



## The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

### Irish Catholic Bishops welcome Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes

Yesterday, on the second day of its Summer General Meeting, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has published the following

**statement welcoming the announcement by Government of a Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes:**

We welcome the announcement today of a statutory Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland.

The harrowing story which is continuing to emerge of life and death in Mother and Baby homes has shocked the people of Ireland. It is disturbing that the residents of these Homes suffered disproportionately high levels of mortality and malnutrition, disease and destitution.

Sadly we are being reminded of a time when unmarried mothers were often judged, stigmatised and rejected by society, including the Church. This



*Prior to the government announcement, Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin had called for 'full-bodied investigation' into all mother-and-baby homes. He said that any investigation needs to ensure that the culture that existed in past has been stamped out.*

culture of isolation and social ostracising was harsh and unforgiving. The Gospel calls us to treat everyone, particularly children and the most vulnerable, with dignity, love, compassion and mercy. We must ensure that all children and their mothers always feel wanted, welcomed and loved. Mindful of the words of Jesus, 'Let the little children come to me, because it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs', we apologise for hurt caused by the Church as part of this system.

It is important that the Commission, and all of us, approach these matters with compassion, determination and objectivity. We need to find out more about what this period in our social history was really like and to consider the legacy it has left us as a people. Above all we need to enable those who were directly affected to receive recognition and appropriate support. We therefore welcome the Government's intention that the Commission of Investigation will have the necessary legal authority to examine all aspects of life in the Homes. The Investigation should inquire into how these Homes were funded and, crucially, how adoptions were organised, processed and followed up.

We also support the Irish Government's intention to publish legislation on 'tracing' rights for adopted children and their mothers with due regard to the rights of all involved. The Investigation could seek to establish a clear and straightforward method for 'tracing' and put in place the necessary resources to assist those who are searching for their parents or children.

To facilitate progress in the Investigation we encourage all those who had any responsibility for setting up, running or overseeing the Homes or adoption agencies to gather any documentation or information that might be of assistance. We will continue to work at a local level to ensure that burial sites are appropriately marked so that the deceased and their families will be recognised with dignity and never be forgotten.

We ask for prayers for all who are personally affected in any way.

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/06/10/statement-of-the-irish-catholic-bishops-conference-welcoming-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes/>

SEE ALSO -

**Babies were 'inferior sub-species' - News Letter**

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/babies-were-inferior-sub-species-1-6110689>

**Midwife's memoir reveals the horror of Bessborough - Irish Examiner**

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/midwifersquos-memoir-reveals-the-horror-of-bessborough-271158.html>

**‘When they took away my baby, they took away my life’ - Irish Examiner**

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/lsquowhen-they-took-away-my-baby-they-took-away-my-lifersquo-271456.html>

## **Include Bethany Home in Government Mother and baby inquiry - C of I Archbishop**

**Following last week’s announcement that an interdepartmental group was to be set up by the Government to look into the issue of mother and baby homes, the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr**



**Michael Jackson, wrote to the Taoiseach, having previously written to the Minister for Education, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Children, asking that the Bethany Home be included in any such inquiry.**

In his letter of Thursday 5 June, Dr Jackson also urged the Taoiseach to consider the possibility of marking such grave sites, similar to the memorial provided by the Department of Justice for the Bethany Home in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin. He said he felt that this initiative has helped address some of the pastoral needs of relatives of those who died as well as the ongoing needs of others concerned with the home.

While it was run by an independent trust, the Bethany Home is often referred

to as the Protestant home. As the leader of the largest Protestant church in the State, Archbishop Jackson has taken a pastoral interest in the issue and has sought to provide pastoral support for those who have been associated with the home.

