



Terry Waite to address ‘Faithful Peacebuilding’ conference in Templepatrick

The Irish Churches’ Peace Project (ICPP) is hosting a two-day international conference this Thursday and Friday entitled ‘Faithful Peacebuilding’.

The keynote speakers are - Mr Terry Waite CBE,
Dr Jörg Lüer, Rev Emmanuel Murangira

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The conference at the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick, will be opened by Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry and chair of the Irish Churches' Peace Project, together with Rev Dr Donald Watts, representing the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Speaking ahead of the conference Bishop McKeown stated: "Since the launch of the Irish Churches' Peace Project in 2013, this initiative has energised our local church communities and brought to the fore strong examples of best practice in the contribution of churches to the vital work of promoting reconciliation and addressing remaining obstacles to peace in Northern Ireland. This conference provides a valuable to opportunity to reflect on that learning, and to challenge ourselves on the basis of the international experience and insights offered by our distinguished keynote speakers."

In attendance will be Church leaders including Archbishop Richard Clarke, Church of Ireland, Bishop Donal McKeown (representing Archbishop Eamon Martin), Catholic Church, Rev Peter Murray, Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev Michael Barry, Presbyterian Church in Ireland and 150 participants from across Northern Ireland who are currently taking part in the work of the Irish Churches' Peace Project.

The three main sessions consist of international perspectives on peace-building and reconciliation, followed by discussion of the learning in the context of the work of ICPP.

1. Personal and Corporate Journeys in

Reconciliation, 26 March at 7.00pm.

Rev. Emmanuel Murangira will speak about his experience of peace-building work with Church-based organisations in Rwanda. A Rwandan refugee, born in Burundi, Rev Murangira was born in a refugee camp and his family experienced displacement several times throughout the course of his childhood. He now works with Tearfund on issues of development and reconciliation in Rwanda and Burundi.

2. The Role of the Churches in Healing Historic Divisions, 27 March at 9.45am.

Dr Jörg Lüer will outline lessons from the experience of the German-Polish reconciliation, initiated with the Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers (1965). Dr Lüer is Secretary to the Justice and Peace Commission of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference and Executive Secretary of the Maximilian Kolbe Foundation, an international peace-building NGO established by the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Poland and Germany.

3. Reconciliation – a Challenge to, and central calling for, the Churches, 27 March at 3.15pm.

This theme will be addressed by Mr Terry Waite CBE, hostage negotiator, humanitarian and author. Mr Waite will draw on his extensive experience as a diplomat and a humanitarian. He garnered international recognition in the 1980s when, serving as a special envoy to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he successfully negotiated the release of hostages in Iran and Libya. In 1987, while negotiating the release of hostages in Beirut, he himself was taken hostage. In captivity for 1,763 days (four years of which were in solitary confinement), he was chained to a wall, often left in darkness, beaten and subjected to mock executions.

The Irish Churches' Peace Project, launched in 2013, is an initiative of the island's four largest churches: Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist; and the ICPP. The ICPP seeks to promote reconciliation in our communities through the Churches working together for the transformation of Northern Ireland and the Border Region. The ICPP vision is to build a peaceful and stable society, with a better and shared future. The project will run until 2015.



Gerry Adams should have told the IRA to admit and apologise for Andrew Kearney's death, said his sister

Ex-Provo accuses Sinn Fein of covering up priest's abuse

A former leading IRA man, who was a security chief for X Factor boss, Simon Cowell has accused Sinn Fein of helping to cover up the sexual abuse of "hundreds" of schoolboys by a now-deceased priest.

Independent - Brendan Curran, a former Irish Army-trained sniper - who was jailed aged 18 in 1973 for 15 years for attempting to murder a British soldier - made the sensational claims as

he announced his resignation from Newry and Mourne District Council at a meeting last week.

Mr Curran said he was prevented 10 years ago from exposing the allegations by a leading well-known Sinn Fein figure.

Speaking to the Sunday Independent after the tumultuous council meeting, Mr Curran said: "This priest is dead now, but he was in every school in the Newry area for years and abused children in every one of them. People have been coming forward."

