



## The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

### Highlights of Methodist Conference 2014

On the Saturday and Sunday of Conference The Methodist Newsletter asked a range of people if they had a Conference highlight. Here's what they said'

- 'My highlight was the wonderful multi-cultural service at Dublin Central Mission on Sunday morning. The preacher was the British Vice-President, Dr Daleep Mukarji. He spoke on how Jesus healed the woman with the issue of blood. She was a social outcast. Even though he was in a hurry to Jairus' house, Jesus took the time to restore her status in society.'
- 'It was inspiring and uplifting to hear others sharing about the work of God on their circuits. A good idea to do this at the start of the day.'

Fleming Fulton School and IMYC present:

## The Whale's Tale



**IMYC have teamed up with Fleming Fulton School in Belfast to present "The Whale's Tale" - a STAR STORIES presentation of Jonah. But this time the students of Fleming Fulton are the stars of the show!**

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- ‘The installation service and the ordination service are always wonderful. I love the sense of belonging that comes from being part of a large gathering of people coming together in worship.’



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- ‘The Friday night evening celebration was phenomenal. God was really moving. And the prayer ministry.....people just didn’t want to leave the church.’
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- ‘The best thing for me was the discussion on Saturday on missional discipleship communities – an exciting prospect for the future.’
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- ‘To me Conference this year was both a challenge and an awakening of the purpose of church in the sense that we can be servants of church programmes rather than servants of God.’
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- ‘In the circuit groups it was encouraging to see common themes emerging and we got ideas that could be tried out at home.’
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- ‘I was encouraged by the story of a circuit that got a new youth worker even though they knew it would be a struggle financially. But they they got just the right person – it has all been working out so well.’
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- ‘Many people come a distance to our church and it is frustrating to feel we can’t easily be part of a local community – but the circuit groups brought reassurance that we could be salt and light in many difference communities.’
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- The message of Friday night that was repeated on Saturday really resonated with me. We are to be in God’s story, allowing God to keep drawing us on in it, rather than trying to get God to fit in with us.
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- ‘Archbishop Richard Clarke’s Bible studies were not to be missed.’
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- My highlight? The happy song video! It was wonderful – bright and outgoing. It captured the spirit of Conference.'
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- 'I love the sense of being part of an extended family.'

## Domino effect as schools drop academic selection

**As two more Catholic grammar schools pledge to end academic selection, Lindsay Fergus predicts others will follow, with the result State grammar schools could become more integrated.**

Belfast Telegraph - Many Catholic middle-class parents with children of primary school age, particularly those whose sons and daughters are in Years 5 or 6, must be giving more than a passing thought to the domino effect in Catholic voluntary grammar schools.

It seems that hardly a month goes by without another Catholic grammar school signalling its intent to move away from the controversial process of academic selection at the age of 11, reducing parental choice.

Just last week two more schools, Loreto Grammar in Omagh and Omagh Christian Brothers' Grammar, revealed that they propose to phase out academic selection starting in 2015, potentially leaving no selective Catholic schools in the Co Tyrone town.

That announcement followed hot on the heels of similar plans for St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School in west Belfast and Dominican College, Portstewart – the only selective Catholic school in the Co Londonderry seaside town.

Earlier this year two other Catholic grammar schools secured the necessary approval needed from Education Minister John O'Dowd to immediately end academic selection – St Patrick's Grammar in Armagh and St Michael's Grammar in Lurgan – eliminating selection from Catholic schools in Co Armagh.

Add those six to the trailblazer, Loreto College in Coleraine, which stopped using academic selection in September last year (again, the only selective Catholic school in Coleraine) and that means seven of 29 Catholic grammar schools – one in four – has either ceased using the results of the unregulated GL Assessments to select their Year 8 pupils or hopes to do so in the future.

At that pace of change, in as little as 13 years there could be no Catholic grammar schools wholly using academic selection at the age of 11.

Education Minister Mr O'Dowd, whose Sinn Fein party scrapped the 11-plus only to see with dismay it replaced with not one, but two unregulated transfer tests, must be elated. As must the Catholic Church, which for years has been calling on grammar schools to open their doors to all pupils.

Until recently Catholic grammar schools have been digging their heels in and refusing to abandon academic selection, but one by one they are falling in line with the Church's and Education Minister's views.