## SEE ALSO

### **Bethany Home, Evangelical Christians, Intolerance and the Orange Order - Blog**

<http://bocktherobber.com/2013/07/bethany-home-evangelical-christians-intolerance-and-the-orange-order/>

## **British and Irish Churches Unite for World Blood Donor Day: 14 June**



IT'S NATIONAL BLOOD WEEK

**TXT FAB BLOOD  
TO 62323**

TO REGISTER AS A BLOOD DONOR

**To mark this year's National Blood Week and World Blood Donor Day on 14th June, churches across Britain and, for the first time, Ireland are being encouraged, as part of the fleshandblood campaign, to raise the profile of blood donation in their local communities by registering as donors, donating together and taking up the challenge to become 'donor churches'.**

The **fleshandblood campaign** celebrated its newest associate just in time for National Blood Week with the Church of Ireland joining the growing list of denominations and organisations committed to the long term advocacy of

donation. Meeting in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, the General Synod of the Church of Ireland voted unanimously to join the campaign to a response of spontaneous applause.

In his Presidential address the Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Richard Clarke said: 'The Church is an organism that is characterised by its giving nature; its people who are characterised by being giving people. The fleshandblood campaign comes straight to our understanding of the human person as gift, and even of the human body in death, as potential gift for others.'

As a corporate act of generosity, the campaign is encouraging communities and congregations to register as blood donors this week by visiting [www.fleshandblood.org/blood/register](http://www.fleshandblood.org/blood/register).

In addition to new registrations, existing blood donors are being asked to book a date to donate blood. A survey, conducted by Christian Research on behalf of fleshandblood found that 10% of Christians have given blood in the last year compared to 4% of the general population who have given blood in the last two years.

Local churches are also being provided with practical tools and ideas to promote donation through the 'Church Challenge' [www.fleshandblood.org/churchchallenge](http://www.fleshandblood.org/churchchallenge), with those taking part receiving personalised certificates signed by the Chief Executive of NHS Blood and Transplant, Lynda Hamlyn.

The Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church said, 'This is an exciting opportunity for churches to become long term advocates of blood donation in their local communities. By raising awareness, encouraging discussion and providing ways to give they could play a significant role in transforming the lives of others through donation.'

Sponsored by Give.net and in association with denominations, organisations and festivals including the Church of England, The Salvation Army, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church, Baptist Union, Church In Wales, Church of Ireland, Church of Scotland, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Hope and Evangelical Alliance, the **fleshandblood campaign** marks the first time the NHS has worked alongside the church on a national initiative of this kind.

Every blood donation saves or improves the lives of up to three people. In general, as long as you are fit and healthy, weigh over 7 stone 12 lbs (50kg) and are aged between 17 and 66 (up to 70 if you have given blood before) you should be able to give blood. If you are over 70, you need to have given blood in the last two years to continue donating.



*For more information about the fab Church Challenge visit:*

[www.fleshandblood.org/churchchallenge](http://www.fleshandblood.org/churchchallenge) or contact [info@fleshandblood.org](mailto:info@fleshandblood.org)

Twitter: @fleshandblood Facebook: fleshandblooduk

## Finale of Armagh Cathedral Organ recital series

**The programme of organ recitals in memory of Dean Herbert Cassidy will come to an end on Sunday 22 June 2014 at 4.15pm in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh. Music will be provided for this final recital by the Normandale Choir and its brass quintet.**

Director of Worship and Music for the Choir, David Clarke, explained: "Normandale Lutheran Church is a suburban congregation in metropolitan Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota. There are approximately 2,500 members with an average weekly attendance of 800. The music ministry involves over 250 musicians who rehearse weekly in six vocal choirs and 3 instrumental ensembles."



The Chamber Choir of twenty-one singers will sing Evensong in the Cathedral at 3.15pm on the same Sunday. This will be followed by the recital when fifty-five members of the Choir will sing, partly 'a cappella', partly accompanied by their organist. The Normandale Brass Quintet will also contribute to the programme with works by composers such as Morley Calvert and Jay Ungar.

Many of the recital pieces are arranged or composed by Minnesota composers, who have worked with hymns, psalms, bible readings and poetry. This year the Choir commissioned composer, Cary John Franklin, to create a piece entitled 'Grant me, Sweet Christ', based on the poem attributed to the fifth century Irish saint, Manchen of Offaly.

The Dean of Armagh, the Very Revd Gregory Dunstan, said, 'There is something particularly thrilling about the combination of voices and brass. Nomandale's concert programme will bring to a fitting climax this programme of recitals in memory of Dean Herbie Cassidy. We are delighted to welcome them to the Cathedral, and to thank all those who have contributed so very generously to this series.'

