



***Pictured at the fifth Council of WCRC Europe that took place in Belfast are (left to right) WCRC Europe Vice Presidents -***

***Rev. Balazs Ódor (Reformed Church in Hungary) and Martina Wasserloos, (Reformed Alliance, Germany). WCRC Europe President Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks, (Protestant Church in The Netherlands,) WCRC general secretary Rev. Chris Ferguson (United Church of Canada) and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Barry.***

## **European Church representatives meet in Belfast**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has hosted the two-day annual meeting of the fifth Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe (WCRC Europe) at Assembly Buildings in Belfast.

Church officials, representing 40 Churches from 27 nations across Europe, met to discuss a variety of issues and receive a number of reports of common interest. The WCRC's last European Council met in the Polish capital Warsaw in March 2014.

Reflecting on the two-day meeting, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Barry explained that the World Communion of Reformed Churches is a valuable network of churches in the reformed tradition that share common roots in the 16th Century Reformation.

“I was delighted to be able to welcome so many church representatives from across Europe to Belfast. It was a privilege to fellowship with ministers and officials from churches as far away as the Uniting Church in Sweden to the north,

the Spanish Evangelical Church in the south and the Transylvanian Reformed Church to the east.

“During our time together we were able to demonstrate the work of our own church in Ireland and hear about the work of our brothers and sisters in Christ in their nations. There were also opportunities to pray together, share Communion and provide our guests with hospitality,” Dr. Barry said.

Describing the Council as “very productive and informative” WCRC Europe president Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks of Holland’s Protestant Church in The Netherlands, explained that at each Council meeting members also discuss a specific theme that is relevant to the place in which it meets, but has a contemporary relevance across Europe.

“We decided that we would discuss nationalism in a European context. How it expressed itself across Europe and the relationship of churches to nationalism and nationalist movements from a theological point of view.

“We were very grateful to Rev. Doug Gay from Trinity College, Glasgow, who has researched and written extensively on this subject. He gave a key note address with insightful inputs from

colleagues from Hungary, Switzerland and Italy,” Rev. Heetderks said.

Rev. Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, gave an overview of the Church’s work across Ireland. Council members were also informed of initial plans to commemorate the 500th anniversary in 2017 of Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses and discussed January’s ‘Solidarity Visit’ by WCRC Europe members to the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia in Ukraine.

The delegation visited Beregszász and Dercen in the southwest of the country close to the Hungarian border. “Part of our role is to encourage and support one another,” explained Martina Wasserloos of Germany’s Reformed Alliance and a vice president of WCRC Europe.

“Listening to the report we noted that though it is a vulnerable community facing immense difficulties and uncertainties, the Church has a vision and practice of a serving faith community,”

“The high level delegation learned about the challenges of being an ethnic and religious minority, both historically and currently, remembering the dozens of Reformed Hungarian

pastors who were exiled, jailed or killed during the Soviet era. They also saw how the church is now working with local governments to plug the many gaps in the social support framework,” she said.

WCRC Europe’s next Council meeting will take place in March 2016 at a European city yet to be confirmed.

## **Belfast man will welcome Queen for this year’s Royal Maundy service in Sheffield**

A Belfast man will welcome HM The Queen to Sheffield Cathedral when she hands out the Maundy money this Holy Week.

The Dean of Sheffield is the Very Reverend Peter Bradley who is from St Polykarp’s Parish in Finaghy, where his parents are parishioners. He was educated at RBAI and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Ordained in 1989, he later served as Chaplain of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He was a team vicar in Abingdon and Wycombe prior to his appointment as Dean.

The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh will be present at the Maundy Service in Sheffield Cathedral on April 2.

A spokesman for the Royal Household said: “Her Majesty will distribute the Royal Maundy during the Service.

“Every year at Easter, Her Majesty presents special ‘Maundy money’ to local pensioners in a UK cathedral or abbey.

“The presentation is in recognition of the service of elderly people to their community and their church.

“Since the fifteenth century, the number of Maundy coins handed out, and the number of people receiving the coins, has been related to the Sovereign’s age: for example, when The Queen was 60 years old, 60 women and 60 men would have received 60p-worth of Maundy coins.”

The Queen, who turns 89 this year, is set to hand money to 89 men and 89 women at the service on Thursday, April 2 – the selection is co-ordinated by the Diocese of Sheffield. It is the first time the tradition has taken place in Sheffield, Last year, it took place in Blackburn, Lancashire.

