



Archbishops Michael Jackson and Suheil Dawani (centre) with some of the other Christian, Jewish and Muslim signatories of the Glen Cree Declaration for Peace and Respect for the Dignity of Human Life in the Holy Land.

**rish Faith Leaders stress the
dignity of human life in the Holy
Land**

Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders in Ireland have pledged to work together to promote peace and deepen understanding in the Holy Land. Some 17 leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths across the island of Ireland also pleaded for an end to violence and loss of life in the Middle East. They did so after hearing from the Anglican Episcopal Archbishop in Jerusalem, Suheil Dawani, whose diocese includes Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

Archbishop Suheil met the faith leaders at the Glencree Centre for Peace and Justice this week as part of a week-long visit to Jerusalem's companion link united dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. The Glencree centre works to transform violent conflict and build peace with a vision of a shared world, where all can live free from violence and conflicts are resolved peacefully; using the experiences of reconciliation on the island of Ireland to help people around the world transform their own violent conflicts.

In the declaration, the Irish faith leaders said they shared grief and pain at the death and suffering currently taking place in the Middle East,

impacting dreadfully upon civilian populations and prayed for peace throughout the region.

“It is both the aspiration and the right of all people to live in freedom and security without fear,” they said. “People of all faiths are equally entitled to enjoy such things and yet each sees the other as denying that right to the other with a consequent spiral of violence.

“Our prayer and plea is for this spiral to be broken and safety and security to be restored to all with a new beginning established through a commitment to parity of esteem in both politics and society.”

The declaration was signed at an event attended by 60 religious, political and community leaders: Milestones on a Journey of Hope. “It recognised the ongoing suffering which continues to affect many parts of the Middle East, and offered an opportunity to explore and reflect with them on some of the experiences of Ireland’s journey out of violence into the hope of a brighter future,” a diocesan spokesperson said in a statement.

The declaration said: “Today together we send our collective message of hope for peace to our

brothers and sisters in across the Middle East who yearn to live in freedom and peace. We join with them and all people of faith in the region: Jewish, Christian and Muslim, seeking a just and durable peace, rooted in reconciling love for all the people of the land that is called 'holy' by each of the Abrahamic faiths."

Signatories to the declaration included representatives from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Armenian churches as well as Islamic and Jewish leaders.

Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference expresses solidarity with persecuted Christians

The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has expressed solidarity and support for Christians, and to all who suffer and have been displaced due to violence in the Middle East.

Bishops said that to respect the dignity of the human person, all people of faith and goodwill need to be strong advocates for the protection of vulnerable minorities.

At the Winter 2016 General Meeting of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference yesterday (7 December) in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, the bishops discussed the focus of 27th Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM) on the plight of Christians in the Middle East, whose very existence is under threat.

In its concluding statement the Bishops' Conference endorsed the final communiqué of the IICM which stated: "Lasting peace and security for the region can only be achieved in the context of a renewed international commitment to solidarity, human rights and respect for diversity.

"As churches, we can play our part by keeping this issue on the agenda of our political leaders and ensuring that the victims of persecution are not forgotten, by making donations in support of the urgent humanitarian needs and by working to ensure that our society models the inclusive approach to minorities we would wish to see in the Middle East and throughout the world."

Blue Christmas at Eglinton parish

Cheery carols, bright decorations, nicely-wrapped presents, lots of festive cheer; that's



The Reverend Paul Hoey

what Christmas is all about – right? Well, not for everyone. And St Canice’s Church in Eglinton is doing something to recognise that for many people the traditional way of spending Christmas can be painful.

The church plans to hold a “Blue Christmas Service” on December 21st – the Winter Solstice – which is the longest night of the year. As the name suggests, the service is for those for whom traditional festivities can bring on a dose of the blues.

Rev. Paul Hoey, Rector of St Canice's, explains: 'I'm very aware that for those dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, facing financial pressures or living with illness that puts a question mark over the future, parties and joviality can be painful rather than pleasurable. This service will offer an opportunity for them to be honest with God about how they really feel, and to seek the healing and hope that this season is really about.'

Rev. Paul got the idea from a little church in the West of Ireland, which had adapted it from something that began in America where it is called The Longest Night Service.

'Everyone in the community is welcome, churchgoer or not, of any denomination or none,' says Rev. Paul. 'Nobody has to do anything other than be still and seek peace in the quietness of a sacred space and rest in the midst of a busy season. It's the first time we've done this and I don't know if anyone will turn up. But I hope that some people will.'

The Blue Christmas Service is on Wednesday 21st December at 7:30pm in St Canice's Church, Eglinton.

Gold Gaisce Award for Dunboyne churchman

Congratulations to Thomas Bruton on being awarded a Gold Gaisce Award. He received this at a ceremony in Dublin Castle on 6 December. Thomas is the son of Des and Joan Bruton. He is a member of St Peter's Church in Dunboyne.

