



***The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby and the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu.***

## **Archbishop Of Canterbury to express remorse today over Reformation violence**

The Archbishop of Canterbury will express his regrets over violence that occurred during the Reformation this week.

Most Rev Justin Welby will express his remorse in a joint statement with the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, today (Tuesday), a spokeswoman for Lambeth Palace confirmed.

He is expected to call for repentance over the conflict between Churches as the new Protestant movement separated from mainstream Roman Catholicism in the 16th century.

The historic split began in 1517 when Martin Luther, a rebel German monk, nailed his 95 theses to the cathedral door in his town of Wittenburg.

The symbolic event triggered a gradual rupture and led to the formation of various Protestant factions. Centuries of violence between Protestant and Catholic countries followed with rulers who adhered to one Church frequently executing proponents of the other.

Welby's intervention will look to heal divisions and comes a month before the General Synod, the Church of England's Parliament, will hold a

debate marking the 500th anniversary of Luther's 95 theses.

"People often look to the past so they don't make the same mistakes again and can move on," a spokesman for the Archbishop of Canterbury said according to the **Mail on Sunday**.

It is part of a wider move to promote reconciliation and peace between Protestant and Catholics.

Welby has **publicly sought to build relations with his UK equivalent**, the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols. The pair have taken part in the prayer and evangelism initiative **'Thy Kingdom Come' for Pentecost** and have done a **Facebook Live video together** sharing their common goals.

Welby has also met Pope Francis three times since he was enthroned in 2013.

Efforts at reconciliation in the UK mark a wider trend towards "ecumenical friendliness".

Ahead of the 500th anniversary Catholic bishops in Germany released a report praising Martin Luther and addressing key disputes between Catholics and Lutherans.

Bishop Gerhard Feige said the "Catholic Church may recognise today what was important in the Reformation – namely, that sacred Scripture is the centre and standard for all Christian life." Given that this was one of the main disputes at stake during the schism, this was a major olive branch from the Catholic bishops.

He also **said**: "Connected with this is Martin Luther's fundamental insight that God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the people is proclaimed in the Gospel – that Jesus Christ is the centre of Scripture and the only mediator."

But not everyone is so eager to bridge the divide.

A document released in October and signed by 50 leading evangelical pastors and theologians gives a "statement of evangelical convictions" ahead of the anniversary.

"The issues that gave birth to the Reformation 500 years ago are still very much alive in the 21st century for the whole Church," a statement read. "While we welcome all opportunities to clarify them, evangelicals affirm, with the Reformers, the foundational convictions that our final

authority is the Bible and that we are saved through faith alone."

Among the signatories are John Stevens, national director of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, Peter Williams, Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, Wayne Grudem, Research Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary and Tim Chester, pastor of Grace Church.

## **Judicial review sought of merger of Belfast Catholic schools**

The merger of the Little Flower Girls' School and St Patrick's College, a boys' school, will result in the creation of a new co-educational school for 1,119 students.

A legal challenge against the merger of two post primary schools in North Belfast on the grounds that it would deprive pupils of a single-sex Catholic ethos non-grammar education commenced this week at the High Court in Belfast.



***The then Education Minister in Northern Ireland,  
John O'Dowd MLA,***

In 2015 the then Education Minister in Northern Ireland, John O'Dowd MLA, approved the merger and change of enrolment of a number of post primary schools in North Belfast and the Glengormley areas arising out of proposals made by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). Included in such proposals was the merger of the Little Flower Girls' School and Saint Patrick's College, Bearnageeha.

Under the proposals, the Little Flower Girls' School, a Catholic girls' school, and St Patrick's College, a Catholic boys' school, will amalgamate to form a new 1,119 co-educational post primary school.

The move would see the two schools merge from the start of the 2017/2018 academic year next September. Speaking at the time about his decision, Minister O'Dowd said "The children and young people of North Belfast and Glengormley deserve equality of access to sustainable and viable schools capable of effectively delivering the full statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework".