And it doesn't take a genius to realise that more Catholic grammar schools will follow suit. More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/debateni/blogs/domino-effect-as-schools-drop-academic-selection-30362096.html>

## Portrait of Dean Desmond Harmon unveiled

The Friends of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, along with the family and friends of the late Dean Harmon gathered for the unveiling of his portrait which will hang in the Chapter Room of the Cathedral.

The current Dean, the Very Revd Dermot Dunne said that while Dean Harmon's tenure as Dean was short, he had been associated



*A portrait of former Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, the Very Revd Desmond Harmon, was unveiled last Sunday afternoon. Pictured are the current Dean, the Very Revd Dermot Dunne, Sue Harmon and her grandson, and artist Olivia Bartlett.*



with Christ Church Cathedral for many years and his sudden departure left the entire cathedral community bereft. He welcomed Dean Harmon's wife Sue and members of their family to the cathedral.

He added that over hundreds of years the cathedral had absorbed so much history which was embedded in the walls. That process was continuing as the cathedral formed the beating heart of the city, he said.

Artist Olivia Bartlett, spoke of her impressions of Dean Harmon and how these had influenced her work. He was renowned for his attention to detail, she said, so she wanted to ensure she got the details correct in the portrait. She recalled the Dean's untimely death and said that he was "our safe pair of hands".

## **Playing Our Part - Young people celebrate their parishes**

**On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> St Gerard's Parish, Belfast, hosted a Celebration of Faith for the Catholic post primary schools in North Belfast. The schools involved this year were Little Flower Girls', St Patrick's College, St Malachy's College and Our Lady of Mercy.**

Orla McCarthy writes - The theme this year was – Playing Our Part. The aim of the day was to follow on from the Diocesan Youth Congress experience of the Year 8 students in September and to remind the young people that they are still a very important part of their parishes and indeed their diocese.

The Year 13 students from Little Flower Girls' who are completing their John Paul II Award this year, were the facilitators for the morning and they went to great lengths to produce a jumbo-sized

jigsaw. The thinking behind this was that every parish is part of the jigsaw of our diocese and that everybody has a part to play in their parish. During the morning, the Year 8 students completed a series of activities with the help of their John Paul II leaders. The first task was to consolidate the work they had completed in preparation for the Congress in September, when they were asked to put together a project on their home parish. This required them to see exactly what has happening in their parish and to be able to name key people. In their groups on Friday, the young people included their parish logos and all the groups and activities available to the parishioners.

They were then asked to look at their participation in the parish and how they, as young people, could use their individual gifts and talents, to enhance the groups already on offer in their parish. They created a 'parish person'

where every person of the group was part of the body of the parish – representing how we all have our part to play.

The final session was based on our hopes for the future – the young people worked together to say what they would want ideally in their parish of the future. Ideas ranged from more comfortable seating to more coffee mornings to raise parish funds and have more of a community atmosphere. Other ideas included ensuring older people have transport, more faith friends for younger people, more events for people of all age groups to attend, more special masses during the year for specific reasons like exams, face to face confessions and Communion under both species. More adventurous ideas included parish sporting groups, swimming pools in the shape of a cross and more colourful statues and pictures.

The morning was really a celebration of everything that is good about our young people and they really showed how our young Church is alive and interested- in planning for the future, we are in safe hands with such wonderful young people!

## **Church welcomes report on underachievement in white working class children**

**The Church of England yesterday welcomed the report of the House of Commons Education Select Committee into Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children.**

Speaking after the release of the report, the Church of England's Chief Education Officer, Revd Jan Ainsworth said:

"This is a timely report into a pressing issue, and the Church of England stands ready to play its role in supporting the young people identified by the committee.

"We are particularly pleased that the committee has highlighted the complexity of issues associated with White Working Class underperformance. Excellent schools can clearly make the world of difference to disadvantaged young people, but the committee also recognises that we need a greater understanding of associated social factors.

