



Armagh Waking of Brian Boru Festival

Following last year's community festival when many local Armagh people highlighted the life and death of Brian Boru, this year's festival will build on the experience by offering four events, held over a two-day period on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 April 2015.

The first event, called 'The Waking of Brian Boru – the Poet's Story' will again bring together people of all ages and backgrounds from the Armagh area to create and perform a musical

drama telling Brian Boru's story. The performance will take place on Tuesday 28 April 2015 at 7.30pm in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, on the Hill of Armagh where Brian Boru is buried. The famous tenth century Armagh poet, Eochaid, will be portrayed as he remembers the course of events which led to his son, the Abbot of Armagh, accepting gold from Brian Boru and thereby changing the course of history. There will be song, dance, drama and music to conjure up memories and images of a time long gone.

The second event will be held in Armagh Public Library and No 5 Vicars' Hill on Wednesday 29 April 2015 from 10.00am. Entitled 'A Glimpse into Brian Boru's World', visitors to the Hill of Armagh will have the opportunity to learn about monastery life and learning in Armagh at the time of Brian Boru. There will be book handling, music and drama.

The third event continuing the theme of Brian Boru's world will be held in Armagh Observatory on Wednesday 29 April from 2.00pm. Visitors will be encouraged to observe the sky as eleventh century people did when they plotted their sailing routes, planned their battles and foretold events. Moments of song, poetry and music will give the last glance of Brian Boru's world before

moving to the activities where comparison will be made between today's understanding of the stars with that of Brian Boru's time.

The final event will be a banquet on the evening of Wednesday 29 April 2015 at 7.00pm in the Navan Centre. While feasting, visitors will learn of Brian Boru's successful march through the North when they gathered slaves, livestock, household goods and gold and silver. They will hear about the gift of gold to Armagh, and listen to songs and poetry in praise of Brian Boru, the Last High King of Ireland.

Sally Walmsley, organiser of the Waking of Brian Boru Festival, said, "The story of Brian Boru and his links to Armagh is one of passion and love. It caught the interest of people last year so it is wonderful to be able to harness this energy and create a new performance with local people of all ages and offer participatory events to bring a wider public into the enthralling world of Brian boru."

Tickets for each events are available from www.armagh.co.uk/brianboru2015 or Armagh Visitor Centre 02837 521800.

Nun criticises Irish bishops' threat to withdraw priests as civil marriage registrars

An American nun who has been censured by the Vatican for her ministry with LGBT people has criticised the Irish bishops' threat to withdraw priests from their role as civil marriage registrars as "counterproductive to the welfare of heterosexual Catholics".

Speaking to the Irish Independent in Limerick where she was attending a major international conference for catholic reform leaders, Sr Jeannine Gramick said the bishops' threat made them "sound like little children – 'if you do this I am going to pick up my marbles and go home'."

"I think they would be punishing heterosexual couples in the sense of making it more difficult for them as they would have to have two ceremonies and it wouldn't hurt the gay population," she said.

Asked about the forthcoming referendum on gay marriage, the nun said: "You can be a catholic and vote for civil marriage for lesbian and gay people because it is a civil matter – it has nothing to do with your religion."

The reform conference, which was organised by the censured Irish priest, Fr Tony Flannery, called for full participation in next October's Synod on the Family of Catholics who are LGBT, divorced and re-married, members of inter-faith families and other marginalised people in the Church.

It also called for the Church to pay particular attention to women who are living in situations of poverty, oppression and violence.

Another central issue discussed by the conference delegates who came from Ireland, the UK, India, the US, Austria, Switzerland and elsewhere, was governance and accountability in the Church.

Fr Brendan Hoban of the Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland said there was "grave dissatisfaction" among his 1,000 members over the procedures of electing new bishops currently being operated by the papal nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown.

"We don't believe real consultation is taking place in dioceses, and the net of possible candidates is not being spread widely enough," he said. "We think that there are genuine candidates in a lot of dioceses who would be much more effective than some of the men that are being appointed," Fr Hoban criticised.

The Co Mayo parish priest added that the policy of parachuting bishops into dioceses from other parts of the country, which has been used in the American church, was “very unsuited” to the Irish context.

However, the delegates were upbeat about the impact of Pope Francis.

“With the resignation of Pope Benedict we are at the end of an era, and this is our best chance to renew the church for a long time“, Fr Flannery said.

The Association of Catholic Priests has called on the Irish bishops to get behind Pope Francis and this new era of reform.

