



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

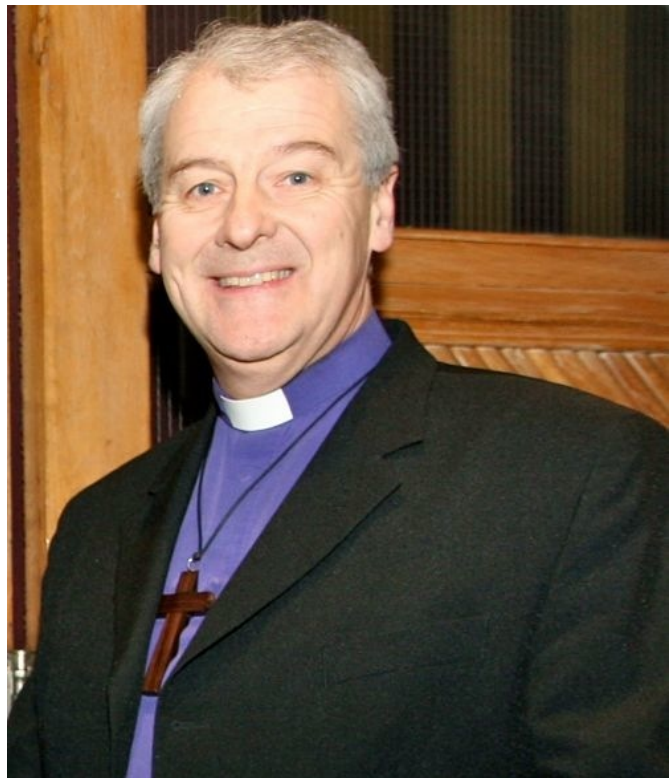
Archbishop of Dublin Appeals to Politicians South and North to Work Together for the Common Good

Statement from Archbishop Michael Jackson:

“The deep level of anxiety felt among ordinary people with everyday preoccupations about prospects for peace and stability in the developing relationships between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland over the past tense days underlines how

precious such peace and stability are to the people of Ireland right across the country. There is now a generation of young people both North and South who have had no direct experience of the torment which The Troubles caused to countless members of earlier generations. The scars and wounds are still carried by those whose cry is still for understanding, justice, compassion and forgiveness.

“For almost ten years, I had the privilege to serve the people as bishop of a truly cross-Border diocese, the Diocese of Clogher. I have the deepest of admiration for the ways in which people took the future creatively into their own hands and developed community aspirations and programmes which took them and their families beyond the day-to-day trench warfare of suspicion, mistrust, violence and hopelessness. I have worked for more than three years in the dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough and sense a



deepening expectation of cross-Border togetherness in the things which matter to people – their relationships with their neighbours on this island of Ireland. Public figures from both Ireland and the UK have underwritten this sense of solidarity and have been warmly applauded for their courage and vision.

“Like many others, I appeal to politicians South and North to work together with renewed fervour for the common good and to take the fair wind offered by the people of Ireland to foster co-operation and good relations among and for our people throughout the length and breadth of the land.”

Huge increase in enquiries about vocations

Rise in numbers attending Open Day at Maynooth and among those discerning a vocation.

Catholic Ireland Net - The National Coordinator for Diocesan Vocations in Ireland has thanked members of St Joseph's Young Priests Society in Knock for being a “powerhouse of prayer” for vocations.



Fr Willie Purcell, National Coordinator for Diocesan Vocations in Ireland.

Fr Willie Purcell paid his tribute as 25 men attended an Open Day for those discerning a vocation to the priesthood at the national seminary in Maynooth.

“You will never know in this life, the number of priests you have helped. You will never know in this life the number of seminarians you have helped, but you will know in the next,” Fr Purcell told a provincial congress of the organisation on 3 May.

“On behalf of all the vocations directors in Ireland, please keep doing what you are doing,” he said. Fr Purcell told the members that their work was a ministry and God wanted them to keep living out that ministry. “God is not done with you yet,” he said, adding “He uses us right to the point of death.”