He continued: "This suite of Development Proposals provides for strong and sustainable education provision for the future that will meet the needs of all pupils in the area and provide them with greater choice and opportunity to access a broad and balanced curriculum. These proposals are the result of several years of planning and I commend CCMS and the schools involved for their work in this regard. It has been a challenging road for all concerned, but I am satisfied that my decisions will future proof Catholic provision in this area for many years to come".

However, since details of the merger have come to light, a petition of over 2,000 signatures has been sent to the office of the current Education

Minister Peter Weir, calling for a reversal of this decision.

Last year the parents of a pupil at the Little Flower Girls' School sought a judicial review of the decision. That action commenced this week at the High Court in Belfast. Reports this week in the Irish News newspaper in Belfast state that the court was told that Mr O'Dowd's decision removes "the option for children to attend a single-sex, non-selective school with a Catholic ethos in that area. If [the challenge] doesn't succeed this will impact not only on pupils at Little Flower at the moment, but also all the girls in future ... That would be hundreds of pupils."

The judicial review challenge also contends the decision breaches an obligation under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to promote equality of opportunity. Lawyers for the Department of Education insist there was no requirement to carry out an equality impact assessment because necessary steps had already been taken by the CCMS. The case is expected to continue for a number of days.

Other changes that will come into effect from 1 September this year will see Mercy College and Edmund Rice College become co-educational.



The Minister said that these proposals will provide a total of 4,900 Catholic maintained post-primary places in the North Belfast and Glengormley area, of which 2,800 will be provided between the schools involved in these proposals. The two Catholic grammar schools in this area (St Malachy's College and Dominican College) will provide the remaining 2,100 places.

## **60K grant for C of I's Long Term Church initiative**

The Church of Ireland has been awarded a generous grant by Allchurches Trust Ltd to support its 'Long Term Church' initiative. The emphasis of Long Term Church is on the wellbeing and sustainability of the Church of Ireland.

The specific focus of the first tranche of the Allchurches Trust grant of £60,000 (from an overall grant of £90,000 over three years) is on the development of technological structures which will serve to better connect people with the Church. Allchurches Trust is a charity which promotes the Christian faith, and may be known to many Church of Ireland members as the owner of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group.

The work supported by the grant will share resource materials and provide central support to all parish communities across the island of Ireland via a 'Parish Resources' section on the main Church of Ireland website. It will also allow the Representative Church Body (RCB) to develop a database to more easily connect with Church members, such as parish treasurers, select vestries, diocesan contacts and clergy, and for these people to identify and contact each other. Fundamentally, the project will help the Church to respond to the changing requirements of its membership, reduce the risk of people, especially young people, feeling disconnected to the Church and encourage the growth of the Church's people-network across distance, generations and differences in lifestyle through the use of online meeting facilities.

Both the Archbishop of Armagh, The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, and the Archbishop of Dublin, The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, have welcomed the grant to enable this project, saying: 'We are delighted that the Church has received this support from Allchurches Trust. As the Church faces an increasingly secular society, the RCB needs to be equipped to support the work of the Church as it readies itself for a

challenging future. This grant will greatly assist the RCB in more effectively serving the wider life, outreach and witness of the Church into the long term.'

Chairman of Allchurches Trust, Sir Philip Mawer, said, 'Allchurches has a long and proud tradition of support for the Church of Ireland and we are delighted that our latest grant will help its people network go digital. Online communities can work for Christians too and we are fortunate to be living in an age where the spiritual as well as the physical distances between people can be shrunk with the aid of digital communications.'

Mr David Ritchie, Chief Officer and Secretary General of the RCB, says, 'It is envisaged that the benefits of this project will be far-reaching, facilitating the RCB to develop and deliver parish resources and to improve communication within our Church community. I am also pleased that this collaboration further strengthens the relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Allchurches Trust.'

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## **C of I responds to school admissions debate in R of I**

In a statement issued, The General Synod Board of Education (Republic of Ireland) says “it was interested to learn of the remarks made by Minister Richard Bruton (yesterday) in relation to on-going considerations regarding school admissions.”

