



***Revd. Stella Jones is Rector of Kinneigh Union of Parishes in the Diocese of Cork. Married with two daughters, she is a committee member of Changing Attitude Ireland and strongly believes in a one tiered society and the equality of all under God.***

## **New group for Irish religious people who support same-sex marriage**

A group calling itself Faith in Marriage Equality has formed to express religious people's support for same-sex marriage.

Journal.ie - With the referendum on same-sex marriage due in May, [Faith in Marriage Equality](#)

[\(FIME\)](#) says it wants to show that people of faith can also support the move. It also wants to add new voices to the debate about the referendum in Ireland.

Speaking to *TheJournal.ie*, Dr Richard O’Leary said they intend to challenge views put across by conservative Christian organisations like the Iona Institute.

He added that they want to show that “people with faith can understand that marriage is based on the values of love and commitment”.

Dr Ciarán O’Mathúna of Gay Catholic Voice Ireland said that he is calling for people of faith to come forward “and be brave” and vote yes in the referendum.

FIME said that the organisations who have endorsed their group include We Are Church Ireland, Gay Catholic Voice Ireland, and Changing Attitude Ireland.

Their charter states:

- 1. We are all equal under God, whether we are heterosexual or gay. Faith leaders should not marginalise or exclude people who are gay rather they should promote equality and inclusion.

- 2. People of faith understand that marriage is based on the values of love and commitment. This is the case for heterosexual and same sex couples, whether the marriage involves children or not.
- 3. Faith institutions already distinguish between civil and religious marriage. While it is proper that faith leaders govern their members' access to religious marriage, they should not seek to prevent access to civil marriage.
- People of faith can exercise their freedom of conscience to vote yes to civil marriage in this referendum, as was done to permit civil divorce twenty years ago.

They are hoping that other groups and individuals will endorse their charter.

“We want to highlight that people in faith can vote yes in the referendum,” said Dr O’Leary.

Asked if he feels that people of faith who support same-sex marriage haven’t had their voices heard nationally, he said: “We do.”

We think that because most media attention has been given to the conservative Christian groups, or Catholic bishops, the yes voice from people

of faith, heterosexual and gay, has not been heard.

Dr O’Leary concluded: “Jesus was a champion of the oppressed and the minorities, and there are positive messages in our religious teachings which would argue for the full inclusion and social justice for gay persons and same-sex [relationships] in our society.”

<http://www.fime.ie/>



## **Summer Madness announce their St Patrick's Peace Party**

Summer Madness has announced their ‘Saint Patrick’s Peace Party’ on 17 March in the Waterfront Studio from 6.30 pm.

A spokesperson said - “We will be joined by keynote speakers the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, fresh from the celebrations at

Down Cathedral and The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nichola Mallon. Our own Jasper Rutherford will also be there along with some local musicians.

“But our really special guests are the 16–30 year olds who we want to inspire to be peacemakers in their generation and to influence their community and culture.

“Our hope is that this event will bring together young people of faith from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds to build their confidence and encourage the role that they can play in shaping our future.

“If that’s you, come along on 17 March. It’s a ticket only event and they’re free but very limited so please only register if you are committed to attend.”

For more info and details about bringing a group email [info@summermadness.co.uk](mailto:info@summermadness.co.uk).

- Doors open 6.30pm with drinks and nibbles reception
  - Main event starts 7.30pm
  - Event ends approximately 9.30pm with a symbolic act of prayer at Belfast City Hall.

## Army Chaplains' Roadshow Rolls into Belfast



***Professor Patton Taylor (left) Convener of PCI's Forces Panel with (right) Staff Chaplain, Rev. Richard Smith.***

There are currently just over 200 Army Chaplains – men and women – in the British Army and the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (RACHD) has been responsible for ministering to soldiers and their families in times of war and peace since 1796.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is one of the recognised 'Sending Churches' who provide chaplains to the military in the UK. Also known as padres, recruits must be ordained ministers in

one of the Sending Churches and be a citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland.

The Church's Forces Panel is responsible for recruiting and interviewing ordained ministers for the chaplaincy and provides on going support to them and their families. Convener of the Panel, Professor Patton Taylor, explained that the evening wasn't just about recruiting.

