



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Orange Order meets Catholic clergy in Belfast



Senior representatives of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland met Tuesday with a delegation of Catholic clergy in Belfast, including Bishop of Down and Connor, Most Reverend Noel Treanor.

It is the second time this year the Loyal Order has met formally with Catholic Church representatives in the city, having previously held preliminary discussions along with the Royal Black Institution in February.

Among the attendees at the meeting were the Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Edward Stevenson.

Issues discussed included the Haass proposals, parading, and shared concerns regarding child poverty and educational underachievement in the Province.

Both parties agreed the two-hour meeting was beneficial in terms of developing mutual respect and understanding for both traditions, and committed themselves to further engagement.

Bishop Treanor was accompanied by Reverend Timothy Bartlett, Secretary to the Northern Bishops and Reverend Michael Sheehan, Administrator of Saint Patrick's Parish, Donegall Street, Belfast.

Other senior Orange representatives included Deputy Grand Master, Reverend Alistair Smyth; Grand Secretary Drew Nelson; Grand Master of the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast, George Chittick; and Director of Services, Dr David Hume.

Northern Ireland to host landmark Christian event



Hundreds to attend July gathering underlining unity among Christians.

Northern Ireland will play host to the annual summer gathering of Focolare, a Christian movement promoting universal brotherhood, from 2nd–6th July 2014 in Ballycastle, Co Antrim. Entitled “Many Streams–One River”, the gathering will have a strong ecumenical theme.

This year the movement celebrates its fortieth anniversary and according to organisers, the gathering jointly hosted by the Corrymeela Community and Focolare, will be a landmark event in its history in Ireland. The Focolare movement which has the aim of contributing with others to the fulfilment of Jesus’ prayer, ‘that they may all be one’ (Jn. 17:21) arrived in Ireland in the early 1970s.

“Immediately there was the feeling that the spirituality of unity could contribute to peace in Northern Ireland,” recalls Juanita Majury from Belfast, who met the movement at the height of the Troubles. For years a committed community living the spirituality built relationships across community divides. In 2004 a Focolare centre opened in Belfast.

“We see this event as an opportunity to extend the ecumenical circle of Focolare,” said Irene Jovaras from the centre in Belfast, “It will seek to manifest how living Jesus’ New Commandment, *Love one another as I have loved you*, (Jn. 13:34) can bring about a unity beyond all our differences.”

Daily programmes including talks, reflections, outings, workshops, social activities and worship, will take place each day at the Marine Hotel in Ballycastle. Parallel programmes for children and young adults will run at the Corrymeela Centre. Two musicians / dancers from the International



performance group Gen Rosso, will be among the animators of workshops on music and dance for young people.

Hundreds of people from all over Ireland are expected to take part in the event which marks the fortieth anniversary of the first Irish Mariapolis which took place in Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare in 1974.

“The Mariapolis is like a big family holiday – an ever growing family holiday where everyone – young and old – can come together to chat, to think, to relax, to have fun, to take a break.” said Conleth Burns (16) from Ballycastle.

The event is open to all and according to organiser, Irene Jovaras, it is not too late to join the event. “Even at this point, people may book for the Mariapolis or drop in at any stage,” she said.

Among the inter church events will be a joint address by Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick and the Very Rev. John Mann, Dean of St Anne’s Church of Ireland Cathedral, in which they will share their own experiences of the New Commandment.

On Thursday evening, 3rd July, Fr Alan McGuckian SJ and Presbyterian historian, Philip Orr, will present a jointly written play, *1912... 100 years on*, which reveals different perspectives on a pivotal moment in Irish history.

On the evening of Friday 4th July, there will a Service of Prayer for Christian Unity in the Presbyterian Church in Ballycastle.

