



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Bert and Ernie, gay marriage, and feeding sectarian tensions with cake



I have always been a little suspicious of the idea that Bert and Ernie from Sesame Street are a gay couple. I mean, I wouldn't be surprised or concerned if they were – I'd be very happy for them.

Padraig Reidy, Telegraph - But the status seems to have been foisted upon them. It's not surprising. Liberals love Sesame Street – it's where we would all like to live (I think Stoke Newington Church Street is the nearest real life example, at least that I've been to), and our ideal neighbourhood would feature a happy, monogamous gay couple. So we've decided for Bert and Ernie.

But I've always preferred to think of the two not as a romantic pairing, but as a puppet Odd Couple, Lemmon and Matthau made felt, bound together in a Sartrean hell by a combination of bad choices, high city rents and fear of dying alone.

Regardless of the true nature of their relationship (which I suppose only Jim Henson really knows), Bert and Ernie have become icons of the movement for gay marriage, particularly in the year since the New Yorker magazine

celebrated the US's moves towards legalising same-sex matrimony this time last year with a [wonderfully cute cover image](#) of the two snuggling on the sofa.

That, then, was New York: fast forward one year to Newtownabbey, County Antrim, where local bakery chain Ashers has come over all Oscar-the-Grouch over another image of the supposedly married muppets.

The bakery's Belfast branch was reportedly approached recently by LGBT activist Gareth Lee, who requested they decorate a cake with a picture of the Sesame Street cohabitants and the slogan "Support Gay Marriage". [According to a video interview](#) with Ashers' general manager Duncan Arthur released by the Christian Institute, staff and management at the bakery discussed the order and decided it would go against the company's Christian ethos to supply the cake. Mr Lee was informed and refunded.

But then, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, seemingly following up on a complaint by Mr Lee, wrote to Ashers warning that the company was breaching the 2006 Equality Act regulations on service provision and telling them they had seven days to remedy the situation, or else face court action.

The bakery has decided to stand its ground, and has called in the Christian Institute for support.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/padraigreidy/100279098/bert-and-ernie-gay-marriage-and-feeding-sectarian-tensions-with-cake/>

Legal action: Christian bakers in gay campaign cake row

The Christian Institute - A Christian-run bakery in Northern Ireland is facing legal action after it declined to produce a pro-gay marriage campaign cake.

The McArthur family, who own Ashers Baking Company in the Belfast area, said they could not fulfil the order because it conflicts with their Christian beliefs about marriage being between a man and a woman.

<http://www.christian.org.uk/news/legal-action-christian-bakers-in-gay-campaign-cake-row/?e070414>

'Gay cake' row could end up in court

BBC - A Northern Ireland bakery that refused a customer's request to make a cake with a slogan supporting gay marriage could face legal action.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-28206581>

News Letter - Can we have our cake and eat it when it comes to equality and diversity?

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/gay-cake-row-can-we-have-our-cake-and-eat-it-when-it-comes-to-equality-and-diversity-1-6166065>

Video: 'Gay' cake row baker unrepentant

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/video-gay-cake-row-baker-unrepentant-1-6165228>

Church response to Belfast school incident

A Statement has been issued by the Diocese of Down and Connor in response to media inquiries regarding St Colm's High School, Belfast -

"The Diocese of Down and Connor was surprised to learn this morning from an article published in The Irish News that the DUP Education spokesperson Mervyn Storey MLA has written to Bishop Noel Treanor in reference to Gaeltacht Scholarships offered to two pupils from St Colm's High School, Twinbrook. Such bursaries being part of the usual school life, neither the diocese nor Bishop Treanor were consulted in advance. As of Tuesday evening 8th July, Bishop Treanor has not received this letter. Bishop Treanor will seek clarification and information from the Board of Governors before giving any further comment."

News paper reports stated that Irish language certificates highlighting Bobby Sands were presented. In todays News Letter there is an extensive report

and a statement by Danny Kinahan, MLA, education spokesman for the Unionist Party.

