



Members of the Church of Ireland and Catholic pilgrimage at the Irish Peace Park

Inter-church Somme pilgrimage ends

The Archbishops of Armagh, the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke (Church of Ireland) and the Most Revd Eamon Martin (Catholic), have concluded a special centenary pilgrimage which brought a cross-community delegation of young people from across the island of

Ireland to significant sites at the Battle of the Somme.

The pilgrimage began on Wednesday with a visit to Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin, which included prayers and a time of reflection at the new Memorial Wall. The group then travelled to the Somme where, on Thursday, the pilgrims visited graveyards and memorials linked to the 36th Ulster Division and 16th Irish Division – including Thiepval Wood and Guillemont. The day concluded with a wreath-laying ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium.

Yesterday morning, the group visited the site of the Christmas truce, Tyne Cot Cemetery and Essex Farm, near Ypres, before prayers and a time for reflection at Irish Peace Park, Messines. This was followed by a visit to the Memorial Museum at Passchendaele.

The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke and the Most Revd Eamon Martin, along with the young pilgrims from across the island of Ireland prayed and reflected at the Peace Pledge in the centre of the Peace Park and visited the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917.

Methodist President trusts Somme commemoration will promote peace-builders'



The newly elected President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Rev Bill Mullally, along with the Archbishops of Armagh and the Presbyterian Moderator, is to take part in a service at the Ulster Tower, Thiepval, France, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. The service will be attended by members of the Royal Family and televised by BBC.

Commenting on the event, the President said: 'I approach the centenary commemoration of the Somme with mixed thoughts. On the one hand one remembers the valour and sacrifice of those who lost their lives for a cause in which they believed. One also remembers the many families and communities affected through the loss of loved ones. On the other hand, there are never really winners in war.'

The President, who has himself experienced the cruel reality of war, believes war is built on the pillars of propaganda and dehumanisation.

He continued: 'I trust that this commemoration will help us to remember and strengthen our determination to be peace-builders in the world.'

Major European Catholic lay conference at Maynooth

A major European Catholic lay conference is underway at Maynooth. Sixty-five delegates from twenty countries are attending the four day event. The theme for this year's Study Assembly is "*Our lay vocation: being merciful to each other!*".

Speakers include Professor Dr Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl, member of ZdK and from the

Deutschen Ethikrat; Steven Vanackere, former Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs; Barbara Walsh Director of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation; and Sven Thomas Nordlöf, poet and psychologist, Saint Eugenia Catholic Church in Sweden.

The delegates were welcomed by Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry who is chair of the Commission for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

He said, "We welcome you to Ireland. The Church in this country is changing from a body that felt safe and secure in our own perceived strength. We are discovering the breath of the Spirit that invites us to be pilgrims and missionaries, not settlers and defenders of our castle, where we risked believing God has taken up permanent abode. We are a people on Exodus. We will be provided with watering holes on the way – and we are told not to hanker after the past. That past may have had its strengths but it was never the Promised Land. Being a pilgrim people is supposed to be the norm for us, not a punishment or an aberration. As Timothy Radcliffe memorably said, "The only thing I know about the future of the Church is that it has a future!"

“You may think of Ireland as being on the edge of Europe, with the next parish being in Boston or New York. But Ireland and its Church have always been European. The Gospel came to us from the mainland of Europe. We sent many missionaries there such as Kilian, Columbanus, Fergal and Coloman. They came to a Europe where none of our present countries existed.

The English invasion of Ireland in the 16th century was motivated by a fear of Spain. In the 18th century, Irish priests were formed in many colleges in France, Belgium, Spain and Italy.

After a century of persecution, the 19th century Church took the French and Italian Church as its model for renewal. The 1916 uprising had strong encouragement from Germany. Irish people are to be found in all the great European pilgrimage centres – Lourdes, Fatima, Rome, Medjugorje. The Irish Catholic Church has always been clear on its European identity and we welcome you as those whom we have known as brothers and sisters down through the centuries.

