



# CNI

---

## **Portadown Presbyterian Church back to square one in its search for a new minister**

Edenderry Presbyterian Church, Portadown – without a minister since Dr Stafford Carson left in the summer of 2013 – is about to re-start the long and complicated system of appointing his successor. But not until the church elders complete a three-week course on the laid-down procedures.

Portadown Times - The Presbytery of Armagh, earlier this month, imposed the conditions on the elders after last year's controversy when the "favourite" to fill the vacancy, Rev Chris Kennedy – then minister at Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin – turned down the post.

It was reported that, at the final stage, an interview with the elders homed in on the fact that he had taken part in an ecumenical 'Walk of Light' through Dun Laoghaire, involving the local Roman Catholic, Methodist and Church of

Ireland clerics and members. It was part of a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the seaside town.

It came to light when a picture of Rev Kennedy and the Church of Ireland Rector, Rev Asa Bjork Olaksdottir (an Icelander), surfaced on the internet. This did not sit well with a few of the Edenderry elders, and the discussion became so heated that Mr Kennedy decided to remain in Dun Laoghaire.

It happened a year after Dr Carson left to take up the post of Principal of the Union Theological College in Belfast. The complicated process of appointing a new minister in Presbyterianism usually takes a year, and Edenderry is having to start again from scratch.

The Armagh Presbytery isn't making any official comment, nor is Edenderry. But sources in both camps confirmed that the elders are having to attend a three-week course to reacquaint themselves with the detailed process. And then – in the language of the church – “they will get leave to call a new minister”.

The minister in charge of the vacancy after Dr Carson's departure was Rev Peter Gamble of Mall Presbyterian Church in Armagh, but he will

not be bearing the double responsibility this time round.

The Portadown Times rang Mr Kennedy at the height of the controversy, but he refused to comment. And the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's ruling body, insisted it was up to the Armagh Presbytery and First Portadown to sort things out.

## **Proposed NI conscience clause - Changing Attitudes Ireland and Amnesty International comment**

This week the Catholic Church through a high-profile delegation to Stormont has voiced its support for a 'conscience clause' bill in Northern Ireland that would also permit anti-gay discrimination.

The Church of Ireland's Changing Attitudes Ireland spokesman Canon Charles Kenny commented, saying: "The negative effects of the proposed conscience clause will increase unreasonable and oppressive hostility towards our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) fellow citizens. We believe this proposal is viewed by many people of faith and by others as a straightforward attack on LGBT community

and it is not consistent with the loving and inclusive message of Christianity”.



***Northern Ireland's First Minister and DUP leader Peter Robinson (second right) with (from left) Dr Nicola Brady, research co-ordinator, Council For Justice and Peace; Bishop Noel Treanor; Deirdre O'Rawe, regional director of Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service NI; the DUP's Paul Givan MLA and the DUP's Jonathan Bell during a meeting on February 24th, 2015, to discuss the Freedom of Conscience Amendment Bill.***

Patrick Corrigan of Amnesty International said in a statement: “What is proposed is not a conscience clause, it is a discrimination clause.

“This change to the law is not welcome and it is not needed. The law already strikes a fair balance between the human right to freedom of religion and the human right not to suffer discrimination.

“Northern Ireland’s First Minister should concentrate on eradicating inequalities already faced by members of the LGBTI community here, rather than lending his support to a discriminatory new law.

“He could start by publishing Stormont’s long overdue sexual orientation strategy, which could help tackle homophobia in Northern Ireland society.”

DUP minister Paul Givan MLA has pledged to introduce a private member’s bill which would effectively void parts of equality laws – by allowing religious people freedom to discriminate against gays based on their ‘conscience’.

A delegation led by the Bishop of Down and Connor met the DUP to discuss the measure this week.

Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor, said politicians need to address the fact that there is a problem, reported the BBC. More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/christians-discriminated-against-says-catholic-bishop-1-6598021>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-group-meets-dup-sdip-on-freedom-of-conscience-bill-1.2115883>

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=26821>

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/political-rivals-talk-to-church-leaders-about-conscience-bill-1415456>

## **Education Authority: NI's new schools body prepares to start work in April**

Plans are well advanced for Northern Ireland's new Education Authority to take over the role of the five existing education boards in April.

BBC - The original idea of a single Education and Skills Authority (ESA) for Northern Ireland was abandoned after seven years of fruitless negotiation, but now plans are well advanced for the substitute Education Authority.

The EA will take over from Northern Ireland's existing five education and library boards at midnight on 31 March 2015.

It is a more modest organisation than planned, and is really one very large board, rather than a completely new concept.

However, it will streamline the provision of education services and save some of the money

which was spent on too many boards with duplicated jobs and services.

The deputy permanent secretary of the Department of Education, Fiona Hepper, told the education committee that it will have an annual budget of £1.5bn and a total of 37,000 employees.

That includes those working in schools but about 2,500 people work directly for the five education boards.

The original aim was to cut the number of those staff but because of a freeze on recruitment that has largely already been achieved. More at -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-31519988>

## **£1m a week spent on welfare benefits for drug addicts and the obese in NI**

Over £1m a week is being spent on state handouts for drink and drug addicts in Northern Ireland

Belfast Telegraph - Alcohol and substance abuse is declared as the main reason in more than 11,000 claims.

Another 1,000 people are on benefits because they are obese, adding a further £100,000 a week to the taxpayer-funded bill.

The figures emerged after the Prime Minister announced [plans to strip the obese, alcoholics and drug addicts of their benefits](#) if they refuse treatment.

David Cameron said it was "not fair" that taxpayers were being asked to fund welfare for those with "treatable conditions" who did not seek help.

In Northern Ireland the bill for handouts to drug addicts, alcoholics and binge eaters is now approaching £70m a year.

Figures obtained by this newspaper show:

Some 6,240 people receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Attendance Allowance because they are alcoholics or drug addicts - a £503,000-a-week cost to the taxpayer;



Another 830 people receive the benefits because they are obese, costing a further £73,000 a week;

Some 5,390 people are also in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) because of alcohol or drug abuse at a cost of £690,000 a week;

And 160 obese people get ESA, costing another £21,000 each week.

The details were provided by the Department for Social Development, which has responsibility for the benefits system in Northern Ireland.

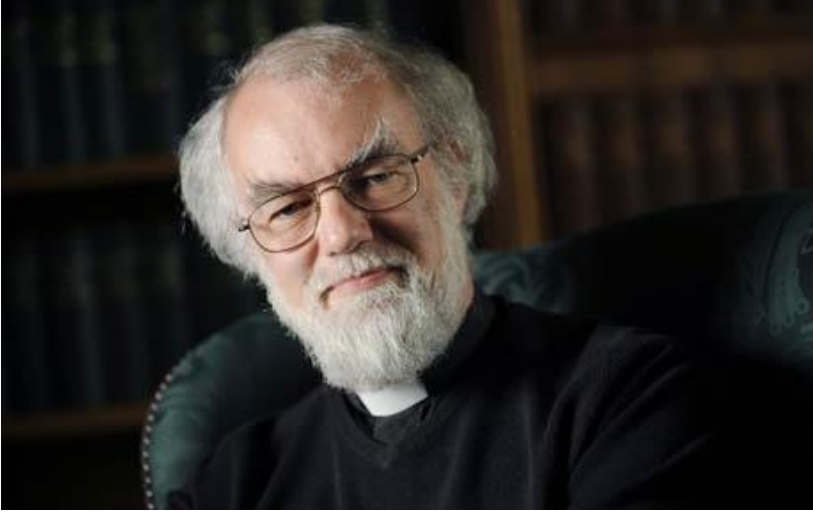
In each case alcohol, drug abuse or obesity was identified as the primary reason why the claimant was receiving benefits. More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/1m-a-week-spent-on-welfare-benefits-for-drug-addicts-and-the-obese-31009440.html>

## **Dr Rowan Williams on RTE's Meaning of Life this Sunday**

Gay Byrne's guest on 'The Meaning of Life' this Sunday, 1 March 2015 – St David's Day – is, appropriately enough, a Welshman, the former

Archbishop of Canterbury and now Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Dr Rowan Williams.



