



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

A gathering of hundreds of young Christians is to take place this weekend for the first time



Known as Catalyst, the camping event will see talks, music and debates taking place at Glenarm Castle Estate this weekend.

Summer Madness, a festival for Christian youth takes place annually. This weekend a new event called Catalyst for those in their 20s and 30s is happening.

News Letter - Tickets are priced at £70, and the organisers said the event will have a capacity of around 500.

Catalyst is itself an offshoot of the upcoming Summer Madness event, but is designed for older Christians.

Summer Madness has a capacity of 2,500 and is described by director John Kee as a “festival of faith”.

It is taking place from June 27 to July 1, at the same venue.

The two gatherings are similar, but whilst the long-running Summer Madness (priced at £95) is geared towards an audience aged roughly between 12 and 20, and Catalyst is aimed more at those in their 20s and 30s.

Mr Kee said the latter is for those who feel they have grown beyond the youth festival, but still “have a hunger to connect with spiritual themes”.

Tickets are available for both and details of how to buy them can be obtained from www.summermadness.co.uk

. To read more about Catalyst, see the following feature: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/features/new-christian-event-poised-to-be-king-of-glenarm-castle-1-6129527>



Research Visit to Haiti Ahead of Next PCI Appeal

Rev Katherine Meyer is currently on a short visit to Haiti in her role as Convener of the Board of Mission Overseas' World Development Committee.

[Christian Aid](#) is facilitating the visit and Katherine will be visiting a number of their projects in the country, which was devastated by a huge earthquake in

January 2010.

The 2014/15 [World Development Appeal](#) plans to focus on two development projects, one of which is in **Haiti**, which aims to significantly reduce food insecurity in areas still profoundly affected by the 2010 earthquake and subsequent hurricanes.

The visit will enable footage and facts to be gathered for the promotional materials for the next Appeal, which is due to be launched in mid-October 2014.

Katherine left Ireland for Haiti on Monday 16th June, and is due to return next Wednesday 25th June.

[Presbyterian Mission Overseas](#) encourage people to pray for Katherine's trip, and for the gathering of good material which will encourage PCI congregations to support the Appeal.

Post Conference heartbreak remembered by Armagh Methodists

‘The fatalities were from all denominations – Church of Ireland (34), Presbyterian (19), Methodist (18), Roman Catholic (9). Amongst the dead was the son of the Rev William R McMullin, minister of Abbey Street Methodist Church, who was attending the annual Methodist Conference in Cork.



Methodist Newsletter - When he returned to Armagh, as well as the trauma of his son lying in a coffin in the manse, he found that his Sunday School superintendent, Samuel Steel was dead with his two daughters and their cousin, and every member of the Abbey Street Church Choir was either dead or injured.’

So writes Desmond Mitchell in an article on the Armagh Rail Disaster of 12 June 1889. Last week, Armagh Methodists held a weekend commemoration to mark the 125th anniversary of the catastrophe that saw the rear carriages of a e train full of passengers on the annual Methodist Church Sunday School excursion to Warrenpoint run back down a steep gradient towards Armagh station to collide disastrously with an oncoming train.

The commemoration took the form of a Flower and Art display with a special service on Friday 6 June and another on Sunday 8 June when the speaker was then Methodist president, the Rev Dr Heather Morris. ‘Dr Morris conveyed the sense of despair that must have been present on that fateful day,’ Mr Mitchell writes. ‘But also that in the midst of tragedy there is the ever-present care of a loving God.....As one minister from another denomination commented at the end: “In your lifetime of ministry there will perhaps be three or four occasions when the service is exceptional in forms of worship, exceedingly relevant in message and so filled with God’s presence that it will rarely be equalled. This was one of those unique occasions”.’

Armagh Methodist Church continues with its Sunday School and Christian witness. As Desmond Mitchell puts it, ‘The church will continue to work for

God's intervening and redeeming love in all situations, no matter how challenging.' Its current minister the Rev Denis Maguire appeared in the recent BBC documentary series 'City of Faith'.