Before he began his address, he received a text from a seminarian in Maynooth who had told him that 25 men had turned up for the Open Day at the seminary.

“That is five more than last year,” Fr Willie told the group. “I texted him back ‘I’m with the people who made this possible’.”

The National Vocations Co-Ordinator said that in the last twelve months he had seen a “huge increase” in inquiries about vocations.

Fr Purcell is also Vocations Director for the diocese of Ossory where they currently have four men going through a process of discernment.

“We are on the rise, people are coming forward. You have to tell others the good news that we are living in the era of the joy of the Gospel.”

Fr Purcell appealed to the members of St Joseph’s Young Priests Society not to give up and to continue the work of their founder, Olivia Mary Taaffe “to keep priests and seminarians in the heart of our prayers. We will never know who will be touched, but they will be touched.”

Orange Chaplain speaks of Adams 'memorial'

The grand chaplain of the Orange Order tells a public rally he is sad that a new mural erected in tribute to Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams is not a "memorial mural".

BBC Ni News - The Reverend Mervyn Gibson told a Belfast rally: "I see they've painted a new mural to him on the Falls Road. Sadly, it's not a memorial mural."

The mural was painted shortly after Mr Adams was arrested in connection with the 1972 murder of Jean McConville.

Mr Adams was released on Sunday and a file is being sent to prosecutors.

The Sinn Féin leader, who denies any involvement in the IRA murder of the Belfast mother-of ten, was questioned over five days at Antrim police station.

The new mural depicts an image of Mr Adams alongside the words: "Peacemaker, leader, visionary."

Mr Gibson made his memorial remarks at a rally in Belfast at the weekend, and also made further allegations about Mr Adams' past.

The footage was posted on the internet.

The chaplain has been a prominent Orange Order spokesman during recent parade disputes.

He was also a member of the Democratic Unionist Party's delegation at last year's Haass talks.

The all-party talks were aimed at resolving disputes over flags, parades and the legacy of the Troubles but broke up without agreement on 31 December.

When contacted by the BBC on Sunday, Mr Gibson declined a request to discuss the content of his rally speech.

Sinn Féin has also declined to comment on Mr Gibson's remarks.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-27274544>

Methodist pioneer ministry in Dunboyne

For four years Rev Mark Forsyth has been employed as a Pioneer minister in Dunboyne Co. Meath. In an article to be published in the June *Methodist Newsletter* Mark describes what being a Pioneer minister is all about. An extract of Mark's description follows:

In essence, I am trying to adopt a missional lifestyle – endeavouring to seek out missional opportunities where I live, work and play. In terms of where we live, we try to get to know our neighbours, and invite them around for social occasions. As we talk about our



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Diocesan Youth Pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick

Saturday May 17th

Registration from 10.30am
Mass on summit at 1.00pm
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ALL WELCOME

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Tuam Youth pilgrimage



involvement in the church, this leads onto spiritual conversations and just recently, one family came to 'Messy Church' and really enjoyed it. We have also started a small prayer meeting for Dunboyne village, and are slowly building up a group that meets monthly to pray for the concerns of our community. As a way of serving within the community and getting to know people, I offer money management courses, and have run three of these so far. One of the participants is now a good friend, and joined me in church last Easter Sunday!

As I clock into work, I don't clock out of being on mission. People know that I'm a minister and this often leads to questions and spiritual conversations. I also managed to get the HR department to agree to let me run a Bible Study in one of the conference rooms during Lent every year, which has been really encouraging. Five or six people normally come along, and it's given me an opportunity to try out an evangelistic course that I've been working on. Seeking out missional opportunities where I 'play' has led me to a local pub, where I have spiritual conversations over non-alcoholic beer and a pool table! Most Saturday nights, while many other ministers are finalising their sermons, I'm heading out to meet the locals, which has been a real eye-opener. Over time, conversations have moved from the pub to a local hotel or coffee shop. In one case, a man attended an Alpha Course – something he never would have done if he hadn't had a personal invitation from someone he knew well.