## **Church leaders should acknowledge their contribution to homophobia - C of I group**

Changing Attitude Ireland has responded to a BBC News report on Thursday, which stated that a grieving man who has been the target of a series of homophobic attacks and death threats, felt he could no longer live in his north Belfast home.

The report continued - Paul Finlay-Dickson, whose civil partner Maurice died of cancer last month, said the attacks began 18 months ago and continued through his illness. In one attack, faeces was pushed through the letter box of their home.

The CAI statement says these attacks “took place in a context of homophobia. The DUP has for decades led verbal and legal assaults on gay people. From its 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign to its opposition to civil partnership to its current proposed conscience clause. The latter would make it even easier to discriminate against gay people is not helpful in reducing homophobic attacks.

“We note that Christian leaders in Northern Ireland, including some Bishops of the Catholic and Church of Ireland denominations, have variously described same sex relationships, including civil partnerships, in the homo-negative terms of “sinful”, “evil” “abomination” “intrinsically disordered” and “not normative”. These teachings are not consistent with the loving and inclusive teaching of Jesus, and they are not conducive to creating a society where homophobic attacks no longer occur.”

Dr Richard O'Leary, the Chair of Changing Attitude Ireland and a sociologist of religion who has published on mixed marriages adds “In the previous generation the attacks on couples in Belfast were on mixed Catholic-Protestant couples. In the present times the attacks are on same sex and civil partnered couples”. Homophobia has replaced sectarianism as the basis of attacks on theologically disapproved of couples”.

Dr O'Leary said Church leaders should acknowledge their contribution to the problem of homophobia in Northern Ireland. However, even if Church leaders were belatedly to condemn this particular homophobic attack, they would lack credibility as long as they teach on Sundays that same sex relationships and civil partnerships are



sinful. Dr O'Leary said he was disappointed that only one cathedral in Northern Ireland is willing this year to host a church service to mark "International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia" which falls on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May.

BBC report at -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-31537163>

## **'I have to lock our church doors every day to stop drug addicts shooting up' - priest**

A Church has to be locked every day because of drug addicts shooting up in the grounds.

Independent - Fr Stanislaw Hajowski, of St Audoen's Catholic Church in Dublin's High Street, said that the ongoing drug crisis in the popular tourist area "doesn't make a good impression".

Yesterday the Herald revealed a massive amount of drug activity in St Audoen's Park, with addicts congregating and injecting heroin in front of a nearby school.

Since reporting that story more addicts have been spotted shooting up in the park during daylight hours, as unsuspecting tourists walk in the grounds.

Fr Hajowski has been in the parish for over a year and says that the problem was a "dangerous" one that ultimately meant he had to close his doors to the public at 2pm every day.

"It's a shame because my church has one of the most beautiful and preserved medieval walls and every so often I see people congregating there," he said.

Located beside the Church of Ireland building of the same name, St Audoen's is also home to the Polish chaplaincy in Ireland. The church itself has been around since 1847 and is a popular destination for tourism.

"A lot of people walk along this road and many of them come to see my church, but unfortunately I have to lock the doors because some drug addicts are visiting the grounds to inject needles into their arms," Fr Hajowski said.

"There can be children running on the grass in the park and they are definitely in danger. Many of the addicts come to the garden and it is not a pretty view for tourists. More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/i-have-to-lock-our-church-doors-every-day-to-stop-drug-addicts-shooting-up-priest-31007575.html>

## **Dublin Inter-parish Evensong**

Tomorrow, Sunday, 22 February, at 5 pm in Sandford Parish Church, Dublin, the combined choirs of Sandford Church, S. Philip's Church, Milltown, and Zion Church, Rathgar, will sing the Office of Choral Evensong for the First Sunday in Lent

### **Music**

Introit: Hearken, O Lord, have mercy upon us  
(Attende, Domine)

Preces and Responses: Plainsong

Office Hymn: Before the ending of the day (Mode viii)

Psalm 143, Chant Hylton Stewart in C

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Charles Wood in A flat

Anthem: A Clare Benediction (John Rutter)

Hymn: Our day of praise is done (Tune: Sellindge)

Director: David O'Shea. Organist: David McConnell

## **On the Front Line – C of I Evangelical Fellowship Day Conference**

The Church of Ireland Evangelical Fellowship is organising a Day Conference entitled 'On the front line, Mission and the Local Church'.

