



Major report on recent difficulties in Down and Dromore diocese published

Following problems which arose in St Matthias, Knocknamuckley, the Bishop of Down and Dromore the Rt Revd Harold Miller, in June 2015 appointed a theological working group to examine the theology of the Royal Black

Institution and the theology of Bethel Church, Redding, California. The Theological Working Group has completed its work and the report was released yesterday, 1 May 2016.

The report examines the theology of the Royal Black Institution and the theology of Bethel Church, Redding, California. It also looks at how far either group is consistent with or divergent from the Church of Ireland.

Bishop Miller said:

“I welcome the publication of this theological report and express my sincere thanks to the Working Group chaired by Canon Dr Christina Baxter. I would also like to thank all those who assisted them.

“This is a fair and balanced report and I would encourage all to read it with openness and thoughtfulness. I trust it will be of help to people in finding a theological perspective and in understanding the groups concerned more fully.

“I am looking closely at the report’s recommendations and I hope to meet with people from the Royal Black Institution, St Matthias’ Church and Hope Community Church, Craigavon.

Take Five!



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of the Protestant Faith

“My hope and prayer is that people would see the report as helpful in facilitating biblical thinking and will approach it in a spirit of graciousness and peace.”

The Working Group’s concluding paragraph states - TWG has expressed some major reservations about the RBI which were voiced to it, or have already been published, or which TWG itself wishes to underline. It recognises that these concerns are based on differing kinds of evidence, some oral, some documented. Since the RBI inhabits the same geographic space as the Diocese

of Down and Dromore, TWG believes that the kind of dialogue, as suggested by Canon Ian Ellis (and others) could be helpful: “While the churches in recent times have had occasional meetings with the loyal orders, a more sustained and in-depth dialogue is now required.”

“Such an idea was drawn to our attention by the RBI official delegation who expressed their willingness to participate. It might well be helpful as the RBI has already indicated that it listens and changes its practices in the light of critiques. “

The Working Group also records concerns about models and practices of church life elsewhere which may be ‘coped’ in some C of I congregations, and it recommends that the diocese examines implications in respect of certain aspects of ministries to the sick and others.

CNI comment - Some readers of the report may conclude, and perhaps with some justification, that the Working Groups findings and recommendations could readily be applied to other dioceses and situations in the C of I.

The membership of The Theological Working Group was:

Canon Dr Christina Baxter, formerly Chair of the House of Laity in the Church of England, and sometime Principal of St John's Theological College, Nottingham.

Dr David Shepherd, Assistant Professor in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Trinity College Dublin. Formerly Principal of Belfast Bible College. Member of Kill O' the Grange Parish.

Canon Dr Heather Morris, Home Missions Secretary, Methodist Church in Ireland, and former President of the Methodist Church.

The Revd John Dinnen, formerly Dean of Down. The group was served by Mrs Jan Peach as secretary

[Download the report as a PDF here.](#)

Filling Station worship in Ballymoney

People from five different churches in Ballymoney came together to worship in St

Patrick's Parish's Old School House on
Wednesday April 27.

For the past year, St Patrick's has been hosting The Filling Station, a monthly worship meeting in the renovated building.

The Filling Station in Ballymoney is the only one in Ireland, but Filling Station meetings take place in many cities, towns and villages in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as in the USA, Canada, France and Switzerland.

The [Filling Station website](#) states: "Using monthly mid-week evening 'celebration' meetings held in non-church venues we have seen Christian communities grow in depth and numbers where a Filling Station has been opened. The Filling Station offers high quality speakers and teachers, contemporary sung worship and powerful, accessible prayer ministry.

"Our meetings are designed to be overtly spiritual but presented in a manner that those outside the church would feel comfortable. Meetings are held monthly and aim to be short, sharp and focused in character. We find many people meet God through these meetings and faith is built up. Many church leaders find them an excellent additional ministry tool."

The rector of Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin, the Rev Andrew Sweeney, introduced The Filling Station soon after the official opening of the renovated School House (St Patrick's Day 2015), and it has been attracting around 100 people from different churches in the town each month.

There is always a guest speaker. In April it was the Rev Simon Genoe, vicar of Lisburn Cathedral. Previous speakers have included the Rev Barry Forde, Queen's University Chaplain; Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, south Belfast; and Bishop Ken Clarke, Director of SAMS, the South American Mission Society.

There is contemporary worship – at the April meeting this was led by Ian Hanna, a former Director of Music at St Patrick's, Coleraine. A local parishioner gave his testimony, and as the meeting closed people came forward for personal prayer.

