



***The General Synod of the Church of England at  
Church House in London***

## **C of I reaffirms stance on same-sex marriage after ‘culture of welcome’ shift in C of E Synod**

Commenting after the General Synod of the  
Church of England considered a report calling

for the church to adopt a “fresh tone and culture of welcome and support” for gay people, the Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, said: “The Church of Ireland does not generally comment on the internal decisions of another Church. With regard to the wider context of discussions on human sexuality and Christian belief and the Church of Ireland, by way of parallel, the resolution of the General Synod in 2012 has enabled the Church of Ireland to establish a base from which to work, bringing together a Select Committee whose membership draws on bishops, clergy and laity.”

The report in the News Letter also stated that a spokesman for the Col said the church’s position on same-sex was affirmed in 2012 and has not changed. The General Synod motion of 2012 said: “The Church of Ireland continues to uphold its teaching that marriage is part of God’s creation and a holy mystery in which one man and one woman become one flesh, as provided for in Canon 31.” The motion adds: “The Church of Ireland welcomes all people to be members of the Church. It is acknowledged, however, that members of the Church have at times hurt and wounded people by words and actions, in relation to human sexuality.”

In the New Letter report Church of Ireland Gazette editor Canon Ian Ellis commented that the debate taking place within the Church of England around attitudes to same-sex marriage is unlikely to have a major effect on the traditional stance taken by the Church of Ireland (Col)

The debate was held to allow the views of members of the Church's national assembly to be heard. The vote itself was symbolic and not binding, but will be used to inform the House of Bishops' work and future discussions on sexuality and same-sex marriage. For the report to be approved, it had to gain a majority in the House of Bishops, House of Clergy and House of Laity.

While the House of Bishops and House of Laity approved the report, the House of Clergy rejected its recommendations by a small majority. The report had been criticised for failing to give gay people a voice, while evangelicals suggested it went too far.

Canon Ellis said: "The thing about the English situation was that it was a vote on a 'take note' debate, so it wasn't really about legislating for any change. The motion fell by a very small majority...but if you add the totals up you will see

there was a majority, if you take them all together, in favour of the report but it fell in the one house.”

Canon Ellis added: “There has been a lot of talk and dialogue about this and they [bishops] just wanted to put their thoughts before the Synod...but obviously there is a division of opinion about the matter. As editor of The Gazette I do know that the Church of Ireland follows what happens in other parts of the Anglican communion, and certainly in the Church of England.

“What happens in England has a ripple effect, and has a bearing upon the situation here, but I don’t feel what happens in the Church of England pressurises the Church of Ireland.”

Canon Ellis said the “challenge here is how to learn to live together with people who differ,” and added: “In terms of marriage it is a very fundamental doctrine of the church, and the Church of Ireland had reaffirmed its traditional view.

“I think that discussion about this will go ahead but I don’t see change in the offing.”

## **100 years of Fatima: Centennial Statue to visit Armagh**

The Archdiocese of Armagh is to celebrate 100 years since Our Lady appeared in Fatima by welcoming a blessed statue to the diocese in March.

On 11 January this year, Pope Francis blessed six statues of Our Lady of Fatima to be brought to each continent, to appeal for prayer and reparation for world peace and to promote the sanctity of family life in our world. One of the statues blessed on that day will be brought to Armagh on Friday 3 March by representatives of the Alliance of the two Hearts.

The statue will arrive at the main gates of Saint Malachy's Church on the evening of Friday 3 March and there will be a short procession around the church during which time the Rosary will be prayed. The statue will be received by Archbishop Eamon Martin at the beginning of the 7.30pm Mass. There will be a Holy Hour after the Mass, to pray for healing for victims of abuse and there will be an opportunity for people to come and pray before the statue until 12 midnight.

On the morning of Saturday 4 March the statue will be brought to St Patrick's Cathedral for the First Saturday Devotions. Confessions will begin at 9.15am. Mass will be celebrated at 10.00am and the Rosary will be prayed in Our Lady's Chapel after Mass. Representatives of the Alliance of the two Hearts will lead prayers in the Cathedral at midday and there will be an opportunity for people and prayer groups to visit the cathedral throughout the day to pray before the Centennial Statue.

