



The Rev Brian Fletcher, President the Methodist Church, with the 2016 Youth Team

Busy Saturday on mission and ministry at Irish Methodist Conference

Perhaps conscious that there was some serious business to be done at Conference and despite

the fact that it was early on a Saturday morning, the Rev Brian Fletcher urged us to listen carefully for the voice of God who knocks on the door and who wants to enter into an intimate relationship with us (Rev3 :14). We learn to hear that voice through prayer when we open ourselves to him completely and allow him to see behind the façade we show to the world. This relationship can only develop when our prayer involves listening as well as talking.

Conference delegates were asked to consider many issues during the day where the recurring theme was the need to discern the best way forward for the Church's mission in a world which is radically different from years gone by and one which is experiencing constant and rapid change. In many areas we are being 'asked to do more and more with less and less'. We considered how a changed political, economic and academic climate has impacted many areas of the Church including the training and education of our ministers and lay people, the work of our military, hospital and prison chaplains and our role in the education of young people.

There were many examples of how the Methodist Church in Ireland is responding positively to the challenges of the new

landscape with innovation and enthusiasm to advance the kingdom of God. For example, we heard from the Rev Winston Graham of how a step taken in trust and hope – the Covenant with the Church of Ireland – has been noted throughout the world as a model for partnership between Churches. We adopted the new name of ‘World Mission Partnership’ in place of the ‘Methodist Missionary Society’ to recognise that mission is no longer a one-way process involving a group or groups within the church but rather a two-way learning partnership in which the whole Church should be involved.

What was most evident throughout a day of discussion and debate about what is often deemed boring and overly bureaucratic – the administration of the Church – was the commitment and dedication by all those involved. Members of Church committees and boards sincerely desire that what they do and propose should be for the sole purpose of building up the people of God and to find the best way possible in today’s challenging world to respond to God’s call to mission.

First lay Methodist Youth Secretary

Saturday evening brought Conference Youth Night with the commissioning of Gillian Gilmore



Gillian Gilmore, the new General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children's Department

as the new General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children's Department.

Gillian is the first lay person to hold this significant role in the life of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Speaking to the many people, young and old, who had filled Edenderry Methodist Church, Portadown, on Saturday 18th June, Gillian thanked the Methodist Church for the trust that had been placed in her and expressed her excitement about what lay ahead. 'People of faith, this is all of our call to pass on faith – to be people who are disciples, who make disciples,' she said.

Gillian went on to speak of her passion to see young people knowing *who* they are and *whose* they are in Christ. 'I am grateful to this Church family that shaped my identity,' she said. 'Our identity is formed in community, not on our own. We owe it to the next generation to do whatever it takes for the next generation.'

Derry Scouting Stalwart Honoured

Waterside man Albert Smallwoods has been presented with a 60-year Long Service Award by the Scout Movement in Northern Ireland.

It's the first time that a member of the movement in County Londonderry has received a 60-year award.

Albert became an Assistant Scout Master in All Saints, Clooney in October 1955, although his



Albert Smallwoods is pictured receiving his 60-year Long Service award from the County Commissioner, Paul Meikle (left); also included is the Executive Commissioner for Northern Ireland Scouting, Ken Gillespie.

involvement with the Scout Movement pre-dates that. He joined the Cub Pack in Clooney in 1946.

Maynooth president takes leave of absence

The head of the national seminary at Maynooth is to step aside and take a leave of absence, it has been confirmed.

The Irish Catholic - Following the year-long sabbatical, Msgr Connolly will formally step down as president and return to the teaching staff – the first rector of the seminary to do so in almost 50 years.

The Irish Catholic learned over the weekend that Msgr Connolly had asked the trustees of the college – chaired by Archbishop Eamon Martin – to take leave of his position. Calls to Msgr Connolly for comment went unreturned as *The Irish Catholic* went to print, but a statement was later posted on the college website confirming the news.

The statement said that Msgr Connolly “has advised the staff of the Faculty of Theology of his plans to take sabbatical leave for the academic year 2016–2017”.

While absent from the college, the statement added that he will “remain as President until the completion of his statutory term in the summer of 2017 and he will continue to exercise some duties during the year”.

Allegations

It comes after a string of controversial allegations about life in the seminary. Last year, a number of student priests were reportedly asked



Msgr Hugh Connolly

to take time out of Maynooth because they were judged to be ‘too conservative’ – an allegation that the college authorities denied.

Last month, *The Irish Catholic* reported that the hierarchy had expressed concern after an anonymous whistle-blower claimed in a letter that some seminarians had been guilty of misconduct of a homosexual nature.