Taking place in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh and surrounding venues, on March 14 (9.30am – 5.30pm), the event will focus on the opportunities of mission locally and highlight how best to respond. A wide range of speakers will contribute to participants' collective thoughts including the Revd Dr Mike Ovey (Principal of Oak Hill College, London) and the Revd Dr Heather Morris (Home Mission Secretary to the Irish Methodist Church).

This is a special day for anyone who has a heart for mission in a local context. The organisers hope it will provide encouragement to local churches as they seek to reach out with the message of the Gospel. Everyone is invited to attend to hear of good news stories and be more inspired for service.

Further details and booking information can be found on the CIEF Website ([www.cief.net](http://www.cief.net)) or by

contacting Patricia Halliday on Tel 028 9266 5310 or 07713 257 691 or [ciefmembmail@cief.net](mailto:ciefmembmail@cief.net).

## **Medical tribute to Connor rector**

The family of the late Canon Alex Cheevers have expressed their thanks to everyone who helped raise funds to support the research work of Professor MF McMullan of Haematology at Queens's University, Belfast.

Canon Cheevers was rector of Magheragall Parish from 1991 until his retirement in 2004. At a service of Nine Lessons and Carols in Magheragall on December 21, a special offering was held in memory of Canon Cheevers,

The funds raised at this service, added to donations in lieu of flowers in memory of Canon Cheevers, meant that the family was able to present Prof McMullan, who was Canon Cheevers' consultant, with a cheque of £5,500 to support research into bone marrow disease and its management.

## **Bishop: Ireland in 'danger' of 'groupthink' over same-sex marriage**

A senior Catholic bishop has warned against the “danger of groupthink” on the upcoming same-sex marriage referendum.

Pink News - The Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, Denis Nulty, claimed the Irish media and Parliament was already supportive of marriage equality.

“Personally, there is a danger of groupthink on this issue,” the [Irish Times](#) reports Bishop Nulty said. “If you look at Dáil Éireann or the media, there’s a danger of groupthink.

“Irish people might be forgiven for thinking that we are the last place on the planet to legalise same-sex marriage, which is not true; 18 out of 193 nations have done so,” he said.

Bishop Nulty, who is president of Catholic marriage care service Accord, was speaking at the launch of a survey regarding attitudes to marriage and family.

He said he was speaking on the issue in a personal capacity. “Accord is not an advocacy group, it’s an agent of the Church, so therefore we don’t get involved in the debate,” he said.

“I’m simply saying, ‘Let’s step back a little and look and reflect’. There’s limited research on

what needs to be done, but equally [we need to] support homosexual people, and the Church is there to do that in their relationship,” he said.

More at -

<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/02/19/bishop-ireland-in-danger-of-groupthink-over-same-sex-marriage/>

## **Down and Connor Priest dismissed from orders**

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor issued the following statement yesterday -

The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith has informed the Diocese of Down and Connor that His Holiness, Pope Francis has dismissed James Donaghy from the clerical state on his own authority and for the good of the Church (ex officio et pro bono Ecclesiae). This means that Mr Donaghy is not permitted to function as a priest under any circumstance, public or private.

The decision decreed by Pope Francis has been previously communicated privately to the victims and to James Donaghy.

On behalf of the priests and people of the Diocese of Down and Connor, I again extend my deepest sorrow and apologise to survivors who suffered such pain at the hands of someone in whom they had placed their trust. I hope that this decision will assist those affected on their journey towards healing.

I assure all that the Diocese remains fully committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults with comprehensive structures of safeguarding in place throughout the diocese supported by specialist personnel and thousands of trained volunteers. The Diocese is also committed to bringing healing to the victims of abuse.

The Diocese is conscious of the right to privacy of the victims and will make no further comment.

- James Donaghy stepped down from his duties in March 2004 and has not worked as a priest since. He further resigned his office of Parish Priest of Bangor in July 2009.
- James Donaghy was convicted in December 2011 of 23 sex abuse charges against three individuals and sentenced to 10 years in jail on 10th February 2012.
- James Donaghy was convicted in July 2013 of a further five charges against an



individual and sentenced to 2 years to run concurrently with the previous custodial sentence.

## **C of E Secretary General To Step Down**

William Fittall, the Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council and General Synod of the Church of England, has today issued a statement to members of the General Synod announcing his intention to leave his post on November 30<sup>th</sup> this year.

