



New Presbyterian church officially opened in Mullingar

Supported by four members of the congregation, and before invited guests from other local churches, civic dignitaries and political representatives, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbytery Church in Ireland, the Right Reverend Dr. Michael Barry conducted the act of dedication and then preached a message from Isaiah 54 verse 2: 'Do not hold

back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.'

"This is an exciting new beginning for Mullingar, not only for our own church, but for all God's people in the area and I am delighted to be here to see first hand a vibrant and growing congregation. I pray that God will bless the Church here and the work that they are doing for Him and the community as they move forward into 2015 and beyond.



"The need for this new building is clearly demonstrated as I am told that the congregation is now the largest it has been in nearly 200

years, since the first Presbyterian Church opened in the 1820s,” Dr. Barry said.

“This badly needed new building provides even greater opportunities for reaching those who don’t know Christ and His message, and better facilities for the congregation itself and the work that they do throughout the week and not just on a Sunday.”

There has been a Presbyterian congregation in Mullingar since 1821. Ordained in 2002 as Minister of Corboy and Mullingar, the Reverend Stephen Lockington said that there was absolutely no thought given to a new building back then, as the congregation had been in steady decline for many years.

“By the end of the 1990s the church was down to 10 or 11 people. The last baptism had taken place in the mid 1980s, so there was certainly no talk at that time, for obvious reasons, of the need for a new church. But I thank God for how He turned things around and for where we are today with a congregation approaching 100 and the official opening of our new building,” Rev. Lockington said.

With more people coming to church of all ages and backgrounds, the congregation outgrew the

old building. Services took place in both the Christian Brothers National School and the Educate Together National School until the new multi-purpose building had been built on the former green field site at Rathgowan.

The last service at the old Presbyterian Church on Castle Street took place in April 2012. Knox and Markwell Architects designed the new church which was built by local firm, Rathcorbally Construction. The first service in the new church took place in December 2014.

“From our last service in the old church to today it has been two and a half years and quite a journey. The new church cost €1.35 million and I want to publically thank everyone for their outstanding generosity. This includes both individuals and groups within the wider Presbyterian family and the local community, all of which has enabled us in continuing to serve God in this part of Ireland,” Rev. Lockington said.

Irish Catholic bishops appeal for `No` in gay marriage referendum

The [Roman Catholic Church](#) in [Ireland](#) on Tuesday appealed for a "No" vote in May's

historic [referendum](#) in the predominantly Catholic nation for a constitutional amendment to allow same-sex marriage.

Ireland's Catholic Bishops' Conference said in a statement ahead of the May 22 vote: "Marriage is important, reflect before you change it."

"We are concerned that, should the amendment be passed, it will become increasingly difficult to speak any longer in public about marriage as being between a man and a woman," they said.

Polls indicate that Ireland will vote for gay marriage but they also show that many "Yes" voters have reservations which could narrow that lead.

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has waned in the wake of a series of child sex abuse scandals, but 84.2 percent of the population still identified as Catholic in the 2011 census.

The head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop Eamonn Martin said bishops respected the views of people who think differently but also said it was important that their views are heard and respected as well.

"We should try to respect the views of people who think differently to us and also, we trust, that our sincerely held views which are grounded in faith will also be heard and respected," he told RTE radio.

Prime Minister Enda Kenny, who called the referendum, said the vote "sets out our image of a very tolerant and inclusive Ireland."

"This is about the tolerance and respect and understanding and sensitivity," he said last month.

Christian Today

Catholic bishop compares homosexuality to Down's Syndrome

www.christiantoday.com/article/catholic.bishop.compares.homosexuality.to.downs.syndrome/49668.htm

The Journal

Bishop says gay couples with children are not parents

www.thejournal.ie/kevin-doran-gay-parents-1981026-Mar2015?utm_source=twitter_self

Fr Iggy O'Donovan calls for Yes vote in marriage referendum

Priest says stance of bishops, Iona Institute and fundamentalists damaging church

Irish Times - A Catholic priest has called for a Yes vote in the marriage equality referendum in May on the grounds of “respect for the freedom of others who differ from us”. Limerick-based Augustinian priest Fr Iggy O’Donovan, writing in today’s Irish Times, recalls the gospel passage where Jesus “tells us to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”.

