



## Controversial Church of England bishop to address Dublin conference

An Irish-born Church of [England](#) bishop, who has faced serious questions over his handling of clerical child sex abuse allegations in the UK, has had his offer to withdraw as guest

speaker from a Dublin conference next June declined, Patsy McGarry writes in the Irish Times.

It followed queries about the appropriateness of the invitation being extended to Bray-born [Bishop Wallace Benn](#) (photo above), who retired as Bishop of [Lewes](#) in 2012. Last March he was questioned at the UK's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

**March 06, 2019**

His offer to withdraw from the June conference in Dublin was declined by organisers pending the relevant IICSA report, due at the end of this month.

[Bishop Benn](#) is scheduled to be guest speaker at the Irish College of Preachers conference in the [Church of Ireland Theological Institute](#) in Dublin, which takes place from June 12th to 14th next.

His address there will be on Preaching that Gets Through: a look at the essential ingredients for effective preaching. The conference is being organised by Bishop of [Kilmore](#), [Elphin](#) and [Ardagh](#) Rt Rev Ferran Glenfield.

A spokeswoman for the Church of Ireland said the Theological Institute was satisfied that Bishop Benn remained in good standing with the Church of England and, so, it had no objection him speaking there.

### **Permission to officiate**

[Bishop Glenfield](#) told The Irish Times that last November Bishop Benn had been granted a permission to officiate (PTO) by the Church of England for a further five years.

He added however that were Bishop Benn “found culpable” of mishandling clerical child sex abuse allegations in the IICSA report later this month, it would “in no way be acceptable” for him to speak at the June conference in Dublin but that “hopefully, he will be exonerated”.

Bishop Benn, he said, had offered to withdraw as guest speaker but that this had been declined.

Born in 1947, Bishop Benn attended St Andrew’s College in Dublin’s [Booterstown](#) and UCD before training for ministry in

**March 06, 2019**

Bristol. He was ordained in 1973 and appointed Bishop of Lewes in 1997, a suffragan bishop of [Chichester](#) diocese in Sussex.

He retired in 2012 amid criticisms of the diocese's child protection policies and conduct of its priests, which had led to calls for his resignation.

## **Child sex abuse**

In 2012 alone three Sussex Church of England priests were charged with child sex abuse offences while a third, Canon [Gordon Rideout](#), was charged with 38 offences of sexual abuse, including sexual assault and attempted rape against 18 children between 1962 and 1973. He was jailed for 10 years.

In March of last year the IICSA looked at the Diocese of Chichester. In his evidence to the inquiry, Bishop Benn denied responsibility for the safeguarding failures in the diocese during his tenure, saying the handling of these issues was not under his delegation at the time.

The Down & Dromore diocesan web site states - "Bishop Wallace Benn, a Dubliner who is a respected pastor; preacher and author. He will be speaking on: *Preaching that gets through: a look at the essential ingredients for effective preaching*.

"The format consists of a series of sessions and workshops focused on preaching effectively and there will be opportunities to worship together in the Institute chapel.

**March 06, 2019**

“The conference is usually attended by around 20 people; a mixture of lay and clerical, experienced and inexperienced preachers trying to hone their craft together.

“Accommodation and all meals are included in the conference fee of 150 Euro which in many cases is sponsored by dioceses.

“The conference is organised and attended by the Bishop of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, the Rt Revd Ferran Glenfield, who is happy to answer any further queries.”

## **29 Prayer Rooms feature in Relentless 2019**

During the season of Lent, 29 church congregations and Christian communities in North and West Belfast along with two primary schools and a youth club will be working together to encourage people to pray for themselves, their churches and their local communities.

Each day during Lent, a prayer space will be available for people to drop in and spend time in quietness to reflect and pray.

The ‘Relentless’ initiative, started last year by the Rev Canon Jim Carson and Heather Carson in the Church of Ireland parishes in the Lower Shankill, seeks to bring church congregations and Christian communities together with a shared vision of encouraging people to pray and ask for God’s blessing and healing on the people and life of their communities.



