



***Rev Dr John Dunlop***

## **Senior Presbyterians reach out to LGBT community**

Presbyterians must welcome everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, to worship a former moderator has told the church's general assembly in Belfast.

News Letter - Rev Dr John Dunlop called for greater understanding of the LGBT community that has suffered as a result of persecution.

Addressing delegates yesterday afternoon, Dr Dunlop said he was “partially left-handed” and that “there is nothing I can do about it”.

He said: “I am heterosexual, I don’t know what it’s like to be anything other than heterosexual. That is how I am. And I ask you to consider the possibility, that people with a sexual orientation, have an orientation about which they can do nothing. It is a part of who they are.”

Dr Dunlop said it must be made clear that they are welcome to worship with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI).

“They are a minority amongst us but they are part of us. I have come to understand that human sexuality is a good deal more complex than I thought it was. People like me are on a learning curve,” he added.

He also cautioned that, in the fallout from the Ashers ‘gay cake’ case, there was a danger people would become “switched off” from the

## Equality Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

“This church in its history often could have done with the protection of equality and human rights legislation. The danger of the Ashers dispute is that it has widened the rift between many of us in the Christian churches and people of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender orientation,” Dr Dunlop added.

Another former moderator, Rev Dr Rob Craig from Londonderry called on the current church authorities to show solidarity with Ashers Baking Company.

“Think seriously, at the coming of the Ashers appeal, to call our church to a day of prayer – not just for Christians oppressed in this land, but also for Christians who are persecuted across the world,” he said.

Rev Alan Boal from Dublin complained there was a “lack of leadership from the PCI” on the referendum and that the PCI must make “greater strides towards meaningful engagement with homosexual people who are members in our congregations”.

Rev Boal told delegates that when resolutions had to be debated and voted on later this week,

including issues arising from the referendum outcome, it should happen behind closed doors “since the lack of full rapport together is deep, and varied emotions play out badly and prematurely in the church and in the press.

“I remain convinced that God’s design for bearing his image to creation is that of male/female complementarity,” but, he added: “We must pay attention to the impact of legislative change...the social revolution is making its way north”.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/senior-presbyterians-reach-out-to-lgbt-community-1-6776953>

## **Presbytery meeting over pro-gay marriage minister**

Presbyterian ministers from across Co Armagh met at the Church’s General Assembly in Belfast this week to discuss the pro same-sex marriage stance of Portadown minister Rev Christina Bradley.

News Letter - The clergy – from the ultra conservative Armagh Presbytery – were told that a representative had already spoken to Mrs Bradley over her outspoken support the Republic’s marriage referendum ‘yes’ vote, and that there will be further consideration of the



matter at the next monthly meeting of the Presbytery.

The Armagh Road minister's views are at odds with the Church's policy that marriage is exclusively between a man and a woman.

Following last month's referendum, she told the Portadown Times: "The referendum wasn't a debate on the institution of marriage as the basis of human society as we know it, but about ending discrimination.

“This warm-heartedness is good to see in a world which often is a cold place as much for women in leadership as it is for gay and lesbian people in churches. I welcome the ‘yes’ vote.”

Mrs Bradley is not thought to have been at the first three days of the General Assembly, where Rt Rev Ian McNie was installed as Moderator on Monday night.

Rev Bradley – who conducted her Sunday service as usual at the weekend – has not been available for comment.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/presbytery-meeting-over-pro-gay-marriage-minister-1-6779063>

## **Donemana 'deeply shocked' by road tragedy**

The deaths of two young cousins in an early morning car crash on the main Derry to Strabane road has devastated the close-knit Co Tyrone village, according to Church of Ireland Minister, the Rev Judi McGaffin.

Derry Now - The two men, aged 19 and 21, were killed when the black Volkswagen Golf they were travelling in hit a tree after leaving the road

between Newbuildings and Magheramason at around 3.30am.

A 16-year-old front seat passenger and the 18-year-old driver, who has since been arrested in connection with the crash, escaped serious injury.