Andrew said The Filling Station had proved very successful in its first year. "It has been a very special part of bringing renewal to this town," he added.

The Filling Station is held on a Wednesday night, once a month, in the Old School House, beginning with refreshments at 7.30pm and finishing around 9pm. Everyone is very welcome.

Irish clergy to staff Serbian Biblical training conferences



Down and Dromore, Canon Ian Berry from Clogher diocese and Revd Sean Martin from Leadership Resources (USA), will be travelling to Serbia to take part in a Crosslinks School of Biblical Training (SBT).

SBTs are short conferences that help equip church leaders to teach God's Word clearly and faithfully. SBT trainers, who are experienced in expository ministry, cover the basic principles of

Bible teaching. The schools are repeated regularly so that trainers can build relationships with participants and develop knowledge of their culture. The SBT in Serbia was developed through Crosslinks Mission Partners Chris and Lotta Strajnic and it takes place at the HUB Bible School outside Belgrade.

Once again the SBT will provide two training streams: Levels 1 and 2 look at Mark's Gospel and Philippians respectively. Level 1 deals with the basics of how to go from a passage in the Bible to a sermon while Level 2 teaches how to preach the Epistles and Philippians. This year a third level is offered to students who have already completed Levels 1 and 2 in previous years. Level 3 will study Exodus and help students have confidence to preach the Old Testament. All the talks are delivered through a translator.

Crosslinks is thankful that this is the sixth Serbian SBT and that this valuable training has been made available to nearly 200 church leaders. Please pray for the teams, their families and the participants of this year's conference.

500 Transition Year students at RDS faith gathering

The RDS Concert Hall in Dublin recently hosted a gathering of more than 500 Transition Year students and 1st Year A Level students from all over the island of Ireland.

They were joined by teachers, chaplains, priests, religious and volunteers, to celebrate the Extraordinary Jubilee of the Year of Mercy.

This year's event marked the third annual gathering of its kind.

The last two years were held at Knock Shrine in Co Mayo.

Schools all over the country were invited to send twelve students, accompanied by two members of staff.

Two speakers addressed them in the morning: Méabh Carlin and Richard Moore, who both gave personal testimonies.

Méabh is a native of Co Armagh. She described how she suffered horrific injuries to her pelvis, groin and legs, when knocked down at World Youth Day in Madrid in 2013.

The doctors feared that she would not live, and later, that she would never walk again, but she



Papal Nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown.

credits her belief in God to the fact that she recovered her ability to walk.

Richard Moore described how he was blinded by a plastic bullet fired by a British soldier in May 1972 when only ten years old, returning home from school in Derry.

The second youngest of ten children, his family had suffered a terrible tragedy only months earlier when Richard's uncle was shot dead during Bloody Sunday.

In spite of heartbreak, Richard's parents were devout Catholics and prayed for God's grace to help them.

Their faith, and witness, he explained, helped him to accept his blindness without anger or bitterness.

He has lived a full and happy life, setting up his own businesses, getting married and having children, meeting and befriending the soldier who blinded him, and in 1996, founding the charity 'Children in Crossfire'.

Richard's charity has raised tens of millions of pounds to help children in Africa, Asia and South America whose lives have been blighted by poverty.

At the RDS event, confession was available all day for any students who wished to avail of the sacrament.

The reverent and joyful atmosphere of the day was greatly enhanced by the singing of soprano Christine O'Flynn, accompanied by pianist Bethan Lee, both during Mass, and during the day.

After lunch, students were given a short address by Fr Dan Baragry CSsR about the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Fr Dan explained the history and meaning of Icons.

The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown, concelebrated Mass in the afternoon with Bishop Francis Duffy and seven priests.

Archbishop Brown spoke about the life and work of Derry native Sr Clare Crockett, who spent the last 14 years of her life serving God and the poor, and was killed in an earthquake in Ecuador earlier this month.

At the end of the day, each school was presented with YOUCATs, a candle, prayer books, miraculous medals, confession leaflets, rosary beads and sweets for the journey home.

New extension opened at C of I Rathdrum school

There was great rejoicing in Rathdrum last Friday (April 29) as the St Saviour's National School community celebrated the dedication and official opening of their new extension and PE hall. The ribbon was cut by Archbishop Michael Jackson and he and some of the pupils also planted an oak tree as link between the town's original No 2 School and the newly extended school. An oak tree was planted in the grounds of the original school in the town centre on the day it opened and it flourishes there to this day.



Joining the many parents, past and present, at this morning's official opening were local TDs, former Rectors of the parish and clergy from surrounding parishes, Principals of nearby schools and the architect and builder. Musical accompaniment was provided by the school orchestra led by James Dunne and there was a recorder recital as well as choral contributions from the children.