"I raised it with the Republican movement 10 years ago and was told to drop it; it was a negative story, to drop it; it was a negative issue."

Mr Curran added: "The leadership was aware of this being raised."

Mr Curran's fellow councillors were completely taken aback by his bombshell statement.

Witnesses told the Sunday Independent that rival SDLP and Unionist politicians applauded Mr Curran after he finished speaking.

Local UKIP councillor, Henry Reilly, wrote on his Facebook page minutes after the meeting:

"Absolutely incredible scenes in the Council Chamber tonight - Cllr Brendan Curran announced his resignation and made very damaging allegations against former Sinn Fein colleagues. He alleged that he had advised Sinn Fein of a paedophile priest who had abused 100's of children in Newry and was instructed not to disclose this information. He alleged that local republicans referred to murdered Mum of 10 Jean McConville as an executed Tout. It was an extraordinary event and the allegations will be very damaging for Sinn Fein."

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/exprovo-accuses-sinn-fein-of-covering-up-priests-abuse-31085419.html>

Apologise over IRA shooting, victim's sister tells Adams

Gerry Adams is facing calls to apologise to the sister of a man who died after an IRA punishment attack.

Andrew Kearney, from west Belfast, bled to death after he was shot three times in the leg in 1998. He stepped in to protect a young man involved in a bar brawl and took on republicans.

His sister Eleanor King told RTE she met Mr Adams. Above The Law was broadcast yesterday, Monday, on RTE One

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/apologise-over-ira-shooting-victim-s-sister-tells-adams-1-6648187>

Irish woman claims priest got her pregnant during affair which began on pilgrimage

The alleged couple are reported to have met on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje.

Independent/Belfast Telegraph - A priest accused of defying his vow of celibacy to have an affair with a woman who became pregnant was forced to cancel a talk to parishioners about marriage just days before the scandal became public.

The 49-year-old businesswoman at the centre of the storm, known only as 'Linda', claimed she got pregnant by Fr Ciaran Dallat (51) before she

miscarried at five weeks.



Fr Ciaran Dallat

The woman claimed that Fr Dallat, an assistant priest at St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast, slept with her three or four times a week during the relationship, which began in September 2012 and lasted until April 2014.

During that time, the woman said she showered the priest with gifts worth almost €30,000. They included a two-week Nordic cruise that cost €5,000; meals at exclusive restaurants; designer clothes and top-of-the-range furnishings for his apartment near St Peter's Cathedral, in the heart of one of west Belfast's most deprived communities.

Linda claimed the affair only ended in April last year - two weeks after her mother died.

She said Fr Dallat told her how a "voice from God" said he could not continue to see her.

The previous year, Linda said Fr Dallat sent her a Valentine's Day card in which he wrote: "Words will never convey the love I have for you - thank you for all the love."

She believed he would leave the priesthood to continue their relationship - but it never happened.

In a twist of fate, Fr Dallat was due to talk about the sanctity of marriage on Sunday, March 15 at St Peter's. But it was dramatically postponed on the parish bulletin as news of the scandal began to emerge.

A hint of what was to come followed later in the day in a radio broadcast of St Peter's morning service. Listeners were told: "The church contains both saints and sinners, but we believe each is equally loved by God."

Linda said she recently told the Bishop of Down and Connor, Noel Treanor, about the allegations and told him she wanted the priest moved out of Belfast.

She also asked for her €27,570 to be returned so she could give it to charity - but feeling fobbed off by the Church she made her claims public. Linda told the Sunday Life: "He groomed me, he preyed on me and then he betrayed me."

She said Fr Dallat first took an interest in her when she was on a pilgrimage in Italy and later told her: "I have waited my whole life for someone like you."

Linda claimed they first slept together two months later during a trip to the holy site of Medjugorje. She claimed the clergyman arrived at her room and demanded: "Take your clothes off."

She added: "The cruellest thing Fr Dallat did was leave me two weeks after my mother died. He told me that he had heard a voice from God

telling him that he could not continue the relationship with me.

