



The Orange Order said there was 'considerable merit' in the proposal by Canon Ian Ellis

Orange Order welcomes idea of church forum

The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland has praised the suggestion that a voluntary, independent body should be set up to bring together Christian churches and the Province's loyal orders.

News Letter - The idea had been mooted in the News Letter on Thursday by Church of Ireland Canon Ian Ellis, who suggested that – among other things – such a forum could help to ease tensions around parades.

In a statement the Orange Order said: “The Orange Institution actively participates in regular communication with the main churches and recognises the importance and immense value of doing so.

“We believe there is considerable merit in this proposal and look forward to exploring it further with all appropriate parties.”

Canon Ellis, rector of Newcastle in Co Down, had made his call for a forum “entirely separate from state institutions” to allow greater dialogue between established churches and loyal orders.

He said: “Just as religion is part of the historic problem in Northern Ireland, so the churches have a role and responsibility in making things better.

“The Loyal Orders are self-proclaimed Christian organisations, yet there is an unfortunate and

growing 'disconnect' between them and the institutional churches that needs to be remedied.”

Among the issues he raised was a “clear divergence between the churches and the Loyal Orders over the subject of ecumenism”.

Such a new forum could also play a role in helping to resolve marching and flag-related controversies, he suggested.

His call came after politicians at Stormont agreed to look at a new way of regulating parades as part of the wide-ranging Stormont House deal.

Religious freedom is at the heart of human rights – Bishop Buckley of Cork

In the course of his homily, Bishop Buckley said that the World Day of Peace for 2015 was celebrated in the shadow of the terrible persecutions of Christians in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and in Syria. He said that it was remarkable that the Christian communities have survived in this region for over two thousand years, back to the time of the Roman empire, but

that within the past year they have been wiped out, killed and hunted from their homeland.

Bishop Buckley said, “We have all seen the horrific scenes of violence and persecution on television and the dreadful images of executions perpetrated by ISIS. Religious freedom is at the heart of human rights. Today, in too many countries, people are being killed and persecuted for their religious beliefs. Turning to violence in the name of religion is a perversion of everything that a religion stands for.

“No one can be compelled to accept a particular religion. Pope Francis has repeatedly asked us not to turn away from the suffering of our fellow human beings who are persecuted on account of their faith. In the last few weeks I have met with the Bishop of Aleppo who told a gathering, during his visit to Cork, of the sufferings of his people in Iraq and of the thousands of people who are being forced violently from their homes. He said that he was saddened by the indifference of western countries – including our own – to their persecution.”

Bishop Buckley appealed to all people to pray for those who were suffering and to those with

responsibility to do whatever they could to highlight and end this injustice. “The Lord is saying to all of us on this day of Peace, as He said to Saint Peter, put up your sword,” Bishop Buckley said.

Bishop John Buckley, Bishop of Cork & Ross, celebrated Mass for World Day of Peace in the Church of Saint Francis, Liberty Street, in Cork city on New Year’s day.

Archbishop Martin warns trafficking is a ‘real problem’

There is a serious problem of human trafficking in [Ireland](#) and the Church and other voluntary bodies had a responsibility to address it, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin has said.

Irish Times - “We must be very clear: human trafficking is a real problem in Ireland today,” he said. Speaking at a Mass in Rathgar to mark World Day of Peace he said “it does exist and it exists right down to smaller communities across the country.”

Meanwhile the Catholic primate Archbishop [Eamon Martin](#) said in his New Year's message that "Irish people North and South need to ask themselves questions and ask questions of their public representatives about where trafficking is happening in this country? What are we doing to make Ireland the land of one thousand welcomes and a cold place for human traffickers?", he asked.



There is a serious problem of human trafficking in Ireland and the Church and other voluntary bodies had a responsibility to address it, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin has said.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin told the congregation at the Church of the Three Patrons he was part of an initiative to address the issue which was supported by [Pope Francis](#). Called churchnewsireland@gmail.com

The [Santa Marta Group](#), it is composed of Church leaders and police leaders in various parts of the world including an [Garda Síochána](#).

But, he said, “while police authorities are taking a lead in the area of trafficking there is also a real responsibility of Church and voluntary organisations to address the problem. Local communities have a role to play.

“The indications are that even in smaller Irish communities there are cases of trafficking in the area of sexual exploitation, in the area of labour exploitation, in the exploitation of maritime workers and even in the exploitation of children.”

Many of those who are trafficked and who live in small Irish communities “feel trapped in a world which is heavily controlled. There are many ways in which local communities can help identify these people who want to free themselves but are fearful of those who manage them,” he said.

“It is easy to simply take no notice of them. How can we tolerate that the practice of human trafficking can go on under our noses not just in our anonymous large cities but even in small communities?

“There are many ways in which local communities can notice individuals in their communities who seem isolated. Together with an Garda Síochána local communities can help build up a picture of possible exploitation which is taking place.”

More at - <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/diarmuid-martin-warns-trafficking-is-a-real-problem-1.2052154>

4th Big Festive Fry will make a difference in Uganda

Earlier this month, Charlene's Project 4th Big Festive Fry was held in St Saviours Church in Dollingstown. Incredibly almost 800 frys were served in the 3 and a half hours and £18,000 raised for the work of Charlene's Project in Uganda.