Rev McGaffin, minister of the parish of Fahan and former curate in Donemana, said the two men who died were members of the Church of Ireland and news of their “tragic and untimely” deaths had left a “deep sense of shock” in the village and beyond.

Appealing for the families’ wish for privacy, Rev McGaffin added: “The loss is felt most acutely by the men’s families but it will be shared by their many young friends.

“I am mindful, too, that two other young people were injured in this accident. This has been a traumatic experience for them. They are recovering in hospital, where their condition is described as ‘stable.’

“The bereaved, the injured and all those affected by this tragedy, are in our prayers at this most difficult time.

“The circumstances of this morning’s crash are still unclear. The police have begun an investigation and I would urge anyone who can help that investigation to do so.

“The Church is providing pastoral care to the families of the two young men who lost their lives. Both grieving families are struggling to come to terms with what has happened and they wish to mourn in private.”

## **RSCM Director for Irish Church Music Summer School**

For many years, the Irish Church Music Association (ICMA) has held a Summer School for parish musicians at Maynooth. Summer School 2015 will be from Thursday 2nd July to Sunday 5th July 2015 and will be held in St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

For the first time the Summer School this year has been organised in association with Church Music Dublin and the programme been planned jointly. Worship during the three-day event will represent the liturgies of both faith traditions.

The team of tutors will include Andrew Reid, director of the Royal School of Church Music. Andrew has visited Ireland on a number of



occasions and RSCM affiliates who have experienced his skills will be glad of the opportunity to meet him again. Andrew will be directing choral evensong on the Saturday 4th July.

The summer school is mostly residential but the event fee structure also caters for those who wish to participate on a daily/non-residential basis.

Church Music Dublin particularly invite choir directors and their choirs to take part on this day.

Registration for the day will take place at 08.45 with rehearsals during the day.

Some of the music chosen by Andrew includes:  
Bairstow: Jesu, the very thought of Thee; Brewer settings of Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and  
Stanford: O for a closer walk with God

## **Anger over Church plans to sell parish hall**

There is anger at plans to sell one of Co Derry's best known parish halls.



Derry Now - Parishioners of St Patrick's Church in Dungiven say they should have been consulted about its intentions to sell St Canice's Hall in the town.

They were informed via the parish bulletin at the weekend that the Church was in the process of transferring ownership of the hall located on the town's Main Street.

A letter, printed in the weekly newsletter and signed by parish priest Fr Aidan Mullan, stated the hall had been running at a loss and was "costing the parish considerable expense."

Fr Mullan said the falling numbers attending the parish bingo, which closed at the end of last year due to competition in the town, was a contributing factor behind the decision to sell the building.

“Over the past period, the Parish Finance Committee has been monitoring the performances from St Canice’s Hall and the deficit has been a concern to them.

“Our hope always had been to cater for the requirements of all hall users and while we did not want a profit neither did we want a continuing substantial loss,” the notice read.

Fr Mullan revealed he had recently been approached by Irish cultural organisation, Glór, who had been seeking premises for a Culturelann with the intention of staging music, drama and allied Irish cultural events.

Fr Mullan added: “The organisation felt that St Canice’s Hall was a suitable venue for their requirements and approached me wanting to know if we would be willing to sell the hall.

“In discussions, when they agreed to accommodate all existing users of the Hall if they managed it, it was felt proper by the Parish

Finance Committee and the Diocesan Authorities to consider selling St Canice's.

"The added advantage under their administration would be that many cultural events would be available to the Dungiven community.

"In the light of these reflections it was decided to transfer the ownership of St Canice's to Glór Dungiven. We are in the process of achieving this transfer."

However, parishioner James McMacken said he was "angry and disgusted" following the news that the hall is to be sold.

He said: "To read it in the bulletin is more sickening. The people of the parish should have been consulted before this sale happened.

"The finance committee should have been looking at ways to save our hall and make it profitable.

"The parochial are to blame over the years in letting it get to the state it's in.

"It is not the right of the parish priest or finance committee to make a massive decision without exhausting all avenues to save our hall and I know this hasn't been done."

He concluded: "The letter in the bulletin was an insult to the people of our parish and gave excuses to get rid of the hall."

