



Fr Hugh Kennedy in the television documentary *Choirboys*. Fr Kennedy who has publicly claimed never to have “molested a child” has been questioned by police about sexual assault. Report this issue

Leading Dublin school axes celebrations amid sex attack probe

Pupils at the private, fee-paying Kings Hospital School were due to gather today (Monday,

December 5) for ceremonies to mark the 345th anniversary of the school receiving its royal charter in 1671, writes Caroline O'Doherty in the Irish Examiner.

The event, one of the biggest in the school calendar, is held every year in early December and features the headmaster's annual address, a prize-giving ceremony recognising academic achievement, a choral performance, and a speech by an invited guest of honour.

A notice on the school's calendar states that the event has been postponed. A source said it was deemed inappropriate to host celebrations given the recent events, but it was hoped the commemoration would go ahead some time after the Christmas holidays.

A decision will be taken later on other events such as the annual carol service.

The school has come under intense scrutiny since news of the alleged incident broke, both for the nature of the reported attack on the 13-year-old boy and for the management's response to it.

It was several days before gardaí were informed about the allegations despite procedures set

down by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, that where a child protection issue arises out of hours when social workers are not directly contactable, gardaí must be alerted.

The school's board of governors met over the weekend for what they described as "a full review of this very serious issue".

In a statement issued afterwards they said: "The care and wellbeing of all students and the wider school community is of paramount importance to the board.

"The governors are committed to the due process and fully support the external investigations currently underway.

"In our role as governors, we will continue to actively monitor the situation and work closely with school management to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children involved and all of the students in the school."

The 24 members of the board include the Church of Ireland Archbishops of Dublin and Armagh and the Bishop of Meath and Kildare, as well as senior figures from business, finance, and the legal profession.

Their emergency meeting came ahead of a previously scheduled meeting which will also go ahead as planned later this week. Staff are trying to keep it business as usual for the 700 day pupils and boarders who attend the school in Palmerstown, Dublin, but the revelations are believed to have caused serious upset among the students and disquiet among parents.

Social workers and gardaí are preparing to interview the eight students who have been suspended since the alleged incident, but may also need to speak with many more as they try to piece together the events that led up to the reported attack and get a full picture of the environment in which the children live and study. The source said the school management accepted they needed to offer an open door to the investigating authorities and would be facilitating all their requests for access to staff and students.

Prominent Belfast priest Fr Hugh Kennedy quizzed over sex assault

The Belfast Telegraph yesterday carried this report which appears to reproduce a report in Sunday Life on Sunday past.

Sunday Life can reveal that Fr Hugh Kennedy — the former Administrator of St Peter’s Cathedral in west Belfast and star of BBC television documentary Choirboys — was quizzed by detectives last month.

The 59-year-old has been suspended from clerical duties until the investigation is concluded.

PSNI Detective Inspector Zoe McKee said: “Police investigating a report of a sexual assault allegation interviewed a male on November 7, 2016.

“Inquiries into this matter are ongoing.”

A spokesman for the Down and Connor Diocese of the Catholic Church confirmed Fr Kennedy has been withdrawn from ministry.

He said: “We have been informed that the PSNI has initiated an investigation into an alleged incident of an historical adult nature involving a priest of the Diocese of Down and Connor.

“Bishop Noel Treanor has suspended the cleric’s ministry pending a full and complete investigation.

“As with every person in such circumstances the cleric’s innocence is presumed until the contrary is proven and he retains the right to his good name. The Diocese cannot provide any further information whilst the investigation is ongoing.”

Until recently Fr Kennedy, whose family are from the Portstewart area, had been based in London at More House in the Archdiocese of Westminster.

The priest moved to England earlier this year having previously been Administrator of St Peter’s Cathedral.

During this time in the west Belfast parish publicly said: “I can categorically state I have never violated or molested a child placed in my trust, either in a private or priestly capacity.”

While at St Peter’s, music-loving Fr Kennedy established the hugely successful Schola Cantorum boys’ choir which featured in a three-part BBC documentary.

In relation to the issue of child protection, Fr Kennedy previously stated: “In order to reassure the parents of the children associated with Schola Cantorum, I am personally willing to

engage with as many of them as possible, to satisfy them of my bona fides.”

Fr Kennedy was ordained a priest in 1981 after studying at the Irish College in Rome.

He was appointed Administrator at St Peter’s Cathedral in 2006 after a spell as parish priest at Sacred Heart in the Oldpark area of north Belfast.

