



## **The essential daily brief on the Irish churches**

### **Therapists open Belfast consulting rooms for unwanted same-sex attraction**

**Consulting rooms for men and women who want therapeutic support to help them move away from same-sex attraction, were dedicated at the headquarters of the Christian Charity, Core Issues Trust (CIT) in Belfast last week.**



Christian Weekly News - The dedication ceremony was conducted by Dr Christopher Rosik, President-elect of the US National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (foreground left) and Professor Robert Gagnon, of Pittsburg Theological Seminary (foreground right).

They were among the keynote speakers at national conferences in London and Northern Ireland, which aimed to highlight the loss of freedom for UK citizens to seek professional help to change unwanted homosexual feelings. CIT is a non-profit Christian ministry led by Dr Mike Davidson, one of two therapists who have been banned by their professional bodies from offering the change therapy.

Another banned counsellor, Lesley Pilkington, will join Dr Davidson in offering talking therapies to clients seeking to lose or reduce same-sex feelings. A third counsellor, Phelim McIntyre, will also be providing therapeutic support at consulting rooms at 70 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8AX, headquarters of Christian Concern and at the headquarters of CIT in Belfast.

## **“We’re called to be a blessing,” Bishop tells Down and Dromore Synod**

**“We’re called to be a blessing,” was Bishop Harold Miller’s message to the Down and Dromore Diocesan Synod which met on 19 June in Bangor Abbey.**



“We, the people of God are actually entrusted with the joyful task of being a blessing in and to the communities in which we live,” said the bishop in his Presidential Address. We receive the blessings of the Lord so that we can be a blessing to those around us.”

Bishop Harold recounted some of the many blessings the diocese has enjoyed in the last 12 months: the Bible Week last August with the largest numbers ever; the donation of £70,000 seed funding for church planting in the diocese; two church plants established since the autumn with another (in the Glen, Newtownards) ready to begin this August; blessing on Wells and the Dock Café, the two existing ‘fresh expressions’; twelve diocesan evangelists in training and a new batch being selected for next year; the encouragement of the episcopal visitations; the re-opening of St Comgall’s, Bangor; the redevelopment of the Kilbroney Centre, due to open next month; the engagement of so many parishes with foodbanks, Christians Against Poverty and discipleship courses; increasing numbers of adults and particularly adult men coming to faith and being baptized and confirmed; and the generosity of the diocese with regard to South Sudan.

The synod acknowledged these blessings by saying together the General Thanksgiving before Bishop Harold addressed what it meant to be a blessing – something, he stressed, which was never sentimental and often challenging.

“Being God’s blessing to the world does not mean that we fit in to the world and its mould,” he said.” It actually often means the opposite – that we speak

with a distinctive but loving voice, and move to a different beat. We are in the world but not of it.”

He went on to apply that idea to four challenges faced by the church in Northern Ireland today: reconciliation and peacemaking in Northern Ireland; racism and the abuse of people of other religions; issues of sexuality and finally the Girlguiding promise.

Acknowledging the complexity of the issues and the important role, where appropriate, of both church and state, the bishop appealed to individual Christians to make a difference and to bless others in an attitude of love and humility.

Turing at the close of his address to the recently released results of the Church of Ireland census, Bishop Harold acknowledged some numerical decline in the diocese over the last two years. He challenged each parish to grow their worshipping congregation by 10% by the end of 2015, saying that he has, “absolutely no doubt that the mix of prayer and godly strategy...can be the tipping point that moves us into growth, and can make the year of our Lord 2015 the year of our Lord in a new way, and one which will bless others with the blessing with which God has blessed us.”

The bishop said that he had seen the idea of blessing in a very striking way when visiting many of the diocese’s 24/7 prayer rooms with their emphasis on serving and praying for their communities. The 19th June was the 170th day of continuous prayer in Down and Dromore and during the afternoon session the synod witnessed and blessed the 43rd handover of the prayer scroll from St Patrick’s Newry to St Patrick’s Drumbeg.

Also during the afternoon, Revd Andrew Forster and Mrs Ethne Harkness reported from the Commission on Episcopal Ministry and Structures and Ronnie Briggs reflected on 200 years of partnership in CMS Ireland.

Time was also given over to a ‘Conversation on the Work of God’ when standing orders are suspended and the floor is open to those who would like to bring encouragement to the synod. We heard stories of blessing and exhortations to bless and make friends with our communities, all conveyed amidst the overriding sense that ‘God is on the move’.