<http://www.derrynow.com/news/anger-over-church-plans-to-sell-parish-hall/31574>

## Drumbeg ground breaking for new parish hall



***The congregation looks on as Bill Parkes and Rachel Price turn the first sod. L to R: Ryan Price, Hugh Crookshanks (Rector's Glebewarden), Revd Willie Nixon (Rector), Michael Barnett (Rector's Warden), Councillor Alexander Redpath (Deputy Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council), and Candida Corscadden (People's Warden).***

On the last Sunday in May, parishioners of St Patrick's Parish Church, Drumbeg, witnessed the breaking of the ground for the building of their new parish hall.

Following morning worship in the historic church, the congregation made the short walk across the graveyard to witness this important landmark in the life of the parish.

The rector, Revd Willie Nixon, conducted a short commissioning service before Bill Parkes (the most senior member of the congregation) and Rachel Price (the youngest member of the Sunday School) turned the first sod in preparation for work to commence. The new hall will sit on ground adjacent to the church graveyard.

## **New Crockford website to be updated daily**

The Church of England has launched a new version of the clerical directory Crockford, delivering a daily update to the 157 year-old directory of Anglican clergy in the UK and Ireland.

The new subscription site has been designed to allow daily updates to details about people and places listed in Crockford, as well as featuring a completely new layout, with clearer language to explain clergy roles as well as more free content.

The latest edition of the website also provides a guide to the structure of dioceses and churches, enabling people to 'thumb through' their local church context.

Thomas Allain-Chapman, Head of Publishing for The Archbishops' Council said:

"Church House Publishing are delighted to unveil the updated version of Crockford online. There has been an online service for over a decade, but we are really confident that the new version will make Crockford much more accessible and useful for the mission and ministry of today's church. Being able to design a brand-new site has given us the opportunity to create something far more mobile/tablet-friendly and ensure searching for what you need is simpler and faster."

Bishop Stephen Platten, former Bishop of Wakefield and Chair of Trustees at Hymns Ancient and Modern said:

"The Crockford brand is an institution in itself, and this new website represents an important milestone in its 157-year history. I am pleased that through the work of Church House Publishing and Hymns Ancient and Modern, Crockford has been given a new lease of life for the future of the Church."

Crockford continues to be available from Church House Publishing as a 1300-page book produced every two years - with the 104<sup>th</sup> Edition due out in December this year.

Details of some of the new features of the site - which will be updated after every working day - can be found at:

[www.crockford.org.uk/news](http://www.crockford.org.uk/news)

## **Two ordained to the priesthood in Dublin**

Fr Christopher Derwin at just 32 years old is the youngest diocesan priest in the archdiocese of Dublin while Fr Paul Glennon is 41.

On the Feast of St Kevin, the co-patron of the archdiocese of Dublin, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin ordained two new priests for ministry in his diocese.





Fr Christopher Derwin and Fr Paul Glennon are part of a batch of fourteen ordinations to the diocesan priesthood taking place in the Irish Church this year.

In his homily at St Mary's Pro Cathedral on Wednesday, the Archbishop told the two men that priesthood is a gift for "the building up of the Church".

He emphasised that "It is not a personal privilege or some form of social recognition."

Priesthood, he said, is not a matter of doing a job.

“It is a matter of identification with Jesus” and he warned them that being a priest “is not easy” and that they could become unsettled and anxious, cynical or resigned.

Referring to the crisis in vocations, Dr Martin asked, “How do we say to a young man in today’s world that being a priest is a worthwhile vocation, that it is worth the effort of renouncing many aspects of life and giving oneself totally to the Lord?”

More at -  
<http://www.catholicireland.net/men-ordained-priesthood-dublin/>

## **Tribute to Bishop Thomas Flynn**

Archbishop Eamonn Martin of Armagh and President of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference paid tribute the former bishop of Achonry. He said - I was saddened to learn of the death of Bishop Thomas Flynn, Bishop Emeritus of Achonry.