"But then bouquets of flowers and cards from him started appearing outside my door late at night. On one occasion he asked me: 'Do you want me to resign from the priesthood?'. "

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/irish-woman-claims-priest-got-her-pregnant-during-affair-which-began-on-pilgrimage-31087208.html>

Church refuses to comment on reports priest has been suspended after woman's affair claims

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/church-refuses-to-comment-on-reports-priest-has-been-suspended-after-womans-affair-claims-31086595.html>

Church rocked by claim that Belfast priest got parishioner pregnant -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/church-rocked-by-claim-that-belfast-priest-got-parishioner-pregnant-31086721.html>

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'Opt-out' clause is rejected by same-sex campaign



A call by the Archbishop of Dublin for a "conscience clause" on same-sex marriage has been rejected by those campaigning for a Yes vote in the referendum on May 22.

Independent - Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has called on the Government to allow for an opt-out on grounds of religious belief for businesses which do not want to provide goods or services for gay wedding celebrations. The call followed recent controversy over a Drogheda-based firm which said it would not print gay wedding

invitations because it was against their staff's religious beliefs.

The Archbishop pointed to a clause in the general summary of the Marriage Bill 2015, which was published by Justice Minister, Frances Fitzgerald, earlier this month. This allows ministers of all key religions, who are providing marriage ceremonies recognised in civil law, to refuse to conduct a gay marriage.

Dr Martin said this "conscience clause" recognised freedom of religion and conscience which was one of the most fundamental of all human rights. He said respect for freedom of conscience was a way to show respect for citizens.

But the "conscience clause" was rejected by Yes campaigners who called it a "licence to discriminate". The group Yes Equality argued that a similar clause had been previously suggested when civil partnership legislation was discussed in the Dáil in 2010.

"The issue was discussed at length in the Dáil and Seanad and entirely dismissed," Mark Kelly of Yes Equality said.

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/optout-clause-is-rejected-by-samesex-campaign-31086756.html>

Amnesty launches Yes campaign for gay marriage vote

Yes voters cannot be taken for granted, warns former minister Pat Carey

Irish Times - [Amnesty International](#) has launched its campaign for a Yes vote in the referendum on marriage equality.

The referendum on whether to allow marriage between gay couples takes place on Friday, May 22nd.

Former government minister [Pat Carey](#) described the referendum as unique in Ireland, because “it is an exercise in civic engagement which has not been tried before”.

Mr Carey, who recently came out as gay, said the Constitutional Convention had recommended a referendum on marriage equality.

“The Government and Oireachtas adopted that and it is now over to the people of Ireland to

make their judgment on what I believe has the potential to be a watershed moment in Ireland.”

But he warned that Yes voters could not be taken for granted and “many of them may still need to be reassured”

... Speaking at the campaign launch outside the GPO, executive director of Amnesty International Ireland Colm O’Gorman said Ireland would be the first country to put this proposition to a popular vote by referendum.

He said the referendum date would be historic because “it is a day when we all, as Irish people, have a chance to stand for a Republic of equals, a day when we can more fully realise equality for all of our people”.

It was fitting to have the campaign launch at the GPO, he added. “Here, almost a century ago, those who proclaimed our Republic asserted that Ireland would value and cherish all of its people equally.

More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/amnesty-launches-yes-campaign-for-gay-marriage-vote-1.2148891>

Poll shows overwhelming support for 'gay cake' row bakery



Ashers Baking Company general manager, Daniel McArthur

A sizeable majority of people in Northern Ireland believe the Equality Commission (ECNI) is wrong to prosecute a Christian-owned bakery over what has become known as the 'gay cake' row.

News Letter - The ComRes poll measured opinion among 1,000 adults in Northern Ireland. It showed that only 27 per cent of adults in the Province believe it is right for the ECNI to take

Ashers Baking Company to court, while 71 per cent disagree.

The survey was carried out on behalf of the Christian Institute which is backing Ashers bakery in a court action being heard in Belfast later this week.

Ninety per cent of those polled also believe equality laws should not be used to force people to say something they oppose.