The statement continue - In making his remarks, the Minister reiterated that he is mindful of how any proposed changes on school admissions would impact on the “important position of religious minority schools”. The Board is grateful to the Minister for highlighting the role and place of minority schools within the Irish education system and Irish society.

However, Church of Ireland and Protestant primary and secondary schools are embedded in communities across Ireland as local schools and serve a wide variety of students, at primary and second level, from various faith traditions and

family backgrounds and have done so for generations. They have long been respected for their lived commitment to pluralism and diversity. The ability of religious minority schools to continue the key role they play in educational provision in modern Irish society is vitally important to safeguard. It is an expression of active participation by minority religious groups in modern Irish society as conscionable minorities who are concerned with contributing to the civic common good of diversity of experience for children, leading to a respectful and engaging citizenship without discrimination, in service to the common good.

However, more than this, Church of Ireland and Protestant schools at primary and second level exist to serve their students who are entitled to receive their primary and second level education within an ethos that is conducive to their own beliefs and that of their parents/guardians/family. The Board is strongly of the view that considerations around changes to school admissions must reflect this existing practical reality.

The Board welcomes the invitation by Minister Bruton to engage in consultations on the

complex area of school admissions and will do so. The Board finds it deeply disturbing nonetheless that special interest lobby groups, who ostensibly seek equality, would publically reject and oppose such consultations. The Board wishes to highlight that the views of the 15,000 pupils at our primary schools and the 10,000 students at Church of Ireland/Protestant second level schools and their parents along with the staff, Boards of Management/Governing Bodies and patrons of each of the two hundred and twenty-seven schools under Church of Ireland/Protestant patronage in the State, are entitled to be heard.

The Board looks forward to reiterating at those consultations the importance of the ability to prioritise entry for students from Church of Ireland, Protestant and other minority religious traditions into the relatively small number of religious minority schools that exist in the State.

Four “options” have been suggested by Minister Bruton in relation to school admissions. The Board will give close consideration to these “options” with specific consideration to how they would affect both primary and second level Church of Ireland/Protestant schools. However,

each school will have their own view on what is appropriate for them in their individual contexts.

The Board is also conscious that the Admissions to School Bill 2016 is currently being considered by the Oireachtas and will, no doubt, add an extra dimension to the consultations that will take place with the Minister for Education and Skills and departmental officials. The Board also wishes to highlight that while the Minister has put forward four “options” the Board might have other approaches which it may consider appropriate to minority faith schools.

We look forward to engaging with the Minister and his officials on these matters and we thank him for his highlighting of how changes to the ecology of existing school admissions would impact minority religious schools.

## **Archbishop Clarke writes to leaders of main NI political parties**

The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, has written personally to the leaders of the main political

parties in Northern Ireland assuring them of his prayers at this politically difficult time.

Archbishop Clarke asks all members of the Church of Ireland in this context to pray for God's guidance, and to seek to say and do only that which is for the common good of all the people of Northern Ireland. Such prayer is clearly enjoined on us by the Scriptures and by the Church of Ireland's Book of Common Prayer.

## **Return of Retreat in the City**

After a break last year, the very popular Retreat in the City is returning to Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, in February. 'Going up the Holy Mountain: A Journey of Love' takes place in the Lady Chapel of the cathedral from February 3 to 5.

The retreat leader will be the Ven Gary Hastings and the sessions will be based on his book *Going up the Holy Mountain*, a reflection on the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage. The retreat will include a series of stations related to our relationship to ourselves and to God and to the brokenness that is part of our human existence,



## Retreat in the City 2017



### Going up the Holy Mountain:

*A Journey of  
Love*

**February 3 - 5, 2017**

as well as reflections on loving God, neighbour and self.

Gary Hastings is the Rector of Galway. From Belfast originally, he is a well known traditional musician. His book, which talks about spirituality, faith, meditation and pilgrim– age, is to do with finding the meaning of ‘reality’ and how to live in it.