While his time at the Bishops’ Conference preceded mine his reputation as a pastoral

leader with a great love for Catholic education was known throughout Ireland. Bishop Flynn led the Diocese of Achonry for almost 31 years until his retirement in January 2008. I offer my prayerful condolences to his family, friends, to Bishop Brendan Kelly and to the priests and people of the diocese.

As a member of the Bishop' Conference, he served on its Council for Communications and acted as spokesperson; he was chair of the bishops' Education Commission between 1992 and 2004, and contributed to discussions around the Education Act of 1998. Bishop Flynn also played a creative role in the Bishops' Laity and Social Welfare Commissions.

As Bishop of Achonry, he promoted adult religious education through the building of a pastoral centre in Charlestown and the establishment of diocesan centres and parish centres for religious education. Bishop Flynn was also involved in the Catholic Bishops' Develop the West initiative.

As we remember Bishop Flynn, a man with a great passion and grá for education, it seems appropriate to share some of the words of another great man of education, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who said: "If, then, you are looking for

the way by which you should go, take Christ, because He Himself is the way.”

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

## **Episcopal Diocese of Texas supports those hard-hit by flooding**

“I saw a lot of people with a light in their eyes,” said the Very Revd Russ Oechsel, archdeacon for the Diocese of Texas. “They know God is with us all the time.”

Oechsel led an emergency spiritual care team from the Diocese of Texas through the streets of the Meyerland area in Southwest Houston, an area especially hard hit by recent flooding. Their purpose was to show up to listen to the stories of those affected by the flooding during the past week. In addition, they carried coolers filled with water bottles and Home Depot gift cards. They heard many stories and were struck by the number of Houstonians out helping their neighbours as flooded homes were cleaned out.

“We saw off -duty police officers, firemen and military personnel helping people clear out wet carpet and sheetrock. There was one group who showed up with food,” Oechsel said. “They set

up under a big tent serving lasagna to anyone who came.”

In the Westbury neighbourhood, they met Stephanie, the leader of the Westbury Civic Club. Stephanie was under a blue tent recording the needs of the various homeowners and at the same time sending out volunteers to help those homeowners address their needs.

“Stephanie was doing this on an ad hoc basis with no particular training, but with the heart of a leader and the compassion of our Saviour,” Oechsel said. “It was a powerful example of people caring for each other.”

The team met a young minister and his wife who were renting their home, now flooded. The couple has a young son, 18 months old, and they are expecting another boy soon. The owner of the house had come to remove carpeting and friends were helping them move their furniture and items that were not ruined into storage. Their church has found temporary housing for them.

Oechsel said they met a single woman who had insurance, but it would not cover temporary housing. She’d begun cleaning out the house, but still needs help. The team left contact

information and plans to follow up with emergency funds early next week.

“We met a wonderful man named Drew,” Oechsel said. “He lost his father early in his life, but was raised in the neighbourhood. He takes care of his elderly neighbours, mowing their grass and watching out for them. He asked us to go and see Mrs. Hamilton. He said he knew she needed to talk. We walked down the street and knocked on her door and were greeted by a lovely older woman. She cares for her husband who has Alzheimer’s and is bed bound. He is in hospice and she pays for a caregiver during the day and at night,” he said. “Mrs. Hamilton’s son came to help clean out so she can save her energy to care for her husband. She was very grateful for our visit promised she would call when she was ready for help.”

“We have some funds,” he said, “and I handed out a lot of cards with my phone number. Mostly, we spent the day listening to peoples’ experiences,” he added.

“I spoke to the former senior warden at Ascension Episcopal Church,” Oechsel said. “He and his brother were helping their father who is in his 80s and has Alzheimer’s.” The man has

lived in his home for nearly 60 years and it was completely flooded.

“It’s important that we are present,” Oechsel said. “Our spiritual care team is there to listen to people, to pray with them, assess their needs, offer gift cards, water and chat.”

Oechsel plans to travel to Wimberley soon to work with the Diocese of West Texas and others to plan strategic long term response to the devastation. [Episcopal Relief & Development](#) has already granted \$15,000 for emergency relief for which Oechsel is very grateful. The Diocese of Texas also sent a donation to the Diocese of West Texas in relief aid for Central Texas and in Acuna, Mexico on the border with the Diocese of West Texas where a tornado killed 17 people over the weekend.