Recorded in the home of the satirist and former Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Jonathan Swift, it's a very wide-ranging, candid, thoughtful and, at times, funny interview with the former leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The programme airs at 10.30pm on Sunday 1st March, on RTÉ One and will be accessible on the RTÉ Player outside the island of Ireland for just three days after transmission, so those overseas who may wish to view it should do so on or near the time of transmission at <http://>

[www.rte.ie/player/ie/live/7/](http://www.rte.ie/player/ie/live/7/) or afterwards on  
[www.rte.ie/player](http://www.rte.ie/player)

Below is a taster clip:

Archbishop Rowan Williams on God – <http://youtu.be/9YAOfer0d-M>

## **Mother of two appointed Chaplain to Cork C of I home**

The Revd Sarah Marry has been appointed to serve as Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of St Anne, Shandon and also as Chaplain to St Luke's Home, Mahon, Cork.

The Revd Sarah Marry is currently serving as curate in the parishes of Douglas Union with Frankfield alongside the Archdeacon of Cork, the Venerable Adrian Wilkinson. Sarah studied Modern Languages (Italian and French) and European Studies at the University of Bath, before being awarded a Diploma in Personnel Management and later the degrees of Bachelor in Theology and Master in Theology at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (at Trinity College, Dublin). She worked for a time in business administration in human resources, including as Human Resources Officer for Concern Worldwide. She was made a deacon in 2011 (and served an internship in the Parish of

Boosterstown in Dublin) and was ordained priest in 2012 in Cork. Sarah is married to Declan and they have two daughters at primary school.

## **I'm not sure if I will go back, says missionary shot by Congo bandits**

A Co Tyrone missionary injured in a gun attack in the Democratic Republic of Congo has said she is undecided about returning to the war-torn country.

Maud Kells arrived back in Cookstown at the weekend - seven weeks after she was shot by bandits during a botched robbery at her residence.

The incident came just days after the 75-year-old was awarded an OBE by the Queen.

Maud said she had been "humbled" by the support and good wishes she had received as she recovers from her injuries. "It's good to be back and I'm just so grateful for everybody's kindness and generosity," she told the Tyrone Courier.

"I'm very humbled with the messages of support I've received."

Maud said she was "in good form" as she continued her recovery.

She was shot by bandits at her home in Mulita, a small jungle village in DR Congo, on January 5.

A bullet passed through her ribs during the attempted break-in.

She was airlifted to a hospital in Nyankunde, near the eastern border of DR Congo, and treated there for six days.

A German doctor and his wife looked after her in their home, before she returned to hospital to continue her rehabilitation.

She returned to Cookstown on Sunday, and is being cared for by her sister Margaret. More at - <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/im-not-sure-if-i-will-go-back-says-missionary-shot-by-congo-bandits-31020140.html>

## **Police spoke to Ballynahinch church 'threat' texter**

Police have confirmed that they tracked down the person who sent a text which allegedly said

a Ballynahinch church – split by an internal feud – “will be burnt to the ground”.

News Letter - For the past two years, Ballynahinch Congregational Church has been divided between those who believe the minister has been voted out of his position and those who do not accept this to be true.

In 2013 Rev George Speers was escorted by the PSNI from the church amid jeers of “out, out, out” from some people in the pews.

Trustee Samuel Graham, who believes the minister should leave, said he was sent a text message two weeks ago “threatening to burn the church down”.

He told the News Letter the message said: “If you don’t make it up with George Speers you will win again. I have no confidence in any of you. That church will be burnt to the ground because you are Satan.”