St Luke's Home Presents Final Instalment of €1 million to Marymount Hospice in Cork

Five years ago, when the new Marymount University Hospital and Hospice in Cork was being built on its new site at Curraheen, County Cork, Bishop Paul Colton asked the directors of Saint Luke's Home in Cork to donate €1 million to the project, and they readily agreed.



On behalf of St Luke's Home, Cork, Dr Paul Colton, Bishop of Cork (right) presents the final instalment of a €1 million donation to Marymount University Hospital and Hospice, Cork to the Marymount Chairman, Professor Cillian Twomey.

The final instalment of that promised €1 million gift was paid recently. Bishop Colton, chairperson of Saint Luke's, was invited by the chairperson of Marymount, Professor Cillian Twomey, to visit the Saint Luke's Home Day Care Unit at the Hospice which was built using the gift from Saint Luke's. Also present were the CEOs of the two charities: Mr David O'Brien, CEO, Saint Luke's and Mr Dan Philpott, CEO, Marymount.

Bishop Colton, who chairs Saint Luke's Boards, but is also one of the Patrons of the Friends of Marymount, said:

These two charities - one Roman Catholic, and the other Protestant – were founded in the same era, Marymount in 1870 and Saint Luke's in 1872. For many years they worked alongside each other on opposite sides of the street at Military Hill in Cork. This gift, I believe, is a significant symbol of a new era, established over recent decades, of ecumenical cooperation and practical partnership in healthcare expertise between our two caring institutions which nowadays care for everyone regardless of background or faith perspective. Between the two, we employ about 580 people in the Cork region (300 at

Marymount and 280 at Saint Luke's). Last time I visited this part of Marymount it was a building site. Today it is wonderful to see the Saint Luke's Day Care Unit up and running: a sign of our work together as two leading charities here in Cork and the wider region.

A full public inquiry into institutional sex abuse needed - Bishop of Durham

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, Chair of the Churches National safeguarding committee, made the following comments to the *Press Association* in response to Home Secretary Theresa May's [announcement](#) yesterday that there will be two inquiries into alleged child abuse and cover up in Westminster in the 1970s and 80s.

The Hillsborough-style inquiry, not expected to report until after the General Election next year, is likely to investigate all institutions, including the Church, about their 'duty of care to protect children'.

***Press Association* report and interview**

A full public inquiry into institutional sex abuse needs to take place or the whole truth might not come out, the Bishop of Durham has said.

The Right Rev Paul Butler said he believed the country has a problem with this kind of abuse and it is important that victims have their stories heard and they receive justice.

He also acknowledged that the process of investigating such abuse could highlight unpleasant and difficult stories from within the church.

"We're really pleased there's been quite a shift and that an inquiry is now taking place," he said.

"Over a month ago the Archbishop of Canterbury, with support of Cardinal Nichols and the president of the Methodist Church, wrote to the Home Secretary saying a full public inquiry is required into institutional child abuse, which I followed up in the House of Lords a few days ago.

"A full public inquiry is required because under those terms people have to take oaths and therefore swear to tell the truth. My fear is the whole story won't come out without that.

"We're absolutely clear that the Church of England and other churches need to be involved in this inquiry as we already know there are parts of our history that involve church people having committed abuse.

"So we have to be investigated just like anybody else and there will probably be some unpleasant and difficult stories to handle and I accept that's part of the reality.

"We think there is a real problem around institutional abuse, so schools, civil service, police, politicians and the church, we need to try and get to the bottom of why people can get into institutions and use those institutions as a safe place to abuse.

"Victim survivors need justice and they need their story to be heard and, as a nation, we need to help them to move on."

Kincora: Time we knew full truth of Belfast's house of horrors

Kincora: the name became a byword for depraved sex attacks on children in care. Is the scandal that threatened to bring the political establishment here crashing down finally about to give up its secrets 35 years on?