# RELENTLESS

## SCHEDULE 2019

Date	Day	Church	Time
06 March	Wednesday	St Paul's (210 York St) Communion 10.15am	10am - 3pm
07 March	Thursday	SoulSpace@The Duncairn Centre	9am - 6pm
08 March	Friday	Divine Healing Ministries (32 Townsend St)	7.30am - 3.30pm
09 March	Saturday	Connect Base (Spectrum Centre 331 Shankill Road)	10.30am - 6.30pm
11 March	Monday	St Michael's (Craven St, Shankill Rd)	1pm - 9pm
12 March	Tuesday	Shankill Methodist (267 Shankill Rd)	10am - 6pm
13 March	Wednesday	Holy Trinity (705 Oldpark Rd)	12 - 6pm
14 March	Thursday	Immanuel (18-36 Ardoyne Rd)	12 - 6pm
15 March	Friday	Divine Healing Ministries (32 Townsend St)	7.30am - 3.30pm
16 March	Saturday	Clonard Monastery (1 Clonard Gardens)	10am - 4pm
18 March	Monday	Shalom House (12 Cliftonville Rd)	8:30am - 4:30pm
19 March	Tuesday	Shalom House (12 Cliftonville Rd)	8:30am - 4:30pm
20 March	Wednesday	Shalom House (12 Cliftonville Rd)	8:30am - 4:30pm
21 March	Thursday	Holy Family Parish (226 Limestone Rd)	10:00am - 3:30pm
22 March	Friday	Rathfern Social Activity Centre (Knockenagh Avenue)/DHM	9am-7pm/ 7:30am- 3:30pm
23 March	Saturday	Mission to Seafarers (Princes Dock St)	12noon - 12am
25 March	Monday	St Peter's (Antrim Rd) Communion 6.30pm	1pm - 7pm
26 March	Tuesday	St Matthew's (30 Woodvale Rd)	10am - 4pm
27 March	Wednesday	Charis College (Townsend St Outreach Centre)	10am - 2pm
28 March	Thursday	Joanmount Methodist (1 Wallasey Park)	12pm - 8pm
29 March	Friday	Joanmount Methodist/ DHM	10am - 6pm/ 7:30am - 3:30pm
30 March	Saturday	Centre Church (50 Berry Street)	2pm - 6pm
01 April	Monday	St Peter's (Antrim Rd) Communion 6.30pm	1pm - 7pm
02 April	Tuesday	St Stephen's (Millfield, beside Belfast Met)	12 - 8pm
03 April	Wednesday	St Mary's (Crumlin Rd)	10am - 4pm
04 April	Thursday	Cavehill Methodist (92-114 Cavehill Rd)	10am - 5pm
05 April	Friday	Divine Healing Ministries/ROC (The Vine Centre)	7:30am-3:30pm/ 10am - 4.30pm
06 April	Saturday	YWAM (443-445 Springfield Rd)	7am - 11pm
08 April	Monday	Eglinton Presbyterian (Ballysillan Rd)	7am - 2pm
09 April	Tuesday	Eglinton Presbyterian (Ballysillan Rd)	3pm - 11pm
10 April	Wednesday	CMSI (33 Dargan Rd)	9:00am - 1:00pm
11 April	Thursday	CMSI (33 Dargan Rd)	9:00am - 1:00pm
12 April	Friday	Divine Healing Ministries (32 Townsend St)	7:30am - 3:30pm
13 April	Saturday	Woodvale Methodist (260 Cambrai St)	10am - 10pm
15 April	Monday	Redeemer Central (101 Donegall St)	9am - 5pm
16 April	Tuesday	St Andrew's (Forthriver Rd)	12pm - 8:00pm
17 April	Wednesday	Celebration Lunch @ Forthspring (373-375 Springfield Rd)	12.30pm
18 April	Thursday	Alexandra Presbyterian (80 York Road)	12pm - 8pm

Last year 21 prayer spaces were available during Lent and

March 06, 2019



**Representatives of some of the churches and Christian communities taking part In Relentless 2019 in North and West Belfast, pictured at the launch service in St Stephen's on March 3.**

this year that number has increased to 29. Sister Karen Webb from the Church Army / Diocese of Connor Connect Base on the Shankill Road said of last year: "It was lovely to just take time to sit in peace and pray in the middle of all the daily rush and also that others dropped in too."

Relentless Prayer 2019 was launched at a service in St Stephen's Parish Church on Sunday March 3, with the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Connor, as the speaker. Around 90 people from various churches and denominations attended.