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/nun-criticises-irish-bishops-threat-to-withdraw-priests-as-civil-marriage-registars-31149299.html>

Minister proposes new school network created by Churches for Northern Ireland

Catholic and Protestant Churches could soon come together to create a network of new 'integrated' schools. Education minister John

O'Dowd has published guidance designed to support the establishment of schools which would be jointly-managed.

Irish News - The minister hailed this as a progressive step which would complement other shared education initiatives.

While the Department of Education has a statutory duty to promote integrated schooling, much of the recent focus has been on promoting different models of shared education.

The executive's Programme for Government includes commitments to facilitate greater sharing of facilities by schools. There are also plans to create 10 shared campuses.

There has been criticism of these schemes, however, with one in Moy, Co Tyrone, where pupils share the same building but wear different uniforms and use different doors described by a leading educationalist as "unbelievably absurd".

The north has just one large faith system - the Catholic sector. All others, including integrated and Irish-medium, are non-denominational. Gradually from the 1920s until the 1960s almost all schools owned by Protestant Churches were

transferred to government, although transferors still contribute their views on the ethos and vision for schools.

The Transferors' Representative Council (TRC), represents the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church in education.

Giving evidence to an assembly committee inquiry into shared and integrated education in February, the TRC said Catholic trustees were keen to work with Protestant Churches because they recognised that controlled schools had a Christian faith foundation.

Under a jointly managed model, the transferring and Catholic Churches would come together to form a group of trustees, which would nominate governors to sit on the school board.

An entirely new type of school would then be established, founded on common Christian principles. The two Churches would work together in an agreed way.

Rev Dr Ian Ellis of the TRC told the education committee at that time that such a model would meet all the criteria of an integrated school.

"Both communities are represented there at the heart of the governance and foundation of the school, and that goes right through to the ethos that is developed within it. If such a school could be devised and a pilot produced, it should have all the benefits that flow to and are enjoyed by the integrated sector - that is "integrated" with a small "i", of course," he said.

"That is one option for the future, and it comes about because the Catholic trustees are keen to work with us on the basis of a common bond."

Mr O'Dowd last night said his guidance was developed in response to interest expressed from controlled and Catholic maintained schools.

"This means representatives of the transferor Churches and the Catholic Churches work together in the management of the school. The department has worked closely with the Transferors Representative Council and the Catholic trustees in the development of the guidance," he said.

"This is an innovative and progressive step forward for local education. This is an opportunity for local communities to develop

new and forward-thinking approaches for educating children."

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/minister-proposes-new-school-network-created-by-churches-1431636>

Reorganising church spaces

The reorganisation of church spaces was the focus of a well attended and interesting colloquium organised by Search Journal in association with the Church of Ireland Chaplaincy at TCD today. Entitled 'Re-Pitching the Tent: Re-Ordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission' the keynote speaker was Richard Giles, whose area of expertise is in the design of liturgical space.

He said: "We inherit buildings that are not fit for purpose and are restrictive. The challenge is to remodel them so that they are based around the Word and the Sacrament. The notion of audience needs to be addressed so that we come to a greater understanding of participation and engagement".

Other contributions came from conservation architect, Margaret Quinlan; Dean of Leighlin, Tom Gordon; and Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, Michael Burrows.

The event took place in the Long Room Hub at TCD and was supported by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

BBC Radio Ulster School Choir of the Year final

Competing to be named the best of the best - the heat is on ahead of the BBC Radio Ulster School Choir of the Year final.

In total, 64 choirs from across Northern Ireland have been singing for a place in the final of the new competition which will take place at the Ulster Hall on April 26.

Presented [by John Toal and Kerry McLean](#), and recorded at six venues across the country, the time is almost upon us for the winners to be crowned.

The competition is produced in association with the Ulster Youth Choir, supported by the Arts

Council for Northern Ireland (ACNI) and part of the BBC Music NI initiative.

The winning choirs will help [BBC Radio Ulster celebrate its 40 anniversary](#) throughout this year and feature across a range of the station's programming and events.

In the Junior category schools be competing for a place in the grand final are: Ballyhenry Primary School, Newtownabbey; Carrickfergus Model Primary School, Carrickfergus; Fairview Primary School, Ballyclare; Our Lady's Girls Primary School, Belfast; Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn and St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim.

In the Senior category, the following schools will be competing for a place in the grand final: Belfast Royal Academical Institution, Belfast; Carrickfergus Grammar, Carrickfergus; Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast; Methodist College, Belfast and St Dominic's Grammar School, also from Belfast.