Attendance was high at this diocesan synod which was the first of a new triennium and of three years in Bangor. Bishop Ken Clarke preached at the

opening service of Holy Communion. Canon Ronnie Nesbitt and Bangor Abbey provided hospitality.

## Irish Gospel Manuscripts to undergo preservation



*Susie Bioletti, Keeper Preservation & Conservation, Trinity College Dublin and Peter Keegan, Merrill Lynch Country Executive for Ireland*

**Four ancient manuscripts are to undergo special preservation work to be digitised and put on show beside the Book of Kells.**

News letter - The priceless works, including the earliest known surviving Irish parchment of the four gospels, will be treated, technically examined and recorded as part of Trinity College's world-renowned library collection.

The oldest is The Codex Usserianus Primus, an incomplete manuscript which dates from the fifth century.

Another is the eighth century Book of Dimma, possibly produced at Roscrea, Co Tipperary, containing [the gospels](#) and illuminated initials and portraits of the evangelists in red, yellow, blue and black pigments.

The remaining two are the Book of Mulling, an eighth century illuminated pocket-gospel associated with the monastery of St Mullins in Co Carlow, and the Garland of Howth, also from the eighth century, a parchment manuscript



associated with St Nessan's monastery on Ireland's Eye in orange, white, yellow and blue pigments.

Susie Bioletti, head of conservation at Trinity, said the funding for the project from Bank of America Merrill Lynch is the most generous grant the library has secured for work on early Irish manuscripts.

"We are extremely grateful for the opportunity it now affords us to concentrate our attention on four of our great treasures," she said.

"Their grant will enable scholarship and public engagement with the manuscripts as we share these national treasures with our Irish and global visitors."

The funding is part of the bank's global art conservation project which has awarded grants to museums in 27 [countries](#) for 71 conservation projects since 2010.

Once conserved the manuscripts will be made available via Trinity College Dublin Library's digital collections and exhibited alongside the Book of Kells, the Book of Durrow and the Book of Armagh.

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/manuscripts-to-undergo-preservation-1-6135074>



## **New C of I Central Director Of Ordinands**

**Canon David Gillespie has been appointed by the House of Bishops as Central Director of Ordinands.**

Canon Gillespie is from Clooney Parish in Derry Diocese and has served both in Northern Ireland and the Republic. He was ordained for Connor Diocese and a curacy in Agherton Parish, Portstewart. Before moving to his present post, he served a first incumbency in the Parish of Moy, Diocese of Armagh.

Since 2009 he has ministered in Dublin as Vicar of St Ann's with St Stephen's and earlier this year was appointed to the Chapter of Christ Church.

The Central Director of Ordinands is responsible for the resourcing of diocesan Directors of Ordinands and takes responsibility for organising an annual Meeting of DDO's. In addition to this, he runs an occasional conference focused on ministry in general and on ordination in particular and communicates with the Church of Ireland through an annual Newsletter. New to the post will be the added responsibility of overseeing the placement of deacon-interns in consultation with the Bishops and CITI Staff.

Commenting on the appointment, the Chair of CITI, the Most Revd Michael Jackson said: *'Canon Gillespie has experience of the Church of Ireland in both parts of the country. He also has experience of four different dioceses, prior to and since ordination. He brings skills of organization and a broad understanding of the shape and character of the Church of Ireland to this role. I look forward to working with him in this capacity.'*

Canon Gillespie takes over from the Venerable Robert Miller, Archdeacon of Derry, who has held the post for the past three years.



## Retirement of Bishop of Limerick

**The Bishop of Limerick, Killaloe & Ardfert, the Rt Revd Trevor Williams, will retire at the end of the month and a Farewell Service was held yesterday in [St Mary's cathedral, Limerick](#) to which all the parishes in the dioceses were invited.**

The service was in the context of Choral Evensong and there was a retiring collection for Christian Aid Ireland of which Bishop Williams is Chairman.

Although born and educated in Dublin, Trevor Williams chose to be trained in the Church of England and after St John's College, Nottingham, served as a curate in the diocese of Oxford. He returned to Ireland in 1978 as Assistant Chaplain in Queen's University, Belfast, and after a period in religious broadcasting was appointed Rector of Newcastle, Co. Down, in 1988.

A period as Leader of the famed Corrymeela Community followed before a return to parish life in 2003 as Rector of the Belfast city parishes of Holy Trinity and St Silas.