Steadfastness of Christian presence in the Holy Land highlighted by Archbishop of Jerusalem in Dublin address

The Archbishop of Jerusalem, the Most Revd Suheil Dawani received a warm welcome when he joined the congregation of Nun’s Cross, Killiskey, on Sunday morning (December 4). He preached at the service which formed part of his first official visit to Dublin & Glendalough as part of the partnership link between Dublin & Glendalough and the Diocese of Jerusalem.

The music during the service was supported by the Choir of Nun’s Cross National School. The proceeds from the parish lunch after the service

will be donated to a school for children with special needs in Jerusalem.

In his sermon Archbishop Dawani focused on the words of John the Baptist: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3.2) and said he had asked all his clergy to reflect on the life of John the Baptist and what it meant to Christians in the Holy Land.

He said that in his diocese there were many in the region who did not feel that the Kingdom of God was at hand. “We know that there are many needy families, refugees in our region and in different parts of our Land, who are knocking on doors day and night seeking food and protection. They feel abandoned by God, and abandoned by their neighbour,” Archbishop Dawani stated.

“If we meditate on John’s message in the light of the advent season, we know that we must learn to treat these outsiders as the incarnate one; as Christ in our midst and respond to them. When we respond in love, in generosity and with hospitality, then we do reveal something of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is indeed near and revealed through our loving acts,” he added.

He said that John the Baptist was persistent in delivering his message which was not universally liked. This persistence could be applied to the Christian presence in the Holy Land. “For many Christians life in the Holy Land is very difficult; we are a minority, perhaps only 2%. In Gaza there are only 1000 Christians. Yet the Christians in the Holy Land have this steadfastness, this persistence not to give up, but to remain in the land where Christ lived. For some the pressure is too much and we tragically see some of our young people leaving,” he said.

Oireachtas honours Mayo missionary

Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD will present the Oireachtas Human Dignity Award to Gena Heraty of Viatores Christi on Thursday 8 December.

A Viatores Christi volunteer from Westport, Gena Heraty, will receive the Oireachtas Human Dignity Award this week for her work in Haiti.

Gena joined Viatores Christi in the early 1990s. After training in overseas development, she travelled to Haiti in 1993 to work as a volunteer at an orphanage run by NPH. This is a charity



known in English as 'Our Little Brothers and Sisters', from the Spanish 'Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos'.

Gena began working in the special needs unit of the orphanage, which is in Kenscoff, 10 km from Port-au-Prince. She is now director of the charity's special needs programme in that part of Haiti.

Part of her work involves an outreach service in the outlying community, providing life-changing medical, rehabilitation and educational support for around 100 families whose children have severe physical or intellectual disabilities. The

project is supported by Irish Aid funding from Mísean Cara.

The Mayo woman will be presented with her award at Leinster House by An Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Feargháil TD, on Thursday 8 December. Each year the award is made to one person who has shown huge commitment to the promotion of human dignity.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita GDP of US\$846 in 2014 – equivalent to US\$2.31 per person per day. As a result, there are very few services available for those with a disability or poor health.

In an interview last year, Gena said: “Generally in Haiti, if you’re a child with special needs you’re abandoned at hospitals. You’re not abandoned because your mother doesn’t love you. You’re abandoned because your mother doesn’t have the means to take care of you.”

Since the lay missionary organisation Viatores Christi was founded in Dublin in 1960, it has placed more than 2,000 volunteers on assignment overseas. Currently, the organisation has 27 volunteers serving in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Over the last 20 years, Viatores Christi has placed many volunteers with specialist skills to work alongside Gena in the orphanage at Kenscoff. At present, the missionary organisation has a specialist physiotherapist and programme co-ordinator in Haiti, with another physiotherapist working at a different NPH site.

For more information, see www.vcvolunteers.ie.

Strangford ferry: All aboard the carol ship of lights

Bracing the cold weather on a boat in December doesn't seem like the best idea, however, that's exactly what hundreds of people in Portaferry and Strangford did over the weekend, BBC NI reports.

They were on the Strangford Ferry, which sails between Portaferry and Strangford, but something was different about it.

For one weekend only, it was transformed from its normal ferry service into the carol ship of lights.

Instead of the usual quiet crossing, passengers were treated to 15 minutes of bright lights and carol singers to get them into the festive spirit.