On Thursday 12 June Transport Minister Danny Kennedy unveiled a statue to commemorate the anniversary of the disaster saying that the great tragedy of the Armagh railway disaster had led directly to various safety measures becoming legal requirements for railways in the United Kingdom.

Messy Church comes to Lisburn - Ulster Star

Messy Church is a form of ministry to families that was first pioneered in a parish near Portsmouth in England in 2004 and is now being run by some 2,400 local [churches in](#) the UK and around the world – including here in Northern Ireland.

Ulster Star - 'Messy Church' is a family friendly expression of worship through singing, games, crafts and celebration, with refreshments and lunch together to close.

Now 'Messy Church' comes to a Lisburn Church.

The first event is to be held in the Hilden Centre, Grand Street (part of Lambeg Parish) on Sunday June 22 at 11am.

'Messy Church' is not for children alone – the emphasis is on families.

Consequently we want children to be accompanied by an adult family member or members - and adults should definitely bring a child or children.

This is an ambitious venture and a lot different to anything we have ever done before in the parish so we hope lots of young families will [attend](#).

They promise it will be different, it will be fun and we will all worship God and learn about him in a new way.

There is no charge and the light lunch together will finish by 1pm.

Majority of priests 'dissatisfied' with new missal

Poll reveals 60% unhappy with missal

Irish Catholic - Dissatisfaction with the new translation of the missal is widespread among Irish priests, a new survey has found. The results of the poll revealed that, of the priests surveyed, over 60% were either dissatisfied

or very dissatisfied with the missal, while over 80% want it revised or replaced.

More specifically; 116 respondents (61%) were either 'dissatisfied' (33.5%) or 'very dissatisfied' (27.2%) with the new translation. A similarly high number, 152 (80%), favour the replacement of the new missal, either

immediately (35%) or as soon as a revised missal becomes available (45%).

However, despite the high levels of dissatisfaction with the new translation among those surveyed, 77% use the new missal exclusively, according to the poll.

The survey, commissioned by the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP), was conducted amongst a random sample of 191 priests by telephone between Monday, March 31 and Friday, April 11, 2014.

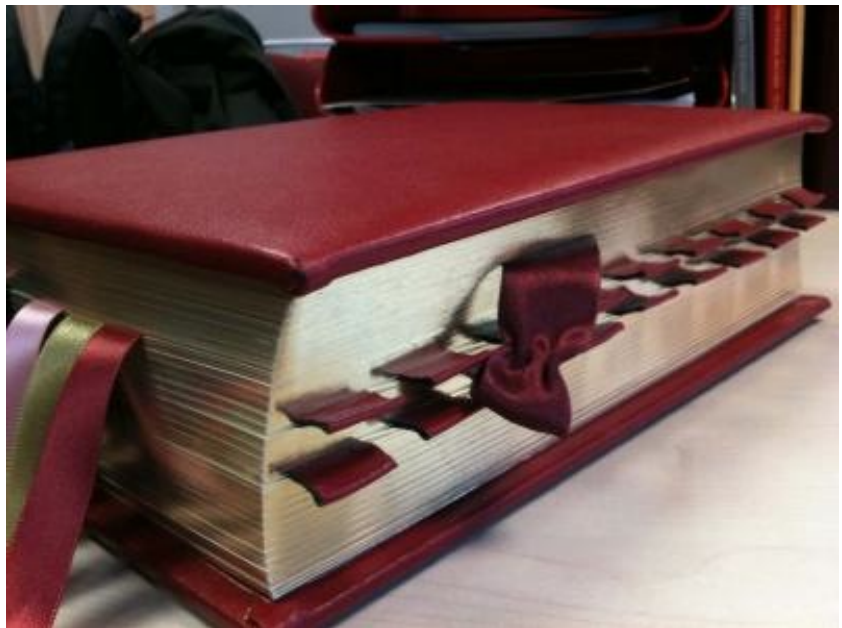
Respondents were chosen by systematic random sampling of the alphabetical list of all clergy in Ireland published in the Irish Catholic Directory 2014.