In Monday’s News Letter, the PSNI said they had made inquiries about the text message “and established that there was no such threat”.

However, Mr Graham was insistent that police had told him that they had “spoken to someone”

and advised him that it was now up to him whether he wishes to press charges.

A PSNI inspector confirmed to the News Letter on Tuesday that they had spoken with the person who sent the text.

“Inquiries were made, the person who sent the text was spoken to and it was established that there was no threat meant,” he said. More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/police-spoke-to-ballynahinch-church-threat-texter-1-6598373>

## **Golf and Munro bagging fundraising drive for CrossReach and Christian Aid**

At first glance, the golf course and the summit of a Munro would appear to have little in common.

But during April and May both will be embraced by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Rt Rev John Chalmers in fundraising drives to raise money for CrossReach and Christian Aid.

The Moderator was inspired to raise cash for the Children and Family Services arm of CrossReach

during CrossReach week in November. Mr Chalmers explains: "I spent a morning giving golf lessons to the boys from Ballikinrain School and decided that it would be good to raise funds. I'm convinced that we can find 24 teams to join me from across the Church."



***The Moderator of the General Assembly is urging people to sign up for a Golf Day and Munro bagging fundraising event for CrossReach and Christian Aid.***

The Moderator's Golf Day will take place at Craigiellaw Golf Club in Aberlady, East Lothian, on Friday April 17. Entry forms for the event are available at <http://www.crossreachevents.org.uk/>

The cost of entry for each team is £250 (including lunch, 18 holes of golf and a two-course post-tournament dinner).



Teams will have a rare opportunity to pit their golfing skills against the Moderator and golf professionals Bill Lockie and John McTear.

Urging golfers to arrive early, the Moderator explained: "Bill is one of the best golf teachers in Scotland and John has a wealth of golf knowledge to pass on. Get to the course by 11.30am and for a small additional fee you can join in the short game school.

"At the post-tournament dinner, Bill will recount some of his tales from the world of golf and along with me; we shall be running an auction of great days out and golfing prizes."

The Moderator hopes this may become a regular annual fundraiser for CrossReach.

In a second fundraiser on May 2, he will join forces with the Moderator of the National Youth Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Rachel Hutcheson, to 'bag' a Munro and encourage congregations to climb Scotland's mountains as part of a year-long celebration of the 70th anniversary of Christian Aid. The charity, which is supported by the Church of Scotland, has organised a year of ascents across 70 of Scotland's Munros to raise £70,000 for Christian Aid.

The two Moderators will climb Ben Lomond, but are looking for climbers who might climb each of Christian Aid's 70 Munros so that will all be conquered on May 2.

Rachel said: "It would be great if we could post pictures of the 70 summits on Facebook and Instagram, so that we can highlight the great effort being made to support the work of Christian Aid."

John added: "I haven't 'bagged' a Munro for years but Rachel is a Munro 'bagger' so at least one of the Moderators will get to the top!"

A team of volunteers based at Drymen Parish Church will co-ordinate walkers on the day, with participants checking in between 9am and 11am and returning between 5pm and 7pm. Congregations are encouraged to take part (either with personal sponsorship or sponsor the Moderators).

Further information and registration for the Moderators' Munros is available at <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/events/trekking/70-munro-challenge.as>

*This is a shortened version of an article that will appear in the April issue of Life and Work.*  
Subscribe here <http://www.lifeandwork.org/subscribe/subscribe>

## Media digest

### Ind

Report on the Archbishop of Canterbury speaking to sixth formers at the St Alban's Academy in Highgate, Birmingham - a Church of England school where 80 per cent of its pupils are Muslim. They state Justin Welby responded to questions on homosexuality and gay marriage saying he remains opposed to same sex marriage but is "listening very, very closely to try to discern what the spirit of God is trying to tell us," and is very aware of his own failings, not wanting to judge others.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/archbishop-of-canterbury-justin-welby-discusses-gay-rights-with-muslim-students-who-am-i-to-judge-them-for-their-sins-10066774.html>