It's the third year that the event has taken place, and its organiser, Alison Murphy from the Portaferry and Strangford Trust, explained where the idea had come from.

"I lived in Vancouver for a while, and I remembered that they do the carol ship parade of lights, which started 50 years ago with one boat - and it's now 50 boats - the whole big festival lasts for weeks," she said.

"I thought, we've got a boat at the bottom of the street - so we thought, could we use the ferry; could we put different choirs on it?"

"It's just going from strength to strength because it actually brings two communities together - Strangford and Portaferry - which are 59 miles apart by road, but only half a mile by sea."

Each ferry crossing took about 30 minutes in total, and with each journey came a different choir, with jazz groups, the Ards Peninsula choir and a number of schools from the area all getting involved.

Teachers Shauneen Reid and Joanne McCauley, of St Mary's Kircubbin Primary School, said their children really enjoyed being part of the singing ship.

"It's good experience for them to get out into the community and see what they do," said Ms McCauley.

"They really love performing."

Ms Reid added: "It's just something totally different. We're lucky that we have a ferry, there aren't too many schools can say that."

Lunch time Carol Service in aid of therapy dogs

Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, will host a lunchtime charity carol service in Aid of the PEATA association on Tuesday December 13 at 1.15 pm. Everyone is invited to come along and enjoy the festivities and join PEATA service users and therapy dogs. Admission is free of charge and there will be a collection in aid of the charity during the service. Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served afterwards.

Peata takes its name from the Irish word for pet. It is a voluntary association established in 1996 and has as its main objectives: To provide a pet therapy service to caring institutions To promote an awareness of the benefits people derive from pets To further the understanding of the relationship between people and pets A pet is not just for life – it is for a healthier, happier life so come along and support a wonderful and worthwhile cause.

Royal tribute from Connor Mothers Union 90th birthday members

Connor Mothers' Union has put together a display of photographs and signatures of 12 MU members who celebrated their 90th birthday this year. This was on show at the recent Diocesan MU Council Meeting in Broughshane.

The 12 names, photos and signatures were among 400 included in a card which was presented to Her Majesty the Queen at the Patron's Lunch in The Mall, London, during the Queen's ninetieth birthday celebrations back in June.

All 400 ladies named in the card turned 90 in the same year Her Majesty turned 90. Connor Diocesan President Valerie Ash was one of 22 MU members who attended the Patron's Lunch (the Queen is an MU Patron) and she was the only member there from Ireland.

Everyone who attended was given lunch in a picnic basket, and Valerie and the other MU members watched the Queen and Royal Family drive up the Mall. The Royals later went on a walk-about and it was during this time that the MU Worldwide President Lynne Temby presented the birthday care for the Queen to HRH the Duke of Wessex.

News briefs

+++ A Cave Hill Christmas at St. Peter's - St Peter's C of I Parish, Belfast, hosts an evening of Christmas music with the Cavehill Community Choir on Friday December 9 at 8pm. There will be wine, nibbles and a ballot. Tickets, £10, from Annette Beattie on 028 9077 8428.

+++ Make space for Advent - Christ Church Cathedral , Dublin, will be open from 7:00–9:00 pm on Wednesday December 14 with

contemplative music and creative prayer spaces. All welcome. Free of charge. Stop for a little while or stay for the whole evening.

+++ Connect before Christmas - *Connect* is a series of regular gatherings and residentials to provide training, spiritual input and advice to both paid and volunteer youth workers held in the North and South. The events organised by the C of I Youth Department are aimed at those working with young people but also open to other workers in children's and families ministry. The next Connect gathering will take place on Thursday, 8th December, between 10am and 1pm at St Saviour's Parish Church, Dollingstown. This will be a morning of celebration with the Revd Simon Genoe, Rector of Magheralin and Dollingstown, followed by a Christmas lunch. RSVP to Simon Henry at simon@ciyd.org

+++ Change at Irish Methodist web site - The Irish Methodist church has said farewell and thank you to Laura Kerr who has been their Website Manager for the past seven months. Laura undertook this temporary post with enthusiasm and commitment and everyone has appreciated her courtesy and efficiency. The whole area of Connexional Communications is

under review and Michael Sloan will be playing a key role in this as well as maintaining the website over the next few months. Items for the website should be sent as normal to info@irishmethodist.org."

