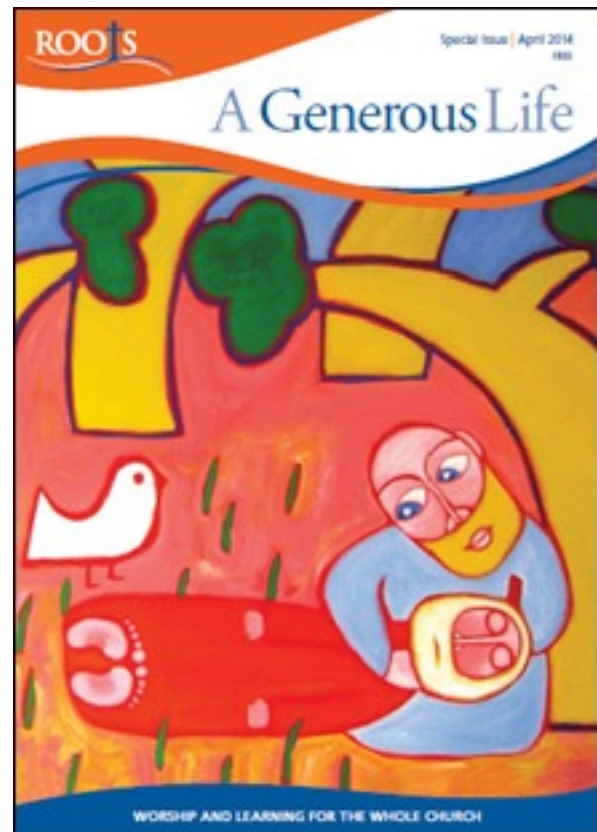
A range of resources is available to help congregations explore their vision, commitment and generosity within the local church and its community. People can also spin an online [Wheel of Generosity](#) and commit to small acts of kindness as part of the Church's campaign.

When asked about the people who had inspired them to be generous, one respondent said:

"When the woman who worked as my cleaner and childminder in South Africa (a 'domestic worker') offered to take on an AIDS orphan who was rummaging through our bin on bin collection day - she had so little but was willing to give so much. It inspired me to adopt a child permanently as a member of our family."

Another said:

"I am what I am today because of the generosity of time and energy of my Boys' Brigade Officers in Scotland. I was there for five years, walked out at the end of those five years and have never seen them again. They may think they had failed but they planted a seed. One day we will meet again and they will be so surprised that I not only became a Christian but a minister."



### **About the Wheel of Generosity**

The Wheel of Generosity is based on a 'real life' wheel designed by trainee Local Preacher Andy Fishburne.

His idea is to take this wheel to churches and ask people to come up and give it a spin. They are then to commit to carrying out a small act of generosity inspired by the picture they get.

The overarching idea is to see if people can get a sense of our (supremely generous) God's presence when we do these generous actions.

Visit [wheelofgenerosity.tumblr.com](http://wheelofgenerosity.tumblr.com) to see how it has been used locally

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