The Gaisce awards are recognition of young people who challenge themselves, strive to reach their full potential, and contribute to the life of their community. Presenting the awards President Higgins told the "talented and spirited young people" they had helped change society for the better.

Thomas has already gained his Bronze and Silver Gaisce awards. To receive the Gold Award he demonstrated achievement in Physical Recreation, Personal Skills, Community Involvement and taking part in a residential. This involved Thomas in swimming, sailing, improving his french as well as helping the Church Wardens in Dunboyne every week. Over the course of their Gaisce challenges, the awardees contributed more than 10,000 hours to helping their communities, developing skills and



Thomas, pictured with his father and mother, Des & Joan Bruton, at the Award Ceremony

achieving personal goals. One of the areas cited at the awards ceremony was the contribution made by Thomas to his church, St Peter's Dunboyne.

Talking of what taking part in the Gaisce Awards has meant for him, Thomas said, "Gaisce has really stretched me! I got to do things I never dreamt of. I got to meet heroes like Ossie Calhoun. People who didn't know me before this helped me to achieve my Gaisce. I have met new people. I have shown others that having a

disability need not hold me back, as long as I was prepared to ask for help".

President Higgins highlighted the contribution that the award winners make to our society. In his speech he said, "When we are encouraged to test our limits and to push beyond the horizons of what we thought was possible, and when we do so always seeking to care for the welfare of others, we learn to look beyond the inevitabilities by which we so often live our lives". He continued, "That is a critical experience, fundamental to the development of pro-active, engaged, compassionate citizens who are not afraid to make a difference and to challenge the status quo so as to craft better communities and a better society."

The chief executive of Gaisce, Yvonne McKenna, said the Gaisce vision for Ireland was to have a country where young people could dream big and fulfil their potential.

Capuchins back down from suggestions of 1916 surrender letter theft

Ireland's Capuchins have backed down from intimations that a 1916 surrender letter by Patrick Pearse, put forward for sale by auction this week, was improperly removed from the order's archives, Greg Daly writes in The Irish Catholic.

The letter, described by Adams Auctioneers as "the most significant Irish document to be offered for sale", directed Cmdt Edward Daly, leading the Volunteers' First Battalion at Dublin's Four Courts, to have his men lay down their arms. It was expected to fetch over €1million.

Originally carried to Cmdt Daly by Fr Columbus Murphy OFM Cap., who died in 1952, the letter passed into the ownership of the Irish Capuchin province, where it was "held in care as part of the Order's heritage in connection with the 1916 Rising" according to a statement from the Capuchin Provincial, Fr Adrian Curran.

Emphasising the Irish Capuchins' belief that the letter is "a precious monument of the history of the Irish People and worthy to be preserved as such for future generations", Fr Curran said the letter had been "alienated by persons unknown from the archives of the Order without the authorisation of its superiors and put up for sale".

Adams Auctioneers, however, rejected this claim, saying the provenance of the letter had been established in 2005, when it first went to auction and was sold for €700,000.

The 2005 auction catalogue said the letter had been given to Fr Conrad O'Donovan, Capuchin Provincial between 1961 and 1967, and was subsequently inherited by the anonymous vendor.

The Auctioneers has since clarified that Fr O'Donovan had gifted the letter to the father of the 2005 vendor in the 1960s.

+ In the event the letter failed to realise its estimated price and was retained by its owner.

GAFCON Head Warns The Church Against 'Sleepwalking Into Fatal Compromise'

The Anglican Church is at risk of "sleepwalk[ing] into fatal compromise", the chairman of the conservative grouping GAFCON said in his **Advent pastoral letter** this week.

Most Rev Nicholas Okoh, Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria and chairman of the GAFCON Primates Council, slammed "the increasing breakdown of church discipline in the Church of England" in reference to clergy who condone gay relationships.

"There are now clergy and bishops who openly take pride in their rejection of biblical preaching and have even launched a website to encourage the violation of the 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution I.10 on human sexuality," Okoh wrote.

"But more disturbing is the response of the Church of England at its highest level. The Secretary of the Archbishops' Council has written an **open letter** to Canon [Andy] Lines in which he describes the Lambeth resolution as merely 'an important document in the history of the Anglican Communion'. But this is no ordinary resolution. It has been the standard appealed to again and again in Communion affairs and most recently in the **Communiqué** from the Sixth Global South Conference in Cairo which describes it as representing the 'clear teaching of Scripture'."

Okoh said the Communion was "standing at the crossroads", and was at a "critical point" in its history.

"Will it return to the ancient paths or sleepwalk into fatal compromise?" he asked.

He said he was "greatly encouraged" by the voice GAFCON had given to orthodox Christianity, but added "great courage" was needed by members to "re-evangelise the increasingly secular West".