Ballynahinch church congregation 'distraught' as dispute rumbles on

The ongoing dispute which split Ballynahinch Congregational Church in September 2013 is continuing to leave members "distraught and devastated", church deacon Samuel Graham said yesterday.

Newsletter - Mr Graham said protests against the position of the Rev George Speers and his management of the church have been ongoing at the church since September 1.

The dispute began in 2010 over the running of the church, which is based on Dromore Street in the town.

Mr Graham said Rev Speers was voted out of his position but has refused to leave.

“The man has been dismissed from the church but he will not remove himself from the church,” he said.

“He still lives in the church manse.”

Yesterday the News Letter left a message asking Rev Speers to contact them, but he declined to do so before going to press.

“We did not hold any protests on Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday, but it has continued on since then,” said Mr Graham.

“The minister is still there. Every Sunday he has between 30 and 40 people in his service whereas we have between 90 and 100 in our service in the minor hall.

“His service starts at 11.30am, the same time as ours.”

Mr Graham, a trustee of the church, said the dispute is “still going through the legal process but has not reached court”.

“We are talking to our legal advisers and that is all I can say at the moment.

“Church members are distraught and devastated with what has gone on.”

At the start of the protest police were called to a disturbance inside the church.

Protestors were chanting “get out” at Rev Speers. Those who took part later said the situation had driven them to “breaking point”.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/ballynahinch-church-congregation-distraught-as-dispute-rumbles-on-1-6039464>

Christian Aid’s work in Zimbabwe ‘an expression of love’ - Lisburn rector

Canon George Irwin, rector of St Mark’s, Ballymacash, Diocese of Connor, and chairman of Lisburn Christian Aid Committee, travelled to Zimbabwe with



the charity to see the work Christian Aid supporters are funding.

The trip was led by Helen Newell and Andrew Coleman from Christian Aid, and the team comprised people from north and south of Ireland.

During the 10 day visit, the group covered large distances overland and visited some 17 Christian Aid projects in the capital Harare, in Bulawayo and in Victoria Falls on the Zambian border.



The courageous and enterprising people George met who are endeavouring to overcome poverty and create a better future with the support of Christian Aid and its partners left George confident that any money raised by Christian Aid in Ireland is doing great work.

Some of the members of an inter church team which walked the Belfast Marathon for Christian Aid - including the President of the Methodist Church and Dean John Mann

The team travelled to Harare from Dublin on March 21, via Amsterdam and Nairobi, arriving late on the Saturday night. "The arrivals hall was an unkempt building and we were thoroughly checked and questioned about why we had come," said George

A letter from Christian Aid's office in Harare ensured the group was permitted into the country. George described leaving the airport as an 'eerie'

experience. "There was no one about because of a curfew and we never went out after 6pm or went anywhere on our own.

"There is still great tension. The formation of the government in 2008 was a terrible time and the economy is very poor, bringing an increase in crime. The police were visible on the streets."

More at -

<http://www.connordiocese.org.uk/news/Christian-Aids-work-in-Zimbabwe-an-expression-of-love.cfm>

Musician Awarded The Fellowship Of The Guild Of Church Musicians

The Revd Dr Peter Thompson made history by becoming the first Irish person and also the first cleric to be awarded the Fellowship of the Guild of Church Musicians by examination.

He joins a distinguished company of musicians from England, Italy, Canada and Australia who have been successful in the demanding series of examinations.

A postgraduate qualification, the fellowship is awarded by the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, on whose behalf the Guild administer the examinations. The diploma was presented by the Rt Revd Dr David Thomson, acting bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich at a recent award ceremony which took place during Evensong in St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

A number of members of the Church of Ireland are honorary fellows of the Guild, including Dr Joe McKee, Canon Martin White and Bishops Eames, Empey and Darling.