Opening proceedings, school Principal, Heather Lawson, paid tribute to the parents of St Saviour's who all helped with the various classroom moves associated with the extension and who helped get the building ready for the special day. She said St Saviour's had a long

history of being a family school and they were delighted to have pupils attending today whose parents had attended before them. Mrs Lawson stressed the importance of the school's link with the parish and said the Rector, the Revd Brian O'Reilly was a regular visitor and had been displaying his skills as a handyman prior to the opening.

In his address, the Archbishop said that often an official opening came with a sense of relief that the work had been completed. He said people gathered together the memories of how they got to this point and looked forward to what lay ahead. "At the heart of a development like this is a group of people who hold hope for the future. This is an act of faithfulness, faithfulness that this building will be used by future generations and trust that the work has been completed to the highest standard. It is also a conviction that we have a future where we are in the place where we have grown up. We have a commitment not simply to the past but also to the future," he commented.

The Archbishop added that schools could live out the phrase in the Proclamation that the nation shall cherish all children equally. "It is in a place like this that that vision is lived out day by day. The foundations for the future were laid for

all who will come to the school in the years ahead but he reminded the pupils, teachers and parents not to forget the present and to enjoy the new building now.

Prayers for gay and lesbian couples criticised by evangelicals

Evangelical Christian leaders have criticised as “a source of deep disquiet” new plans for prayers for gay and lesbian couples. Bishops in the Church in Wales have circulated a pastoral letter [“to all the faithful”](#) concerning gay and lesbian Christians.

Ruth Gledhill in Christian Today - It follows an 18-month consultation in Wales on whether it would be “appropriate” to acknowledge same sex unions in Church through a blessing or even marriage.

“Given that the civil law of the realm has now been changed to permit marriage of same sex couples, many see this as a natural next step,” says the letter.

It became clear that although a majority of members supported change, there was no consensus and any move to change would not

secure the two-thirds majority needed from the Church's governing body.

The bishops say that after the Primates' meeting in January, where "consequences" were imposed on the United States Episcopal Church for endorsing same-sex marriage, in Wales they do not feel they can support a move to change the discipline of the Church in Wales.

"Nor can we permit the celebration of public liturgies of blessing for same sex unions," the bishops say.

However they do go on to "offer prayers in response to the pastoral need of those gay and lesbian persons who are making profound commitments to friendship or partnership."

The [Evangelical Fellowship of the Church in Wales](#) said that to affirm same-sex partnerships by offering prayers to God for them can only be possible if one is already convinced that they are good things. "And that is just the question which the Church in Wales through its official decision-making body has not resolved."

The fellowship continued: "The announcement by the bishops of these forms of prayer must be a source of deep disquiet." The statement said:

"Disquieting, too, to any member of the Church in Wales who values its scriptural obedience, its adherence to Christian tradition, or its continued relationship to orthodox Christian bodies around the world."

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/prayers.for.gay.and.lesbian.couples.criticised.by.evangelicals/85070.htm>

Census of 4,000 congregations across Scotland next Sunday

Next month congregations in Scotland will be part of the most-detailed church census to have ever taken place in Scotland.

On the weekend of Sunday 8 May, more than 4,000 congregations across Scotland will record attendances at worship as well as complete details about how this compares to five years ago, along with what kind of outreach and charity programmes they participate in.

The 24-question survey will help provide an accurate picture of trends in 21st century Scotland, comparable with the Statistics for Mission profiles so churches can informatively focus their ministry and mission.

Supported by all of the mainstream Christian denominations, it is hoped that results will be available by April 2017. The exercise follows previous censuses in 1984, 1994 and 2002.

Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie, who has been involved in the census steering committee, said: "There have been various changes in churchgoing in recent years and it is important to find out how widespread these are in Scotland.

"It is a big study, measuring trends in churchgoing and exploring factors which are thought to lie behind some of the recent changes in churchgoing patterns.

"The results will be really important both nationally and locally, helping churches to plan strategically. Congregations will be able to identify issues specific to their area and develop appropriate strategies for evangelism and mission."

Cathedral and choral

The Music in Calary 2016 Series begins in **Calary church, Co. Wicklow**, on Thursday evening when the Espositio Quartet will perform works by Hayden, Esposito and Schubert. Ticket

information may be had at
derekneilson@eircom.net

The **Irish Church Music Association** holds its 47th **Summer School** from Wednesday, July 6 to Saturday, July 9, 2016 in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. The theme for Summer School 2016 is *God Full of Mercy*.