"Recruitment is an important part of the event, but Roadshows like this one are also opportunities for friends, family, and all those interested to discover more about ministry within the Army at both Regular and Reserve levels."

A former Army Reserve Chaplain himself, who served in different parts of the world including Afghanistan, Professor Taylor is also Head of Biblical Studies at Union Theological College.

"For over 100 years Presbyterians in Ireland have had a long pastoral association with the Army at Regular, Reserve and Cadet force levels and that continues to this day, as we have eight chaplains currently serving," he said.

Chaplains are ordained ministers with between two and three year's experience who undertake their initial training at the Armed Forces'

Chaplaincy Centre in Hampshire and then at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. They neither carry weapons nor bear arms and will normally

be assigned to a unit of about 700 troops and families.

One Presbyterian minister, Rev. Dr. Victor Dobbin, rose to become Chaplain-General to Her Majesty's Land Forces (1995-2000), the most senior chaplain in the British Army. The current Chaplain-General, Rev. Dr. David Coulter is a Church of Scotland chaplain, but is also from Northern Ireland.

With the RACHD holding nine regional information events around the UK each year, the Belfast Roadshow was open to all denominations and was attended by Methodists, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian ministers.

Speaking after the event, Staff Chaplain, Rev. Richard Smith, who is responsible for recruitment, said that RACHD welcomes applications from all denominations and is a pioneer in ecumenical relations. "Looking after people is our business," the Methodist Minister, who has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, said.

"Providing spiritual support, both publicly and privately, at every level of the Army and pastoral care at home and abroad, is an essential part of what we do. On average, we need to recruit around 20 chaplains a year to maintain current



levels and our roadshows play an important part in this, so it is good to be back in Belfast.”

One local serving Presbyterian chaplain said, “It is a role I thoroughly enjoy. It may be a cliché, but you do get to see a good part of the world during training and on unit deployment overseas. A number of my colleagues have seen active service in Iraq, Afghanistan and with United Nations’ Missions.

“It is a huge privilege to serve, but it is definitely a calling as we deal with people who would never go near a church and would have never heard the Gospel message and the hope and salvation it brings. It is very humbling.”

## **New bishop appeals for reconciliation in first Limerick sermon**

**The newly installed Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe Dr Kenneth Kearon has appealed to people to reach out to “strangers, the lonely and the isolated” in his first sermon in the diocese.**

Limerick Leader - Dr Kearon was enthroned at a ceremony at St Mary's Cathedral on Saturday (February 7) and delivered a sermon that dwelt on ideas of community and identity in "western post-modern society".

Members of the Church of Ireland itself, he said had in recent years "moved from being a very closed community, living to ourselves and defining ourselves against the majority religious community. We have moved from that to a situation where we are now fully integrated into Irish society."

One of the readings at the ceremony had delivered an important message of reconciliation, Dr Kearon said.

"And our world badly needs to hear and receive that message of reconciliation. The surge of extreme violence in the name of Islam is terrifying; but is there nothing we can do?

"We in Ireland know to our cost that much religious inspired violence has its roots in alienation so perhaps we should ask how a Muslim teenager feels living in this city. Does he or she feel comfortable and at home, or is rejection and alienation part of their experience? In our country, some of our politicians and even our President have experienced frightening

protests. Is this purely about water, or is there a deeper, more worrying feeling of frustration at being out of control?

“Christians,” he continued, “bring to any discussion of community their own distinctive model of a reconciled community where welcoming the stranger, including the lonely and the isolated, and participating in the transformation of the world around us are central. Within that, the Church of Ireland in these parts brings its own experience and perspective, as a community which in the last 50 years or so has moved from being somewhat at the fringe of Irish society to full integration and participation in Irish life.

“So then, questions about identity and belonging abound. Christians respond with an understanding of community rooted in the reconciliation we have experienced in Christ and which leads to a vision of communities which are both reconciled and reconciling.”