It is just over 4 years since Charlene Barr passed away. Before she died she had raised over £120,000 to build Hidden Treasure Primary School, just outside Kampala in Uganda. The money she raised not only built the two block school but also built teacher accommodation and provided a well to bring clean water to the school community. The project she started continues to

impact the lives of vulnerable children in Uganda today.

In 2012 the money raised in the Big Festive Fry paid to put a bore hole and well in the second Charlene's Project school, Kahara Primary, in rural western Uganda where many of the children go to school barefoot.



In 2013 the money raised put a Community Hall at Kahara Primary School. When the Charlene's Project team visited this July we saw the new school community hall in Kahara nearing completion. It is just wonderful seeing the impact of the monies raised from previous Big Festive Frys.

This year's Charlene's Project 4th Big Festive Fry has raised enough money for the development of the third school the project is supporting. Kilwara Primary School is close to Kahara Primary School but the school has so little by way of resources. Like in Kahara many of the children go to school barefoot. Charlene's Project wants to work with a cluster of primaries in the Kahara/Kilwara community so that more pupils complete primary education. In the longer term the aspiration would be to provide a secondary school opportunity for some of these wonderful children in this rural community. During our recent July visit we heard of one boy who walks 16 km to and from the nearest secondary school each day.

The team of 37 who visited Hidden Treasure and Kahara in July composed of young people from Ireland, England, USA and Canada worked in both Hidden Treasure and Kahara Primary Schools and in the other projects that Charlene's Project supports. Kids Clubs, Sports programmes, Health Promotion work, Teacher training and humanitarian distribution was all part of the teams work. It continues to be encouraging

to see the ongoing development at both Hidden Treasure and Kahara Primary Schools.

As demonstrated by the incredible support of this month's Big Festive Fry the event has become a "must" in many folks Christmas calendar. The atmosphere in St Saviour's was electric and those present enjoyed a visit from the African Children's Choir who joined the many families gathered for breakfast and gave a wonderful rendition of "Amazing Grace" for everyone to enjoy. Charlene's Project thanks all who attended the 4th Big Festive Fry and everyone who supported so generously the ongoing work being done with children in Uganda.

Amnesty looks forward to court challenge to same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland in 2015

Amnesty International has welcomed the first same-sex weddings in Scotland and said it looked forward to a court challenge in 2015 to the continuing ban on such marriages in Northern Ireland.

Belfast Telegraph - Today saw the first same-sex marriages take place in Scotland, where the law changed earlier this month.

Same-sex marriage was legalised in England and Wales earlier this year, with the first weddings taking place in March.

The changes leave Northern Ireland as the only part of the UK with a ban still in place.

Patrick Corrigan, Amnesty International's Northern Ireland programme director, said: "It is great to see Hogmanay in Scotland being marked by a celebration of love with these longed-for weddings.

"Sadly, as we enter 2015, same-sex couples in Northern Ireland continue to face a ban on marriage as a result of discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

"We look forward to seeing that discrimination being challenged in the Northern Ireland courts during 2015."

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/amnesty-looks-forward-to-court-challenge-to-samesex-marriage-in-northern-ireland-in-2015-30873288.html>

Forum head calls on church to speed up schools handover



Prof John Coolahan chairman of the forum on patronage and plurism. Ireland faces renewed criticism from UN unless secular education options improve.

The Department of Education needs to wield a “stick” against the [Catholic Church](#) if it wants to make progress on the divestment of schools to other patrons, according to the chairman of the forum on patronage and pluralism.

Irish Times - Prof [John Coolahan](#) says the church’s refusal to take “a proactive stance” in promoting the divestment of schools undermined the process from the outset, and he suggests

cuts in school funding might be considered to concentrate minds.

UN human rights monitors have criticised “the slow progress in increasing access to secular education” in Ireland and are warning the Government it faces fresh censure in the absence of reform.

Former minister for education Ruairí Quinn once talked about removing half of the State’s 3,100 primary schools from Catholic Church control to create a more diverse and inclusive system.

To date, however, the church has yet to hand over a single primary school to another patron, although it did merge two Catholic schools to create a vacant property for [Educate Together](#).

One [Church of Ireland](#) school has transferred to Educate Together, the multidenominational patron which has also opened nine new primary schools in areas of growing populations.

Prof Coolahan said: “There needs to be a carrot and a stick and I think the stick wasn’t much applied as time went on.

“If there was no movement at all then I do think that you could say schools in this area – though

this might be a bit crude – would have reduced capitation,” he added.

Minister for Education Jan O’Sullivan has said she hopes to be able to announce this month plans for “three to four” further Educate Together schools, including in Tuam and New Ross. These are two of 28 areas that have been earmarked for change on foot of parental surveys in select locations.

More at - <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/forum-head-calls-on-church-to-speed-up-schools-handover-1.2052481>

See also - Segregation concerns over transfer of school patronage

www.irishtimes.com/news/education/segregation-concerns-over-transfer-of-school-patronage-1.2052351?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Archbishop of Canterbury welcomes government boost to get kids saving

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has welcomed the announcement this week that the government will fund a pilot programme to help

children develop good financial habits at a young age by setting up savings clubs in primary schools in partnership with credit unions.