Ashers was threatened with legal action last July after refusing to bake a cake with the slogan 'support gay marriage' - and notified of the ECNI decision to prosecute in November after the bakery's general manager Daniel McArthur confirmed there would be no reversal of the original decision.

Mr McArthur has repeatedly stated that the cake order was declined because it promoted same-sex marriage and not because the customer was gay.

He also said the order would have been refused regardless of the customer's sexuality, simply because the slogan clashed with the owner's deeply held religious convictions.

In the past, Ashers has declined orders for cake designs incorporating nudity or foul language.

The new survey, examining attitudes towards free speech, showed that 79 per cent believe a Muslim printer should not be prosecuted for refusing to print cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, eight in 10 (82 per cent) believe an atheist web designer should not be forced by the courts to design a website promoting the view that God made the world in six days, and almost three-quarters (74 per cent) believe a printing company run by Roman Catholics should not be forced to produce adverts calling for the legalisation of abortion.

A recent UK-wide poll revealed 60 per cent of British adults think the publicly-funded ECNI court action against Ashers court action is “disproportionately heavy-handed”.

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/poll-shows-overwhelming-support-for-gay-cake-row-bakery-1-6648303>

Cake gate - a view from Australia

SBS - In response, the Equal Opportunity Commission of Northern **Ireland** brought a

civil ... For many people, **religious** beliefs are part of their everyday life.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/03/13/cakegate-story-clash-religious-freedom-and-gay-rights>

Roads to be blessed in west as deaths on the rise



Roads in the west are to be blessed as the road death toll there continues to rise

Roads are to be blessed in an attempt to reduce the carnage caused by traffic accidents.

Independent - The move by Catholic and Protestant clerics in the west of Ireland follows confirmation by gardai that road deaths in the region have risen in recent years, while figures for fatalities nationally have been falling.

Speeding in 80kmh and 100kmh zones had been identified as a major factor in road fatalities in the West.

The special 'Blessing of the Roads Ceremony' will take place at services in most Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes in Co Mayo on Easter Sunday, as religious leaders back the local county council's campaign to make the roads safer.

"The Blessing of the Roads Ceremony takes places in parts of Australia each year to raise local awareness of road safety, and we are bringing it to Mayo this year," said Noel Gibbons, Road Safety Officer with Mayo County Council.

Reverend Val Rogers of Westport said the trauma of road crashes for families was devastating.

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/roads-to-be-blessed-in-west-as-deaths-on-the-rise-31086764.html>

**Jesus, Judas and even the donkey
are rehearsing for Ballylinan's
passion play**



Rehearsal for the passion play in Ballylinan, Co Laois.

Almost 200 people involved in staging mammoth three-hour production of the Easter story in the Co Laois village, which runs from Friday 27th until Good Friday

Irish Times - Jesus reads his lines on his daily commute from Laois to Dublin. Mary Magdalene's day job is organising the [National Ploughing Championships](#). And every second male in [Ballylinan](#) is sporting a bushy beard. It's all part of the preparations for the mammoth passion play which is staged by a small community in Co Laois every few years.

The three-hour retelling of the Easter story, starting with Jesus arriving in Jerusalem and ending with his resurrection, has been sold out whenever it has been staged. The latest run will

open on Friday, March 27th, and the crown of thorns is primed for action.

Anna Marie McHugh, who plays [Mary Magdalene](#), says this is the sixth time the people of Ballylinan and surrounding areas have staged the production. Its last run was in 2010 to sell-out audiences, and even more locals are involved this time. “We’ve nearly 200 people involved, between cast and crew, ranging in age from four to over 80,” she says.

“Over half the cast is under 40, which is amazing. They’ve been coming to rehearsals two nights a week since before Christmas and now it’s stepped up to three nights a week. Even Molly the donkey attends the rehearsals and is now adroit at entering and leaving the stage, thanks to some tasty bribes.”

More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/jesus-judas-and-even-the-donkey-are-rehearsing-for-ballylinan-s-passion-play-1.2149165>

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