Dr Kearon, a native of Dublin, succeeds Trevor Williams as Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe. The ceremony on Saturday featured the tradition of the new bishop seeking to gain entry by knocking on the rarely opened west doors of St Mary’s three times with his staff. He was

admitted by Dean Sandra Pragnell and led to his seat before a congregation that included Catholic Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy, Rev Vicky Lynch, the Methodist minister of Christ Church Limerick and representatives of Limerick's many other faiths.

More at -

<http://www.limerickleader.ie/news/new-bishop-appeals-for-reconciliation-in-first-limerick-sermon-1-6576978>

Limerick Post - recent enthronement of Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick Rt Revd Kenneth Kearon had "a great sense of a city again gathering in Christ", Catholic Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy has said.

Welcoming Bishop Kearon's formal enthronement at St Mary's Cathedral, Bishop Leahy said it was a privilege to be at such a symbolic and hopeful ceremony.

"There was a great sense of togetherness in Christian faith at St Mary's Cathedral for Bishop Kearon's formal enthronement. It was a service laced with symbolism, with hope and with public commitment before God and his people but, at the same time, the new bishop acknowledged the challenges that lie ahead in society today,

challenges for the family and personal identity,” said Bishop Leahy.

“There was very much a message also that we must go out and engage with the world, working especially for reconciliation at all levels and that is a message for all Christian faiths. The service reflected well the type of person that Bishop Kearon is.”

Bishop Leahy described Bishop Kearon as “a very kind man, full of energy and enthusiasm, not least for ecumenism, and Limerick will be all the better for his presence here”, and wished him and his wife and daughters “a happy time here”.

<http://www.limerickpost.ie/2015/02/13/warm-welcome-for-church-of-ireland-bishop/>

## **Four new multi-denominational schools to open by September**

Four new multi-denominational primary schools are expected to open later this year.

Irish Examiner - Three schools will operate under the patronage of Educate Together while the

fourth- a Gaelscoil - will operate under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta.

It's expected the three Educate Together schools, which will open in September, will be located in Tuam, Co. Galway, New Ross, Co. Wexford and Castlebar, Co. Mayo while, the Gaelscoil will be located in Birr, Co. Offaly.

The Minister for Education Jan O'Sullivan announced the news this morning.

In a 2012 parents' survey, the Department explored the possibility of "divesting" some schools from Catholic groups "in order to promote more diversity in primary education in Ireland."

95% of schools in Ireland currently belong to the Catholic Church or Church of Ireland. Of the 3,200 primary schools, 2,900 are under catholic patronage.

"This is a fantastic development for Educate Together," said Jarlath Munnely, Educate Together Regional Development Officer for Ireland West.

"This provides further choice for the parents and goes another step on the road to providing

Educate Together schools right across the country”.

## **Archbishop's speech on 70th anniversary of Dresden bombing**

Speech given by Archbishop Justin Welby at the Frauenkirche in Dresden, during a service to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the allied bombing of the German city.

The service was attended by the President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, and German church leaders.

*Full text of the speech follows:*

It is a great honour and privilege to be with you on this deeply moving day. This is my first visit to Dresden. Yet so much of your story and the journey that brings us together in this beautiful place is known to me and a cause for both sombre reflection as well as quiet rejoicing.

To be welcomed into your city and invited to share in this event as a British church leader is nothing short of miraculous.

Seventy years ago our nations and peoples were at war.

Over three days in February allied bombers brought death and destruction on a scale and with a ferocity it is impossible to imagine. In the rage of war our hearts inevitably harden and increasingly brutal and devastating force is unleashed.



Walking together as friends requires talking together in truth. As Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf challenges us: “To remember wrongdoing untruthfully is to act unjustly.”

Much debate surrounds this most controversial raid of the allied bombing campaign. Whatever



the arguments, events here seventy years ago left a deep wound and diminished all our humanity. So as a follower of Jesus I stand here among you with a profound feeling of regret and deep sorrow.

Healing such wounds requires enemies to embark on the journey to become friends, which starts with our memories of the hurt we have suffered and ends with a shared understanding of the hurt we have caused each other.

This journey is only possible in the context of God's love. It is a testimony to God's mercy that so many across post war Europe were able to take up the almost impossible command of Jesus to love even our enemies.