Methodists hear Waterford church is full to capacity

The 'thrill and excitement' of developments at St Patrick's Church, Waterford was a talking point at this week's meeting of Irish Methodism's General Committee in Dublin. There had been six Holy Week services at which congregations ranged from 100 to 120 in number. The church is now full to capacity and there is an urgent need

to proceed with phases two and three of the development.

There was further enthusiasm around a new multi-ethnic church project supported by both the Home Mission Department and the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland) designed to encourage intercultural congregations.

In his presidential letter in the forthcoming May *Methodist Newsletter*, the Rev Peter Murray refers to his recent visit to Waterford for the official opening of the St Patrick's Gateway Centre where he was encouraged by 'the vibrancy of that church family' and Gillian McDade interviews church council member Max Asante-Fouhene, who comments on similarities and differences between his new home in Waterford and his native Ghana.

Archbishop Welby in 'visit of condolence' for murdered Egyptian Christians

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has travelled to Egypt for a "visit of condolence" following the murders of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya.



Egypt declared seven days of national mourning after the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya

BBC - The group of migrant workers were [kidnapped and beheaded by Islamic State \(IS\) militants](#) in February.

The Archbishop will be meeting religious and political leaders on his visit, including the Coptic Christian Pope and the Grand Imam.

He has called for more support for Christians facing persecution.

He is also hoping to meet Egypt's president Abdul-Fattah al-Sisi, says BBC religious affairs reporter Alex Strangways-Booth.

Mr Sisi has publicly supported the Coptic Christian communities in his country.

In his Easter message, the archbishop highlighted the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Africa, including the 148 victims of a Kenyan university attack earlier this month.

He said those living in peaceful societies should "stand as witness" to what was happening to Christians elsewhere. BBC chief international correspondent Lyse Doucet said the Archbishop had warned that the treatment of Christians was the worst it had been since the 13th Century.

He had backed military action against Islamic State fighters in Iraq but also made it clear their appeal to young Muslims in many places, including Britain, had to be tackled in other ways, our correspondent added.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32370699>

Conservative Anglicans poised for 'leap forward', deny schism

Anglican leaders are preparing to step up their operations with a charity based in London that will be seen by opponents as a schismatic rival to the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Christian Today - The charity, the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, or GFCA, set up for the "advancement of the Orthodox Anglican Christian Faith", is to start employing staff to teach and preach a conservative gospel to an increasingly secular world.

The charity, which currently has a turnover of more than £100,000 annually and operates in England, Wales, Australia, Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda, is aiming to raise £500,000 a year to expand its mission.

The plans emerged after the primates' council of Gafcon, the Global Anglican Futures Conference, met in London this week behind closed doors.

Archbishop Peter Jensen, former Archbishop of Sydney, appointed general secretary of GFCA, told Christian Today: "We are poised for a considerable leap forward. We have a vision. We are on the way. We are raising money to employ people." These employees will work in ministry, with one taking a particular interest in theological education worldwide, he said.

The charity was set up at the request of the Gafcon primates. London was chosen as the company headquarters.

Archbishop Jensen, who is 71, said: "In my own lifetime we have seen the death of Christian Britain. The assumption people made, that they were Christians, is now broken. That is a huge shift in the last 50 years. Working out how best to relate to a culture that has gone so strongly anti-Christian is putting a strain on all the churches including the Church of England. It is the stresses and strains of living in this brave new world which creates division and disagreement between us."

The Gafcon branch in the UK is called the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. AMiE, the Anglican Mission in England, is a missionary society set up by FCA and supports churches both within and outside the official Church of England structures.

The Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, is currently looking into the involvement of the retired Anglican bishop of Paraguay, John Ellison, in a service of commissioning for a church plant in his diocese. Christ Church is affiliated to AMiE not the Church of England.

The Salisbury diocese said in a statement: "Ideally we might want to welcome Christ Church as fellow workers in Christ, but we also wonder why another church explicitly for

Anglicans is needed in Salisbury when the broad spectrum of Anglican identities is already catered for.

"The Bishop of Salisbury is seeking clarification about the involvement of Bishop John Ellison in the December service. Bishop Ellison has had to postpone two meetings arranged to discuss this matter due to illness. We hope and pray that the Gamaliel principle of Acts 5:38-39 will guide us."

Archbishop Jensen said it was not the conservatives who were leaving the Anglican mainstream: "This goes back to the behaviour of The Episcopal Church in America. If there is a schism, it is because the American church decided to break with centuries-old tradition and with the biblical position on human sexuality."

He was referring to the consecration of the openly gay Bishop Gene Robinson in 2004. Bishop Robinson recently announced he was divorcing his partner of 11 years.