Christians of Many Traditions Engaged in First Ecumenical Bible Week

The first Ecumenical Bible Week, which took place in Dublin and surrounding areas between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, has been declared a success with people from a wide range of Christian backgrounds joining the programme.

People turned out in significant numbers to the various venues in Dublin, Arklow and Leixlip to listen and engage with speakers on a range of Bible-related topics.

The Revd Ken Rue, Vicar of Wicklow and Killiskey and vice chairperson of the organising committee, says that it is hoped that the week will take place





The panellists at the 'Thinking Allowed' session in All Hallows: Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, the Revd Lorraine Kennedy–Ritchie, Sean Mullan, Gillian Kingston, Fr Mikhail Nazonov, Archbishop Michael Jackson and Philip McKinley (interviewer).

again next year. He said the committee had received positive feedback and people liked that the programme took place in a number of different venues.

“The committee feels that it has lived up to their expectations. We had no idea of how it would be supported and we are delighted with the level of engagement. We have taken a number of suggestions on board and we hope to be able to do it again next year,” he stated adding that there had been a great spread of different Christian traditions reached during the week.

One of the highlights of the week was the ‘Thinking Allowed’ session which featured church leaders, including Archbishop Michael Jackson and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, speaking about what the Bible means to them. The other panellists were the Revd Lorraine Kennedy–Ritchie (Presbyterian), Mrs Gillian Kingston (Methodist), Sean Mullan (3rd Space) and Fr Mikhail Nazonov (Russian Orthodox). Before a crowd of over 200 people in All Hallows College, they were interviewed by Philip McKinley who posed the question: “How have you come to appreciate the Bible in your journey of faith?”

Archbishop Jackson, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, was first to the stand and said he had read the Bible from an early age and had been given space to engage with it. He said that Scripture could be a lonely place but he was in a position where he could converse with people worldwide. There was

a lot of pressure to lead from the front, he said but it was evident from the Bible that followership was also important. Pointing to the Good Shepherd, he added that the idea of shepherding was as important as leadership and followership.

The Revd Lorraine Kennedy–Ritchie, Moderator of the Dublin and Munster Presbytery, spoke of growing up in South Africa and getting to know the Bible in a conservative, evangelical setting. As children they were given Bibles and expected to read and know them. This meant she had an early relationship with the Bible. Through her academic learning that relationship had changed and reading the Bible was not for pleasure but for learning. Now, she said, she can read and reflect on Scripture as part of her job and for pleasure again and often Biblical images have helped her in her life.

Gillian Kingston, vice President of the World Methodist Council and former lay leader of the Methodist Church in Ireland, recalled her childhood memories of her mother reading the Bible to her in Nigeria. She started at the beginning and remembers being wowed by the language and images of God creating everything. Later on, while in school in Cork, she said they had to learn passages of Scripture, which they all disliked. But she said she was glad of it now because it had stayed with her. She said that knowing that all Scripture is God–breathed was magical for her.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, said his growing up was different. He knew his Catechism off by heart but not the Bible. He said that very often the language of Jesus was outrageous in its exaggeration and this was particularly the case when it came to God’s mercy. God does not put a price on offering his forgiveness and mercy which, the Archbishop said, could take us by surprise wondering how our church could become so harsh and so judgemental. He said that Pope Francis had recently spoken about the problem of the self–referential church and suggested that if we forgot about our own perfection and thought about the defects of Jesus we might be inspired.

Sean Mullan, 3rd Space and formerly of the Evangelical Alliance Ireland, said his earliest memories of the Bible dated back to the 1970s and reading about the Bible on leaflets. Later he was given a Gideon’s New Testament which he brought with him when he was heading off to sea to train as a navigation officer. He said he was sharing a cabin with someone who was new to the Bible and who was reading it enthusiastically. He said this stimulated him to look at the Bible again and the Gideon’s New Testament with the tiny print became a means to his engagement with God and spirituality. This continued until he decided to move from his career to study theology so that he could

teach the Bible to others. He said that the Bible must have a reality and must make a difference.

