



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Moderator assures prison officers of Church support



Presbyterian Moderator Dr Rob Craig (right) and Presbyterian Director of Social Service Lindsay Conway (left) hosted a breakfast meeting last week in Church House, Belfast with Sue McAllister, Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Brian McCaughey, the Services's Director of Rehabilitation together with other senior managers and officers of the Prison Service to assure them of the full support of the Presbyterian Church for their work and to thank them for the contribution they make in the care and rehabilitation of men and women who have come into conflict with the law.

Presbyterian Moderator Dr. Rob Craig has assured the Northern Ireland Prison Service of the “full support” of the Presbyterian Church and thanked the service for the “contribution it has made in the care and rehabilitation of men and women who have come in to conflict with the law.”

Dr. Craig made his remarks at a breakfast he hosted this week at Presbyterian Headquarters in Belfast attended by Prison Service Director General Sue McAllister and around twenty of the service's senior managers and officers.

Dr. Craig said, "The Presbyterian Church has been conscious of the ongoing pressure that numerous reports have had on the Prison Service. Whilst it would be totally inappropriate for me to comment on any of these major issues, I must speak into that public space to say that Northern Ireland must have a Prison Service that is fit for purpose; that the Service must look and feel different than it did twenty years ago. Significant changes have been made in the area of staffing and regimes, but that desire for normalisation has been hampered greatly by the intrusion of the past."

The Moderator continued with the observation that the Service is almost constantly in the public eye. "One lobby is clearly stating that you are too soft and, the other, that your regime is too strict. In attempting to steer that middle ground you find yourselves in an impossible position and subjected to public opinion. You are all subjected to, what appears to me as an outsider to be, endless reviews and inspections.

"As Moderator, I would thank you and all your colleagues in the Service for the contribution you have made in the care and rehabilitation of men and women who have come into conflict with the law. Let me assure you all that you have the support of the Presbyterian Family and that it is vital for the Presbyterian Church to stay connected and have ongoing discussions with the Northern Ireland Prison Service."

Irish Launch of Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

The Irish launch of of the campaign to stop killer robots takes place on Thursday April 10 at 7.00 pm in the Irish School of Ecumenics, Loyola Institute Building (facing the rugby pitch), TCD main campus.

The speaker will be Noel Sharkey, Emeritus Professor of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics and Professor of Public Engagement in the University of Sheffield and Chairman of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control. All are welcome.

The event is organised by Afri in association with the International Peace Studies course, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin.

Over the past decade, the expanded use of unmanned armed vehicles has dramatically changed warfare, bringing new humanitarian and legal

challenges. Now rapid advances in technology are resulting in efforts to develop fully autonomous weapons. These robotic weapons would be able to choose and fire on targets on their own, without any human intervention, raising numerous ethical, legal, moral, policy, technical, and other concerns with fully autonomous weapons. Giving machines the power to decide who lives and dies on the battlefield is an unacceptable application of technology. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is an international coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to ban fully autonomous weapons.

£350,000 raised through Buy A Brick for church dementia centre

The Belfast Central Mission (BCM) of the Irish Methodist Church has expressed thanks to everyone who has donated to the Buy a Brick Campaign to raise money for the the new Copelands centre in Millisle.



So far, the Buy a Brick Campaign has generated £351,570.02. Everyone at BCM is delighted with this generous response. If you want to make a contribution to the Copeland centre then visit www.belfastcentralmission.org/buyabrick

Copelands will be a new way of caring for older people with dementia, enabling them to live a full and active life within a protective and caring environment.

The facility will be a flagship project; an exemplar model providing market leading care for NI. It will be constructed according to the University of Stirling's Gold Standard in dementia design and will provide specialist dementia and nursing care. It will offer a 24-hour residential and nursing service in a comfortable and supported environment with 64 en-suite rooms, each one equipped to give residents maximum opportunity and independence.

The home will address the needs of people with dementia who are still physically active but require a secure and supportive environment. Features will include:

- a pod structure;
- dementia friendly lighting;
- a sensory garden;
- chapel;
- hair salon/nail bar;
- cinema room;
- café for residents and their friends and family;
- a library and internet room;
- a social and leisure activities programme.

[Find out more about Copelands.](#)

Bishop says North afflicted by political ‘sclerosis’



Dr Donal McKeown, the new Bishop of Derry: ‘as Christians of various traditions, we have an opportunity and a duty to be sources of hope, especially when political sclerosis seems to have afflicted our body politic’

The failure of the [Northern Ireland](#) Assembly “to focus on delivering the reforms that people need” was addressed this afternoon by the newly installed Catholic Bishop of Derry Dónal McKeown.

Irish Times - In a homily at the installation ceremony in Derry’s St Eugene’s Cathedral on Sunday, he said that “as Christians of various traditions, we

have an opportunity and a duty to be sources of hope, especially when political sclerosis seems to have afflicted our body politic”.

He said “ I know that many politicians are embarrassed at the failure of the NI Assembly to focus on delivering the reforms that people need. But, as Churches, we cannot merely criticise them. We have the chance to play the part of critical friends, speaking on behalf of the many who feel that human need are being neglected in the service of political priorities. There is no more room in society for self-referential politics than there is for a Church that falls prey to ecclesial introversion.”

He continued that “Our society knows many places where people feel discarded or beyond hope. Many people feel prisoners of their past while others seem to glide on, presumed masters of their future. That can happen because of neglect and abuse in its multiple forms; it can come from ill health or lack of satisfying chances to contribute to society; it can be reinforced by being labelled in education or social status; it can be born from the mistakes that they or others have made.