When people vote, “we are giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s. In a democracy, Caesar is the people”. Churches, he says, “have views, ideals and laws about the family, and they quite properly teach their members about those views. . . But when we become legislators, as we do when we vote in referendums, we legislate as citizens for all our fellow citizens.”

He says: “It is possible to have deep and passionately-held convictions without seeking to have those convictions imposed by the State on fellow citizens who do not share them”.

He concludes that “respect for the freedom of others who differ from us is part and parcel of the faith we profess. For these and for other reasons I will be voting Yes”.

Fr [Brendan Hoban](#), of the Association of Catholic Priests, had asked recently whether

“the bishops, Iona [Institute] and the hardline fundamentalists [had] any idea of the damage they’re doing to the church” by their stance on the referendum.

“A positive result for ‘Catholic’ forces [a No vote in the referendum] could do huge damage to the Irish [Catholic Church](#), ” he said. “Can someone in authority not say that Catholics follow their own teaching but that legislators have to legislate?”

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/fr-iggy-o-donovan-calls-for-yes-vote-in-marriage-referendum-1.2132636>

"Seismic shift" required to equip all Anglicans as evangelists - Abp Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has set out his vision for a Church in which every Christian shares "the revolutionary love" of Jesus Christ.

In the inaugural Lambeth Lecture, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby focused on the third of the priorities he announced on taking up his ministry two years ago: evangelism and witness.



"The best decision anyone can ever make is to be a follower of Jesus Christ." Archbishop Justin Welby, Lambeth Palace, 5 March 2015.

He described evangelism as “the Good News of the coming of Jesus Christ into this dark world... not simply [good news] because without this light we are in the dark, but also because it comes to us unwarranted, unsought, without our initiation.”

The Archbishop stressed that he had a “particular passion, priority and focus” to root evangelism in the life and witness of the local church and most specifically in the life and witness of every Christian, “not only the professionals”.

“In fact all we endeavour to do is done with the intention that we serve and enable the lives of every follower of Jesus to be faithful witnesses to the transforming love of God,” he said.

“I am under no illusion as to the seismic shift that needs to take place in order for this to happen. But a seismic shift is what we need. For this country will not know of the revolutionary love of Christ by church structures or clergy, but by the witness of every single Christian.”

The Lambeth Lectures series of talks will feature guest speakers addressing key issues for the Church.

Text of lecture here -

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5515/archbishop-of-canterburys-lecture-on-evangelism>

Canon David Porter shares lessons learned about reconciliation

“Reconciliation is always a quest, always a journey,” observed Canon David. W. Porter, director of reconciliation for the Archbishop of Canterbury, as he addressed Episcopalians gathered for the annual assembly of the [Episcopal Urban Caucus](#) in late February.

The Episcopal Church in Connecticut hosted the two-day conference in Meriden. The Episcopal Urban Caucus is an association of lay and ordained Episcopalians dedicated to the cause of reconciliation, social justice and peace. Porter spoke at one of ten workshops that explored ways to end violence and promote reconciliation.



Belfast man, Canon David. W. Porter, is director of reconciliation for the Archbishop of Canterbury

Porter, formerly a peace-building practitioner in Northern Ireland, is a layperson and a Baptist who called himself a “strongly convinced Anabaptist, who would be a Mennonite if I lived in America.” Archbishop Justin Welby and Porter worked together when Porter was serving as the canon for reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral and Welby was the dean of Liverpool. Welby has made reconciliation a cornerstone of his episcopacy and hired Porter to his current position soon after being appointed archbishop. Porter said that he has one title but three jobs. His first task is to work within the Church of England to find a different way of engaging issues of deep difference, such as the ordination of women bishops. This particular issue moved forward in January of this year when the Rt. Rev. Libby Lane was [ordained and consecrated](#) as bishop suffragan of Stockton.

Efforts to ordain women to the episcopate in the Church of England helped define a model for what Porter called “the Archbishop’s vision of learning to disagree well.” Porter is now applying the model to the issue of human sexuality by organizing a series of “shared conversations” among clusters of diocese in 13 different locations, followed by the General Synod in 2016. He sees his role as helping to “take the toxicity out of the conversation.”