In so doing we follow him in the way of the cross, so powerfully present here in the Frauenkirche and in the nearby Kreuzkirche through the Coventry Cross of Nails.

Helmut Heinze's statue, Choir of Survivors, is a deeply moving work, now located within the ruined Coventry Cathedral, a gift from this city of Dresden. Dedicated to civilian victims of aerial bombing, it speaks of the brokenness of our human family.

It has also become a profound symbol of this reconciliation journey. It is when we find it in our hearts to memorialise the suffering of our former enemy that we know reconciliation has come to fruition.

Given the pain of our past it is only the love of God in Jesus that makes that possible. We should never underestimate the miracle which peace in Europe represents - arguably the most significant political process of reconciliation in history.

“From now on there can be no more wars of faith,” writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer. “The only way to overcome our enemy is by loving them.”

## **Down Hope Builders trip to Uganda**

Revd Ken McGrath, rector of Kilkeel, recently returned from a Hope Builders trip to Uganda where a team of 38 built one large classroom block and two dormitories in two weeks and 40 degree heat!

Ken also had the privilege of seeing a new project, ‘Hope Village’ which is making a huge difference to the poorest families in the area.

With the exception of 2014, a Hope Builders team has been travelling from County Down to Uganda annually since 2001. Originally the vision of Kilkeel parishioner and Diocesan Reader, David Charleton, several parishes in the diocese have sent team members and been involved in fundraising over the last 15 years.



All the trips have been to Nakasongola, north of Kampala, in an area once known as the Luwero Triangle. In these notorious 'Killing Fields', many people were murdered and had their bodies dumped. In the late nineties Nakasongola was not only part of the jungle, it was a place without hope.

“It’s been incredible to see what has happened here since Trevor Stevenson (Fields of Life) arrived in 1995,” said Ken. “It started with a primary school and now Bethel Royal is a model secondary school and a whole community has sprung up around it. Not only is there hope here, there is also tremendous potential.”

High quality local leadership has been key to the success of Nakasongola and Ken, who was a headmaster in Kenya in the early nineties, also spent some time with the headteacher and staff of the school.

Also on the trip, Professor Rab Mollan, retired orthopaedic surgeon and NSM, ran a daily clinic at the medical centre. As word spread the numbers grew and Rab was able to treat a wide variety of ailments and refer others for lifesaving treatment.

Hope Village is another project born in Kilkeel, this time the vision of parishioner, Karen Campbell, Michelle McCartney (also from the town) and Romaine Douglas from Ballywalter.

Whilst cooking for the teams over the years they were impacted by the plight of some of the women and their families who were destitute,

often through no fault of their own. They were squatting on the land in very basic dwellings and at the mercy of the landowner.

“We really wanted to do something permanent to help and the obvious solution was to build a community,” says Karen. “We purchased 20 acres of land and now there are 12 houses and 12 families in ‘Hope Village’.

“Every family arrives with nothing and is given a 4-room brick house with a separate latrine and wash house on a one and a half acre plot which they have to clear and cultivate. They’re also given basic furniture and utensils, a bull and 4 months worth of food.

“We set them on their feet and give them a chance to flourish,” continues Karen. “The hardest thing is having to turn some families down, but we have eyes and ears in the area looking out for the most needy cases.”

Land in Uganda is steadily rising in price but, after stepping out in faith and offering to buy 22 more acres, Hope Village is set to grow again.

## **Media digest**

## **Irish News**

### **Farry Says He Will Pursue Reform Of Teacher Training**

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/farry-says-he-will-pursue-reform-of-teacher-training-1413066>

## **News Letter**

### **Belfast man's Philippines charity project a perfect Ten for PM**

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/belfast-man-s-philippines-charity-project-a-perfect-ten-for-pm-1-6574570>

## **Irish Times**

### **The real story of St Valentine, revealed in a Dublin Church**

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/the-real-story-of-st-valentine-revealed-in-a-dublin-church-1.2103222>

