

The essential brief on the Irish churches



Bishops and officers of the General Synod welcome the passing of legislation to provide to provide for interchangeability in ministries between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland, the two Churches being in a Covenant relationship.

Merger of Catholic and Protestant Colleges of Education may be finalised by 2016

Dublin City University (DCU) is committed to protecting the ethos and identity of those Catholic and Protestant Colleges which are to become the Institute of Education in

Drumcondra under its control.

Irish Times - The university was putting in place "structures that will allow the ethos and identity of the incoming denominational Colleges to be respected, and for the preparation of teachers for denominational schools to be fully

protected,” DCU president Prof Brian MacCraith has said. “You can institutionalise diversity within the context of a secular university by putting in place appropriate structures,” he said.

Prof MacCraith was speaking of the coming together in Dublin of St Patrick’s College Drumcondra, the Mater Dei Institute of Education, and the [Church of Ireland](#) College of Education (CICE) on a new campus at St Patrick’s in Drumcondra. More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/merger-of-catholic-and-protestant-colleges-of-education-may-be-finalised-by-2016-1.1789561>

Bishop asks parents to encourage their sons into priesthood

A Catholic bishop has challenged parents and parishes to reach out to young men in football clubs, bands, schools and families to encourage them to consider the priesthood.



Bishop Denis Nulty

Irish Independent - Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin wrote to 56 parishes in Carlow, Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Kilkenny, Wicklow and Wexford yesterday asking the Catholic faithful to make an effort to support young men to consider becoming priests.

In a special letter read out at Masses in parishes on Vocations Sunday, the bishop suggested that parishes should ask themselves when they last produced a vocation.

His appeal comes as figures show the number of active priests in Ireland has fallen by 16pc in six years. In his appeal, Bishop Nulty said: "If you are interested in healing wounds, extending compassion, warming hearts and offering forgiveness, then priesthood may be for you."

According to the latest report of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, there are 2,050 active clergy serving a Catholic population of 4,635,178 in Ireland, which averages out as one priest for every 2,261 Catholics.

In 2007, a report by the Council for Research and Development, a commission of the Irish Bishops' Conference, showed there were 2,464 active diocesan priests in 25 out of the 26 dioceses of Ireland. That is a drop of over 400 priests in six years.

Meanwhile, four men and one woman who have all taken the leap and answered the call to the priesthood or religious life, have just launched a booklet which provides an insight into their daily lives.

Entitled 'A Day in the Life of a Not So Typical Life', the four contributors are a seminarian, priest, religious brother, missionary brother and religious sister.

Young Capuchin friar, Brother Martin Bennett is in his sixth year with the Capuchin Franciscans and is studying theology and philosophy in All Hallows College, [Dublin](#).

He lives with seven other friars and is involved in the Capuchin Day Centre for the homeless in Dublin, which serves over 700 meals each day.

"Since joining, I have had the opportunity to live in Oxford and Zambia, working in varied apostolates with young people, drug addicts, psychiatric patients and the homeless," he said.

Cultural diversity in Newry and Mourne celebrated

Mayor Michael Ruane opened the “Cultural Experience” event held in the Canal Court Hotel on Saturday 26th April.

Newry Times - He stated that Newry and Mourne has become an increasingly diverse society. People from all over the world have chosen to make the towns and villages in our area their home.

He praised the Irish Churches Peace Project, Embrace, the Newry and District Inter-Church Forum and Newry and Mourne District Council for organising the event.

The event brought people from Western and Eastern Europe, America, Africa and Asia together with local people to explore the benefits of experiencing different cultures and the issues of cultural diversity in Northern Ireland.

After the event one person said, "I enjoyed meeting people from other countries. The short film and the panel discussion were really informative. The music was excellent."

The Irish Churches Peace Project is supported by the European Union's PEACE III Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. It seeks to work with churches and church related groups to promote good relations, cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Embrace is a group of Christians working together to promote a positive response to people seeking asylum, refugees, migrant workers. The Newry District Inter-church Forum is made up of people from various churches and has organised a number of events to help build good relations across the Newry and Mourne District. More at -

<http://newrytimes.com/2014/05/06/cultural-diversity-in-newry-and-mourne-celebrated/>

Visitors from South Sudan to speak at Connor / Yei Focus event

An update on the current situation in South Sudan will be given by two visitors from that country at a CMSI Connor Yei Focus Evening.