Fr Mikhail Nasonov, Rector of St Peter and St Paul's Russian Orthodox Church in Harold's Cross, outlined his early days in the Soviet Union where, like all Soviet children, he had never read the Bible. At the age of 18 he read 'Crime and Punishment' where he learned of the story of Lazerus and remembered being shocked by this incredible text. From that moment he began to search for a way to read the Bible. He added that it was possible for everyone to find the words they needed in the Bible to meet each crucial need in life.

John Brewer: peace threatens religion in NI; a future shared society may well be a secular one

[John Brewer](#), professor at QUB's [Institute for Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice](#), delivered the second annual *David Stevens Memorial Lecture* on Wednesday evening. A former General Secretary of the Irish Council of Churches and leader of the Corrymeela Community until his death in 2010, David Stevens had a long time interest in the interplay between religion and politics. The [full text of the lecture is available](#).



John Brewer suggested that “religious change is happening in ways that are breaking the link between religion and politics and are promoting a shared society”. In his opinion:

Northern Ireland is changing, and changing for the better. It just doesn't feel like it. We have yet to make peace with peace I think.

Post-Good Friday Agreement, John suggested:

If truth is the first fatality of war, perspective is the casualty of peace.

Because there is still some distance to go to realise a shared society, we easily lose sight of just how far we have come. Perspectives are distorted in peace processes by focusing on the difficulties ahead and ignoring what we

have actually achieved. Our politicians are particularly prone to this. And so the public sphere, which is dominated mistakenly in the media's mind by politicians, becomes curmudgeonly, cantankerous and crabby, further disillusioning pro-peace supporters, and buoying its detractors.

Focussing on three areas, he started by asking “whether we are still as religious as when the conflict reinforced identification and observance?”

Change in levels of identification is clearly a foot. There has been a rise in what is called religious independents – those who have no religious identification or refuse to state it in the census or social surveys. Religious independents have risen by six per cent, from 11% to 17% of the total population in the twenty years between the 1991 and 2011 censuses. On the other hand, clearly, we still maintain very high levels of religious identification compared to other Western societies, at 83% in 2011 ...

The overall statistical pattern, however, is clear: identification is in slow decline for mainstream Protestantism, holding up for Catholicism and rising amongst small independent, charismatic and conservative evangelical churches, so that the growth in religious independents comes at the expense of mainstream Protestant denominations.

John pointed to census data and the results of Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey modules on religious practice which points to a decline in religious observance. But the headline statistic that adult weekly church attendance in NI had dropped from two thirds in the 1960s to 40% by 2008 did not reveal the full picture.

*The number of believers who declare they **never** attend church has remained relatively stable over forty years at around one in six people and the practices of believers have changed only to being less regularly observant; there has been no increase in the number of those who do not attend at all. Less regular observance is not the same as growth in non-belief. We should call this liberalisation rather than secularisation – more liberal practice rather than a rise in non-belief.*

Secularisation, thus, is not yet on the rise and there is no growth of non-belief at the moment to change the way religion and politics intersect in Northern Ireland. So we cannot look to secularisation to decouple the link between politics and religion in Northern Ireland. I contend, however, that the changes in religious identification and practice that I call liberalisation are nonetheless having the same effect.

<http://sluggerotoole.com/2014/06/19/john-brewer-peace-threatens-religion-in-ni-a-future-shared-society-may-well-be-a-secular-one/>

Think tank vows 'real solutions'

The blame game for failure to make progress on community relations in Northern Ireland should be replaced by action, the head of a new think tank said.



Lord Alderdice

News Letter - The Centre for Democracy and Peace Building was launched yesterday, Friday in Belfast.

Its directors include former Northern Ireland Assembly speaker Lord Alderdice and DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson.

Chief executive Eva Grosman said: "Everybody is finger pointing at OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) and the disfunctionality of the department and the system, we have to regulate [the market](#), we have to pick up and run things as a civic society.

"We cannot wait any longer or engage in a blame game or wait for someone else to do something."