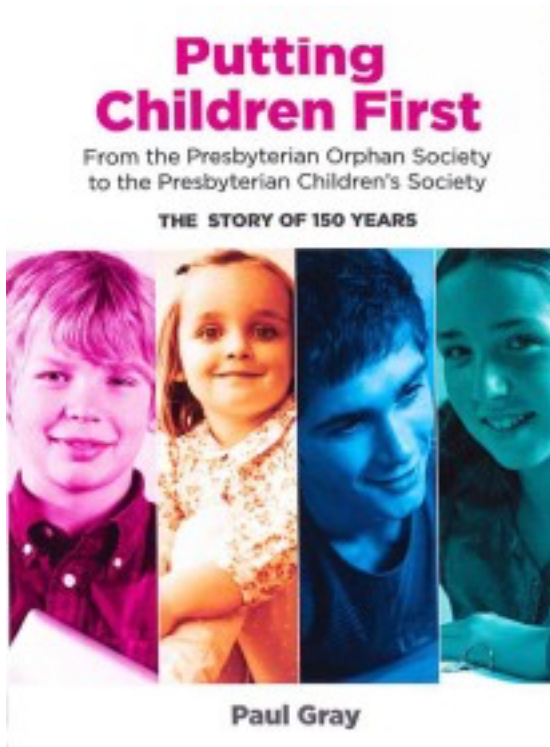
“There are many opportunities and challenges for this continent and world in which we seek to witness. On the positive side, we have great traditions of faith, deeply rooted in our cultures, traditions and artistic heritage. In Ireland, we are discovering a renewed thirst to drink at the

wellsprings that nourished our ancestors through all sorts of periods. A century ago, people stood on the cusp of a radical redrawing of the continent which saw the end of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires and the creation of many small states. One hundred years later, the fear of the invasion and attack is inducing many to build new walls and not bridges. We may be facing a period of renewed nationalism, as well as strident regionalism within some current states.

“Our task is not just to keep alive the flame of faith in our secular societies but to engage with those societies, offering hope and being a witness to a Church that, *‘by its relationship with Christ is a credible sign or sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind’* (Lumen Gentium 1). Our individual churches are not just concerned with saving souls but also with saving Europe from its worst self-destructive inclinations.”

Putting Children First, 150 years of the Presbyterian Orphan Society

The Presbyterian Orphan Society was founded in 1866 to address the needs of Presbyterian orphans. It was very much the brainchild of Dr churchnewsireland@gmail.com



William Johnston of Townsend Street, Belfast, and Dr Wilberforce Arnold, a medical doctor and member of Elmwood Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

Poverty and destitution was rife in Belfast at the time so children were particularly vulnerable. The Society started with 175 children aided in 1866 and has gone from strength to strength ever since. In response to the need to reflect the changing circumstances of families and children, the Society changed its name in 1997 to the

Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society and then in 2016 to the Presbyterian Children's Society.

The publication, which commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Society, traces its origins and growth, the key role played by the Society during the First World War in supporting children who were left fatherless by the death of the main breadwinner, how the Society had to adapt with the introduction of the welfare state, and the support given to the Society over the years by the Presbyterian community.

The examples featured in the publication of very poignant expressions of gratitude from families for the support they received from the Society is testament to the important role of the Society in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in the community. This publication can be obtained from the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland at 26 College Green, Belfast, BT7 1LN or ordered on-line.

Strengthening church links between Cork and Finland

Earlier this month, a visit from the Bishop and his staff from the Diocese of Porvoo (Borgå) in the Church of Finland to Cork, Cloyne and Ross was



Bishop Björn Viktröm addresses the Cork, Cloyne and Ross Diocesan Synod.

an opportunity to strengthen links, friendships and mutual understanding between the two dioceses within the Porvoo Communion of Churches.

The Right Reverend Dr Björn Vikström, Bishop of Porvoo, led the delegation of clergy and lay people from the Diocese on a visit to Cork between 9th to 12th June. The Diocese of Porvoo (Borgå) is an extra-territorial diocese within the Church of Finland made up of Swedish speaking congregations and parishes, some inland, but mostly located along the

Finnish coast, with the Diocesan Cathedral at Porvoo (known in Swedish as Borgå).