The event, beginning at 7.30pm tonight May 13, will be hosted by the Rev Andrew Sweeney of Ballymoney parish and will take place in St Patrick's Parish Church Hall.

Bishop Anthony Poggo is from Kajo Keji diocese, just east of the Diocese of Connor's partner Diocese of Yei, and he will be giving an up to date overview of the current situation in South Sudan and how it is affecting the lives of ordinary people.

He will also be discussing how the church is responding to the crisis at all levels. He is an experienced communicator and author and has taken a lead in calling for a peaceful resolution.

The Rev Basil Buga from Yei will talk about what is happening in Yei Diocese, and the diocese's future plans.

Both speakers are visiting Ireland for the Bicentenary celebrations of CMS

Ireland.

CMSI Partnership Co-ordinator Jenny Smyth, who travelled to South Sudan in March, said: "From my recent visit to South Sudan I was deeply impressed with the role of the church leaders in speaking out for Christian principles to guide actions and the practical ways ordinary Christians are involved in caring for those suffering. I hope to show some photos from the visit at the Focus Evening."

She said there will also be an opportunity to discuss the way different parishes here have been involved in the Yei/Connor link and how this can be developed into the future.

See also -

Longing for peace, reconciliation and healing in South Sudan

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/05/longing-for-peace,-reconciliation-and-healing-in-south-sudan.aspx>

IDAHO services

Changing Attitude Ireland has organised the following events on Sunday 18th May to mark the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (May 17th)

Services on Sunday 18th May as part of IDAHO - International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

BELFAST: St George's, High St, 3.00pm. Speaker Michael Wardlow,

DERRY: St Columb's Cathedral 4.00pm. Speaker Wendy Donaghy.

DUBLIN: St Ann's, Dawson St, 3.30pm. Speaker Canon Adrian Empey.

CORK: St. Anne's, Shandon 10.30am. Speaker TBC.

LIMERICK: St. Mary's Cathedral 7.00pm. Speaker Dean Sandra Pragnell

WATERFORD Christ Church Cathedral 8.00pm. Speaker Bishop Michael Burrows

In addition there will be a service in NEWRY on Friday 16th May. St Catherine's, Dominic St, 8.15pm



Married to ministry

In another first for Irish Methodism, Mr Neil Morris is to be this year's guest speaker at the annual ministers' spouses' lunch.

Over the years since the Methodist Church in Ireland approved the ordination of women, Neil is not the first man to take on the role of a minister's spouse. However, as husband of the Rev Dr Heather Morris, he is the first man to be married to an Irish Methodist president. All attending the lunch, to be held in Wesley College, Dublin, on Saturday 14 June, will be interested to hear what Neil has to say and the *Methodist Newsletter* looks forward to reporting on the event.

Again, the important supportive and complementary role played by those married to ministers was emphasised by the guest speaker at an overnight breakaway for Methodist ministers' spouses that took place this weekend in Omagh. Mrs Alison Orr, the wife of a Presbyterian minister, led those present in a very helpful time of teaching, reflection and prayer – with the opportunity for a little retail therapy for good measure!

Down and Connor pilgrimage

The Annual Pilgrimage to Knock will take place on Sunday 8 June and will be led by The Most Reverend Anthony Farquhar.



The ceremonies commence at 2.30pm in the Basilica with the Sacrament of the Sick, followed by Mass and the Rosary Procession.

Further details can be obtained from Father Colin Grant at 028 9064 3939
Or at cgrant486@aquinas.belfast.ni.sch.uk

Down & Dromore Bible week

This year the Bishop's Bible Week is moving from the last week in August to the first week in September

When: Monday 1 – Thursday 4 September **Venue:** Willowfield Church **Theme:** 'A dangerous faith.'



The Bishop's Bible Week in 2014 will explore the biblical context, impact and dangerous meaning of the great commandments according to the Gospel of Mark. The leaders and speakers throughout the week will be younger than usual but equally gifted.