Archbishop Jensen said many people in The Episcopal Church were unhappy with the direction it took on sexuality. Gafcon was born to hold these people together in unity. "Gafcon is a unity movement, but its horizons are broader than that," he told Christian Today.

"Having realised that the Archbishop of Canterbury was more or less powerless to do anything about The Episcopal Church, the Gafcon primates saw the Anglican Communion itself needed to be renewed and restored and brought into unity around biblical standards. That is our vision: to restore unity and renew biblical standards and reach the world for Christ."

He said he admired the present Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby's stand for evangelism and church planting.

"He's a man after my own heart in that area. I would guess there might be other areas in which we would differ, particularly strategy."

In a communique, the Gafcon primates said: "We are uniting faithful Anglicans, growing in momentum, structured for the future, and committed to the Anglican Communion."

The next Gafcon conference will be in 2018.

More at -

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/conservatives.committed.to.anglican.communion.but.increase.funding.to.own.mission/52307.htm>

Telegraph

Bishops back Church of England breakaway congregations

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11546390/Bishops-back-Church-of-England-breakaway-congregations.html>

South Carolina Supreme Court agrees to hear multimillion dollar lawsuit involving US Irish linked diocese

The S.C. Supreme Court recently agreed to hear a lawsuit over an Episcopal Church schism in South Carolina involving more than \$500 million in church properties, bypassing the state appellate court in the complex case.

The justices set a Sept. 23 date to hear oral arguments.

“We are pleased that the court has agreed to hear the case, and we look forward to presenting our positions on these important issues before the Supreme Court,” said Thomas S. Tisdale, Jr., chancellor of The Episcopal Church in South Carolina, which comprises about 30 parishes

that remain with the national church after the split.

Last month, The Episcopal Church and its local parishes appealed Circuit Judge Diane Goodstein's order granting parishes that left the national church rights to the Diocese of South Carolina name, seal and their church properties. They filed a notice of appeal with the state Court of Appeals in Columbia but also asked the S.C. Supreme Court to take up the case to save time and church money.

The case already has cost millions in legal fees, and its transcript spans 2,523 pages including the testimony of 59 witnesses and 1,200 exhibits.

The more quickly the case is resolved, the sooner all parties can get back to ministry without incessant legal distractions, said the Rev. Jim Lewis, the Diocese of South Carolina's canon to the ordinary.

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"We're delighted that the S.C. Supreme Court is taking the appeal now and that it won't have to go through the state court of appeals before it

could be heard by the state's highest court," Lewis said in a statement. "Our aim all along has been to protect the diocese, its identity and properties from The Episcopal Church, which has sued more than 80 other churches and dioceses that sought to leave. We're grateful that the South Carolina judicial system has expeditiously moved this case forward."

The protracted legal journey began when about two-thirds of parishes in the Diocese of South Carolina and Bishop Mark Lawrence left the national church in 2012 after years of bitter arguments over everything from gay clergy and same-sex marriage to the nature of salvation and the hierarchical powers of the national church.

Lawrence's followers then sued The Episcopal Church and its local parishes to keep the diocesan name, marks and individual parish properties.

After a three-week non-jury trial in summer 2014, Goodstein ruled strongly in favor of the breakaway parishes, saying they had the right to leave and take the Diocese of South Carolina name and their church properties with them. They include some of Lowcountry's most historic colonial churches, such as St. Philip's and St. Michael's in Charleston and Old St. Andrew's

Parish in West Ashley, as well as the beloved St. Christopher Camp and Conference Center.

The Diocese of South Carolina had a partnership with the Diocese of Kilmore.

Media digest

Independent

McAleese's son talks of growing up as gay man as he calls for Yes

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/exclusive-mcaleeses-son-talks-of-growing-up-as-gay-man-as-he-calls-for-yes-31152459.html>

Irish Times

Muslim leader warns against Yes vote in marriage referendum

http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/muslim-leader-warns-against-yes-vote-in-marriage-referendum-1.2180331?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Independent

Homosexuality is 'just like rape', pastor claims

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/homosexuality-is-just-like-rape-pastor-claims-31151703.html>

Secular society

Irish same-sex marriage – is the Church trying to blackmail the state?

<http://www.secularism.org.uk/blog/2015/04/irish-same-sex-marriage--is-the-church-trying-to-blackmail-the-state>

Belfast Newsletter

Abortion law ‘unlikely to be passed by the current Assembly’: Wells

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/abortion-law-unlikely-to-be-passed-by-the-current-assembly-wells-1-6697027>

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