



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Bishop's priorities for elections

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor has said in a statement on the forthcoming elections, “As Christians, who by our national citizenship are also citizens of the European Union, we enjoy both the great freedom and the great responsibility of participating conscientiously in the democratic process and voting in the forthcoming elections.



He continued, “We have the freedom and responsibility to make the decision about who to vote for in accordance with a well-formed conscience, before God. It is also important that we commend and encourage all those who take up the noble vocation of politics and who, with a true spirit of public service, work with integrity and commitment for the common good.”

The Bishop commented, “How we vote is ultimately a matter of personal conscience. As with every act that has moral consequences, we are called to inform our conscience. This means weighing up the position of each candidate and political party in the forthcoming elections and deciding how, in exercising our Christian responsibility to vote, we can maximise the common good. With many issues, this is a matter of legitimate technical debate and sincere political difference. With other issues, however, such as the right to life of every innocent person from conception to natural death, the values at stake are so fundamental that they can never be undermined.”

Bishop Treanor said, “It is a welcome sign of normality and progress that many citizens are engaging conscientiously and decisively with social and

moral issues in Northern Ireland elections, beyond the traditional polarities of the Constitutional question.”

He said Catholic Social Teaching pointed up four principles which had a particular resonance in Northern Ireland:

1 The right to life, 2 Upholding the special value of marriage between a woman and man as the foundation of the family, 3 Promoting justice, social inclusion and concern for the poor, Promoting peace and reconciliation.

See also - <http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/bishop-appeals-catholics-vote-their-conscience>

Text in full at -

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/05/16/christian-citizenship-local-council-european-parliamentary-elections-northern-ireland-pastoral-reflection-bishop-treanor/>



BBC 1 City of Faith programme on Armagh

‘City of Faith’ Begins on Monday, May 26th, on BBC One Northern Ireland at 10.40pm

Armagh has been the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland since the fifth century when St Patrick founded his church there. Today there are two cathedrals named after the saint. From its earliest

known history, Armagh is a place where people have searched for something greater than themselves. Now in a powerful new six-part series made for BBC Northern Ireland exploring life and faith in Armagh, people from the city and the surrounding area share their stories of what faith means to them and why it matters in their lives.

City of Faith, made by Tern Television, begins on Monday, May 26 on BBC One Northern Ireland at 10.40pm.

In the first programme, Jack O’Hare, David and Claire Scott and Gerry Gribbon talk about their own personal experiences of a life of faith.

Jack O’Hare, a former principal of a primary school, was very involved with the restoration of St Patrick’s Roman Catholic Cathedral and was awarded

the Papal Medal, the highest honour which can be bestowed on laity by the Pope.

David and Claire Scott are members of Mall Presbyterian Church and have a young son Daniel who was diagnosed with Exomphalos – a medical condition which means some of his main organs are outside of his body. The couple share their story and explain how this situation has brought them both closer to one another and to God.

Gerry Gribbon, a recovering alcoholic, moved to Armagh from Belfast over 30 years ago and has devoted his life to helping others. Cameras follow him from Armagh to Lourdes as he makes his annual pilgrimage with a local group, which he has done for the past 17 years. Each year the trip has an added poignancy for Gerry as it coincides with the anniversary of his son's death.

Brendan Byrne, series producer/director, said: 'City of Faith has been an inspiring journey. I've had the opportunity of opening a window into the extraordinary life stories of so many ordinary people, people whom you couldn't fail to identify and empathise with.'

'These programmes are about personal faith, rather than religion, and making them has strengthened my own faith in the goodness and decency of my fellow countrymen and women from all traditions, and all walks of life here. Armagh opened its arms to my team, and in return I hope our portrayal of this city's faithful is a tribute to that warm welcome.'

Saying Goodbye Service

St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, will be hosting a special service on Sunday 1 June for anyone who has lost a baby.