At the time, Msgr Connolly insisted that any allegations of misconduct are handled robustly by the college authorities.

Vice-president Fr Michael Mullaney, will serve as acting-president and assume day-to-day responsibility for running the college.

In 1968, Msgr Patrick Corish stepped down after less than a year as president of Maynooth and returned to the teaching staff – the last president to make such a move. Msgr Connolly – who was appointed president in 2007 – will take up the post of Professor of Moral Theology on his return from sabbatical.

Msgr Connolly did not return calls as *The Irish Catholic* went to press and queries were directed to the Catholic Communications Office who referred only to the statement on the Maynooth website.

Cathedral, choral and musical

The **‘Music in Calary 2016 Series’** continues in Calary parish church, Co.Wicklow, on Wednesday evening when pianist Lance Coburn will play works by Beethoven, Schumann and Tchaikovsky, while on Friday evening Beth McNinch (viola), Lance Coburn (piano) and Sharon Carty (mezzo) will perform works by Brahms, Loeffler, Frank Bridge and Michael Head. Tickets from derekneilson@eircom.net

News briefs

Seagoe Parish Church, Portadown - Sunday 26th June 2016 is the closest Sunday to **the 200th Anniversary of the Consecration** of the

current church building for worship, the Consecration having been on 28 June 1816. All of the services will take the form of a thanksgiving for the past and a looking to the future. 10.30am is the time of the main morning service and the evening service will be at 6.00pm in St. Patrick's, at which the Bishop of Down & Dromore will preach.

The National Museum of Ireland are granting the parish the privilege of having the Seagoe Bell on display which dates from approx 900ad. There will also be a display of items from the Parish Archives, which date from the 1600s. The display will open to visitors from Wednesday 22nd to Tuesday 28th June from 2pm to 4pm and 7-9pm.

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Summer 2016 Celtic Walking Pilgrimages - 9 Day Brigid's Way Celtic Pilgrimage options are now available. More information can be found at www.brigidsway.ie

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Annual Family Focus Week at Knock Shrine - The annual family focus week will be held here at Knock Shrine which again are organised for mid July. A special feature this year is the blessing of a new remembrance garden, dedicated to the memory of all deceased children, which will take churchnewsireland@gmail.com

place on Saturday July 9th at 2pm. There are over 700 children enrolled in our book of remembrance and this will be a very special and significant occasion for them. Last January they each brought a snowdrop bulb which we planted in the new garden area and the clergy are looking forward to welcoming them back again now on July 9th to see how this sacred place has been turned into a place of real beauty – a place they can come to remember and pray quietly for those they loved and lost. Click on the link for a full brochure of the the event: [Family Focus day Brochure link](#)

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The **Standing Committee** of the General Synod and the Executive Committee of the **Representative Church Body** will meet in Church of Ireland House, Dublin, on Tuesday.

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Carrick Parish Church (Derry & Raphoe) is holding a **Flower Festival** next weekend, from Saturday 25th to Sunday 26th of June, 2 - 5 pm each day. Praise service Sunday 7 pm. Proceeds in aid of charity.

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Coole parish celebrates 175 years - This year marks the 175th anniversary of the Church of the
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Immaculate Conception in Coole, Co. Westmeath. As part of celebrations, the church will be hosting a programme of events from June 26-July 2 under the theme of the Seven Sacraments. The goal of the programme is to commemorate the Seven Pillars of the Church while honouring the 175 years of the church's presence in Coole. The parish is taking the opportunity of the anniversary to restore not only the physical church building, but also to renovate the building blocks of the faith community in Coole, Whitehall and the surrounding area.

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Mothers' Union - Three wonderfully brave (and perhaps slightly mad) Mary Sumner House staff are taking part in a sky dive to raise money for the 140th staff challenge! Chief Executive [Beverley Jullien](#) (plus her husband Paul), Head of Fundraising & Communications [Daniel McAllister](#) and Families First Editor [Tola Fisher](#) will be jumping out of a plane on 13th July! Please, if you can, lend them your support! <https://www.justgiving.com/teams/140Challengers>

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The Church of England's investment arm - the Church Commissioners, has almost trebled the value of its investment fund over a 20-year period, it announced this week. The value of the Commissioners' investment fund has grown from £2.4 billion at the start of 1995, to £7.00bn at the end of 2015; producing a return of 8.2 per cent last year.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Northern Ireland's first joint faith school a step closer

Belfast Telegraph

Clerics from the **Church of Ireland**, Presbyterian and Methodist denominations told Stormont's Education Committee in February 2015 that joint faith ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-irelands-first-joint-faith-school-a-step-closer-34808669.html>