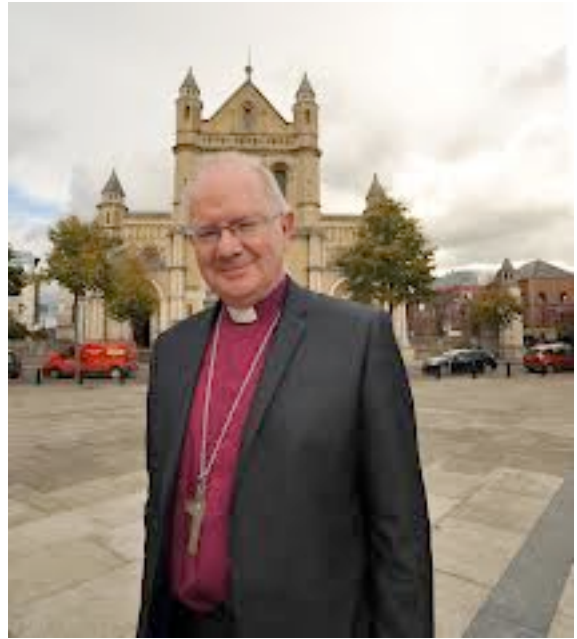
“In an increasingly global, multi–ethnic culture it becomes ever more urgent that Christians go ahead together as brothers and sisters in order to engage in fruitful dialogue with other faith groups to ensure a future of peace without tensions. These summer gatherings are one of many events to bear witness to the faith that such a future is possible,” said Ms Jovaras.

Church Of Ireland Statistics For Mission Announced

During 2013 the Church of Ireland undertook a parish–based Census exercise with a view to enabling dioceses and parishes to plan ahead

for spiritual and numerical growth on an evidential rather than anecdotal basis.

The Census was based on a postal paper questionnaire returned by parishes and average Sunday attendance figures were gathered over three Sundays in November 2013 (excluding Remembrance Sunday). The census figures were analysed and evaluated by Dr Bev Botting, Head of Research and Statistics of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, and presented by Dr Botting to members of the Church of Ireland Standing Committee today.



The figures provide 'first time' baseline statistics and the Census is a useful initial engagement with data collection for mission which will be built upon through further census exercises every three years (with refinements to the survey instrument and mapping likely). In presenting the figures, sincere thanks were expressed to all those who participated in gathering the data, not least clergy and Diocesan Secretaries across the island for their strong commitment to it – the response rate was over 90%.

The most recent national Census statistics in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland show that c.378,000 people claim affiliation with the Church of Ireland – 249,000 in Northern Ireland (13.7% of the 1.8m population) and 129,000 in the Republic of Ireland (2.8% of the 4.6m population). Of these, 72,000 are 'Vestry persons' (resident and accustomed) – 25% of the Church of Ireland population aged 20+.

Average attendance at worship on a 'usual' Sunday, based on the 2013 exercise in November, was 58,000 people – 15% of those reporting as Church of Ireland in the 2011 national Censuses. (Attendance figures by diocese are provided in the Notes below.)

Of those attending worship (November 2013) the proportional distribution by age was: 15% aged 0–11; 7% aged 12–18; 6% aged 19–30; 14% aged 31–45; 19% aged 46–60; 24% aged 61–74 and 15% aged 75+.

Proportional distribution of attendance by gender is 57% Female, 43% Male.

A feature of the data collection was recording attendance at the major Christian Festivals of Christmas Eve/Day and Easter Day. On Christmas Eve/Day 2012 108,000 people attended worship – 29% of the population; on Easter Day 2013, 76,000 people or 20% of the population attended Church of Ireland worship. (The figures for Christmas do not capture celebratory services preceding Christmas Eve/Day.)

The Census also asked for returns on ‘occasional offices’, figures which show the extent to which the Church of Ireland is involved in key milestones in life: based on returns, 3,700 Baptisms; 2,300 Confirmations; 1,300 Weddings and 3,500 Funerals take place in Church of Ireland churches across the island each year.

In welcoming the availability of these new statistics, the Archbishop of Armagh, The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, said ‘As I conveyed in my address to the General Synod last month, we need to think clearly about “long-term” church and how best to make a positive witness and contribution to the community in all parts of Ireland over, say, the next twenty years. It is better to begin this process based on reality rather than wishful thinking. This first-round census data allows us to think about how best to do so, looking to the future by developing strategies based on a realistic assessment of where we stand now. The statistics present the scale of the missional challenge ahead of us, one which we embrace with hope.’

Iraq Crisis Appeal: left with nothing

More than 500,000 men, women and children have fled Mosul and other cities in the north-west in recent days, in fear for their lives.