Ivan Little in Belfast Telegraph - ... "But, bit by bit, the drip-feed of disclosures turned from a trickle to a torrent. One of the Kincora officials, McGrath, was a prominent Orangeman who had once boasted in the papers that he was learning Irish. But he was also believed to have been involved in a little-known paramilitary organisation called Tara, made up of fanatical Protestant extremists.

McGrath was also linked to a number of mainstream loyalists and it was rumoured there were influential political figures who were among the low-lives involved in the child sex ring associated with Kincora.

It was alleged that McGrath was an MI5 agent, whose sexual assaults were covered up.

Senior military figures claimed that the RUC knew about the abuse at Kincora for years.

But it was only after Belfast journalist Peter McKenna exposed the '[Sex Racket At Children's Home](#)' in the Irish Independent in January 1980 that any official action was taken.

The cover-up was said to have gone right to the top. Sir Maurice Oldfield, a former head of MI6, was reportedly seen by his Special Branch protection officers associating with boys from Kincora.

Another name mentioned in relation to Kincora was that of Red Hand Commando leader John McKeague, who was shot dead by the INLA in Belfast in January 1982 shortly after reports that he had been interviewed by police about the sex abuse at the boys' home.

A unionist councillor, Joss Cardwell, took his own life in 1983 after he was questioned by police. He was chairman of a council welfare committee and said he had statutory visiting responsibilities in relation to care homes. The Rev Ian Paisley was accused of failing to report McGrath's abuse to police....
More at

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/kincora-time-we-knew-full-truth-of-belfasts-house-of-horrors-30416227.html>

Expert Group on Provision of Hospital Chaplaincy in Dublin and Glendalough

A new group has been set up to address issues of chaplaincy in hospitals in Dublin and Glendalough.

The group is to explore models of chaplaincy nationally and internationally and will make recommendations for sustainable provision of chaplaincy to in-patients and staff.

The expert group's membership includes the Archdeacon of Dublin, the Ven David Pierpoint, Dr Melissa Webb, Mrs Joan Kirk, Canon Robert Warren, Canon David Moynan, the Revd Eugene Griffin and Canon Daniel Nuzum (as consultant to the group).

Members have been invited to think radically about chaplaincy provision in the United Dioceses and will report to Diocesan Councils by June 2015 at the latest.

The group was set up by Archbishop Michael Jackson after concerns were expressed over the provision of chaplaincy in some hospitals. He said that

the provision of appropriate care and chaplaincy of those who are working in hospitals and of those who are patients in hospitals was a priority.

“The expansion of healthcare provision throughout the Dublin area has brought an urgent need for a review of such provision made by the Church of Ireland in these United Dioceses, both in larger and in smaller hospitals. It is essential that we do this sensitive work in line with the very best of contemporary care and practice and with the safety of the vulnerable as of paramount importance. I wish to thank all those who have agreed to serve on this group and to wish them well in the vital work which they have undertaken,” the Archbishop stated.

Archdeacon Pierpoint is Vicar of the Christ Church Cathedral Group of Parishes and has an understanding of hospital management through his membership of the board of Tallaght Hospital and the needs of healthcare staff through multiple hospital chaplaincies. This extends to the Gardai, the Legal Profession and to Government ministers and their families and staff.

Canon Daniel Nuzum is an accredited Healthcare Chaplain working at Cork University Hospital and Marymount University Hospice. Daniel has a specialist interest in perinatal ministry and palliative care and has presented and published research in this area. Daniel is a PhD student in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University College Cork. As a professional chaplain Daniel is a member of the Chaplaincy Accreditation Board, a former member of the executive of the National Association of Healthcare Chaplains and engages locally, nationally and internationally in the

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field of chaplaincy.

Dr Melissa Webb is Vice President and a member of the board of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin. She is a former Chairman of the board of the National Children's Hospital and a board member of Tallaght Hospital (AMNCH). She has a special interest in patient and staff care and in nursing and midwifery.