Disagreements between Sinn Fein and the DUP have been blamed by political opponents for delays in passing measures like a racial equality strategy.

Ms Grosman said she envisaged her organisation acting as a bridge between the community and its leaders, pointing to the high profile of some supporters.

Mr Donaldson was heavily involved in political talks chaired by former US diplomat Dr Richard Haass aimed at reaching five-party agreement on parades, flags and dealing with the legacy of the past.

He is also associated with efforts to export the lessons of post-conflict Northern Ireland to other [countries](#).

John Alderdice is a former leader of the Alliance Party who helped negotiate the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. He now works at Oxford University where his posts include directorship of the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict.

The Centre for Democracy and Peace Building is hoping to collaborate with Oxford and Harvard University in Boston on researching alternative political structures for Northern Ireland. More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/think-tank-vows-real-solutions-1-6130585>

Justice in the Community Awards

Nominations are now open for the Northern Ireland Justice in the Community Awards 2014. These awards recognise the exceptional achievements of those who are working to support the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland to help make local communities safer and better places to live, work and socialise

Who can be nominated for a justice award?

You can nominate those people who you believe are working hard to promote and deliver justice within their local communities, whose efforts often go unrecognised.

Those people could include members of the public, volunteers or staff in voluntary and community groups, as well as those working within the criminal justice system who work for the benefit of the entire community. They may be individuals or a group of people involved in supporting victims or witnesses or working with offenders to help reduce reoffending. They could also be involved in tackling anti-social behaviour by helping young people to take part in other activities, such as sports or training and education.

Past winners

Previous winners have included:

- a youth development worker using football as a medium to reducing anti-social behaviour
- volunteers raising awareness about human trafficking

- individuals working for a community restorative justice organisation working to develop relationships between their community and local statutory organisations such as the police.

Make a nomination

If you know someone who you think is a Justice Champion and deserves a Justice in the Community Award, then you should download and complete the nomination form. Guidance notes to help you complete the form are also available at the link below.

Nominations can either be submitted by email or by post at the addresses set out in the form. The closing date for receipt of nominations is 5.00 pm on Friday 19 September 2014.

- [Justice in the Community Awards 2014- Information pack and nomination form \(PDF 98 KB\)](#)

The awards

All nominations will be considered by an independent judging panel. Three top awards will be made, each to the value of £500, for equipment or services to benefit the winners' local communities.

Further information

For further information on the awards please contact:

*Justice Awards Co-ordinator
Department of Justice
Massey House
Stoney Road
Belfast
BT4 3SX
Phone: 028 9016 9588*

Email: justiceawards@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk

Anglicans invited to join global advocacy webinar

Anglicans are invited to attend the Anglican Alliance's advocacy webinar on Tuesday 24th June 2014 at 9am UK time. Just click the link below and enter your name to join in!

<http://workcast.adobeconnect.com/anglican>

The organisers state - Find out more about how you and your church can speak up and the ways that you can bring your voices to your leaders.

[Presenters from churches and agencies](#) across the Pacific will be online to discuss tools that can be used by the local church to advocate to their governments and encourage their communities to engage in advocacy initiatives.

The webinar follows the [Anglican Alliance's presence at the C20 Summit](#) in Melbourne, Australia, where the voices of Anglicans from the Pacific will be put to world leaders to ask them to take action on climate change.

You can [join the discussion](#) and listen to presenters on Tuesday 24th June at 9am UK time for one hour.

There will be the opportunity to put questions to the panel throughout the webinar, and a recording of the webinar will be posted online for all to access the day after the event.

Instructions on how to access the webinar room and take part are available at <http://www.anglicanalliance.org/news/19403>

If you have any questions about this event or if you would like any more information please do not hesitate to contact Christina Manning, our Communications and Learning Manager, at christina.manning@aco.org

We look forward to seeing you in our webinar room on Tuesday 24th June at 9am UK time!

[US General Assembly committee opens door for Presbyterian ministers to perform same-sex marriages](#)

The Presbyterian Outlook

<http://pres-outlook.org/2014/06/marriage-committee-votes/>

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