## **Times**

Article on commemorations in Dresden, 70 years on from the bombing that devastated the city. It says the Archbishop of Canterbury will be among speakers at a ceremony today to mark the firebombing of the eastern German city, which claimed 25,000 lives and came to symbolise the wanton destruction of modern

warfare. It states his message of reconciliation remains relevant in a city that has long struggled with extremism and recently spawned a protest movement against "Islamisation" that proved to be a cover for racist opponents of immigration.  
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/europe/article4352388.ece>

### **Professional Pensions**

Report that F&C Investments has appointed a council of six experts on responsible investment (RI), ethics and sustainability to advise the firm on these issues, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. The council's members include Justin Welby who joins as president, as well as two former pension scheme managers. The council will help maintain the integrity of the standards by which F&C's ethically-screened funds are run. It says Justin Welby was chairman of the former committee of reference, which advised the F&C's responsible funds range until the end of 2014, and previously spent 11 years in the oil industry.

<http://www.professionalpensions.com/professional-pensions/news/2395067/archbishop-of-canterbury-to-lead-f-c-s-responsible-investment-council>

### **BBC/ Christian Today/Mail**

Reports that General Synod passed a motion calling for people who take their own life to be allowed a "normal" service. Reports note that Synod members also heard that many clergy do give burial services to suicides and have done so for years despite the letter of Church law. The motion was brought by the Rev Canon Dr Michael Parsons from Gloucester who said the church wanted to offer hope whatever the circumstances of a person's death.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-31437383>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2951586/Church-England-allow-funerals-suicides-General-Synod-votes-sweep-away-ban-signal-compassion-vulnerable.html>

## **Guard**

Article on new GCSEs unveiled by the government yesterday. It states Religious Studies was one of the four new qualifications and that the content of the new RS GCSE has been contentious because of concerns that it would not include a non-religious world view. It has now been confirmed that pupils will study two religions out of Buddhism, Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism in the first half of their course. They can then choose whether to go on to study one



or both of those faiths in greater depth through a variety of themes.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/feb/12/tough-new-food-gcse-culinary-techniques-nutrition>

## **Guard**

Further article on the YouGov/Times poll on more young Britons being atheists. It states in recent polling just 16% of Anglicans and Methodists said they had "no doubts" about the existence of God and states even the Archbishop of Canterbury admitted to doubts. It states the poll is another benchmark in the decline of religious belief in the UK, but much more study is needed to understand all that is driving this, and where religion may still be resurgent.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/12/religion-atheism-britons-god>

## **BBC**

Report that the government is being urged to extend the scope of the child sexual abuse inquiry to cover the whole of the UK - rather than just England and Wales. The investigation should cover Scotland, and Northern Ireland, including claims of abuse at Kincora Boys' Home in Belfast in the 1970s, a Home Affairs Committee

report said. The Home Office said the report had been noted and was being considered.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31449341>

## **Express**

Further report that vicars across the south-west of England are getting comedy tips at a workshop, run as part of the South West Christian Resources Exhibition in Exeter. It states it is hoped that the 'Stand Up For Jesus' course will attract more worshippers in churches across the South-West of England and help to reverse falling attendances.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/557847/Stand-Up-For-Jesus-is-Church-of-England-comedian-course>

## **Guard & Mail**

Further reports on the identity of the three men who were killed when a 32-tonne tipper truck careered out of control down a hill in Bath. They state around 400 residents attended an hour-long prayer service for the victims at All Saints Church Weston, led by Rector Patrick Whitworth, on Tuesday. Children, parents and grandparents lit candles and used colourful pens to write messages of condolence on white fabric. Books of condolences have been opened in libraries at Bath and Weston, while tribute flowers have been left at a nearby church.

[churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

February 16

[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/12/  
men-killed-in-truck-tragedy-identified](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/12/men-killed-in-truck-tragedy-identified)  
[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/  
article-2951302/Final-victim-Bath-tipper-truck-  
crash-named-59-year-old-businessman-  
grandmother-four-year-old-fights-life.html?  
ITO=1490&ns\\_mchannel=rss&ns\\_campaign=149  
0](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2951302/Final-victim-Bath-tipper-truck-crash-named-59-year-old-businessman-grandmother-four-year-old-fights-life.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)