+++1866 communion chalice and paten gifted

- A small but unusual gift with a long connection to Connor Diocese was presented to St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on St Andrew's Day (November 30). The gift, which will remain in the Cathedral for safekeeping and display, is the private communion chalice and paten of Canon Richard Irvine DD, and it dates back to 1866. Canon Irvine was ordained deacon in 1860, priest in 1861, and was curate—assistant successively of Glenavy, St George's and Christ Church, Belfast, before spending 34 years as Rector of St Stephen's, Belfast, until his death in 1903. He was Prebendary of Rasharkin in the Chapter of St Saviour in Lisburn Cathedral for the last five years of his life. The chalice and paten are of an old—fashioned design with the cup of the chalice on an almost stemless base. They were given to Canon Irvine on February 8 1866 — with a hundred sovereigns, no less — by the congregation of St George's, Belfast, as he left to take up his new position across the city in Christ

Church. At some stage, probably after Canon Irvine's death, it is thought they may have been returned to St George's for the use of another priest – these things are routinely handed on – and were given to Canon Noel Shortt, PhD, who was a Canon of St Anne's Cathedral from 1996 until his retirement in 1999. Mrs Evelyn Shortt presented this gift to St Anne's, and while the clergy will use it occasionally, it will be primarily be on display and be held with the other silver treasures of the Cathedral.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Omagh shared education school campus to cost £60m extra

Irish News

The Strule campus in Omagh will involve six schools and is due to be complete by 2020

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/2016/12/05/news/omagh-shared-school-campus-to-cost-60-million-extra-817939/>

Liam Neeson steps down from Ballymena boxing club amid abortion row

Irish News

It is understood the Hollywood actor left his role after narrating a campaign video calling for a repeal of the Irish constitution's eighth amendment

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2016/12/05/news/liam-neeson-steps-down-from-ballymena-boxing-club-amid-abortion-row-817943/>

Racial segregation 'growing in UK', Dame Louise Casey warns

BBC News

Ethnic segregation is growing and schools should do more to promote British values, a report says.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38200989>

Mail/Guard

Reports on an interview with the *Radio Times* in which Theresa May said she will keep to the same traditions she has had for the last 20 years on Christmas Day including visiting a lunch for the elderly, which is put on by the local churches in her Maidenhead constituency. She told the *Radio Times* that throughout her life she has been going to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and church on Christmas Day morning. In a

separate piece, the Guardian's religion correspondent writes that the Prime Minister has spoken publicly about her Christian faith for the third time in just over a week, suggesting she may be more ready to acknowledge her personal beliefs than her immediate predecessors.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3999964/Theresa-says-Christmas-Day-plans-won-t-change-job-title.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/05/pms-christmas-poirot-goose-and-church-before-presents>

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/05/what-theresa-mays-christmas-plans-tell-us-about-her-faith>

BBC/Tel

Reports that a town has claimed a new Guinness World Record for the largest live nativity gathering. The event in Calne, Wiltshire, was certified as a world record, after 1,254 people gathered dressed as shepherds, angels and wise men. They beat the previous record set in Utah, America of 1,039. The record was a joint initiative between the town council and the Bible Society.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-38200272>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/04/hosts-angels-herds-shepherds-hundreds-wise-men-town-everyone/>

BBC

Reports that skeletons unearthed at a site said to have been visited by King Arthur are the oldest example of monasticism found in the UK, archaeologists have said. Carbon dating revealed the remains, discovered at medieval Beckery Chapel, near Glastonbury, were from the 5th or early 6th Century AD.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-38187299>

Mail/Exp/Premier

Further coverage of three archbishops from war-torn Iraq and Syria who were refused visas to attend the consecration of the UK's first Syriac Orthodox Cathedral last month despite being invited to London to meet Prince Charles.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3998726/Syrian-Iraqi-archbishops-denied-UK-visas-extremist-Islamic-preachers-allowed-in.html>

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Middle-East-bishops-refused-entry-to-UK>

Premier Christianity

Further report of an article by the Bishop of Burnley, Philip North, [in the *Church Times*](#) where he said the CofE 'must dismount its middle-class bandwagon and reconnect with the dispossessed working class.'

<http://www.premierchristianity.com/News/UK/Church-so-disconnected-with-the-poor-warns-Bishop>

Comment

Exp

Article criticising the Home Office for its refusal to grant visas to three archbishops from Syria and Iraq to attend the consecration of the UK's first Syriac Orthodox Church last month.

<http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/739601/Banning-three-bishops-Middle-East-UK-Britain>