One of the presenters at Summer School 2016 will be **Tony Alonso**. Tony is one of the most prominent voices in contemporary liturgical music. His music reflects an understanding of the multicultural needs of the contemporary church as well as a commitment to strong ritual music. In addition to several published collections of liturgical music, Tony's music appears in compilations and hymnals throughout the world. Tony has shared his musical gifts as well as his love and knowledge of liturgy at conferences and events across North America and Europe. He is also the published author of several books and articles related to liturgy and liturgical music.

Tony holds a Bachelor of Music degree in choral conducting from Northwestern University and a Master of Arts degree in theology from Loyola

Marymount University. An emerging theologian, Tony is currently pursuing a PhD in the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where he is focusing on liturgical and ritual studies.

News briefs

On Saturday morning there was a gathering at **Powerscourt** graveyard, Enniskerry, to commemorate the 1916 patriot and trade unionist, Harry Nicholls. Organized by the trade union, IMPACT, the event will include a prayer service, wreath laying ceremony and 'a few words'.

Yesterday in **St Mary's cathedral, Tuam**, there were installations to the cathedral chapters of St Mary, Tuam, and St Patrick, Killala. The Revd Stan Evans was installed as Provost of Tuam and Prebendary of Lackan and the Revd Andrea Wills was installed as Prebendary of Tagsaxon–Laccagh and Prebendary of Killanley and Ardagh.

St John the Evangelist church, Sandymount, celebrated its patronal festival of St John before

the Latin Gate with Solemn Mass when the preacher was the Revd Andrew McCroskery, Vicar of St Bartholomew's, Dublin.

The annual 'Pictures at the Priory' exhibition will be opened in **Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny**, on Bank Holiday Monday and will be open on the following Wednesday and Friday from 7pm until 10pm. This is an important fund raising and outreach project for the Kells union of parishes where the rector is the Revd Martin Hilliard.

The **Church of Ireland Gazette** is looking for an **Office Administrator** at the Gazette office, 3 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn. This is a part-time post of 16 hours per week (Monday–Thursday, 9.00 am – 1.00 pm). The job involves the management of accounts and general office administration, including the administration of emails and responding to enquiries from the public. Experience in book-keeping, payroll and VAT is essential. Must be IT proficient.

For a job description and application form, please contact the Office Manager, Mrs Ella McLoughlin at The Church of Ireland Gazette, 3 Wallace Avenue

Lisburn BT27 4AA Or email:

advertising@gazette.ireland.anglican.org Or tel. (028) 9267 5743. Closing date for applications is Monday 16 May 2016.

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News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Mail/Premier

Reports on resources for the CofE's first Godparents Sunday (see above) with criticism from former Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir Ali. A C of E spokesman is quoted saying the day 'acknowledges and supports' the relationship between godparents and godchildren and 'recognises its importance in the lifelong journey of discovering all that faith in Jesus Christ means. *Premier* includes interview with Revd Dr Sandra Millar author of the resources and Head of Projects and Resources (Archbishops' Council).

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3567681/Church-England-uses-trendy-Post-notes-new-service-celebrating-role-godparents-sparking-anger-traditionalists.html#ixzz47OXJIKGm> <http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Christians-celebrate-God-Parent-Sunday>

S Times

Fame and Fortune column (on how public figures deal with finances) features interview with Bishop of Stockport, Libby Lane, who was the CofE's first female bishop. The article states that she earns £33,000 and gives 10% of her take-home pay to charity and has never had the spare cash for investments or to buy a home.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fame-amp-fortune-my-cup-unlike-my-wallet-runneth-over-0f2558ggt>

Mail/Tel

Report that thousands of Christians gathered yesterday in Jerusalem for an ancient fire ceremony that celebrates Jesus' resurrection as the Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates Easter.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3567530/>

[Burning-passion-Jerusalem-hosts-ancient-fire-ceremony-Eastern-Orthodox-Christians-celebrate-resurrection-Jesus.html#ixzz47OaaEfJn](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3567530/Burning-passion-Jerusalem-hosts-ancient-fire-ceremony-Eastern-Orthodox-Christians-celebrate-resurrection-Jesus.html#ixzz47OaaEfJn)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/30/crowds-gather-for-holy-fire-ceremony-in-jerusalem/>

Christian Today

Report that more than 80 international NGOs and faith groups have issued an urgent plea to world leaders to stop the escalating crisis in Syria. In a letter to US and Russian presidents, the groups warn that "hope is crumbling on your watch". Article notes the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth singed on behalf of the Church of England.

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