Derry Now

<http://www.derrynow.com/news/plans-revealed-to-merge-county-derry-catholic-school-with-church-of-ireland-school/98639>

Atheist Ireland criticises legislation on marriage

Irish Times

Mr Hamill argues his church does meet the criteria set down in the Civil Registration Act 2004 for recognition of **religious** bodies for marriage ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/atheist-ireland-criticises-legislation-on-marriage-1.2686298>

One-third of Irish adults active in local church

The Irish Catholic

Almost a third of **Irish** adults are actively involved in their local parish, and many more believe the **Church** will continue to play an important role in **Irish** ...

<http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/one-third-irish-adults-active-local-church>

Bogus Mass cards will finally be banned

The Irish Catholic

The **Irish** Catholic first raised concerns about so-called trafficking in Masses in ... John Curran TD told The **Irish** Catholic he was "very pleased" that the ... the legislation, said he welcomed the **news** and hoped "that the **Church** will act ...

<http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/bogus-mass-cards-will-finally-be-banned>

Mail

Report on comments made by Kim Leadbeater, sister of murdered MP Jo Cox, who described her as perfect and called for people to show "strength and solidarity" after her death. Article notes that prayers are expected to be said at church services across the country today and that St Peter's Church, Birstall, said on its Facebook page: "We expect that we might be joined by a number of visitors as we will be responding to the sudden tragic death of Jo Cox, our MP."

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<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3648645/Sister-killed-MP-Jo-Cox-calls-strength-solidarity.html#ixzz4C0sY91qd>

BBC

Report that former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams has said the UK government needs to do more to respond to the refugee crisis and that rhetoric in the media which suggested the UK was "full" was "unfounded". He was speaking in his role as Chair of Christian Aid, ahead of Refugee Week. Articles note that the government said it had pledged to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 - and about 1,600 had already arrived.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36568862>

Mail

Report on criticisms of new poem by Poet Laureate, Carol Anne Duffy, called *Gay Love* which includes the line 'And God is gay'. Article then notes that a growing number of CofE bishops are calling for a rethink on traditional interpretations of the Bible on homosexuality and refers to a recent sermon by Dr Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans, at Liverpool Cathedral. Report also notes that the issue of sexuality will be discussed at next month's General Synod (in shared conversations after official business has closed).

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3648614/Poet-Laureate-s-lament-Orlando-dead-declaring-God-gay-Carol-Ann-Duffy-criticised-controversial-claim-pens-tribute-nightclub-victims.html>

Ind

Feature on the stigma of claiming benefits noting research analysis by Church Action on Poverty which revealed that between them, working age families and pensioners are failing to claim more than £10bn a year in benefits.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/money/spend-save/10bn-worth-of-benefits-go-unclaimed-each-year-in-the-uk-a7085166.html>

Wales online

Report that the EU referendum debate has created a “kind of monster” and public discourse has been poisoned with “venom”, the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, has said as the Church in Wales prepares to give thanks for public servants. This weekend congregations across Wales will give thanks and prayers for all those in public service and remember the life of Jo Cox.

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/archbishop-warns-referendum-debate-created-11490253>

Guard/Tel/Metro/Times

Reports on vigils held yesterday across the country for murdered MP Jo Cox. Articles note that the Archbishop of Canterbury attended the London vigil in Parliament Square; *Metro* quotes Bishop of Huddersfield
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/live/2016/jun/17/jo-cox-death-police-labour-mp-latest-updates>
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/jo-cox-death-mourners-in-their-hundreds-remember-murdered-mp-at-vigils-across-the-uk-a7088401.html>
<http://metro.co.uk/2016/06/17/more-love-and-less-hate-thousands-gather-at-vigils-across-country-for-jo-cox-mp-5951929/>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/hostilities-on-hold-as-rivals-come-together-to-pay-tribute-9tnhh9v5j>

Tel/Times/C Times/Christian Today

Reports previewing next month's General Synod meeting (see above) in York following yesterday's press conference. Articles focus on the shared conversations on sexuality which will take place after official synod business concludes, particularly on the booklet for synod members *Grace and Dialogue, Shared Conversations on Difficult Issues*. David Porter, Chief of Staff for the Archbishop of Canterbury, is quoted.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/17/the-sincere-schism-church-of-englands-etiquette-guide-for-gay-ma/>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/church-ldvhp9rh3>

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/24-june/news/uk/talk-nicely-or-else-synod-members-are-counselled-ahead-of-sex-talks>

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