



## **Faith group dismay at Presbyterian Church action on minister's welcome of Republic's vote on same sex marriage**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has been criticized by Faith in Marriage Equality for its clampdown on ministers who affirm gay people.

The Rev Christina Bradley, who ministers at Armagh Road Presbyterian Church in Portadown, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland had welcomed the passing of same sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland, however she has now recanted.

Canon Charles Kenny, a Church of Ireland minister and spokesperson for Ireland's gay affirming group 'Faith in Marriage', said he "was dismayed that such pressure had been put on the Presbyterian Minister to recant".

He claimed "the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was trying to shut down discussion in the Church on the inclusion of its gay and lesbian members".

He said he "knew members of the Presbyterian Church, lay and clergy, who were affirming of gay people but were too frightened to say so".

Canon Kenny predicted that "the action of the Church would send a very damaging message to its gay members and make the Presbyterian Church in Ireland an even colder place for them and their families".

The Rev Bradley had said after the referendum result: "This warm-heartedness is good to see in a world which often is a cold place as much for women in leadership as it is for gay and lesbian people in churches. I welcome the Yes vote."

Her statement prompted a special Presbyterian Church Commission to investigate her pro-gay views. It was reported that the Commission's verdict was read out in her church last Sunday week by the clerk of session while Rev Bradley looked on.

The Commission's statement read: "Mrs Bradley confirmed to the Presbytery that marriage is to be between one man and one woman" and that "Mrs Bradley confirms that same-sex marriage is contrary to the will of God revealed in the Bible and accepts that homosexual practice is sinful in God's sight".

In 2013, the Northern Ireland justice minister, David Ford, stepped down as a Presbyterian elder in Co Antrim while church authorities investigated his views on same sex marriage.

- See CNI News September 19 and Comment September 21.

## Merger of Limerick teacher training colleges abandoned



***Minister Jan O'Sullivan quietly annuls planned union between teacher trainers Mary Immaculate College and University of Limerick***

An “unhappy marriage” has been quietly annulled by Minister for Education and Skills Jan O’Sullivan. The proposed union between Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and University of Limerick as part of a national plan to streamline teacher training has been ditched, the institutions have confirmed - the Irish Times reports.

In a statement, Mary I said “the issue of incorporation with the University of Limerick is

no longer on the agenda”, although the two institutions would continue to work together as part of the midwest cluster that includes Limerick Institute of Technology.

While other unions such as the DCU-St Pat’s Drumcondra-Mater Dei -Church of Ireland college incorporation have charged ahead, Mary I demanded the continuance of its existing “structure and governance” as well as funding autonomy, and whatever political pressure it applied seems to have worked.

Mary I has found a more compatible bedfellow in St Patrick’s College, Thurles, which will now operate as a satellite campus under the MIC banner.

Mary I president Prof Michael A Hayes said there was an “obvious complementarity in both campuses’ cultures and ethos”, and “clearly, MIC is held in the highest regard by the Minister and the Department of Education and Skills”.

Indeed, chief celebrant was none other than Ms O’Sullivan, who said: “I want to commend the management and staff of both institutions on the professional manner in which they have brought about this incorporation, ably assisted by the Higher Education Authority.”

## St Anne's at the heart of Culture Night



***St Anne's Cathedral was packed for a Culture Night Concert by the Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra.***

St Anne's Cathedral was again at the heart of Belfast Culture Night 2015, hosting a series of superb musical performances and talented artists.

Crowds again packed into the Cathedral for two beautiful services featuring the St Anne's Choir – Evensong at 5.30pm and Compline at 9pm which was attended by more than 600 people.

The annual Culture Night draws an estimated 50,000 people to the Cathedral Quarter, and this year featured more than 200 events in over 100 venues.

In St Anne's activities got underway at 1pm with the opening of an exhibition by local Christian artist Mary Gilfillan in the Ambulatory.

Throughout the afternoon the Cathedral provided the stage for concerts by several singer songwriters, beginning with Irish Folk and Root singer Marc O'Reilly at 2pm; acoustic music from the Bad Hearts aka Paul Wilkinson and Edelle McMahon at 3pm and Amanda St John singing soul songs old and new from 4pm.

In the Crypt people viewed Cisme, a hauntingly beautiful video installation by Jonny McEwen. The Cathedral was also the venue for an exhibition of banners created with Open Arts, and in the rear car park 'The WIMPS Blanket Fort' – a Children in Need project – offered visual arts and workshops. WIMPS (Where Is My Public Servant) had invited a number of politicians in to answer questions put to them by young people.

Back inside, Songs of Peace and Freedom proved a big hit, with their repertoire including a range of international songs to inspire.

The Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra filled the Cathedral with Big Band Music featuring swing, funk and pop. This concert which began at 8pm was a huge draw, with the seats packed and people queuing to get in.

Many stayed on for Compline, with the Cathedral in complete silence for this ancient monastic late evening service.