Retreat in the City is open to all. It is non–residential (there many hotel options in the city centre for those coming from outside of Dublin) with a registration fee of €100. The retreat begins on Friday evening at 6.00 pm. On Saturday, sessions run from 9.30 am to 3.30

pm. The retreat continues on Sunday with space for personal prayer in the cathedral prior to the Eucharist at 11.00 am. It concludes with lunch together as a group following the service. The retreat fee includes dinner on Friday night, lunch on Saturday and Sunday, and tea/coffee breaks.

To register contact the cathedral office on 01–677 8099 or [welcome@christchurch.ie](mailto:welcome@christchurch.ie).

## **Crossing Barriers in Christian Unity week in Belfast, Armagh and Dublin**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will take place between 18th–25th January – the octave of St Peter and St Paul.

Each year a different region is invited to prepare the material for use around the world. For 2017 the material has been prepared by the churches in Germany and focusses on the 500th anniversary of the German Reformation.

This year's theme – Crossing Barriers – is based on 2 Corinthians 5:14–20 drawing on the German churches' experience of reconciliation and integration.



# Barriers

The service between the cathedrals in **Belfast** will take place on the eve of the week, at 7pm on Tuesday, 17th January, in St Peter's Roman Catholic Cathedral. The service will be repeated in St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral, **Armagh**, at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 18th January. The services are rotated annually between the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Church cathedrals, with a Church of Ireland representative preaching in a Roman

Catholic cathedral and vice versa. The Rt Revd John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher and President of the Irish Council of Churches, will be the preacher at this year's services, and will speak on 'Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us'.

All are welcome to both services. The joint choirs of both cathedrals will lead the singing at the Belfast service and provide two anthems. The service will be attended by The Rt Revd Harold Miller (Church of Ireland Bishop of Down and Dromore), The Revd Dr John Dunlop (representing the Presbyterian Church in Ireland), The Most Revd Anthony Farquhar (Roman Catholic Bishop Emeritus of Down and Connor), and The Revd Bill Mullally (President of the Methodist Church in Ireland). The Dean of Belfast, The Very Revd John Mann, and the Administrator of St Peter's Cathedral, Fr Martin Graham, will also participate.

The Inaugural Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in **Dublin and Glendalough** will take place in Christ Church, Taney, on Wednesday January 18 at 8.00 pm, by kind permission. This service is organised by the

Dublin Council of Churches, as per tradition, and all are welcome.

For details of other services in Dublin and Glendalough, see -  
<http://dublin.anglican.org/news/2017/01/Events-Taking-Place-in-Dublin-and-Glendalough-for-Week-of-Prayer-for-Christian-Unity>

## **Irish bishops meet for Mass at the tomb of Saint Peter**

On Sunday the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ireland began their ten-day *Ad Limina* visit to meet with Pope Francis and senior officials of the Holy See. Ahead of their meetings, the bishops concelebrated Mass on Sunday morning at the tomb of Saint Peter in Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome. The Principal Celebrant for this Mass is Archbishop Eamon Martin.

Archbishop Eamon said, "We gather as bishops, conscious that with all the bishops of the Church, and with the Pope at our head, we form a single "college" which succeeds in every generation the "college" of the Twelve Apostles, with Peter at their head, which Christ instituted as the foundation for the Church. We pray therefore in

a special way at this moment for Pope Francis, thanking God for the powerful witness and challenge the Holy Father continues to present us.

“We gather as priests to celebrate Eucharist – the ultimate expression and source of our communion with Christ and with one another.

“We gather as shepherds, bringing to this place the needs and intentions of our people, religious and priests.

“We are conscious of the pressures and struggles which beset our people, the internal struggles that can disrupt harmony, the wolves which sometimes attack the flock, and the weighty responsibility for their care that has been laid on our shoulders.

“If it were left to us, of course, we know in our hearts that we would inevitably fail as shepherds – the flock would be scattered, communion shattered.