Porter's second job is to advise on healing divisions in the Anglican Communion. Welby, during his first year in office, visited 37 primates. While Welby was welcomed for those visits, the message has been "hospitality does not mean reconciliation" and there are many differences to be reconciled.

Porter and Connecticut Bishop Diocesan Ian Douglas together explained how the "bonds of affection" that developed between Anglican churches following British and American colonialism were no longer sufficient to hold the Anglican Communion together. Porter and Douglas agreed that common participation in God's mission, while not denying difference in contemporary post-colonial Anglicanism, offered a hopeful way forward.

Porter said his third task is the one he likes the most. The vast majority of the 85 million Anglicans around the world live in conflict situations and or in post-conflict situations, he said. In these contexts the questions become: "How do we help churches keep going? How do we keep churches from becoming part of the conflict and taking sides? And how can churches and their leaders become peace-builders and bridge-builders in their own right?"

To facilitate this work Porter draws on his experience in Northern Ireland.

Porter concluded his talk by summarizing six lessons about reconciliation that he has learned through those years. First, “it’s always political” and politics is the art of negotiating relationships that are often very personal. Since all conflicts are political, if the church is to be involved it has to be political.

Second, “bad religion trumps good.” When false religions use slogans and make tempting promises, people will believe and sign on every time. “We should not give up hope. We need to think differently about how we go about changing our world and challenging bad religion.”

Third, “we are all responsible.” Here Porter drew the distinction between being complicit and being culpable. Everyone who is aware of unreconciled situations is complicit, but only when we participate in the conflict do we become culpable.

Fourth, “history matters” and it is critical to keep a historical perspective. Relationships make all the difference, he explained several times, and

knowing the history of a relationship helps forge stronger ties.

Fifth, “peace offends [and] can violate our sense of justice,” he said. This is because in the name of reconciliation, justice may not be served. For him personally what mattered was “There is a belief that there is a world to come in which all will have to give an account to the living God, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. I may not see justice now but as Martin Luther King said, ‘The arc of the universe tends toward justice’ and that arc does not stop at death.”

Sixth, “reconciliation is elusive.” Porter said “Reconciliation is not a technique or a program. It’s a journey towards the kingdom, a journey into Christ, always a quest and always elusive.”

Rowan Williams hails parliamentary approval of UK aid Bill

Christian Aid Chair Rowan Williams on Monday praised Parliamentarians of all parties for coming together to pass a Bill which commits the UK to spend 0.7 per cent of its national income on aid.

Dr Williams said: “We have seen an impressive level of cross-party co-operation on this important Bill in recent months, with MPs and Peers from all major parties coming together to support it. Successive Governments deserve praise for raising UK support for the world’s poorest people to this level.”

Rowan Williams, who is a member of the House of Lords, added: “Giving aid is an extremely practical way of demonstrating our love for our neighbour in need. I have seen the vital difference that UK aid is making to the lives of some of the poorest people in the world.

“This law will make UK aid more predictable and more effective than ever. We also know that aid alone is not enough. Now this law is in place, we should continue to focus on tackling the root causes of poverty, such as climate change and tax dodging by multinational companies in the poorest countries in the world.”

The International Development Bill was today passed in the House of Lords and is set to become an Act over the coming days. MPs gave strong cross-party support for the legislation during two votes late in 2014 in the House of Commons.

The Bishop of Derby Alastair Redfern, who is the Church of England's lead Bishop on International Development, also welcomed the passage of the Bill and thanked everyone who has campaigned for it over many years.

“The passing of this Bill through Parliament today is the culmination of literally decades of campaigning by churchgoers across the country,” he said.

“They have been motivated by their faith to campaign on behalf of the poorest people in our world and they see this as fundamentally an issue of justice. I hope that everyone who has been involved in this campaign feels very proud today.

“UK aid does a huge amount of good for the poorest people right across the world. From helping them to recover from disaster to fighting corruption, preventing disease and providing education, UK aid changes millions of lives every year.”