**March 06, 2019**

The programme begins on Wednesday March 6 in St Paul's, York Street, at 10am, with Holy Communion at 10.15am.

Heather Carson said: "We would be delighted if colleagues and friends in Connor Diocese would join us in praying for the life and witness of churches and Christian communities in North and West Belfast and drop in to one of the prayer spaces available."

For more information contact Stephen Whitten on [stephen.whitten@churcharmy.org](mailto:stephen.whitten@churcharmy.org) or Heather Carson on [coils.heather@gmail.com](mailto:coils.heather@gmail.com).

## **Voices of children must be heard – Primary school management conference hears**

The importance of listening to the voices of pupils in the education system has been highlighted by the Junior Minister at the Department of Education, Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor at the launch of a new project for Church of Ireland primary schools. The Minister was addressing the annual Church of Ireland Primary School Management Association conference which took place at DCU All Hallows Campus on Saturday (March 2).

The 10th annual conference saw the launch of the Student Voice Project in Church of Ireland schools. The project will engage with primary school leaders to explore pupils' experiences of Christian faith, school ethos and spiritual health in their schools.



**March 06, 2019**

Minister Mitchell O'Connor said that the child was at the epicentre of the education system and that the whole purpose of school and the Department of Education and Skills was the education and development of the child. However, she said that often the voice of the pupil was absent.

## THE CHILD IS THE EPICENTRE OF EDUCATION

“This omission is being addressed here today... The UN convention on the Rights of the Child holds that the child who is capable of forming views has the right to express them,” she stated. “The Student Voice Project seeks to ask children their views on their school and its ethos. This may bring opinions and views that you, as school managers and me, as a policy maker, might find puzzling. Yet if the child is the epicentre of education then this is a voice that needs to be heard. I commend the Church of Ireland in starting this work.”

She hoped that the findings of the project could feed into education policy.

The Minister said that the All Hallows Campus was a fitting environment in which to hold the CIPSMA conference as for generations it had been a place of faith based education. She said she was glad that was continuing but noted that faith based education was not without its critics in today's Ireland.

She said she, along with hundreds of thousands of others, owed their education to faith based schools. Church of Ireland schools offered something different to education in



March 06, 2019



**At the CIPSMA conference – Dr Ken Fennelly, Jacquie Wilkinson, Geraldine O'Connor, Prof David Lankshear, Canon Prof Leslie Francis, Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Bishop Kenneth Kearon, Canon Brian O'Rourke, Sean Henry and Rev Prof Anne Lodge.**

Ireland, she stated adding that pluralism and living together was held dear.

“I know that your schools are highly diverse. This diversity has been a characteristic of your schools for generations and they are respected for that,” she told the school teachers and managers present.

## STUDENT VOICE PROJECT

Canon Prof Leslie Francis and Prof David Lankshear of the University of Warwick gave the background and outlined

March 06, 2019



**The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church visited Castleblayney and commented - If I had small children and were in the area, I'd send them to this fantastic school. We did a bear hunt in Castleblayney National School, listened to accomplished musicians play Amazing Grace and Mrs McMullen, a retired teacher herself, was complimentary about the handwriting!**

the findings of the Student Voice Project which was devised for use in the Church of England and the Church in Wales.

Canon Francis said the challenge was to display the distinctiveness of church schools to people outside the church. "If you want to know about schools, then the best people to ask are the students in the schools," he commented. It was from this premise that the Student Voice

**March 06, 2019**

Project grew and was undertaken in schools under the patronage of the Church in Wales.

The three year project aimed to provide an annual report to the Church in Wales, to provide an annual report to each participating school to set alongside their provincial reports and to aid self evaluation, and to contribute to academic debate and stimulate serious thinking to inform policy and practice. Through their project they hoped to discover the students' attitudes to Christianity, their spiritual health and school related attitudes.

## IRISH CONTEXT

Jacqui Wilkinson of the Church of Ireland Centre at DCU talked about bringing the thinking of the Welsh project into an Irish context. She said that Church of Ireland schools occupied a small niche here but there was value in the project for the wider education system. She added that the project was important at a time when so many schools were looking at the issue of ethos.