It was another hugely successful Culture Night for St Anne's Cathedral.

## **New Honorary Secretary of C of I General Synod**

Mr Ken Gibson was elected as a lay Honorary Secretary of the General Synod, following the resignation of Mrs Ethne Harkness in June. Mr Gibson is a retired Northern Ireland Civil Servant and has held a senior position in the International Fund for Ireland; he is also a member of the Church and Society Commission and has been Lay Honorary Secretary of the Connor Diocesan Council since 2002.

He will hold office until the day before the next meeting of the General Synod in May 2016.



## Continuing popularity of annual West Cork bell ringing weekend



Bell-ringers from Church of Ireland churches in West Cork - Skibbereen, Rosscarbery and Bandon - were joined by nine bell-ringers from the U.K. for a weekend of bell-ringing and social activity on the weekend of 11th to 13th September last.

The West Cork Ringing Weekend takes place over the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in September annually. The basic idea is to get some experienced bellringers to come to West Cork from the UK, to give the ringers of Rosscarbery, Skibbereen and Bandon the opportunity to ring with a steady band, which makes learning much easier.



This year, there were 9 ringers from England, and 1 from Bangor, County Down. Free accommodation and transport was offered to those who needed it. As well as many sessions of ringing (1 on Thursday evening, 3 on the Friday, 4 on the Saturday, plus Sunday service ringing), there was also a dinner on the Saturday evening at the Celtic Ross Hotel. After dinner the local handbell team (Carbery Bells), augmented by 2 experienced handbell tune ringers from the UK, entertained guests with a selection of tunes.

Following Service ringing on the Sunday, the guests and local ringers were given a soup and sandwich lunch at Martin and Jane's house in Drinagh, and a chance to ring on their miniature ring of 12 bells. Following this, everyone went up to Cork to finish the weekend off with ringing on

the [12 bells at St Fin Barre's Cathedral](#), where the Cork ringers provided tea and biscuits, and the chance to ring on their six bell mini ring, which is currently set up within the Cathedral. Six learners from Skibbereen, one from Rosscarbery, and six from Bandon all benefitted from people generously giving their time to come to West Cork, and pass on their knowledge and experience. Bell-ringers are looking forward to doing it all again next year!

## **Most people in England are still Christian, says new study**

Christianity is far from extinct in Britain and nearly six out of ten people still say they are Christian, according to a new report.

Most people like the Christians they know. Even those who say they are not Christian are open to finding out more about the faith.

The survey of 3,000 people was carried out by ComRes and Barna Group on behalf of a coalition of church groups made up of the Church of England, the Evangelical Alliance and HOPE. The study, carried out mainly in England, is particularly significant in light of the changing

face of faith in Britain because, unusually, researchers will track the data over the next 30 years.

According to the study, most non-Christians know a Christian and think well of them. They are most likely to describe them as friendly, caring, good-humoured, generous and helpful. One in five non-Christians is open to finding out more about Jesus after hearing Christians talk to them about their faith.

## **Lay Reader leaves Church of England over his same-sex marriage**

A Church of England lay reader has left the church as he is not allowed to officiate once his planned same-sex marriage goes ahead.

Jeremy Timm, of the Howden Team Ministry, took part in his final service at Howden Minster, East Yorkshire.

The Archbishop of York can withdraw the licence if Mr Timm's civil partnership is converted to marriage.

A statement for the archbishop said there would be no public comment.

It said there would be only direct communication with Mr Timm.

Parliament made same-sex marriage legal in England and Wales in March 2014, but the Church of England's doctrine holds that marriage can be only between a man and a woman.

During Sunday's service Mr Timm's announcement of his intention to marry his partner of 15 years on Thursday, and leave the church was greeted with applause.

He handed over his reader's robe to the church warden and said he hoped to return in the future.

He has previously said: "Marriage is the way in which people, same-sex or not, show their love and commitment to each other."

His decision to leave the church was announced in August [in a blog](#) on the Changing Attitude website.

The statement from the archbishop's office said the relevant guidelines were on the Diocese of York website and "this guidance is clear in

expecting the same of readers as the Church of England does of its clergy".

C of E Canon law states - "The Church of England affirms, according to our Lord's teaching, that marriage is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong, for better for worse, till death them do part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for the mutual society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

## **Vicar of Baghdad warns: Europe is ignoring the real refugees**

Europe is failing the most vulnerable refugees by focusing its sympathy on the migrants crossing its borders rather than those left behind, Canon Andrew White has said. In a passionate statement, he added: "the wrong people are at the front of the queue."

Until November last year Canon White, better known as the 'Vicar of Baghdad', was Chaplain of St. George's Church in Baghdad, the only



Anglican Church in Iraq. He was eventually forced to leave at the behest of the Archbishop of Canterbury following numerous death threats from ISIS militants, and now works as the founding and current President of the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME).