Following their journey from Dublin, and a visit en route to the ancient ecclesiastical site at the Rock of Cashel, the visitors were given a presentation by the Bishop of Cork, the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton, about Ireland and the Church of Ireland in general, and the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, in particular.

Bishop Colton and Mrs Susan Colton were entertained to dinner by Bishop Vikström and the Finnish party. The following day started with a visit to the Cork, Cloyne and Ross Diocesan Office for dialogue.

At the heart of the visit was the Cork, Cloyne and Ross Diocesan Synod when Bishop Vikström addressed the annual gathering of clergy and laity, and the two bishops exchanged gifts. On Sunday morning, 12th June, the entire group attended the Sunday Eucharist at Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork, at which the Bishop of Porvoo preached, and Bishop Colton presided.

Afterwards a number of people from the Diocese of Cork together with the Finnish visitors were entertained by Dr Paul and Mrs Susan Colton to lunch at the Bishop's Palace.

The Porvoo Communion of Churches is a fellowship of Anglican and Lutheran Churches in Great Britain and Ireland, the Nordic region, Iberia and the Baltic countries. Porvoo is the name of the cathedral city in Finland where the representatives of the participating Churches celebrated the Eucharist following the conclusion of their ground breaking dialogue.

Bishop Paul Colton was present on that occasion and represented the Church of Ireland in the conversations that brought about the agreement. He has preached twice in Porvoo Cathedral since and been on a number of exchange visits to the Church of Finland.

'Vicar of Baghdad' Andrew White suspended as president of charity

'Vicar of Baghdad' Canon Andrew White has been suspended from his role as president of the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME).

White wrote on his Facebook page that his suspension was "in response to some inaccurate statements I made about our work with and funding for the former slave girls taken by ISIS".



Canon Andrew White

FRRME, which White founded "to provide spiritual and material relief to refugees displaced by violent upheaval", said he has been suspended with pay pending the findings of a Charity Commission Statutory Enquiry.

"The Foundation is cooperating fully with the appropriate authorities," it said in a statement.

"It would be inappropriate to comment further on an active investigation other than to say that the Foundation believes at this stage that the alleged incident stemmed from a genuine desire by Canon White to help others."

In his Facebook post White said: "What is clear is that at no time did we pay money to any terrorists.

"Whilst I cannot work on behalf of the FRRME I continue to lead worship and support individuals that we are helping." White asked his Facebook followers to "pray for us at this very difficult time".

[Andrew White](#), a former Canon for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral, served as the Vicar of Baghdad until he was encouraged to leave the country following advances made by Daesh. He now spends his time travelling between his home in England and bases in Amman and Jerusalem. In Amman, he works as pastor to a number of Christian families who sought refuge in Jordan after fleeing Daesh's advances in Iraq. And in Jerusalem he works on reconciliation initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians.

His suspension by FRRME will not affect his preaching and teaching ministry.

**News links to reports on faith,
politics and education**
**Redemptorist novenas are 'major religious
events'**

the Irish News

Earlier this year, the Redemptorists in **Ireland**, together with all 26 Catholic Cathedrals celebrated the 150th anniversary of veneration to the Mother of ...

<http://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/faithmatters/2016/06/23/news/redemptorist-novenas-are-major-religious-events--560329/>

Housing land to be sought from religious orders

Irish Times

Religious orders will be asked to contribute land and vacant buildings by ... Neither the Conference of **Religious** in **Ireland** nor the **Irish** Bishops' ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/housing-land-to-be-sought-from-religious-orders-1.2695336>

Abortion: NI Appeal Court urged 'protect women who risk criminalisation'

BBC News

The Court of Appeal is urged to step in to protect women who risk criminalisation by trying to accessing abortions in Northern Ireland.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-36608949>

Simon Harris rejects Mick Wallace's abortion bill as unconstitutional

Irish Examiner

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/simon-harris-rejects-mick-wallaces-abortion-bill-as-unconstitutional-406692.html>

Church must apologise to gay people, pope's adviser declares

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-must-apologise-to-gay-people-pope-s-adviser-declares-1.2697089>

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