Here's a taste of how the week will look in terms of speakers and titles with more details to follow.

Monday 1 - Andrew Brannigan: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Tuesday 2 - Revd Simon Genoe: Loving God with everything.

Wednesday 3 - Revd Craig Cooney: Loving others as we love ourselves.

Thursday 4 - Jasper Rutherford: How far are we from the Kingdom?

Churches issue briefing on European elections

The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Britain and the United Reformed Church have issued a briefing on the elections for the European Parliament.

The Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Britain and the United Reformed Church have issued a briefing on the elections for the European Parliament which take place in the UK on 22 May 2014.

It offers a tool for reflection on some key issues, from immigration and tax to the environment and human rights and suggests questions which might be posed to candidates.

European Parliament elections often attract a low turnout of voters in the UK. Only a third of voters participated in the 2009 European elections, compared to two thirds who voted in the 2010 General Election.

* The briefing can be read here: <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/European-Election...>

Kirk to host post-referendum service of reconciliation

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The Church says that the service, to which leading figures from the Yes and Better Together campaigns will be invited, is to be held at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh on 21 September and will focus on healing divisions and building the future together.

It said the service would highlight the need to put differences aside and begin working with each other, whatever the outcome of the referendum on 18 September.

Speaking to BBC Scotland, the Rev Chalmers said: "Reconciliation is the business of the church. So it seems fitting, at a time when people are taking sides and passions are running high, that we should prepare for the day after this is all over.

"I hope that reconciliation won't be the biggest part of the service. I hope that expressing our magnanimity in victory or defeat, or expressing our commitment to working together for the future of Scotland will be the biggest part of it.

"The danger is if we don't keep the level of this debate down to a respectful place, where we listen to one another, where we don't try to score points by name-calling, where the language doesn't get too emotive and sticks to substance, then the business of healing will be a lot harder afterwards.

"All of the politicians need to remember that if we keep the debate respectful at this time, there's much more chance that we will find it possible to work together afterwards, to build whatever the voters give us."

The Rev Chalmers has also pledged to work with other churches, other faiths and with non-faith groups who are committed to working for social cohesion and the greater good of Scotland.

A spokesman for Yes Scotland said whatever the outcome of the vote, it would be incumbent on people on both sides of the debate to co-operate for the benefit of the country.

"When we receive the invitation from the Church of Scotland we will be pleased to accept," he added.

A Better Together spokesman said: "Regardless of which way we vote as individuals, nobody should doubt the good faith of anybody in this debate.

"We all love Scotland and want to see the best future for our country, but we can respectfully disagree about how we achieve that."

The Kirk has made clear that it will not take sides on a Yes or No vote to the question 'should Scotland be an independent country?' Instead, it wishes to encourage a mature civic discussion and to provide resources for that debate. <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/20218>)

* The Church of Scotland's report *Imagining Scotland's Future: our vision* is available here: http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/19243/our...

Christians 'cannot vote for Scottish independence in good conscience'

Christians cannot vote for an independent Scotland in good conscience because it would lead to a secular state, a former Free Church of Scotland Moderator has warned.

Daily Telegraph - In a paper to the Free Church General Assembly about the forthcoming referendum, Rev John Ross said a successful 'Yes' vote would result in Christianity "being deprived of state recognition as Scotland's national religion" for the first time since the Reformation.

Rev Ross said the Scottish Government's White Paper on independence was "dishonest" in claiming that separation would result in no change to the legal status of any religion or of the country's churches.

His intervention came as the Scottish Secular Society announced its support for separation, arguing that the British state gives unfair protection to "certain forms of Christianity".

But other senior Free Church figures in the church have argued that the Nationalists' reassurances should be taken at "face value" and voters face a choice between a secular Scotland and a secular Britain.

The church will not tell its ministers and members how to vote in September's referendum but has commissioned a report for this month's General Assembly in Edinburgh with two leading figures arguing for independence and two for the Union. More at -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/10820682/Christians-cannot-vote-for-Scottish-independence-in-good-conscience.html>

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