In a scathing statement, Canon White has now slammed Europe for its response to the migrant crisis. He says it is wrong to focus resources on those already in Europe, when those in real need are the ones left behind.

“I am disappointed by Europe’s response to the refugee crisis,” he said “Not enough is being done to help the most vulnerable, particularly those who have fled religious persecution.

“My charity is providing food, shelter and medicine for hundreds of Iraqi refugee families who have fled ISIS and are now in Jordan. Some have walked across the desert to find safety, with little more than the clothes on their backs.

“When I see angry young men clashing with border police in Hungary and demanding to be let into other EU countries, I feel that the wrong people are at the front of the queue.

## **Bishop Gene Robinson’s open letter to Pope Francis**

Retired Bishop of New Hampshire Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, is one of the White House papal visit guests over whom the Vatican has expressed concern. Bishop Robinson responded by writing an open letter to the Pope, which can be read [in its entirety at The Daily Beast](#).



There has been a bit of a kerfuffle in the last 24 hours due to reports that a senior Vatican official is offended, on your behalf, by my invitation to the White House on Wednesday to welcome you to America. Sister Simone Campbell, one of the nuns working day in and day out on behalf of the poor, is lumped in with me as a purported offense to you.

Based on your saintly ministry so far as Pope, I have to suspect that this report does not represent your own views (if this has even been brought to your attention), but rather the views of those who would try to “protect” you from the world. It would seem that I hold a higher view of you than some of your handlers who may have forgotten that you have demonstrated quite regularly not only your knowledge of the real world, but also a compassion for it. Not to mention that the good nun and I will be somewhere in the middle of a throng of 10,000+ Americans joining together to welcome you and wish you well.

Robinson calls himself “a laborer in another part of the vineyard,” emphasizing the points of ministry and theology he and Pope Francis both share:

Our churches disagree on those whom we are willing to ordain, their gender and their sexual orientation. Still, that does not keep me from striving to love and serve those entrusted to me, and to pray for you as you strive to love and serve those entrusted to you. We both care passionately about the poor, and we share the notion that unfettered capitalism creates and perpetuates poverty, treating the less fortunate as goods to be used up and discarded.

## Media digest

### **Irish Examiner - 1916 deaths can't be justified by politicians**

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/yourview/1916-deaths-cant-be-justified-by-politicians-355079.html>

### **BBC**

Reports that the Local Government Association says refugees will not be housed in spare rooms. The organisation says that although it's been heartened by people offering rooms, they're not needed. Also mentions the Archbishop of Canterbury's decision to offer a house to a refugee family in the grounds of Lambeth Palace.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34314195>

## **Guard**

Article about a letter sent by 100 rabbis to the Prime Minister urging him to speed up the process for refugees to enter this country. The letter also asks David Cameron to expand the number of people the country will take. The story also mentions the Archbishop of Canterbury's offer to house a refugee family in the grounds of Lambeth Palace.

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/21/rabbis-david-cameron-refugees-kindertransport>

## **FT**

Article about how big organisations could learn from the Archbishop of Canterbury's stance on the Anglican Communion. The report says that his plans to create a looser organisation could be applied to the world's four big professional service groups. It states that the Archbishop might not be as unlikely a management guru as he appears.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/64e4a880-5d1c-11e5-9846-de406ccb37f2.html?siteedition=uk - axzz3mRRFNNz8>

## **Premier**

Reports that a joint study by three major faith organisations, including the Church of England, has found that 57% of people consider themselves to be Christian. It also found one in

five people who aren't Christians would be happy to learn more about the faith, and also that under-35s are more open to Christianity and Jesus than older people.

The Church of England's national adviser for Mission and Evangelism, Dr Rachel Jordan, is quoted in the article.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Two-in-five-think-Jesus-is-a-mythical-figure>

## **Times**

Columnist Robert Crampton writes about lying and how he was caught out in the past, once by the Bishop of Hull's wife.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/life/article4563673.ece>

## **Exp/Mail/Star/Sun**

Reports examining whether the ghost of Richard III is haunting Leicester cathedral. A visitor took photos of the building and when she looked back at them, says an image of the king was on one of the slabs. His remains were re-interred in the cathedral earlier in the year.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/history/606847/Richard-III-haunts-Leicester-Cathedral-photographic-proof>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3243102/Medium-claims-images-PROVE-Richard-III-haunts-Leicester-Cathedral.html>

<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/weird-news/465888/Ghost-sighting-stories-photos-Richard-III-Leicester-cathedral>

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/6651507/Hunchback-from-the-dead-Ghost-of-Richard-III-appears-in-cathedral.html>

## **Mail**

A letter sent by Charles Darwin, in which he talks of his beliefs on religion, was due to be sold at auction in the United States. The article states that it's believed to be the only concrete proof of the scientist's views on religion or God.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3243818/I-m-sorry-inform-not-believe-bible-Rare-letter-sective-Charles-Darwin-confesses-atheist-set-sell-90-000-auction.html>