GAFCON-UK was last month **accused by William Nye**, general secretary to the Archbishop's Council, of being "significantly misleading" in a briefing document.

The UK branch of the conservative group had published a list of names of clergy who were in "violation" of Lambeth 1.10. Nye pointed out the resolution was not legally binding but rather expressed the "view of the attitude of the Communion" at the time.

GAFCON-UK **then accused the Church of England** of being more concerned about "Twitter mobs" than "what is right before God".

It warned the Church's doctrine on marriage was being relegated to "a museum piece".

HRH the Princess Royal appointed High Commissioner to the General Assembly 2017

The UK Government announced yesterday that the Princess Royal is appointed as Her Majesty's High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2017.

The release says:

"The Queen has approved that Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, KG, KT, GCVO, GCStJ, GCL, CD be appointed as Her Majesty's High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2017."

Rev Dr John Chalmers, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, welcomed the appointment saying:

"We are delighted with the news that Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal has been appointed by Her Majesty The Queen as Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of 2017.

“Her Royal Highness served as Lord High Commissioner in 1996 and we look forward to her returning to the General Assembly next year.”

The High Commissioner is the Sovereign's personal representative to the Annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. She attends the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on behalf of the Sovereign. She makes the opening and closing addresses to the Assembly, and carries out a number of official functions as the High Commissioner.

GB Churches report 'dramatic' loss In confidence over youthwork

Churches have lost confidence in providing youth work, according to ground-breaking new research launched on Wednesday.

Smaller congregations often do not offer anything for teenagers and even those who do provide for young people say what they offer is not effective, the research found. It highlighted a "pretty desperate" state of care in churches.

Only 50 per cent of churches regularly talk about basic Christian beliefs with young people and the majority never discussed pornography, same-sex attraction, other religions, drugs and addiction.

It highlighted a disparity between what church offers and what young people want to talk about, with many reporting they "lacked confidence" to talk about difficult topics. Only 51 per cent said they even occasionally talk about mental health despite 80 per cent of teenagers saying they wanted to learn more about it.

Losing Heart was launched at Lambeth Palace on Wednesday evening by Youthscape Centre for Research, a Luton-based youth charity, who surveyed 2,054 churches across the UK. The study found many churches are "struggling" to offer the bare minimum and "feel a general sense of desperation" about how to improve.

Director Phoebe Hill said the findings showed a "stark" lack of confidence over youth work.

"So many of the churches surveyed felt ill-equipped to handle the topics that young people really care about; but more than that they were

often shockingly disparaging about the quality of their youth work.

"When asked 'what's going well in your youth work', common answers included 'not a lot', 'nothing', and 'it does not do so well.' That's very hard to hear as a youth specialist, but it can't be the final word. We clearly have a job to do in terms of reinspiring confidence."

Chris Curtis, CEO of Youthscape, said: "We had speculated about how difficult some churches were finding youth ministry, but now research is telling us there's a real problem.

"However, so often it's moments like this where we realise that all is not well, that spur us on to change and to grow. I am full of hope that over the next decade we can reimagine youth and children's work in this country and renew it in ways that we have yet to discover."

Tribute to Helen Roseveare by Bishop Harold Miller

I heard the news this morning (December 8) that our beloved sister in the Lord, Helen Roseveare,



had passed into the Lord's closer presence. I had the privilege of knowing Helen since coming to the diocese twenty years ago, though my wife Liz remembered her as a leader in WEC camps in her youth.

But Helen was the kind of person everyone felt they knew, because of her writings and inspirational stories of missionary work in the Congo.

Helen was in every way the archetypal missionary. She was warm, relational, resilient and utterly focussed on serving the Lord. In the Diocese of Down and Dromore we honoured her with a Spirit of Patrick award at a most memorable event in Down Cathedral in 2009. She was also presented with Maundy money by the Queen in Armagh Cathedral. In truth, no honour or award was more important to her than serving her Master, Jesus Christ. His glory was what mattered above all else.

Helen was a member of St Elizabeth's Church in Dundonald, which she dearly loved. Her funeral service will be there on Tuesday at noon. She was a deeply committed evangelical, since a life-transforming conversion experience while at University. For her, faith meant transformation of life. But she was also (and I don't exaggerate here) one of the most honest people I have ever met. She would tell of her doubts and challenges, had a real awareness of her humanity, and didn't much like woozy sentimentality! I greatly liked that side of her. I remember her being asked to speak at 'Summer Madness' to thousands of young people in her latter years, in the midst of spotlights and booming music. She stepped on

the stage, spoke powerfully of her experience of God and had all of them eating out of her hand!

Helen, you will be greatly missed. The world is a better place because of you. You were unique, and will be an inspiration to generations after you to live fully for the Lord to the very end.