“We’ll sit down with the diocesan staff in West Texas to map out our resources for long term recovery once the first wave of cleanup has taken place,” he said. Most of the homes destroyed in Wimberley were likely to be insured.

That is not the case to the south in San Marcos. “If we begin a major rebuilding effort, it may focus on the San Marcos area, but we will know more in a few weeks,” he said.

West Texas Bishop Gary Lillibridge last week [wrote to his diocese about those disasters](#).

The Diocese of Texas had several churches report minor damage, but no major flooding, although many parishioners are facing major rebuilding once the storms are past. Many cars were flooded as well.

The Rev. Gena Davis, rector of Grace Episcopal Church, Houston, had more than two feet of water in her home and lost two cars. Much of her extensive library was lost to water damage, although she was able to find her treasured icons in time to dry them off and save them from permanent damage.

Her husband Gary worked for three years overseeing the rebuilding efforts in Galveston following Hurricane Ike and now finds it strange to be on the receiving end of the flooding. "I remember comforting people who were very upset at having lost everything," he said. "I still can't take this all in," he added, looking around at the piles of furniture and household items hauled to the curb from their home.

Davis said she ignored the numerous alerts from her cell phone the night of the flood and it wasn't until she realized the car's alarm was going off



that she got out of bed to check. It was then she stepped into several inches of water, “that just continued to rise.”

Texas hopes for a drying out period in the coming days and many consider that the drought the state has suffered for the past several years might not look so bad.

## Media digest

### **Fears over 'trafficking' of irish children to the US**

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/special-investigation-fears-over-trafficking-of-children-to-the-us-334315.html>

### **Matthew Parris: A gay atheist's challenge to the Church**

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/matthew.parris.a.gay.atheists.challenge.to.the.church/55193.htm>

### **Primate Calls For Pastoral Care To Gay Community**

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/primate-calls-for-pastoral-care-to-gay-community-1459199>

## Guard

Guardian journalist Andrew Brown writes about Stephen Hawking's restated position on assisted suicide and says we shouldn't focus on assisted dying but rather help others find value in life  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/assisted-dying-stephen-hawking-help-others-find-value-life>

## **Times**

Letters opposing and supporting a change in the law on assisted suicide including a letter from Professor Peter Davies of Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital who warns 'a change in the law would not be a slippery slope but a precipice over which we would jump.'  
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/letters/article4459570.ece>

## **Tel**

Report which says Tony Blair has been accused of trying to 'erase' his role from history after an article published on his charitable foundation's website about the rise of Isis made 'little mention' of Britain's role in the Iraq war. The background article entitled "What is Isis?" was written by Peter Welby, Archbishop Justin's son, and editorial manager of the faith foundation, the newspaper reports. A spokesman for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation is quoted as saying the

piece is a widely read and from the foundation's online resource Religion and Geopolitics.

The spokesman tells the newspaper: "You are wrong in your assertion that it doesn't look at events following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In fact just under one third of the piece does exactly that."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/tony-blair/11649854/Tony-Blair-accused-of-trying-to-erase-his-role-in-rise-of-Isil.html>

### **BBC Online**

Report on the launch of a £1 million fund to aid social justice in Lincolnshire by the Bishop of Lincoln, Christopher Lowson. Bishop Christopher is quoted as saying the money will help tackle a wide range of issues in local communities.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-32956760>

### **BBC Online**

Report on how a 200ft (60m) deep sinkhole which opened up above an old lead mine is close to being filled in, 10 months after it first appeared. The crater appeared metres from the home of landowner John Hensby in Cowshill, County Durham. The Church Commissioners, responsible for the mine, are quoted as saying

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

the hole was in the final stages of repair with Mr Hensby saying a 'remarkable' job had been done.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-32981983>

## **Times**

Report on how Pope Francis is offering to take 120 tramps to the north of Italy for a sneak preview of the Turin shroud. He has paid for a first coach load of vagrants to set off from Rome next Wednesday to see the shroud, the Times reports.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/europe/article4459478.ece>