Priest and educator - Rev Kevin J McKenna

Born in the townland of Drumderg in the parish of Ballinascreen (Draperstown) - he was very proud of his home and background, it was always very close to his heart. He spoke lovingly and with deep emotion of his parents and the old homestead.

His education was at the local primary school and St Columb's College and then on to Maynooth. He obtained a degree in classical studies and also excelled in Irish language. He wore his academic achievements with great



humility. Being in his presence a lifetime, one would never have heard him say nor could one guess that he was a man of great learning.

His priestly life can be reflected on in two parts - his life in education as teacher and school principal and his life as a priest in the parish. His teaching career began in Carndonagh College in 1960, in 1963 he moved to a teaching post in Maghera where he remained until 1971 when he once more returned to Carndonagh College. From 1973 until his leaving education in 1991 he was principal of Carndonagh Community School – this school was an amalgamation of Carndonagh College, the Convent School and the Technical school.

The school there became the biggest school in the Republic of Ireland and possibly in these islands. Despite the huge number of pupils he knew every pupil by name and all about them. Fr Kevin had a tremendous love for Inishowen and Donegal. He knew almost everyone in north Inishowen. He often reflected on his trips to the Gaeltacht and late nights spent at Malin Head looking at the Northern lights.

After leaving Carndonagh he had a very pleasant transition year in Kilrea. From Kilrea he moved to Waterside as Parish Priest. It was a culture shock for all involved. After six pleasant years in Waterside he moved to Dungiven from where he retired. Dungiven was special to him; he lived in Dungiven in retirement and it is where his earthly remains are laid to rest.

Fr Kevin was a man of faith. Like his academic brilliance, Father Kevin didn't parade his faith in public. He allowed Jesus his privacy in the oratory; his faith like his life was simple and uncomplicated. His faith was centred on the Eucharist and a devotion to Mary the Mother of God. "Our faith is simple," he said "you either believe the words of Jesus or not. It's as simple as that." For Fr Kevin there was no in between, he accepted the words of Jesus as true, no ifs, buts or questions.

He was always very aware of his own human weaknesses and his mortality but he never doubted the love of God and looked forward to the promise made by Jesus of eternal life for those who believe and reunion with all those

loved ones who have gone before. We are grateful to God for the life of Father Kevin who brought variety and richness to the tapestry of our lives.

Appointment

The Revd Neal Phair has been appointed as Rector of Ballybay, Muckno and Clontibret. Originally from County Monaghan he is currently serving as Vicar in the benefice of Cherbury and Gainfield in the Diocese of Oxford.

Homelessness rate higher in Northern Ireland than in the rest of UK

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/homelessness-rate-higher-in-northern-ireland-than-in-the-rest-of-uk-30245982.html>

WCC encourages “swift and peaceful” action to restore Nigeria’s missing girls

The abduction of more than 250 young women by the Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria has prompted “profound concern” from the World Council of Churches (WCC), Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. In his letter to Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan, Tveit encouraged “swift and peaceful” action to restore these students back to their homes.

The letter from the WCC general secretary was



issued on Monday, 5 May.

“This tragic situation is devastating not only to the immediate community, but also to all Nigerians praying and working for peace. It touches the World Council of Churches directly, as many who have lost their daughters are members of our church families in Nigeria,” said Tveit.

He added that the WCC’s concern for the abducted Nigerian students is “intensified in the face of increasing global sexual exploitation of girls and women, and the possibility that these abducted students may become victims of just such injustice and violence.”

“Following the rescue of these children for which we pray, the impact of exploitation may require long-term accompaniment of the young women and their families by the Nigerian government, faith communities and local networks of care and support,” he added.

Assuring the WCC’s support to the Nigerian government, Tveit said that the WCC is ready to assist in “mobilizing the inter-religious and international communities to seek effective and peaceful means towards safely restoring these students to their homes, loved ones and communities.”

Full text of letter at -

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/messages-and-letters/letter-to-goodluck-jonathan-on-nigerias-missing-girls/>

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