In 2008 he brought these varied experiences to the episcopate when he was elected as Bishop of the united dioceses of [Limerick, Ardfert, Aghadoe, Killaloe, Kilfenora, Clonfert, Kilmacduagh and Emly](#), the Church of Ireland's largest diocese encompassing counties Limerick, Kerry and Clare and parts of Galway, Tipperary and Offaly. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, communication in its various forms has been a principal interest of Bishop Williams and he has been an active chairman of the Central Communications Board.

## Outrage at lewd church altar scene

**A scene showing a partially-clothed couple kissing on the altar of a Catholic church has been removed from a music video after priests complained.**

DJ Wilkinson's video Half Light was shot at various locations in Belfast.

A scene filmed in the Good Shepherd Church on the Ormeau Road was edited out of the video.

"The behaviour in the video was a desecration of the church and caused most grievous distress to the parish priest," a church statement said.

Down and Connor diocese added: "If viewed by the parishioners it would cause severe hurt and distress to the wider parish community.

"For these reasons, to protect the church and its parishioners, the Diocese of Down and Connor immediately brought these concerns to the attention of the distributors and creators of the material."

The diocese said it had not granted permission for a scene of that nature to be filmed in the church.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-27959235>

## Christmas stories and the Great War competition

### **A little inspiration for any Christmas story writers out there!**

Methodist News - There is still time to send in your entries for our Christmas story competition before the deadline on Monday 30 June. Just to help with the creative challenge of an unseasonal theme, here is a photograph taken, a few years ago, from the front steps of Methodist College where award-winning author and competition judge, Sheena Wilkinson is a member of staff. We have had a great response to the competition from across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and we don't envy Sheena the task of judging between the excellent stories that are continuing to arrive....

On another note, Sheena will be in the Heritage Centre at Methodist College on Thursday 26 June at 6.30 pm to celebrate the publication of *The Great War* (Walker Books), a collection of stories inspired by objects from the First World War to which she has contributed.

Meanwhile send your short stories to [newsletter@irishmethodist.org](mailto:newsletter@irishmethodist.org). Competition rules and further information may be found on the website at [methodistnewsletterireland.wordpress.com](http://methodistnewsletterireland.wordpress.com).

The Christmas Story competition is being run by the Methodist Newsletter in partnership with the interdenominational Edgehill Christian Writers' Group.

## Gay wedding canon in service ban

### **The first gay British clergyman to be married has had his permission to lead some services revoked.**

BBC - Canon Jeremy Pemberton married his long-term partner in a civil ceremony in April, in defiance of guidance by Church of England bishops.

He has confirmed he will no longer be allowed to operate as a priest in Nottinghamshire, but remains a chaplain to hospitals in Lincoln.

Diocese officials said clergy must "model the Church's teaching".

Gay marriage became legal in the UK in March but the Church of England [has not accepted the change](#).



At the time of his marriage, Mr Pemberton, who describes himself as activist for LGBT equality in church and workplace, said he would be the first of many.

More at -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-27963877>

## Press Coverage

### Telegraph - Women bishops and church unity

Report on comments to [The Tablet](#), the Catholic magazine, by the Archbishop of Canterbury who said the expected decision in favour of women bishops will not spell the end of hopes of unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, despite theological differences.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10913044/Welby-braced-for-difficulty-with-Rome-as-Church-of-England-prepares-to-approve-women-bishops.html>

### Telegraph - Judge suggests conscience clause on issues like homosexuality

Report on how Britain's top female judge has suggested a "conscience clause" protecting Christians and others whose beliefs on issues such as homosexuality clash with their jobs should be considered to help resolve disputes over religious freedom. It states Lady Hale, Deputy President of the Supreme Court, said that despite a series of prominent cases involving wearing crosses and sexuality issues, she is not convinced the law has yet found a way to strike a "reasonable" balance.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10912236/Conscience-clause-could-protect-Christian-workers-says-top-judge.html>

### Times - Mentored by Eric Liddell

Obituary on Steve Metcalf - a missionary whose life and teaching was changed for ever by a wartime meeting with the Olympic athlete Eric Liddell. It states Metcalf was in a Japanese concentration camp with former Olympian-turned missionary, Eric Liddell, who gave him his own running shoes. When Liddell died in the camp, Metcalf was among those who carried his coffin to the graveside. It states their meeting changed his life irrevocably and he promised God that if he survived the war, he would go to Japan as a missionary. Speaking about Eric Liddell many years later he told the assembled internees and Chinese officials, that Liddell had given him two things: his running shoes and his "baton of forgiveness". "He taught me to

love my enemies and pray for them," he said.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/obituaries/article4124578.ece>

**GET CNI HEADLINES ON TWITTER - link on CNI home page...**

**... Please commend CNI to your friends**