News briefs

+++ Aid from Clifden arrives in Iraq - the aid lorries which left Clifden at the end of November have arrived safe and well at the distribution depot in Northern Iraq. The boxes of clothes and blankets which originated in parishes, villages and towns in the West of Ireland will be stored here, ready for onward dispersal to their final destinations.

+++ Cork's first Christmas Tree Festival - was held from 2nd to 4th December in the Church of Ireland Parish of Carrigrohane Union, based at the three parish churches: St Peter's, Carrigrohane, St Senan's, Inniscarra and The Church of the Resurrection, Blarney. It was a wonderful and very happy venture. Each church had a Prayer Tree (Redeemer, Treasure and

Immanuel trees) – with shapes for people to write their own prayer and decorate the trees. Extra shapes had to be made each day as so many people took this opportunity to pray! Each church also had a Giving Tree (Poverty, Myrrh and Fruit trees) – with an opportunity for people to bring gifts of non-perishable foodstuffs for St Vincent de Paul. There was also a ‘homeless’ tree outside each church – which stopped many of people in their tracks on the way in – and a Refugee tree outside St Senan’s which included a deflated dinghy. Approximately a thousand people attended the weekend, including the very special occasion of the opening on 1 December in St Senan’s to which all participants, sponsors and parishioners were invited.

+++ Christian Aid walk from Bethlehem to Egypt in Wales - A group of Welsh Christians are walking from Bethlehem to Egypt to raise funds for Christian Aid’s work with refugees and displaced people around the world. But rather than walking the 430-mile journey that the Holy Family undertook in the Middle East, they are walking the 140-miles between the south-Wales village of Bethlehem in Carmarthenshire and the north-Wales hamlet of Yr Aifft (Egypt) in Denbighshire. The walkers set off from

Bethlehem on Sunday and were due to arrive in Yr Aifft (Egypt) next Thursday.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

From Belfast to Belleville

Belleville Intelligencer

The new minister of the east-end Belleville church is following in the footsteps of his father who was a minister of the Methodist **Church of Ireland**.

<http://www.intelligencer.ca/2016/12/07/from-belfast-to-belleville>

BBC/Guard

Reports that Canon Jeremy Pemberton, who lost his employment tribunal case of claims of discrimination and harassment against the retired Bishop Richard Inwood, former acting Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, has had his appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) dismissed. The BBC report notes that EAT judge Jennifer Eady QC said she would consider the case suitable to be given leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal, should such an application be made. A spokesperson for the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham is quoted.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-38235199>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/07/hospital-chaplain-loses-same-sex-wedding-discrimination-appeal>

Times

Reports that the 14-day time limit on growing human embryos in the laboratory will not be extended, the head of the fertility regulator has said. Sally Cheshire, chairwoman of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, has dismissed a campaign by some scientists for the freedom to carry out experiments on embryos at a stage when their bodies are beginning to form. The report quotes former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton as suggesting that Christians and other religious believers might accept a time extension for embryo research.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fertility-watchdog-refuses-to-extend-embryo-time-limit-h8lg9q6h6>

Sky News

Report on calls by the British Humanist Association to make humanist weddings legal in England and Wales following a survey showing that almost a third of people have attended a

humanist ceremony. Rev Canon Dr Sandra Millar, Head of Projects and Developments for the Archbishops' Council is quoted as saying that the Church of England helps 6,000 families a week to mark one of life's big moments, through a wedding, funeral or the christening of a child.
<http://news.sky.com/story/calls-grow-to-legalise-humanist-ceremonies-in-britain-10687312>

ITV

Further coverage that a "homeless Jesus" sculpture is to find a new resting place in the centre of Manchester after planners ruled it could be installed there. Manchester City Council has approved plans for the sculpture, by Canada's Timothy Schmalz, to be sited outside the historic St Ann's Church at the heart of the city. The church wants the sculpture outside the Grade I listed building to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people in the city, Manchester Diocese said.

<http://www.itv.com/news/granada/update/2016-12-06/sculpture-of-homeless-jesus-receives-planning-permission/>

Premier

Report on a [letter](#) to the *Times* published yesterday from Rev Nigel Genders, Chief

Education Officer for the Church of England, in a response to an article by one of its columnists on the role of faith organisations in schools. He said: "More than half of the 4,700 Church of England schools have no faith criteria for admissions.

Many of those that do, do so precisely to encourage disadvantaged pupils and a diverse social mix. A proposed 'lifting of the cap' will not change our approach. Our schools are popular with families of all faiths and no faith."

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Church-of-England-rejects-faith-school-criticisms>

Comment

Times: Time for reflection in schools is for all faiths and none

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/time-for-reflection-in-schools-is-for-all-faiths-and-none-2lwtvq0fm>