Archbishop Eamon Martin will join for the 7.00pm Vigil Mass on the Saturday evening and before the end of Mass, homes and families will be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus and people will have an opportunity to enrol in the Brown Scapular. The special Statue will leave St Patrick's Cathedral after the Mass on that evening.

This year marks the 100th anniversary since Our Lady first appeared in Fatima, Portugal on 13 May 1917. The apparitions continued once until 13 Oct 1917. The Vatican has confirmed that the Holy Father Pope Francis will travel to Fatima to mark the centenary of the apparitions.

The Alliance of the Two Hearts, Ireland is a branch of the Alliance of the Holy Family International. Formed in 1990, the Alliance of the Holy Family International (AHFI) is a movement of youth, family, clergy, and media practitioners who organised themselves to promote the Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, not only as a devotion, but also as a way of life.

## **Belfast rabbi's book to introduce Judaism to synagogue visitors**

Belfast Synagogue is launching a book about basic Judaism to help educate the many visitors that regularly tour their centre of worship, The News Letter reports.

The book – Judaism, a brief outline – is intended to give an overview of the Jewish religion and is written by Rabbi David Singer, who was born in Birmingham and spent some 30 years in Jerusalem before becoming rabbi of the Belfast Jewish community.

He told the News Letter: “This is a book about basic Judaism. At the synagogue we have a very diverse range of visitors, ranging from junior and senior school groups, students of theology and church and historical groups.



***Rabbi David Singer at the Belfast Synagogue on Somerton Road, where he has launched a new book on Basic Judaism***

“Their aim is generally to see the synagogue or understand more about Judaism.”

So the book was written to address the many questions such visitors regularly ask during their tours.

“I don’t lead every tour, mainly when they are more theologically based, so the book will be useful for everyone taking part in such events.”



Mr Singer said that he had not seen anything else that was particularly suitable for the purpose.

The book, which is 28 pages long, contains chapters on the definition of the Jewish faith, its monthly calendar, the Hebrew language, synagogues, Jewish prayer, Judaism in the home, objects and dress, rites of passage, signs and symbols, the different streams of Judaism, leadership and roles in Judaism and the role of women in Judaism.

### **Belfast Jewish community reviewing security after hate messages**

Belfast Telegraph

[http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/jewish-community-reviewing-security-after-hate-messages-35458575.html?utm\\_source=ipad\\_share&utm\\_medium=ipad\\_app&utm\\_campaign=clickbacks](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/jewish-community-reviewing-security-after-hate-messages-35458575.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks)

## **Corrymeela seminar on exploring the Benedictine tradition**

The Corrymeela Community on 28 February 2017 will host a seminar on “The Power of Servant Leadership in Benedictine Spirituality”



Benedict is known for writing the major “Rule” of monastic life, a rule that, 1500 years after its authorship, continues to be influential in monastic communities globally. Eva Grosman from the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building will speak on this topic. Eva is a noted and celebrated citizen of Belfast, writing about peace, diverse identity in Belfast, leadership and dialogue.

The “Spirituality and Power Seminars” are a series of seminars run by Corrymeela, usually on the last Tuesday of each month, at Corrymeela’s offices in Belfast, 83 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HP.

They run from 4pm–5.30pm and will feature a speaker who will present some reflections on the topic of Power and Spirituality.

The seminars are free, but are you welcome to make a donation if you choose.

If you are coming along, please let the organisers know, either email [belfast@corrymeela.org](mailto:belfast@corrymeela.org) or call 028 9050 8080, tea and coffee will be provided.

## **Donegal Parish Church to reopen following lightning strike**

Donegal Parish Church is to reopen on Sunday week after being closed for two months because of a Christmas Day lightning strike. Significant damage was caused inside and outside the church when the building was hit by lightning during a violent storm.

“We’re pleased the repair work is nearing completion,” the Rector, Ven. David Huss says, “and we’re really looking forward to getting back into the church.” Archdeacon Huss says the cost of the repair work came to around €20,000. “Thankfully it’s covered by our insurance,” he revealed. “The church had to be completely rewired and we’ve had to replace our sound system. We’ve also had to tidy up the destruction that was caused by the lightning strike.”

Electrical circuits and sockets were blown out during the incident on Christmas evening; floodlights were smashed and bricks were blasted from path walls leading up to the church door.