She said she had carried out some research in Cork and the work had provoked conversation about ethos. She said she would be sending out questionnaires to 171 schools as part of her research at the University of Warwick. Urging schools to take part, she said the questions are aimed at 5th and 6th classes and the results would benefit each school and school patrons as well as the state as a whole.

“We need to hear from schools and value the student voice. It is really worth listening to the voices of students. There is a lot we can do with the information,” she said.

## UNPACKING ETHOS

The theme of this year's CIPSMA conference was 'Who are we? Accounting for Ethos!' and Bishop Kenneth Kearon (Limerick and Killaloe) and Sean Henry, PhD candidate at Maynooth University, unpacked the issue of ethos.

Bishop Kearon said that part of his role as a patron of Church of Ireland schools was to talk about ethos but he noted that there was no one snappy statement on the ethos of Church of Ireland schools.

He said that most ethos statements include the words 'inclusive' and 'diverse'. "I ask if these are the sorts of phrases that a marketing expert would suggest to sell schools to parents or are they values that we as a church would like to see expressed in the ethos of our schools," the Bishop observed. "These words are more important than ever. The words are used in the ethos statements of nearly every school, not just Church of Ireland schools."

He continued: "It used to be easy. There were just Catholic and Church of Ireland or Protestant schools. They just had to ensure that they were different enough to represent choice. But choice is more complex today. So what is the Church of Ireland commitment to diversity? I believe that Church of Ireland schools represent diversity in the system. It is not just about providing education to primarily Protestant children and filling up the remaining places with children of other faiths. There is a deeper role in ensuring diversity is present."



March 06, 2019

He said he would expect ethos statements to mention the individual rights of children and a realistic commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, “not because Irish society expects it but because it is part of what we are as members of the Church of Ireland”.

## EDUCATION COMES THROUGH ENCOUNTER WITH DIFFERENCE

Sean Henry continued the theme. He said that in trying to establish an ethos, on one hand there was an effort to determine the distinctiveness of a community while on the other, the body of the school was made up of people for whom faith had little meaning. He asked in what ways Church of Ireland schools were diverse and if responding to diversities was important to Church of Ireland schools.

He suggested that the word ethos pointed to an understanding of living that involved living with and being taught by others who are different to us. He stated that education does not happen through an encounter with sameness but through an encounter with difference.

So if a school espouses a diverse ethos it is committing to creating a space where pupils can become virtuous by encounter with the other, he said adding that this moves away from the idea that ethos is a fixed code that must be followed. It is a bottom up understanding of ethos.

“So a Church of Ireland school does not assume that everyone in it is Church of Ireland. Nor does it expect present or future belonging to the Church of Ireland. This does not mean that the traditions of the Church of Ireland

March 06, 2019

are not valuable to pass on. Ethos in this meaning is a very humble commitment,” he explained.

## Down and Dromore leaders meet for annual quiet day

Over 100 clergy, diocesan readers, parish and diocesan staff from Down & Dromore gathered for the annual Quiet Day in St Ignatius Carryduff on Shrove Tuesday, 5 March.



Bishop Harold led a three-hour service from the *Week of All*

*Weeks* prayer book with the theme: *Following the Lord to the Very End: The Seven Words from the Cross*.

Even though Shrove Tuesday is the ‘wrong’ day to be meditating on the Cross, there is something profound about remaining with Jesus for three hours while he suffers and dies for our salvation. Bishop Harold wanted to offer this opportunity to his leaders at the beginning of Lent.

Ahead of the service he said: “Traditionally the three hour service focuses on the seven words from the cross and it struck me that those seven words relate to experiences of

**March 06, 2019**

ministry. For example, how do we deal with unforgiveness, through hurts we have suffered in our ministry; how do we care for people pastorally the way Jesus cared for his mother and the disciple from the cross; how do we deal with a felt need when someone says, 'I am thirsty'; how do we come to a completion in our ministry when we're able to say, 'It is finished', I have completed what God has given me to do?' These are the things we will meditate on as we sit at the foot of the Cross today."

## **Fight cancer on Daffodil Day**

### **March 22**

Incidences of cancer in Ireland are rising and more people than ever before need your support.

The organisers of Daffodil Day are calling on you to get involved by selling daffodil merchandise in your local community on March 22. With every daffodil you sell you are funding Researchers, Nurses and Volunteers Drivers across Ireland. You are relieving worries and providing support to cancer patients and their families.