Canon David Moynan served Curacies in Seagoe Parish (Dromore) and Taney Parish (Dublin) and was Rector of Arklow, Kilbride and Inch (Glendalough) before becoming Rector of Kilternan (Dublin) in 1994. He was assistant chaplain in Craigavon Area Hospital from 1986 to 1988 and has been Assistant Chaplain in St Columcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown since 1996. He is also chaplain to Kilternan Care Centre and believes in the importance of pastoral visiting of those who are ill, preparing for hospital or convalescing as well as the supportive value of visiting people in hospital and the value of hospital chaplains in a patient's wholeness, wellbeing and healing.

The Revd Eugene Griffin has been appointed as curate of the Castleknock with Mulhuddart and Clonsilla parish group and will commence his curacy in September 2014. He wrote his dissertation on the subject of clergy, grief and bereavement. Prior to his ordination as a deacon, Eugene was an accountant in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Dublin. Alongside his work as an accountant, he was also a support contact person for the HSE's anti-bullying initiative 'Dignity in the workplace', worked with the Irish Hospice Association on 'end of life' issues and was an active member of a committee which wrote the hospital's handbook on staff bereavement. Eugene is a former auditor with the Comptroller and Auditor General where he worked primarily on audits of the health sector.

Mrs Joan Kirk is a member of Dublin and Glendalough Diocesan Councils. She qualified as a nurse in 1971 having trained in the Adelaide Hospital. She was commissioned as a Diocesan Lay Reader 1996. In 2006 she was commissioned as chaplain for St John's House. She also helped with chaplaincy in St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin for approximately four years starting in 2002.

Canon Robert Warren was Curate-assistant in Limerick City Parish from 1978 to 1981, Rector of Adare Union of Parishes (Limerick) from 1981 to 1988 and Rector of Tralee Union of parishes (Ardfert) from 1988 to 2012 when he became Rector of Taney Parish (Dublin). He was Diocesan Secretary of Limerick and Killaloe from 2002 to 2012 and Archdeacon of Limerick and Ardfert from 2008 to 2012. He has been a Canon of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, since 2004. He was chaplain to Limerick Regional Hospital

from 1978 to 1981, Croom Orthopaedic Hospital from 1981 to 1988, Kerry General Hospital from 1988 to 2012, Bon Secours Hospital, Tralee, from 1988 to 2012 and is currently chaplain to the Beacon Hospital in Sandyford.

Compulsory Christian school assembly should be scrapped – Church of England education chief



Bishop of Oxford says compulsory collective worship belongs in the 1940s and should make way for ‘spiritual reflection’.

The 70-year-old legal requirement for schools to include an act of collective worship in assembly should be dropped because of the decline of Christianity in Britain, the Church of England’s head of education has said.

The Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Rev John Pritchard, said schools should still have to make time for “spiritual reflection” containing elements of Christianity and the other major religions.

But he said compulsory participation in collective “worship” was more suited to the 1940s, could actively put people off religion and is meaningless to people who do not believe.

Under the 1944 Education Act schools are legally obliged to stage acts of collective worship “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”. There are separate arrangements for Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh faith schools.

Last week the National Governors’ Association, which represents more than 300,000 school governors across England, [called for the rule to be abolished](#) for all non-religious schools.

It said the law is [already being widely ignored](#), because of a lack of space or availability of staff willing or able to lead worship.

Bishop Pritchard, who as chair of the Church of England’s Board of Education is responsible for the teaching of around a million children in Anglican schools, as well as speaking for the Church on education in the Lords, said a change in the law could be “liberating” for schools and churches alike.

“I think in the 1940s when all of this was put together it was possible to say that collective worship represented the mood of the nation but I don’t think that is where we are now,” he told The Daily Telegraph. More at -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10951894/Compulsory-Christian-school-assembly-should-be-scrapped-Church-of-England-education-chief.html>