“Thanks to the hard work of our parishioners and the efficiency of our contractors we’ll be able to move into the church again on Sunday week,” Archdeacon Huss says. “We’ve been enjoying having our services in the parish hall, but it’s been a bit of a squeeze. So we’re really looking forward to getting back in, and getting a bit more space again. I’m anticipating a great atmosphere at our Thanksgiving and Reopening Service.”

The service, which will begin at 11am on Sunday 26th of February, will be a combined family service for the whole group of parishes.

## **Former sexton of Dublin church and school ordered to leave her home of 35 years**

THE former sexton and caretaker of St Catherine’s and St James’s church and school, Dublin, was today given just under a fortnight to

quit the house in which she has been living for the past 35 years, Ray Manage reports in The Irish Independent, February 17.

Barrister Ruth Cannon told the Circuit Civil Court that the Representative Body of The Church of Ireland had provided Eileen Walsh with a tenancy of 90 Elford Terrace, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8 in 1982.

Ms Cannon told Judge Jacqueline Linnane that the church body had made an application to the Residential Tenancies Board's dispute resolution service in late 2011 and had been granted a termination order against Ms Walsh.

David Ritchie, chief officer and secretary of the representative church body, stated in an affidavit that on 2nd September 2011 notice had been served on Ms Walsh terminating her employment on notice. She had been told her occupation of 90 Elford Terrace was dependent on her being sexton and caretaker of St Catherines and St James's Church and school.

Mr Ritchie said an adjudication hearing had taken place and an order terminating the tenancy had been made by the Tenancies Board and served on Ms Walsh by the landlord in September 2011.

Ms Cannon said the Tenancies Board had directed Ms Walsh and all persons residing in the dwelling, including her son David, to vacate and give up possession of the property. In 2015 Ms Walsh had appealed on a number of issues including that Dean Robert McCarthy was then no longer in office and no longer an agent authorised to act on behalf of the church body.

Judge Linnane heard that a tenancies appeal tribunal had upheld the Board's decision as valid and directed that Ms Walsh and all residents should leave within 56 days.

Ms Cannon said this period was now well expired and since Ms Walsh had not appealed further to the High Court and had continued to fail to comply with the terms of the termination the church body was asking the court to enforce the order.

Judge Linnane directed that the Tenancies Board determination of November 2015 be enforced and ordered Ms Walsh and her son, and anyone else in occupation, to vacate within 10 days of service of her order on them.

The judge also granted the church body an order for possession. She refused to make an order for legal costs against Ms Walsh.

## County Armagh school children's singing has papal approval

Children from a County Armagh school have been given the opportunity to sing in one of the world's most historic venues., BBC NI News reports.

Pupils from St Paul's High School in Bessbrook are currently visiting Rome, to mark the school's 50th anniversary.

On Thursday, they sang at a Mass in St Peter's Basilica, Rome, which Catholics believe is the burial place of Saint Peter.

Headmaster Jarlath Burns who is on the trip said it was an "amazing opportunity" for the children.

The children range from school years 9-14.

The school's director of music, Colm Murphy, is passionate about choral music and it was through his connections as organist at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh that the school was able to get such an opportunity.

It is a kind of pilgrimage for the school - in its 50th year the children will also be singing at its namesakes church - St Paul's Basilica.



### ***St Peter's Basilica, Rome***

Mr Burns says both travel and music take a high priority at the school.

"As a school we love to give the children opportunity to travel, get them on planes and broaden their minds with new experiences.

"The children realise how lucky they are. Before the Mass started today, I said: 'Do you realise you have reached the pinnacle of your careers?'

"Many dedicated singers never get a chance like this".

The choir will also be singing at the Basilica of St Paul, at the Pontifical Irish College and the Archbasilica of St John Lateran.



You can see longer clips of the children singing on [Jarlath Burns' Twitter page](#).

## **Never-seen-before analysis of NI charity sector released by Commission**

Northern Ireland's charity regulator has today released a report which reveals previously unknown details about Northern Ireland's charity sector, to mark three years of charity registration.

The report, compiled from the registration details of charities gathered since 2013, reveals that:

### **Income**

- Combined income of charities registered to date stands at just over £1billion – around 10% of the money available to devolved government
- 72% of NI charities have an income of £100,000 or less
- One-third have an income of £10,000 or less, and 24% have an income of £5,000 or less
- The top 20% of charities by income account for 88% of combined charity income.