Christian Aid states - They do not know what fate awaits them, or when they will be able to return home. They urgently need your help now.



Terrified and homeless, families are exposed to searing heat, often without anything to eat or drink. They are heading for a region already severely stretched by refugees escaping the civil war in Syria.

Adrian Ouvry, head of humanitarian programmes at Christian Aid, said: 'This is a crisis on top of a crisis. Large numbers have fled to an area where there is already a serious need as a result of the Syrian conflict.'

'With this new crisis, there is now an even greater need for help.'

If we cannot meet the needs of the impact of hundreds of thousands of people arriving from Mosul and surrounding areas, then the impact could be disastrous.

We are one of the few major agencies already working in Iraq, but we need to urgently step up our response.

With your support we aim to reach 50,000 people with food, water and other essentials.

Hero Anwar is from our partner REACH, which is helping some of the most vulnerable refugee communities.

She told the BBC: 'People cannot stay in a place where they are under threat. They have to flee their homes with nothing. They have nothing and they need basic items just to survive.'

'Because of donors such as Christian Aid we are able to respond.'

The speed with which this crisis is unfolding is frightening. We urgently need your help now. Please give what you can to support our crisis appeal and our crucial work in Iraq:

£21 could buy rice, vegetable oil, beans lentils, tomato paste and salt.

£43 could provide a hygiene kit with soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, wound disinfectant and bandages.

£60 could afford a blanket, mattresses, pillows and a cooking set.

We have been working in Iraq for more than 20 years - find out about [our projects in Iraq](#).

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/whatwedo/middle-east/iraq.aspx>

Cathedral Patronal Service Celebrated Amid the Greenery of Garden Festival

The Patronal Service of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin took place on Sunday last amid ‘a spectacle of flowering and untrammelled fruitfulness’, as the preacher observed.

The service took place on Trinity Sunday, the cathedral being properly titled the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, during the first Dublin Garden Festival which was hosted by Christ Church.

The large congregation, which included many members of the Friends of Christ Church Cathedral whose annual lunch and AGM took place after the service, were seated in lush surroundings complete with trees and shrubs as well as flower arrangements. A portrait of former Dean, the Very Revd Desmond Harmon, painted by Olivia Bartlett was unveiled in the afternoon.

The sermon was preached by the Revd Alan McCormack, the Rector of St Botolph without Bishopsgate in London, who focused on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. He said that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity must first be received as a truth about the whole Creation and the central creativity of God provoking a responsive creativity among those whom he has called into existence. He added that it spoke of God’s creative energy and humankind’s status in the world as a result of its continuous providential deployment.



Bishops Issue Joint Statement In Support Of Community Relations Week

A Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Bishop have issued a joint statement to mark their support for Community Relations Week in the city (16 – 22 June).

Bishop Donal McKeown (Bishop of Derry) and Bishop Ken Good (Derry and Raphoe) stated:



‘The challenge in our community is twofold. It is to strive tirelessly to heal the wounds caused by our violent conflict. It is also to ensure that such conflict never happens again. We can best do this by journeying towards reconciliation, so that a cycle of historic division is broken once and for all in this land.

‘We take seriously the command of Christ, the head of the Church, as told in the story of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). His command to love God above all other allegiances and to love our neighbour as we would ourselves is the path to a future with hope.

‘Differences whether of history, race, religion or politics do not define who our neighbour is. Christ teaches us that every person is our ‘neighbour’ and that we are to find practical ways to ‘love’ them. We renew our Christian

commitment to loving our neighbour in this city – whoever that neighbour may be.

‘As we work for the healing of wounds and reconciliation in our city we recognize and commend the significant work already being done. This is not only by our own members but also through much patient community work.’

McAleese: Pope plan to ask priests about family life ‘bonkers’

Mary McAleese has described the Pope's plan to canvass bishops' opinions on family life as "bonkers".

Irish Independent - Ms McAleese, a two-term President of Ireland, strongly questioned Pope Francis calling a synod to review the Catholic Church's teaching on family life.

She won the backing of the Association of Catholic Priests with some of her comments, which demanded a "new theology of women" instead of an "old boys club".

She said there was "just something profoundly wrong and skewed" about asking clergy for their views when they were all "male celibates".