Research indicates that children develop their attitudes towards money long before they reach secondary school age, with the Money Advice Service suggesting that most children have formed their financial habits by the age of seven.



The 'LifeSavers' project, which is led by the [Archbishop of Canterbury's Task Group on Responsible Credit and Savings](#), will seek to equip children with good financial habits by educating them about the benefits of saving at an churchnewsireland@gmail.com

early age. It will also introduce children to credit unions, which play a key role in providing financial services to more than a million customers across Britain.

Encapsulating the credit union spirit, 'LifeSavers' will involve the whole community and will engage the help of teachers, parents and community volunteers to ensure its success. The project will pilot in six schools in its first year in South East London (Lewisham/Bromley), Bradford and Nottingham, before rolling out to up to 100 schools over the next four years, benefitting up to 30,000 pupils.

Archbishop Justin Welby said:

"It is great news that the government has announced this funding for the 'Lifesavers' pilot programme, enabling us to begin a programme of establishing savings clubs at church schools across the country. This project has the potential to help establish sensible, positive attitudes to money and the habit of saving in children and young people - habits we hope will stay with them for life. I am immensely grateful that HM Treasury has endorsed the 'Lifesavers' approach by providing this invaluable practical support."

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Andrea Leadsom, who announced the funding, said:

“A key part of our long term economic plan is to secure peoples’ financial futures. And at a time when young people are exposed to financial decisions earlier than ever, LifeSavers is a welcome initiative from the Church of England and the credit union movement. The project will help to tackle the root cause of money problems and develop good savings habits as early as possible.

“Credit unions provide an invaluable service to a growing number of members, many of whom are on lower incomes, and make a real difference to their communities. The government wants to see British credit unions go from strength to strength, and I’m hoping the money we’re announcing today is the kind of Christmas present the sector needs to ensure the next generation understand the benefits of saving with credit unions”

Sir Hector Sants, chair of the Archbishop’s Task Group on Responsible Credit and Savings, said:

“I am delighted that the government has agreed to support our savings club initiative in church

primary schools. Understanding how to manage money responsibly is a key factor in living a fulfilled and contented life, and it is vital to help children build this understanding from as early an age as possible. The savings clubs will also help promote the development of a larger and more vibrant community finance sector in this country.”

AirAsia crash killed 41 members of one church

The tragic loss of AirAsia Flight 8501, which fell into the Java Sea on December 28 on the way from Surabaya in Indonesia to Singapore, has hit Surabaya's Christian community especially hard.

Fully a quarter of the 162 passengers and crew who died were from one church. Pastor Philip Mantofa of Surabaya's Mawar Sharon Church discovered that 41 of his congregation were on the plane, most of them travelling to Singapore on holiday.

Mantofa led a service of prayers and songs yesterday at Surabaya airport. He said: "Some things do not make sense to us but God is bigger than all this. God is not evil ... help us God to

move forward even though we are surrounded by darkness.”



Indonesian military personnel carry caskets containing the remains of passengers on board AirAsia flight QZ8501, which crashed into the Java Sea.

Among those comforted by counsellors from the church was Linca Gonimasela, whose 13-year-old son Adrian Fernando died with his aunt, uncle and their three-year-old daughter. ""He is my only son," she said. "At first he didn't want to go but later on he was persuaded to join them for the New Year holidays."

Another congregation, Bethany Church, lost five members of the same family. A pastor there, Deddy, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, told the New York Times the crash was a tragedy for all Indonesia. "We can guess from the names that many are Christian and Chinese," he said.

Three members of the Gereja Kristen Indonesia Ngagel church, a Presbyterian congregation of around 2,000, also died. Its pastor Florida Rambu Bangi Roni [told USA Today](#) that a planned New Year's Eve service would instead be a memorial for the passengers. "The tragedy of AirAsia is a reminder," she said. "We don't know what time we will die. So we should care for others, make them happy. It's important."

Other churches in the region also cancelled services or changed New Year celebrations into occasions of mourning.

Church gained 15 million Catholics in a year, say researchers

Membership of the Catholic Church grew by 15 million in a single year, according to new statistics.

The [Fides news agency](#) published the figures, which are based on the latest edition of the Church's Book of Statistics, which covers the period up to December 31 2012.

Fides said the number of Catholics worldwide increased in 2012 to 1,228,621,000, a rise of 15 million on the year before.



The greatest increases were in the Americas and Africa, but the Church also grew in Asia, Europe and Oceania, [Vatican Radio](#) reported.

Catholics comprised 17.49 per cent of the world population in 2012, Fides said, a decrease of 0.01 per cent on 2011.

The number of priests in the world increased by 895 to 414,313, but the number in Europe declined by 1,375. Meanwhile, the number of women religious worldwide fell by 10,677 to 702,529.

According to the study, the Church runs 71,188 preschool centres, 95,246 primary schools and 43,783 secondary schools around the world, as well as 115,352 charity and healthcare centres.