### Times/Ind/Mirror/Mail/Tel

Various reports on the House of Lords voting against a move to block a planned law change approving mitochondrial donation techniques for IVF babies. They state the UK has

now become the first country in the world to legalise the creation of IVF babies using DNA from three people, despite opposition from church leaders and pro-life groups warning it had been introduced too quickly and marked the start of a "slippery slope" towards designer babies. They state the first baby conceived with the new technique could be born as early as next year.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/science/article4364732.ece>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/threeparent-babies-britain-becomes-first-country-to-allow-technique-after-house-of-lords-approves-new-regulations-10068289.html>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/technology-science/science/three-parent-babies-britain-first-5225042>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2967544/UK-country-world-legalise-three-parent-babies-Lords-approves-controversial-IVF-technique.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/11432058/Three-parent-babies-House-of-Lords-approves-law-despite-fears-children-could-be-sterile.html>

## **Mirror**

Report that Selfridges store in Manchester has agreed to remove a set of spikes from outside the shop after it was accused of targeting the homeless. It states a spokesman the studs would be removed and alternative designs found

to address the issue of smoking and littering by the store. Plans for a demonstration outside the shop had been revealed by the Church of England and the charity Church Action on Poverty.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/selfridges-homeless-spikes-store-remove-5224875>

### **BBC/FT/Tel/Ind/Mail**

Reports that the Catholic Church in England and Wales has said voters should consider their candidates' stance on issues including abortion and assisted suicide, ahead of the general election. [In a letter urging Church members to vote on 7 May](#), the archbishops of Westminster and Southwark suggested "key issues" for reflection. They include faith-based education, the living wage and climate change. Reports refer to the Church of England calling for a "fresh moral vision" in politics last week. *Mail* comment contrasts the Catholic paper with the bishops' pastoral letter.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31607399>

[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/635ddc1e-bc47-11e4-b6ec-00144feab7de.html?](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/635ddc1e-bc47-11e4-b6ec-00144feab7de.html?siteedition=uk#axzz3Sde2E1EH)

[siteedition=uk#axzz3Sde2E1EH](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/635ddc1e-bc47-11e4-b6ec-00144feab7de.html?siteedition=uk#axzz3Sde2E1EH)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11432286/Treatment-of-poor-shocking-say-Catholic-leaders.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/catholic-bishops-urge-public-to-judge-politicians-on-what-they-do-for-the-poor-10068346.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2967784/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Dispiriting-decay-integrity-public-life.html>

## **BBC**

Magazine article on Christian mercy, after various christians including Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church said that they would forgive ISIS militants after the beheading of 21 Coptic believers in Libya. In the video, Egyptian singer and christian Anne Alfred talks about forgiveness and peace as part of the Christian faith.

<http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-31589091>

## **Times/Ind/Guard**

Reports that Islamic State militants have abducted scores of Christian villagers in northeastern Syria in apparent retaliation for an offensive by Kurdish and Christian fighters backed by US-led airstrikes. The British-based [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#) said that at least 90 Assyrian Christians were abducted, more than 50 of them from Tal Shamiram, where a church was set on fire. Witnesses said that they overheard Isis militants boasting on their radios that they had seized "56 crusaders".

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article4364358.ece>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-with-isis-militants-kidnap-up-to-90-assyrian-christian-men-women-and-children-from-villages-in-northeast-syria-10067906.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/24/isis-kidnaps-90-christians-in-syria>

## **Guard**

Report that a book which helped change the course of English history, part of the evidence Henry VIII and his lawyers gathered in the 1530s to help win an annulment from Catherine of Aragon and ultimately to break with Rome, has turned up on the shelves of a National Trust mansion in Cornwall. The book is a summary of the theories of the medieval philosopher and theologian William of Ockham.

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/feb/25/henry-viiiis-evidence-to-support-break-with-rome-turns-up-in-cornish-library>