And the mother-of-three questioned how many people who would be taking part in the gathering had ever changed a baby's nappy.

A world synod of bishops to discuss family life, and whether the church should revise its teachings on the subject, is due to be held in Rome this October.

Ms McAleese questioned the idea of people "who have decided they are not going to have any children, not going to have families, not going to be fathers and not going to be spouses" discussing the matter.

"It is completely bonkers," she said at a public interview following her receipt of UCD's famous Ulysses medal on Bloomsday.

The Vatican has already circulated a questionnaire and a working paper written by the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops will be released before the end of the month.

In the interview with Professor Conor Gearty of the [London School of Economics](#), Ms McAleese (62) said: "I've got a much simpler questionnaire and it's only got one question.

"How many of the men who will gather to advise you as pope on the family have ever changed a baby's nappy? I regard that as a very, very serious question."

The Association of Catholic Priests last night said that they believe women should have a "huge involvement" in Pope Francis' upcoming discussion. Fr Sean McDonagh, a spokesperson for the organisation, said that he believes "women should be included" in October's discussion, and that it "it doesn't make sense" for them to be excluded.

"I believe that women should have a huge involvement in all of these issues. These are moral issues about family and sexuality," Fr McDonagh told the [Irish Independent](#).

He said that he believes that Pope Francis is "trying to find ways" to include women.

UCD yesterday honoured five outstanding people whose work in justice has made an extraordinary contribution to Irish society and across the world.

Ms McAleese was joined by European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly, Chief Justice Susan Denham, director general of Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) Noeline Blackwell and Professor of Human Rights at the London School of Economics Conor Gearty received the Ulysses medal, the highest honour awarded by [James Joyce](#)'s alma mater.

Previous recipients include Nobel prize winner [Seamus Heaney](#) and former US president [Bill Clinton](#).

‘Old press’ destined for Wexford skip found to be 15th-century altarpiece worth €100,000

A dust-covered “old press”, destined for a skip in Co Wexford, has turned out to be a rare 15th-century Flemish altarpiece valued at €100,000. The discovery was made by the parish priest of Piercetown

(also known as Piercestown), a village between Wexford town and Rosslare.



The altarpiece discovered by Fr John O'Reilly in Piercetown, Co Wexford, is a triptych with painted door panels that open to reveal a central tableau of sculpted carvings depicting the lamentation of Christ.

Irish Times - But mystery surrounds how, and why, the work of art, created during the Northern Renaissance – which flourished in the [Netherlands](#) and [Flanders](#) more than 500 years ago – came to be in Co Wexford.

Fr John O'Reilly said the item came to light when an outbuilding in the parochial house's ground was being cleared. He had planned to convert the disused garage into a parochial office. Workmen putting material into a skip came across what looked like "an old press or bathroom cabinet".

The priest "told the lads to leave it to one side".

Months later, he "took a closer look before throwing it out". He noticed paintings on the doors of the cabinet, "discovered a face among all the grime", and wondered: "Have I got another Caravaggio?" Then he "opened the doors and discovered the statues".

The altarpiece is a triptych with painted door panels that open to reveal a central tableau of sculpted carvings depicting the lamentation of Christ.

Fr O'Reilly contacted a local antiques dealer, "who got excited". Since the initial discovery, two years ago, he has been in contact with the National

Gallery, experts in the Netherlands and various fine-art auctioneers in Ireland and overseas.

Fr O'Reilly became parish priest in 2009 and his predecessor is deceased. He said there was no record of how the altarpiece ended up in the garage.

It will go under the hammer next month at Sheppard's auctioneers in Durrow, Co Laois, with an estimate of €80,000- €120,000. Fr O'Reilly said the proceeds would be used to benefit the parish, including a project to renovate the sacristy for use as an oratory.

Sheppard's said the altarpiece had possibly been made by "a follower of Dieric Bouts", a leading artist of the period and one of the so-called Flemish Primitives.

Methodist Church celebrates 40 years of women's ordination

This Saturday, the Methodist Church in Great Britain will celebrate forty years of women's ordination.



Although women were permitted to become deacons in the Methodist Church from 1890, they were not ordained as presbyters until 2 July, 1974, at the Methodist Conference in Bristol.