This 'Saying Goodbye' Service is one of 25 taking place in 2014 all over the UK and it is for anyone who has lost a baby at any stage of pregnancy, at birth or in infancy, whether the loss is historic or recent.

All are welcome regardless of faith or no faith, to join with other parents and families who have experienced loss, and take part in a beautiful service filled with music, poetry, acts of remembrance and more.

The service in St Anne's begins at 3.30 p.m. on Sunday 1 June. More information about Saying Goodbye can be found at www.sayinggoodbye.org

Newcastle Inter-church Pentecost Flower Festival

To mark Pentecost weekend, the four main Churches in Newcastle have come together to hold a Festival of Flowers.

The festival, with the theme of The Coming of The Holy Spirit, will be hosted by Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Downs Road, Newcastle, with the participation of the local Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and St John's Church of Ireland.

For nearly a year now, a committee representing all four Churches has been preparing for the festival which will open at 2.00 p.m. on Friday 6 June 2014. The opening service will be led by Rev Dr Heather Morris, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Most Rev Dr Anthony Farquhar, Auxiliary Bishop of Down & Connor, Rev Dr Donald Watts, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and Right Rev Dr Edward Darling, Retired Bishop of Limerick (representing Right Rev Dr Harold Miller).

The festival will be open 2.00 – 8.00 p.m. on Friday 6 June, 11.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m. on Saturday 7 June and 1.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m. on Pentecost Sunday 8 June.

The floral displays, depicting various Pentecostal themes, will be arranged by members of the NI Association of Flower Arranging Societies (NIAFAS). The Association is very experienced in these events, having already presented numerous such displays across Northern Ireland. Joan Magee from NIAFAS said, "The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption will provide a magnificent setting for the festival and I am greatly encouraged by the interdenominational nature of the event. We in NIAFAS are really looking forward to being involved."

Margaret Lavery, Chair of the organising committee, said, "Celebration of Pentecost, recalling the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early Christian community, is common to all Christian denominations and the initial organising group were keen that the event be as inclusive as possible. I am delighted that this will be a truly joint effort involving the Presbyterian Church, St John's Parish Church, the Methodist Church and Our Lady of the Assumption. The festival promises to be an edifying cross-community experience for all."

Social service in Dublin recognised

An uplifting service celebrating social action took place in St Werburgh's Church in Dublin's city centre, featured a host of

inspirational people and projects. ‘Worship for the City’ highlighted the wonderful work being undertaken by a number of social action projects but also prayed for the city and its people.



Participants in the Dublin and Glendalough Social Action Service with Archbishop Michael Jackson.

Organised by the Dublin and Glendalough Committee for Social Action, the service aimed to inspire others to get involved in social action by hearing the personal stories of the speakers.

Among the contributors were Brother Martin of the Capuchin Friary on Church Street, Dublin, who highlighted the work of the Capuchin Day Centre which feeds 700 people six days a week. Joe Donnelly from the Anchorage Project in Ringsend, which involves a community café, childcare projects and a garden centre and aims to serve the local community while also helping communities in the developing world, read prayers.

Kelda Barnes from the Darndale Childcare Project which caters for 267 children aged 0–12 years in disadvantaged communities also prayed, this time for those who volunteer for the service. Three women and two volunteers from Tiglin Women’s Group highlighted their experiences of the Ashford based centre which aims to provide a solution to life–controlling addiction through a programme which has a Christian ethos. The new Tiglin Worship Group, who were giving just their second performance, also sang.

Graham Jones told of the work of the Solas Project in Dublin 8 which aims to see communities rejuvenated through education and sport and to build up young people to overcome all the limitations put on them by disadvantage.

The service opened and closed with words from Archbishop Michael Jackson who referred to the reading for the day from the Gospel of John about the Good Shepherd which he said came to mind when hearing about those who worked and volunteered for the many projects that nurture, care for and protect people.