Mr. Fittall, 61, took up the role of Secretary General in 2002 having previously worked in a number of senior posts in Whitehall. Announcing his intended departure, Mr. Fittall said:

"After a succession of demanding roles I have, with my wife, concluded that the time has come for me to retire from full time work and move to a more flexible pattern of life.

I am giving a substantial period of notice in the hope that this will facilitate a smooth and orderly transition. It is likely to take around three months for the selection process to be completed and

the person chosen may then have several months' notice to serve from their present role."

Responding to the announcement, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "William has made a substantial and prodigious contribution to the work and life of the Church of England. For over a decade he has been unstinting in his efforts to ably lead the staff of the Council and professionally support the work of the Synod. He has been indefatigable in his service and I will personally miss him greatly."

## Media Coverage

### **Mail/Tel/Mirror/Times/Express**

Reports that the Prime Minister David Cameron has praised Bomber Command and their role in the Dresden bombing. His comments come after the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of his profound feeling of regret and deep sorrow at the memorial service to mark the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden. A spokesman for the Archbishop is quoted as saying, "Any suggestion that the Archbishop was apologising is manifestly false. The Archbishop's comments were a reflection in a solemn ceremony on the tragedy of war."

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2959549/PM-highlight-economic-record.html#ixzz3SG9SISStA>  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/11422903/David-Cameron-defends-heroes-of-Dresden-raid.html>  
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/archbishop-canterbury-dresden-comments-david-5193604>  
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article4359844.ece>  
<http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/559306/David-Cameron-says-we-owe-debt-to-heroes-of-Bomber-Command>  
[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2959446/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-don-t-Tories-blow-trumpet.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2959446/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-don-t-Tories-blow-trumpet.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)  
[ITO=1490&ns\\_mchannel=rss&ns\\_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2959446/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-don-t-Tories-blow-trumpet.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

## **Guard**

Sustainable Business report looking at the case for the Church of England's stance on ethical investments. The writer looks at the case for engagement with companies it is invested in and quotes Head of Responsible Investment for the Church Commissioners, Edward Mason.

<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/feb/19/could-the-church-of-englands-stance-on-ethical-investments-be-up-in-flames-over-fossil-fuel>

## **Guard/Mirror**

Comment article on the Bishops' Pastoral letter which says if politicians want to make themselves look less nasty they should avoid

picking fights with the Church. It states committed Christians genuinely do worry about the poor - enough to change their votes accordingly, a [new survey](#) from the Evangelical Alliance suggests - and their concerns shouldn't be lightly dismissed. *Mirror* mentions the letter in article on Conservatives and welfare state policies.(see blogs also)

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/19/tories-nasty-fights-church>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/david-camersons-slashing-welfare-safety-5194266>

## **BBC**

Report that Guildford Cathedral which was "at serious risk of closure" has raised more than 90% of its £7m target for urgent repairs and development. Officials at the Grade II listed Cathedral said last year it was at risk because of deteriorating plasterwork, which contained asbestos. It states a £7m fundraising campaign was launched and now has only £500,000 left to meet the final target.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-surrey-31530909>

## **Eve Standard/Mail/Mirror**

Further reports that a life-sized sculpture of troubled rock star Pete Doherty being crucified has been unveiled as part of the 'Stations Of The

## Cross' exhibition at St. Marylebone Parish Church.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/pete-doherty-crucifixion-sculpture-unveiled-at-central-london-church-10058023.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2960318/For-Pete-s-sake-s-church-Crucified-sculpture-drug-addict-singer-Pete-Doherty-installed-London-chapel-ART.html>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/pete-doherty-crucifixion-sculpture-go-5190823>

## **BBC**

Report that prayers will be said for an 11-year-old boy, Cameron Comey, who it is feared fell into the River Towy on Tuesday after playing with his brother in Camarthon. It states prayers for Cameron and the lighting of candles will take place in St Peter's Church, Carmarthen, on Friday, when ministers and local vicars of all denominations will be present at the church.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-31526088>

## **Mail**

Item that one of the Church of England's leading theological colleges, Westcott House, Cambridge, has turned to a firm of City headhunters to help find its next principal. The comment column says it has engaged the services of Messrs Saxton Bampfylde, to help

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find the right person, which it describes as 'the Fortnum and Mason of labour exchanges'.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2960924/SEBASTIAN-SHAKESPEARE-Duke-s-party-daughters-war-neighbours.html#ixzz3SGGmu5zJ>