As with all the recitals in this memorial series, admission is free, with a retiring collection towards the maintenance of the Cathedral's fabric. To date, donations have amounted to over £1,500.

## **US organist and choirmaster to give masterclass in Magheralin**

**On Sunday 10 August Magheralin Parish will welcome Mr. Gary Gordon as their guest organist and choirmaster.**

He will play at 11.30 am Morning Prayer on that day, as well as providing a [masterclass](#) for the choir, and leading a hymn-sing for the evening service. As a concert artist, award-winning educator, and worship leader, Gary uses his unique and diverse set of musical skills to uplift all.



Gary has performed in musical tours of Australia, Israel, Africa, Germany, Holland, Poland, and most recently China. For 23 years he has served as a music director, choirmaster, and organist from the local parish level to the diocesan level. For 14 of these years he also taught music at prestigious Anglican primary and secondary schools. His students have garnered top honors in local and national competitions.

Gary holds two degrees in music, including a master's degree in vocal performance, and currently is pursuing his third degree in organ performance. Since 1995 he has made Texas his home, while he is a native of Maryland near Washington, D.C..

Magheralin Parish warmly invites those who love to sing to a Choral Masterclass and a hymn-sing with a guest choirmaster/organist from the USA in August.

The masterclass will take place at Church of the Holy & Undivided Trinity in Magheralin on Tuesday 5 August at 7.30 pm.

The hymn-sing will be held in the church on Sunday 10 August at 8.00 pm. A freewill offering will be collected at both events.

## **The Mix - a PCI young adults event**

**The Mix is a new event for young adults (18-30) to meet others their own age and an opportunity to bring along friends who aren't Christians.**

This is a Tag Rugby and Ultimate Frisbee competition for young adults (aged 18-30).

All players play Tag Rugby for half of the afternoon and Ultimate Frisbee for the other half.

There will be a barbeque during the afternoon and a short evangelistic presentation.



Registration from 12 noon, Kick Off at 1pm and BBQ from 3pm

Teams should be made up of 5-8 members; at least one member must be female.



**Venue:** Magherafelt High School **Cost:** Team ticket: £60 | Individual ticket: £10 | Spectator ticket: £5

**N.B.** All players and spectators must be over 18 years old with respect to Child Protection guidelines and the Health and Safety of the event.

Closing date for registration Friday, 6th June 2014. Booking forms etc at -

<http://www.presbyterianireland.org/Training-Events/Events/The-Mix-Sports-Event?eventType=2>

## **PCI Missionaries from Dungannon to minister in Italy**

**Alan and Tracey Johnston leave for Italy later this month to serve in ministries near Porto Mantova. Alan and Tracey grew up in Dungannon and met each other in their teens in Dungannon Presbyterian church Christian Endeavour.**

They have served the Lord together in many different ways, such as co-leading Holiday Bible clubs in Dungannon and Elmwood, Lisburn, and co-leading the PCI ignite team to Italy for three years.

Alan was formerly minister of Gilford and Tullylish congregations, before moving to Hazelbank Presbyterian

Church in Coleraine in 2004. Tracey worked for nine years in Wesley Owen / Faith Mission Bookshop in Coleraine.



They have three children, two of whom are young adults and will remain in N Ireland to further their studies. Their youngest son (mid-teens) will be travelling to Mantova to study an International Baccalaureate in Verona International School.

In Italy, Alan and Tracey will be working with [Coram Deo Ministries](#).

Coram Deo are involved in book translation / publication, conferences and church planting.

They will be mainly involved in Coram Deo's first church plant Sola Grazia (Grace Alone) Church, in Porto Mantovano outside Mantova.

Their work will involve preaching, administration, teaching English as foreign language (TEFL), community outreach, and Porto United (sports outreach).

There is a long term desire within Coram Deo to be able to afford to open a coffee shop / bookshop in the centre of Mantova.

Alan and Tracey Johnston were commissioned at a service in Hazelbank Presbyterian Church, Coleraine, on Sunday evening 7th June. They hope to leave for Italy later this month.