Afterwards the Archbishop said the service had provided 'snapshots of hope, visions of truth and pictures of reality'. 'We have been taken and led gently by the hand to see that all of creation is to be found here in the city,' he said. He added that reality was sold to us as consumerism and a commodity but in fact reality was about relationships and the recognition that we are made in the image of God. In a time of austerity, sharing the love of God cost nothing, he said.

'You walked with us' - Sudanese cleric to Connor diocese

The partnership between the dioceses of Connor and Yei in South Sudan was the focus of an evening organised by CMS Ireland in Ballymoney on 13 May.

Special guests were the Rev Basil Buga from Yei and Bishop Anthony Poggo from Kajo Keji Diocese. They are among a number of global partners in Ireland to help celebrate CMS Ireland's 200th anniversary.

The evening was hosted by the Revd Andrew Sweeney, Connor Council for Mission. Andrew was part of a team from Connor which visited Yei in January 2013. Another visit to South Sudan last January was postponed due to civil unrest. Connor and Yei have been in partnership since 2007.

Bishop Anthony described the background to this latest conflict which he said he had displaced an estimated 1.3 million people and had cost the lives of at least 10,000.

The leaders of the two factions reached agreement on May 9, he said, and a transitional government is to be formed. 'This is very significant but there are a lot of issues to be hammered out,' Bishop Anthony said. 'We request your prayers so that they will look at all these issues and agree on the way forward, because that is the key for the future of this nation.'

The Bishop gave a brief biblical reflection on Nehemiah, drawing parallels to the situation in South Sudan. He said: 'By helping build a school or a vocational training college you are helping in the fight against poverty and helping us prevent future war. You are giving us encouragement and a reason why we should remain in peace.'

CMSI Partnership Co-ordinator Jenny Smyth, who visited South Sudan in March, showed images of devastation caused by the conflict and of the work the church is doing, providing food and shelter for displaced people. More at -

<http://ireland.anglican.org/news/5137>

Linen in the Bible Exhibition in Christ Church, Dublin

Until the end of this month Christ Church cathedral, Dublin, is hosting an exhibition, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven' which explains the meaning of linen in the Bible.

The exhibition draws on a wide range of images and texts to explain how linen has been a spiritual symbol. In the religion of old Israel linen often stood for vegetation, earthiness and the soil and in the fabrics of Jerusalem's Temple linen was a symbol of the earth. But once the cloth was drained of pigment and made to glow a brilliant white it stood for the kingdom of heaven, the realm of eternal life and light. In the Resurrection story the white fabric stands both for mortality and for eternity.

The exhibition uses images from ancient Egypt and medieval Christian manuscripts as well as pieces of contemporary art. It features specially commissioned photographs of early Christian icons including a famous Serbian fresco and a 1500 year old mosaic from St Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai.

The exhibition has been curated by Margaret Barker, an authority on the Jerusalem Temple, Bruce Clark, online religious editor of the *Economist*, and by the Temple Study Group, an international initiative which promotes study and discussion of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Dromore organ recital

The international organ recitalist Mark Duley will be playing in Dromore Cathedral on Saturday 24 May at 1.30 pm.

The concert is part of an organ playing marathon in 20 Irish Cathedrals (3 of which are in Northern Ireland) over the space of a week in May.

The recital is to raise funds for “Pipeworks” which promotes organ playing in Ireland and internationally and holds a regular International Organ Playing Competition every three years in Dublin.

Mark (who is Director of Pipeworks) is originally from New Zealand and was formerly organist in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. As well as his organ playing career he is a renowned choral conductor.



A donation of £5.00 is requested from those attending and all proceeds will go to Pipeworks. The concert will last about 1 hour.

Car parking will be available in the Cathedral car park.

Booklet outlines Moravian witness near Dublin

A new booklet on the history of the Moravian Burial Ground at Whitechurch, County Dublin, was officially launched this week in Whitechurch Old Schools.

Written by Rosemary Power, *The Moravian Burial Ground at Whitechurch, County Dublin*, looks at the burial ground where over 700 people of the Moravian tradition have been buried from 1764 to the present day. It also provides a brief guide to the Moravians and a history of some of the few people buried there.