Three of the original seventeen ordinands - the Revd's Marjorie Hopp, Elizabeth Hodgkiss and Jennifer Lunn - will participate in the celebration, which will take place at Wesley's Chapel in London on Saturday 21 June. All are welcome to attend and details of the event can be found [here](#).

"It was an honour to be one of the first," said the Revd Lunn, "and I am grateful to the Barnsley Circuit who were delighted when there were only seventeen and they got one!"

"Women have often been, and often are among the voiceless and the unnamed," added the Revd Ruth Gee, President of the Methodist Conference, who will be preaching at the service. "I am proud that there is no role that women cannot play in the Methodist Church in Britain. As one of their successors, I want to thank those women who paved the way. As a

female follower of Christ, I want to stand alongside others who do not have a voice, who are unnamed and unseen, even in the Methodist Church. We will celebrate, we will give thanks and we will commit ourselves to the continuing journey towards the time when we can truly affirm that all are one in Christ. This is a celebration for the whole church."

A new hymn has been also been written for the occasion by the Revd's Nicola Morrison and Michaela Youngson and will be led by a choir brought together for this occasion.

Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury to fight human trafficking

Pope Francis and [Britain's](#) Archbishop of Canterbury committed their Churches on Monday to work more closely together to fight "the grave evil" of human trafficking and modern slavery.

Irish Independent - Justin Welby, spiritual leader of the world's 80 million Anglicans, held talks with Francis at the Vatican on how to combat what both Churches have called a crime against humanity.

"It is a crime that we all need to overcome as a matter of urgency, as a matter of human dignity, freedom and wholeness of life. May God give us the resolve and cooperation we need together," Welby told the pope in his address.

Francis, leader of 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, spoke of their shared "horror in the face of the scourge of human trafficking and forms of modern-day slavery".

"(The Churches must) stand together, with perseverance and determination, in opposing this grave evil," the pope added.

According to a global slavery index issued last year by the Walk Free Foundation charity, nearly 30 million people, including children, live in slavery worldwide, many of them trafficked by gangs for sex work and unskilled labour.

Welby, 58, is the 109th leader of the Church which was formed when England's King Henry VIII split from Rome in 1534.

Neither Welby nor Francis spoke of the doctrinal differences dividing the two Churches, such as a female priesthood, which the Anglican Church allows but Rome forbids.

The 77-year-old Argentinian pope noted that while "the goal of full unity may seem distant indeed," the goal should still guide the Churches and their members in their daily relations.

Despite doctrinal differences, they have found common ground on social issues and have recently stepped up their joint efforts, including at the grass roots level, to raise global awareness about human trafficking and slavery.

Both support the Global Freedom Network, an inter-religious initiative that encourages faith leaders to help victims.

Catholic nuns, for example, have formed the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons, known as Talitha Kum (Little Girl, Arise), a phrase in Aramaic taken from the Bible. It has members in more than 30 countries.

Last month, another group of nuns backed by the pope raised the alarm over increased risks of human trafficking, exploitation of workers, forced prostitution and sexual tourism at the soccer World Cup in Brazil.

On Sunday, Welby agreed that the proceeds of a charity cricket match to be played between squads from the Vatican and the [Church of England](#) in September in Canterbury would go to organisations fighting human trafficking.

Read the text of the Archbishop's address to Pope Francis here:

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5345/archbishop-justins-address-to-pope-francis>

Read about the Archbishop's gifts to the Pope here:

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5346/archbishop-justins-gifts-for-pope-francis>

Tablet

Report on the Archbishop of Canterbury's two day visit in Rome. States in a sermon at a celebration of the Eucharist at the Anglican church of All Saints, Justin Welby said that historically, churches had opted for "power and structural integrity," and that he called on Christian Churches to reject institutional self-preservation and instead become inspired by

the Holy Spirit to reach out to the world, particularly the poor.

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/901/0/welby-in-rome-challenges-churches-to-take-risks-and-cast-off-institutional-prestige->

Tel

Report on how the Archbishop of Canterbury met the Pope's cricket team in Rome. It states Justin Welby joked about the forthcoming match between the Vatican's first XI and the Church of England team, saying there would be no intervention on the other side, because 'We all know God is English'.