## Newcastle Inter-Church Flower Festival

**Last weekend Newcastle was the location of a three day Inter-Church Flower Festival. It was held in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and involved all the main Churches in Newcastle.**

It ran from Friday, June 6, until Pentecost Sunday. The Festival theme was 'The Coming of the Holy Spirit'. This was reflected in the creative floral displays.

The event was the brainchild of Margaret Lavery, an active member of the Parish of Maghera. She opened the festival with a question: 'Have we just died and gone to heaven?' The ensuing laughter encapsulated the communal reaction of the congregation who were stunned by the beauty and magnitude of the displays.



***Bishop Anthony Farquhar, Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr Heather Morris, Methodist President, Dr Donald Watts, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and Bishop Edward Darling, former Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick (representing Bishop Harold Miller)***

Mrs Lavery, Chairperson of the Organising Committee, paid a warm tribute to all those who made the dream a reality: Fr Jim Crudden and Fr Declan Mulligan, the members of other Churches who readily agreed to participate in the project, the sponsors who generously provided financial support and the NI Group of Flower Arrangement Societies (NIGFAS). She singled out the

Group's Chairperson, Joan Magee, Crossgar, who agreed to act as Artistic Director.

Mrs Lavery welcomed Councillor Desmond Patterson, Vice-Chairman, Down District Council, to the opening. She thanked the Council for its generous sponsorship.

The opening ceremony was conducted by Dr Heather Morris, Methodist President, Bishop Edward Darling, former Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick (representing Bishop Harold Miller), Dr Donald Watts, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and Bishop Anthony Farquhar, Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor. Local clergy included Canon Ian Ellis, Church of Ireland, Rev Ken Connor, Methodist, Fr Jim Crudden and Fr Declan Mulligan, Parish of Maghera (Newcastle/Bryansford). Canon Ellis and Rev Connor were accompanied by their wives.

In an inspirational address Dr Heather Morris reflected on the significance of Pentecost: "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you'. We are a 'sent' people. We are challenged to proclaim with joy the Good News to the world. The beauty of the floral displays reminds us of the beauty of God's creation." Dr Morris said that Christians should be confident in their belief that the Holy Spirit is always with us.

The concluding service on Sunday was conducted by local clergy: Canon Ian Ellis, Rev Ken Connor, Rev Robin Quinn and Fr Jim Crudden. The prayers and scriptural passages echoed the theme of Pentecost.

Paddy Shannon, Chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council (Maghera), thanked all who contributed to the success of the Festival. As a member of the organising committee he worked closely with the various Churches in the preparations which resulted in a highly successful event.

A cross community choir led the congregation in the singing of the hymns at the opening and closing ceremonies. The Choir Director was Aveen Doherty. The organist was Dr James Leonard.

The festival was an outstanding success in respect of the quality of the displays, the huge numbers who visited the exhibition and the strengthening of the bond between the Churches. Both Dr Morris and Mrs Lavery emphasised the co-operation between the Church congregations, especially in the organisation of various fund-raising.

The organising Committee is grateful to all those who participated in the fund-raising programme: Our Lady of the Assumption Choir, the Barber Shop

Quartet, the South Down Choral Society and the Inter-Church Community Choir.

The designers who created the imaginative displays to illustrate reflections on the theme of Pentecost were: Mary Knox, Rev William Macmillan MBE, Jackie Catherwood, Elizabeth Rea, Fr Sean McEvoy, Karen Frew, Avril Galloway, Alison Dickson, Betty Hyndman, Doreen Chambers, Hazel Briggs, Joan Magee, Fiona Johnston, Susan Turley, Elaine Taylor, Gertrude Carson, Joan Rutledge, Pauline McCloy, Sally McCurry, Beverley Stevenson, Hilda McClements, Barbara Megarry, Sandra Abbott and Mary Tompsett.

## **Historic Insight - Protestant schools in Eire ‘struggle for cash’**

**Reported in the News Letter on June 7, 1958: Protestant schools in Eire ‘struggle for cash’**

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/reported-in-the-news-letter-on-june-7-1958-protestant-schools-in-eire-struggle-for-cash-1-6097567>