Speaking at the launch folklorist Professor Patricia Lysaght said she had known nothing about the Moravian tradition until Dr Power brought her to the cemetery. She said she has always had a fascination with cemeteries and her visit to the Whitechurch burial ground had sparked an interest in the folklore of the tradition.

Canon Patrick Comerford paid tribute to Dr Power’s work as a historian and folklorist, but also as a pioneering ecumenist. “She is a living reminder that the Moravians in this area are not dead and are not to be relegated to recording their graves and burial grounds. He added that Moravians were never ones for merely expanding their own ecclesiastical empire but put themselves at the service of the wider Church.

Both Canon Comerford and the Revd Sarah Groves, Minister of Gracehill Moravian Church, County Antrim, are part of the talks taking place between the Moravian Church and the Church of Ireland. He said that the Moravians might be a tiny church in Ireland but they had enriched the life of the Church of Ireland.



Canon Horace McKinley, Professor Patricia Lysagh, Dr Rosemary Power (author), the Revd Sarah Groves and Canon Patrick Comerford.

Dr Power thanked everyone who was involved in the publication of the booklet and added that great information was to be found in Dublin City Archives. She said that the proceeds from the sale of the booklet would go back into the work of the Moravian Church.

The Revd Sarah Groves paid tribute to the Rector of Whitechurch, Canon Horace McKinley, who had been the “unofficial custodian” of the Moravian Burial Ground for many years. She said the initiative began in 2012 when the neighbouring Grange Golf Club contacted them to look at the walls of the graveyard. When she visited the special piece of ground she wondered how they could get the stories of the people buried there told and also highlight the work of the Moravians.

“Rosemary’s booklet tells the story of the people, who they were, why they were here and the faith that brought them here,” she said. “Today is not the end. It’s the end of the beginning so that the stories of these people will continue to be told.”

Archbishop honours church musicians

The Archbishop of Wales has paid tribute people who dedicate their time to keeping music at the heart of services in churches and chapels across Wales, Sunday after Sunday.

Organists, choral leaders and singers were presented with awards and certificates by the Archbishop, Dr Barry Morgan, at a ceremony at in Swansea recently.



There were two types of presentations – the Archbishop of Wales' Award in

Church Music, which recognises people of outstanding musical ability who contribute to worship, and the Certificate of Merit which pays tribute to the talents and devoted service of musicians who contribute without being professionally trained. The awards are open to musicians from all denominations of Christian worship.

This year, two people received the Archbishop's Award and five were presented with the Certificate.

The Archbishop said, "These awards are a way for the wider church to recognize the important part music plays in our worship and to thank those who make it happen. However formally qualified they may be, what they have in common is a commitment and dedication to turn up week after week, year after year. They nurture and encourage an enjoyment of church music, ensuring our wonderful heritage is enjoyed now and passed down to our children."

More at -

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/05/archbishop-of-wales-honours-church-musicians.aspx>

New Zealand move to blessing of same-sex relationships

The New Zealand General Synod on May 14 passed a resolution that will create a pathway towards the blessing of same-sex relationships – while upholding the traditional doctrine of marriage.

It will appoint a working group to report to the 2016 General Synod on “a process and structure” that would allow those clergy who wish to bless same-sex relationships – using a yet-to-be developed liturgy – to do so.

The working group will also be charged to develop “a process and structure” to ensure that clergy who believe that same-sex blessings are contrary to “scripture, doctrine, tikanga or civil law” to remain fully free to dissent.

The “process and structure” in their case would mean these clergy would not only be exempt from performing these same-sex blessings – but that their “integrity within the church” would be assured, and they would have full protection for their dissent in any relevant human rights legislation.

Synod has therefore upheld the traditional doctrine of marriage – but also moved to find ways to respond to committed relationships between two people, regardless of gender. More at -

<http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/006576.html>

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/20491>

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