Archbishop defends Church schools

The Archbishop of Canterbury has defended Church schools in the wake of the "Trojan Horse" allegations in a speech in which he warned against the dangers of using social media to replace "reflective comment" with "instant reaction."

The Most Rev Justin Welby said "not one" church school had been affected by the recent problems highlighted in Ofsted reports which placed five Birmingham schools in special measures following allegations of a takeover plot in the city's schools by hardline Muslims.

He told a meeting of nearly 700 MPs, peers, church and charity representatives, including Prime Minister David Cameron and Labour leader Ed Miliband, at the National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast, that church schools stand for qualities including "tolerance and acceptance".

"In this country alone we educate nearly a million children in the Church of England, another half a million through the Roman Catholic schools, and, let me say, no recent problems were in one of the church schools," he said.

"It is the church schools that stand for tolerance, acceptance, reception, generosity, open-handedness. Education is something which the Church has done for centuries, which it held in its monasteries when the rest of the world had given up on it in western Europe, and we do it today."

In his speech, Archbishop Welby warned the Church against an "obsession" with internal issues and said the faithful did not have the option of "simply ditching" those with whom they disagreed.

He said he hoped and expected that final approval of women bishops would be passed by the Church of England General Synod when it meets next month in York. But he said the issue was not a "win-lose or zero-sum game"

and he "rejoiced" in the Church of England's commitment to those who disagreed with the move.

"You don't chuck out family, you love them and seek their well-being even when you argue," he said.

The archbishop said the Church faced a new phenomenon of instant reaction brought about by the revolution in communications in the 21st Century.

"The comments that even 20 years ago took months to reach the far corners of the Earth, now, as we know, take seconds," he told his audience.

"Instant reaction has replaced reflective comment.

"That is a reality that you deal with in politics and it demands a new reality of ways in which we accept one another, love each other, pray for each other.

"The best answer to a complex issue on which one has heard a sound-bite from a sophisticated argument is not always given in 140 characters.

"The Church of this century must be a generous Church because of that communications revolution, because of technology, because we are face to face with everyone everywhere always, in a way we never have been in history."

Archbishop Welby said the Church should be "hospitable" and "utterly at home in a world of numerous faith traditions".

He paid tribute to "remarkable" Muslim leader Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, the Leicester-based imam and social activist, saying they had spent time together during the Christian season of Lent, when they had shared their scriptures.

" I read bits of John's Gospel with him, and he read bits of the Koran with me. Hospitable," Archbishop Welby said.

"That belonging to one another, being different, diverse and yet authentic to oneself and to one's tradition and the truth, is a gift this world needs.

"It's the opposite of all this Trojan Horse process. It is a generosity of spirit and openness to listen."

Archbishop Welby said the Church in the 21st century was "suffering" in countries such as Nigeria and Pakistan.

He highlighted its work in countries such as the Congo, where he said it had helped victims of sexual violence for years, and the South Sudan, where he witnessed calls for reconciliation by Archbishop Daniel Deng in the face of appalling massacres.

He added that the Church was "speaking heroically" for Meriam Ibrahim, the Christian mother-of-two sentenced to 100 lashes and death by hanging for apostasy in Sudan.

"A 21st-century global church loves the poor and the victim, and stands for human dignity, challenges oppressors and supports victims. It speaks for women killed in lynchings called 'honour killings', or for those imprisoned under blasphemy laws. It does all that despite its own suffering," Archbishop Welby said.

He also warned that it was "easy" to be cynical about politics - but he praised the commitment to maintain international aid at 0.7% of GDP, the introduction of the Modern Slavery Bill and last week's conference on ending sexual violence in war zones, co-hosted by Foreign Secretary William Hague and Hollywood star Angelina Jolie.

"Those aren't cynical vote-winners, from any politician in this room, but they arise from a spirit of generosity, which is right and proper."

David Lammy, MP for Tottenham and a former Labour minister, Caroline Spelman, Conservative MP for Meriden and the former environment secretary, and Sarah Teather, Liberal Democrat MP for Brent Central and former children's minister, were among a series of senior political figures to say prayers at the start of the breakfast.

There was also a reading from Attorney General Dominic Grieve and introductory comments from the Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow and Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham and shadow employment minister.