#### **What is Involved**

If you would like to make a difference to the people's lives in your community and have some spare time then we need your help. All you need to do is:

Commit to organising a whole day of selling daffodil merchandise outside a shop in your local area on March 22.

March 06, 2019

Belfast Jewish Heritage Walks  
meeting at Jaffe Fountain, Victoria Square

Tuesday 12 March 2019, 10.45am



A Jewish heritage walking tour in Belfast city centre!

*The Jewish community's contribution to Belfast as a great industrial  
and trading city.*

Guide: Steven Jaffe – who is coming over from London specially.

The walk will take a little over one hour – we will be walking to Ten Square  
Hotel at the back of City Hall, taking in places (sometimes surprising) of Jewish  
interest along the way.

Voluntary donation.

To reserve places please contact Steven at  
**[belfastjewishheritage@yahoo.com](mailto:belfastjewishheritage@yahoo.com)**



**March 06, 2019**

Ask family and friends to help with selling the daffodils merchandise on the day

Meet with the Daffodil Day Team to learn more about how you will be supporting cancer patients in your community. Have a fun yellow experience

If this sounds like something you would like to get involved in please contact Brenda, your community fundraiser, on 087 2807197 or

[bmccarthy@irishcancer.ie](mailto:bmccarthy@irishcancer.ie)

who will give you more information. 43/45 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4. Tel: 01 2310500.

## News briefs

### **+++Down & Dromore young adult leadership**

**development** - The diocese is conducting a review of its leadership development over the next few months and one strand involves asking young adults in their 20's and 30's for their thoughts.

A spokesperson said, "We would like to gather a range of people in this age bracket for an evening to meet with the bishop and archdeacons to ask them what they would like to see regarding a vision for biblical leadership in our church".

When: Thursday 28 March from 7–9.00 pm. Where: Church House, 61–67 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2QH (parking available via Talbot Street). With this in mind, if you're in your 20s or 30s and would like to contribute along with other young adults, please contact Andrew Brannigan at [andrew@downanddromore.org](mailto:andrew@downanddromore.org)

March 06, 2019



**This past weekend at the Methodist Church in Ireland's Soul Mates'19, the kids and leaders delved into prayer, 'plugging in & powering up'. It's amazing to see so many kids respond in prayer, lifting up friends & family, asking God for courage and desiring to encounter Him more.**

**+++Sponsor a chorister at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin**

- A donation of €50, or whatever you can afford, will contribute towards the cost of sending Saint Patrick's Cathedral Choir, Men and Boys on tour to Sweden in the summer. These tours are a fabulous experience for the Choristers but can only happen with your support, so please give generously.

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)

**March 06, 2019**

Contact details - Name: Address: Email: Amount Pledged: €

---

Please make any cheques payable to "Saint Patrick's Cathedral" marking the reverse Sponsor a Chorister and return to the Master of the Music, c/o Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Saint Patrick's Close, Dublin 8.

### **+++ Saint Patrick's Past Choristers' & Pupils'**

**Association's** - annual Reunion Dinner will be on Friday 22nd March 2019 at the Royal Irish Yacht Club. This was a very enjoyable evening last year and all past choristers and pupils are encouraged to come and wine and dine with old friends. Tickets are €45 each, including a Prosecco reception, may be obtained by contacting Susan Ronan at [SBRIE@leo-pharma.com](mailto:SBRIE@leo-pharma.com)

## **March 6 in Christian history**

**March 6, 1475:** Italian artist Michelangelo Buonarroti, famous for his paintings (the Sistine Chapel), sculpture ("David"), and architecture (the rebuilding of St. Peter's Cathedral), is born in Caprese.

**March 6, 1984:** Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoller, a founder of Germany's Confessing Church and a prisoner for his opposition to the Nazis, dies. Because of his advocacy for complete neutrality between East and West Germany (which was perceived as compromise with communism), he spent his later years in obscurity.

**AN INVITATION  
to become a  
FACEBOOK FRIEND  
of CNI**

**and get headlines of the CNI daily  
news magazine...**

**...Just a click at**

**<https://www.facebook.com/Church-News-Ireland-261305103892998/timeline/>**

**+ Please share CNI with your friends  
[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)**