## Geography

- County Antrim is home to the most charities - despite having only 34% of the population, it is home 44% of charities
- 45% of NI-registered charities work in their local area only. Only 8% work internationally.

## Purposes

- Half of charities here work to benefit the whole public rather than address the needs of a specific section
- 57% of our charities exist to advance education. 28% exist to advance religion. 2% exist to advance animal welfare.

## Beneficiaries

- 345 charities (7%) list ‘interface communities’ as one of their beneficiary groups
- 213 charities (4%) exist to help ex-offenders and prisoners

## **Governance**

- There is an equitable gender split among governance volunteers with 50.1% males and 49.9% females making up Northern Ireland’s charity trustees
- 63% of charity trustees are aged over 50, with 5% of charity trustees being under the age of 30.

While the registration process is ongoing, with 5,300 charities registered out of an estimated total of between 11,000 and 17,500, the information currently held by the Commission provides never-before available information about Northern Ireland’s charity sector.

Commission Chief Executive Frances McCandless said:

“Charity registration has enabled us to put together this previously unseen picture of charities in Northern Ireland, revealing the extent to which charities operate here, their income, their governance, and their focus.

“We hope that the report can be of use to the sector, to the general public and to government.”

## **20161219 The Northern Ireland register of charities - three years on..pdf**

Download [PDF \(1.33 Mb\)](#)

## **News briefs & Upcoming events**

### **+++ Retirements in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory**

- Two clergy retirements have been announced in the Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. The Reverend Martin Hilliard, rector of Kells Union of Parishes with Inistioge, will retire on Easter Day and The Reverend Canon Roger Harmsworth, rector of Killane Union of Parishes, will retire on July 1st.

### **+++ Heritage Sunday at Belfast Mission to**

**Seafarers** - is hosting another Heritage Sunday event on February 26, organised in association with Belfast Hidden Tours. Events get underway at 11am with a walking tour of Sailortown with guide, Historian John Gray. This will be followed by lunch and then ‘The Belfast Story,’ a show telling the history of Belfast through traditional Irish music and dance with a contemporary twist, and featuring dancers from *Riverdance*. The Mission to Seafarers is based at the Flying

Angel Centre, Princes Dock Street, Belfast, BT1 3AA. Tickets for this event, which must be booked in advance, are £15 for adults and £7 for under 16s. Please contact Doreen on 028 9075 1131 or email [doreen@missiontoseafarers-ni.org](mailto:doreen@missiontoseafarers-ni.org).

### **+++ Willowfield Youth worker vacancy -**

Willowfield Church are seeking to employ an enthusiastic Youth Worker who will work alongside the Youth Coordinator and team of volunteers.

[Click here to download the Job Description and Personal Specification.](#)

[Click here to download the Application form.](#)

To Apply: Download and complete the above application form and return it to [dave@willowfieldchurch.co.uk](mailto:dave@willowfieldchurch.co.uk) or by post to: Dave Bradshaw, Willowfield Church Office 330 – 332 Woodstock Road, Belfast, BT6 9DP. Closing Date: 5pm on Friday 10 March, 2017. Interviews are being held on Thursday 16 March

### **+++ Annual Derry Mass for those with Special**

**Needs** - The Annual Diocesan Mass for those with special needs, and their families and friends, will take place in Saint Joseph's Church, Galliagh, Derry on Saturday 6th May 2017 at 2.00pm. Bishop McKeown will celebrate the

Mass. If you have a child who wishes to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation or First Communion at this Mass please contact the Catechetical Centre, The Gate Lodge, Francis Street on (028) 71264087.

**+++ Warm Ugandan welcome for Lisburn parish team** - The team from Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, currently working at St Apollo School, Diocese of Luwero, Uganda, is settled in well after a warm welcome. The men in the group have made tables and benches and the team is helping out at the school in terms during mealtimes and joining in sporting activities. The 12 strong team will be in Uganda until their return on February 24.

**+++ C of E clergy to work past 70** - Senior Church of England ministers look set to be allowed to work beyond 70, as its General Synod voted on the issue for the first time amid concerns about a shortage of clergy. The C of E faces a [recruitment crisis](#) as hundreds of ministers are due to retire over the next decade and there is not enough younger staff to replace them. See - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/12/church-england-ministers-could-work-beyond-age-70-ease-recruitment/>