"That is why we have commissioned our own project, working through Church schools serving some of the most disadvantaged communities in England, to put additional resources and energy into enabling those children to succeed. Church schools can and do make a real difference to the lives of children who

have the furthest to travel in terms of educational achievement, but we recognise there is more that could be done"



*Choristers from St Asaph Cathedral*

## **Wales: Churches to celebrate "Music Sunday"**

**Churches are being invited to celebrate music in worship by holding a Music Sunday this month.**

The Royal School of Church Music has designated June 22 as Music Sunday and is encouraging churches to hold special concerts, services and collections to celebrate the importance of music in worship.

One of the key services will be held at St Asaph Cathedral when RSCM director Andrew Reid, will lead a choral festival exploring music through the ages and featuring work by Tallis, Durufl , Stanford and Rutter. The service, which begins at 5pm, will also be attended by the Bishop of St Asaph, Dr Gregory Cameron. All are welcome.

This will be the sixth year that RSCM Music Sunday has been held in its present form. Most occasions have included a fund-raising element, splitting

the proceeds between themselves and the worldwide work of the RSCM in supporting church musicians.

"I am always thrilled, indeed honoured, to see such a wide range of Music Sunday events, as details come in," says Catherine Demetriadi, Head of Development at the RSCM. "There is always plenty of enthusiasm and innovation shown by churches and choirs."

More information about RSCM Music Sunday can be found at [www.rscm.com/musicsunday](http://www.rscm.com/musicsunday), along with details of events registered so far and how to get involved.

Meanwhile, later in the month, church choirs from across south-east Wales will join together at Llandaff Cathedral for an RSCM Festival Choral Eucharis on July 19. They will be conducted by RSCM co-ordinator David Ogden and the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, will be the celebrant. Choirs can register from 1.30pm and the service, to which all are welcome, starts at 5pm.

## **Church Army Africa celebrates 60 years**

**Church Army Africa's 60th anniversary celebrations, which began in Nairobi, Kenya, on Monday brought together 200 delegates from D R Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Sudan, Malawi, England, Australia and the United States America.**

Welcoming the delegates the Assistant Provost of All Saints Cathedral, Revd Paul Korin, said "If the Church is not positioning itself on mission and evangelism, that Church is waiting to die".

Presenting a keynote address on the theme 'Transforming Mindset, Empowering the African Church to become a mission force' International Director for CMS Africa, the Revd Dennis Tongoi said that the "message of the Gospel is more urgent now than ever before".

Mr Tongoi observed that the growth of Church membership has not resulted in social transformation in Africa. Christians, he said, have failed to be the window through which the world can see the future and present hope. He asked those present why many people on the continent of Africa lived in poverty in the midst of plenty.

Mr Tongoi suggested that this disparity was down to the kind of Gospel that has been preached in Africa over many years, one which has led many



Christians having only half the truth. Integral mission and holistic discipleship was, he said, key to unlocking the people's thinking.

He pointed out that it was not *how many* churches but the *quality* of churches and its members that would make a difference in transforming society. He added that many preached a Gospel focused on heaven when people rather needed to experience God's Kingdom in the here and now.

Mr Tongoi warned that "If the Church does not disciple the nation, the nation will disciple the Church".

He praised Church Army Africa for its holistic/integral approach to mission, and concluded by saying that the Church Army had been vital in the life of the nation and the Church in Kenya.

## **Pope offers prayers for refugees during general audience**

**Pope Francis greets the crowd as he arrives to lead his general audience in St Peter's Square.**



Addressing Mary as “mother of refugees,” Pope Francis offered prayers for the millions of people in the world forced to flee their homelands, and he asked Catholics to reach out to them with assistance and a real welcome.

“Remember, Jesus was a refugee; he and Mary and Joseph had to go to Egypt to save his life,” the Pope said on Wednesday at the end of his weekly general audience. “Pray to Mary who knows the pain of being a refugee.”

Anticipating the UN’s World Refugee Day on June 20, Pope Francis led an estimated 30,000 people in praying the Hail Mary for all those “forced to leave their homelands to flee conflicts and persecution.”

The Pope said that, “millions of families — millions — of every religious faith” have sought refuge in many countries around the world, the Pope said. Even

when they reach a safe place, they live with the members of “dramas and wounds that cannot be healed easily.”

“Let us be close to them, sharing their fears and their uncertainty about the future and concretely alleviating their suffering,” he said.

Pope Francis also prayed that God would bless the people and organizations that generously work to ensure refugees find a welcome, recognition of their dignity and hope for the future.

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