“But it is not left to us. Here at the tomb of Saint Peter there is consolation in the knowledge that the Lord chose Peter – one who could profess

his love and faith so powerfully – yet, when the pressure was on, thrice deny the Lord so miserably.”

## **Lay Canons installed in Belfast Cathedral**

History was made in St Anne’s Cathedral on Sunday January 15 when the Cathedral’s first Lay Canons were installed.

Mrs Myrtle Kerr and Mr Robert Kay were presented by the Archdeacons of Belfast and Down respectively and after the reading of the Mandate by the Cathedral Registrar, the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, led each new Canon to their designated seat.

Mrs Kerr, a parishioner of Clonallon and Warrenpoint with Kilbroney, and her late husband Cecil moved from the Chaplaincy in Queen’s University, Belfast, to establish the Christian Renewal Centre in Rostrevor in 1974.

Introducing Mrs Kerr at Sunday’s service, the Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev Harold Miller, said he ‘could not think of a more suitable person’ for this role. He told Mrs Kerr: “This is honouring you as a person in your own right and



***Mrs Myrtle Kerr, the Very Rev John Mann, Dean of Belfast, and Mr Robert Kay at the service of installation of Lay Canons at St Anne's Cathedral on January 15.***

as the person who shared a ministry with Cecil all through the years.”

Mr Kay, who is married to Carol and is a parishioner of Agherton in Portstewart, was introduced by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, who described him as a ‘giver.’

Mr Kay served faithfully as lay honorary secretary of the Diocese of Connor for more than 30 years. He also served on the Representative Church Body (RCB – the governing body of the [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)



Church of Ireland), the RCB Executive and was until very recently chair of the plans committee of the RCB.

## **News links to reports on faith, politics and education**

### **How one of Ireland's most southerly towns has fought back against the city brain drain**

The Journal

After years of seeing many of its brightest leave in their droves, Skibbereen is bouncing back.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/skibbereen-ludgate-cork-3188233-Jan2017/>

### **Education Minister sets out four options to deal with baptism barrier**

The Journal

As it stands schools are legally permitted to select students based on their religion.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/minister-bruton-plan-deal-baptism-barrier-3188793-Jan2017/>

### **BBC/Guard/Times/Ind/Even Stand/Christian Today**

Further coverage that the head of the Scottish Episcopal Church says the Church is "deeply distressed" at the offence caused by the reading of a passage from the Koran during a service to mark Epiphany at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral

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

in Glasgow. Police are investigating offensive online messages received by the Cathedral. In a statement, Scottish Episcopal Church Primus David Chillingworth said: "The decisions which have led to the situation in St Mary's Cathedral are a matter for the Provost and the Cathedral community but the Scottish Episcopal Church is deeply distressed at the widespread offence which has been caused. We also deeply regret the widespread abuse which has been received by the Cathedral community."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-38628338>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/15/st-marys-cathedral-glasgow-quran-reading-david-chillingworth>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bishop-sorry-about-koran-in-cathedral-fh3k3mg8v>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bishop-scotland-church-episcopal-david-chillingworth-muslim-student-jesus-christ-quran-church-a7528541.html>

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/church-distressed-at-offence-after-glasgow-cathedral-koran-reading-a3441021.html>

### **Mail/Tel/Mirror/Even Stand**

Reports that HM the Queen and Prince Philip were joined by members of the royal family and high profile guests as they attended church on

Sunday. The royal couple braved the rain for the short walk from their cars to the church of St Mary the Virgin in Flitcham, on the edge of the Sandringham estate, in Norfolk.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-4121714/Purple-reign-Queen-adds-splash-colour-grey-day-braves-wet-weather-attend-church-Sandringham-bouncing-festive-illness.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/15/queen-joins-nephew-earl-snowdon-church-service-just-days-fathers/>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/purple-reign-queen-gives-dazzling-9627616#ICID=nsm>

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/queen-attends-church-for-second-sunday-after-missing-christmas-services-with-illness-a3441001.html>