* Christian Aid <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/index.aspx>

Media digest

Irish Times

Louth man claims he was raped by IRA member

www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/louth-man-claims-he-was-raped-by-ira-member-1.2133408?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ira-man-raped-me-in-my-own-home-and-sinn-fein-helped-cover-it-up-31053829.html

The Journal

‘Spectacular’: Sinn Féin accused of trying to distract from IRA abuse claims

www.thejournal.ie/abuse-sinn-fein-ira-paudie-mcgahon-spotlight-1982875-Mar2015?utm_source=twitter_self

News Letter

Sinn Fein seems to have little interest in a stable Province

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/sinn-fein-seems-to-have-little-interest-in-a-stable-province-1-6623081>

Last-minute Sinn Fein U-turn as party blocks welfare reform

www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/last-minute-sinn-fein-u-turn-as-party-blocks-welfare-reform-1-6621877

Irish Times

Slapping ban would split parents, campaigners and legislators

www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/slapping-ban-would-split-parents-campaigners-and-legislators-1.2132659?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Guard

Report that Conservative MPs have been accused of blocking a parliamentary committee's attempt to scrutinise the former HSBC boss and minister Stephen Green over the tax scandal. It states a proposal put forward by a Labour MP to call the bank's former chief executive before the public accounts committee (PAC) has been voted down. Green, it says, is an ordained minister of the Church of England and left HSBC with a £19m pension pot. He joined the board in 1998, when he was given responsibility for overseeing private banking and other operations.

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/mar/09/hsbc-tory-mps-accused-of-blocking-watchdogs-bid-to-question-green>

Guard/Times/BBC

Further reports on more free schools being approved by the government creating more than 230,000 places across the country. They state for the Christian faith, there is a new Church of England primary in Tonbridge, Kent; the Runnymede school

with a Christian ethos in Chertsey, Surrey, and a Church of England secondary school in Swindon. BBC looks at what makes a 'free school'.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/09/david-cameron-faith-schools-academies>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/education/article4377410.ece>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/education-13266290>

Mirror

Report into how people with mental health problems are suffering, says research published by the Methodist Church last month showed people who receive the sickness and disability benefit

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) because of a long-term mental health problem are being sanctioned at a rate of more than 100 per day.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/urgent-inquiry-needed-impact-100k-5300120>

Mirror

Article on the real meaning of Easter answering questions on why the dates move and why we have easter eggs, as well as looking at the Christian celebration.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/easter-2015-details-dates-bank-5299565>

BBC

Report on the restoration of what is claimed to be the "world's largest tapestry" in Coventry Cathedral. It states the tapestry of Christ in Glory, by Graham Sutherland, has hung in Coventry's cathedral since the building was consecrated in 1962. The £100,000 restoration is likely to take about a month, according to cathedral staff.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-31794079>

Mail

Article on places used for film locations says the 900-year-old Lincoln Cathedral served as a pivotal filming location for the 2006 film, The Da Vinci Code. And it was believed Lincoln Cathedral generated a substantial amount of extra revenue from extra the visitors. It says the cloisters, as well as the cathedral's chapter house, stood in for London's Westminster Abbey and it is estimated that the church, which

costs £3 million per year to run, received £250,000 in return for filming.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel_news/article-2985277/Inside-real-life-locations-famous-Britain-s-biggest-blockbusters.html#ixzz3TxclsbqY

Mail

Article on the funeral and burial of Britain's tallest man. It says Christopher Greener who was 7ft 6 tall had to be buried in a double plot of land, which is normally reserved for two people, at his parish church in Hayes, near Bromley, Kent.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2986537/Former-Britain-s-tallest-man-grew-7ft-6in-buried-huge-bespoke-coffin-funeral-attended-members-Tall-Club-Great-Britain.html#ixzz3TxfBEUCU>

Mail

Article on surprise wedding organized by couple who invited friends on a walk in wellies and ended up taking them all to a tiny chapel in Netherex, Devon, where they were greeted by a vicar who married them.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2986233/Couple-plot-secret-wedding-tie-knot-wearing-wellies-tricking-family-friends-going-morning-ramble.html#ixzz3Txg30WGF>

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Tel

Article on how TV Masterchef's Monica Galetti unwinds and spends her perfect weekend. She says the family tries to go to church on Sunday mornings, saying, "It's an adorable, tiny and very friendly church and is just across the road, but sometimes there's so much packed into a Sunday that we don't get the chance."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/11454685/My-perfect-weekend-how-Masterchefs-Monica-Galetti-unwinds.html>