He said that “[Pope Francis](#) is quite explicit that many people feel crushed “by the economy of exclusion”, scorned by “the new idolatry of money”, victims of a “financial system which rules rather than serves” and prisoners of the “inequality which spawns violence”. In saying this he is not being modern or new. He is simply reflecting the Jesus of the Gospel.”

Bishop McKeown said “in this springtime of our society and our churches in Ireland, there is much work to be done if the new season is to bear mellow fruitfulness. The ground needs to be tilled, the weeds removed, the new seed planted.

“We may not be the ones to reap the harvest. But how we work today in the hard ground that characterises the peripheries, will determine where the next generation will be able to dream or just be trapped in a cycle of recurrent nightmares, devoid of hope and victims to shallow promises of salvation through bling and botox.”

This morning, before the installation ceremony, Bishop McKeown visited the Church of Ireland’s [Christ Church](#) in the city where he was warmly welcomed by the congregation and rector Rev [Robert Miller](#) who presented him with a Book of Psalms and extended his heartfelt good wishes.

Bishop McKeown (63) was born in Belfast but raised at [Randalstown](#) Co Antrim. President of St Malachy’s [College Belfast](#) from 1995, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor diocese in 2001. In Derry he

succeeds Bishop Séamus Hegarty who retired in November 2011 for health reasons.

ICC Euro-Church committee

Elections to the European Parliament will be held in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in May, and it is timely that the Irish Council of Churches has recently established a European Affairs Committee .

Among the committee's duties will be to bring a Christian judgement to bear on European affairs while at the same time informing the member Churches about the European Union and its structures. The Chairman is Dr Kenneth Milne and membership of the new committee comprises representatives of the member Churches. Both CEC (the Conference of European Churches) and COMECE (the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community) have drawn attention to the fact that since the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty the European Parliament has greatly increased influence in the formulation of EU policies and that these elections provide citizens with an opportunity to play a part in choosing who is to represent them. - C of I notes, Irish Times.

Tributes paid to the Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick

Tributes have been paid to the Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe, Trevor Williams, who has announced he is to retire this summer after six years.



Bishop Williams with Bishop Leahy at the Limerick Person of the Year awards

Limerick Leader - Bishop Williams, 66, said it is not a decision he has hcome to lightly, but is "convinced it is the right time for the Diocese, my family and myself.

"I am very thankful for the privilege of serving the United Dioceses of Limerick and Killaloe for the past six years," he said.

Speaking to the Limerick Leader following the announcement, Bishop Williams said his retirement "was not a forced thing".

"I could have stayed on for a number of years, but there is a fairly exciting project emerging in the diocese that's a six to 10 year project and I won't be around to see that finish," he said.

"One of the sad things is that I'll be leaving behind many of the friends I've made in Limerick over the last few years, and I will miss the camaraderie from the community at large," he commented.

He particularly noted the warm welcome that has been extended to him by the Catholic Bishops of Limerick, including the incumbent Brendan Leahy and his predecessor Dr Donal Murray.

Bishop Williams, who resided in Adare, said he has a small house in Dundrum, Co Down, which served as his "bolthole" during his three decades in Northern Ireland - and added that it will now be his home once more.

The Catholic Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy spoke of "the warmth and humility" of Bishop Williams on the announcement of his retirement, which he greeted with "mixed feelings".

"Of course I am happy for him and his wife, Joyce. But I will miss them both very much. They have been extremely kind and welcoming to me since I arrived in Limerick a year ago," he said.

"I have known Bishop Trevor for several years and have greatly appreciated his warmth and tremendous commitment to peace, reconciliation and dialogue. He is a man who sees the best in people and draws it out in them. He thinks the big picture but is attentive to the practical details to be worked out. We have met often in the past months and in each encounter I've come away enriched by Bishop Trevor's good nature, sense of humour, passion for justice and humble disposition. He has a keen sense of reaching out to those on the margins. He is also well known for his very fine media skills as evident in the "Would you believe" documentary in 2012 as well as numerous contributions to local radio and print media in Limerick.

Commissioning of Lay Ministers

On Sunday April 13 at All Saints' Church, Grangegorman, there will be a service commissioning new Diocesan Lay Ministers at 11.30 am.

Archbishop Michael Jackson will commission Helen Gorman, who is currently Parish Reader in the Christ Church Cathedral Group of Parishes and David Reynolds, who is currently Parish Reader in Bray as Diocesan Lay Ministers following their completion of training. All are welcome to attend.

256 Lay People To Assist At The Eucharist

Two hundred and fifty–six lay people were commissioned in Cork, Cloyne and Ross to serve as Lay Assistants at the Eucharist at Sunday Services throughout the Diocese on Sunday, 6 April.

The General Synod as evidenced in the Church of Ireland Book of Common Prayer empowers the bishop of a diocese to ‘permit lay persons approved by him/her to assist the priest in the administration of the bread and wine’. In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, these permissions, on the nomination of the clergy, are issued by the Bishop every three years. Those nominated take part in a course of local training which includes: an overview of the Anglican understanding of the Eucharist; the role of liturgy in the life of the Church; the centrality of the Eucharist; personal preparation; and, of course, the practicalities involved in administering the Holy Communion.

Bishop of Connor to lead Holy Week in Christ Church, Lisburn

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, will be in Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, to lead Holy Week 2014.

Events will include daily worship from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, curry and a chat with the Bishop for people in their 20s and 30s on the Tuesday evening, a barbecue for the community held in the church grounds on Maundy Thursday, the Lord’s Supper and foot washing in the parish hall later that day and a City Centre Walk of Witness on Good Friday.

The full programme for Holy Week in Christ Church, Lisburn, is at -

<http://connordiocese.org.uk/news/Bishop-of-Connor-leads-Holy-Week-in-Christ-Church-Lisburn.cfm>

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