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

New Irish political party would respect conscience

**A new political
 party to appeal
 to voters
 disenfranchised
 and
 disillusioned by
 the mainstream consensus may be a step closer.**



Lucinda Creighton

Irish Catholic - It is reported that the party, emerging from the 'Reform Alliance' group of Fine Gael TDs expelled by Enda Kenny for refusing to betray their conscience and support abortion, will shortly publish a policy document. The document will reportedly address the issue of political reform.

A key and innovative part of the new party will be that party representatives will not be bound by the narrow party whip system on controversial moral issues. Instead, members will be able to make up their own minds and vote in accordance with their conscience on issues like abortion and gay marriage.

While welcoming to pro-life voices, the party is reluctant to be solely defined by this issue, instead hoping to appeal to the wider high proportion of disenfranchised voters. In the most recent local elections, just over half of voters bothered to cast a ballot. In Dublin, just 43%.

The group is reportedly trying to recruit independents to join with the group of dissident Fine Gael TDs and senators.

The Irish Catholic understands that front-woman Lucinda Creighton and her colleagues intend to make freedom of conscience on moral issues a central plank of its policy platform.

In a statement to The Irish Catholic, Ms Creighton insisted party members would “absolutely have the right to conscientious objection”.

“A free vote for all members would be unquestionable on all moral issues. The idea is to effectively dilute the party whip system,” she said.

Current mounting speculation follows steps taken by the Reform Alliance late last year towards becoming a fully-fledged political party by registering with the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO). Opinion polls regularly show nearly a third of the electorate is undecided on who to vote for in a general election fuelling speculation that there is an appetite for a new party.

- See more at: <http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/new-party-would-respect-conscience-lucinda-creighton#sthash.FZWBiFgR.dpuf>

Inside the DUP: An overwhelmingly Protestant make-up, with just a handful of Catholics and no Muslims

"I'm a Christian and that is why I am in the DUP. I'm not sure if I wasn't a Christian that I would be in the DUP."

Liam Clarke in Belfast Telegraph - These are the words of one DUP councillor to Professor Tonge's researchers.

The DUP emerges as an extremely religious party in a society where church attendance, though still high, is slowly falling off.

Peter Robinson, the party leader, who is one of the tiny 1.1% of members who belong to the Elim Pentecostal Church, sets the tone. When asked how much influence "church and faith" should have on its policies he draws a distinction.

"I don't think that the church should have any influence on it (DUP policy). People's own faith will guide them in terms of their outlook on life and therefore, from a structural institutional point of view, it (the score) should be a zero, but from a personal point of view, it should be 10," he says.

Nigel Dodds, the deputy leader and a Free Presbyterian, sees the DUP as a party in the European Christian Democratic tradition.

Paul Girvan, an MLA who chairs the finance and personnel committee at Stormont, believes that "politics came about through religion. If you use the Ten Commandments you can formulate almost every law you will ever need".

Jim Wells sees the party as a brake on Northern Ireland "becoming less and less evangelical and Christian".

Just 2% of DUP members, compared to 10% of respondents in the 2011 census, say they are non-religious and it almost goes without saying that the form of religion in vogue within the party ranks is overwhelmingly Protestant. The Roman Catholic Church, of which 41% of the population of Northern Ireland are members, is our largest denomination, but despite efforts by the leadership to reach across the religious divide, only 0.6% of DUP members, perhaps six or seven people, are members of the Catholic Church.

Not a single DUP member out of the 75% who responded is a Muslim or a member of any non-Christian religions. That compares to 30.5% who are Free Presbyterians, the largest denomination in the party.

Its dominance is, however, slipping. Mainstream Presbyterianism accounts for 29.1% of DUP members, though 39.2% were born Presbyterians, and it is likely to become the main denomination in a few years.

Church of Ireland is next in popularity with 17.7% of members, Baptists and Methodists have 4.2% each, and the rest are made up of a scatter of small denominations like Brethren.

More links on this report at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/inside-the-dup-an-overwhelmingly-protestant-makeup-with-just-a-handful-of-catholics-and-no-muslims-30330697.html>

Irish mass grave discovery prompts government investigation

The Irish government has established a working group to address details emerging about Catholic-run, state-funded mother-and-baby homes and the burial of deceased children.

Catholic Herald - Minister for Children Charlie Flanagan said that the initiative would result in a report to the government on how best to address "a shocking reminder of a darker past in Ireland."

The revelations that nearly 800 babies died in the home for unwed mothers in Tuam run by the Bons Secours nuns in the west of Ireland from 1925 to 1961 and were possibly buried in unmarked graves in a disused septic tank has put renewed focus on such homes. Opposition politicians have called on the government to establish an independent inquiry to establish the truth of the allegations.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin said that “if a public or state inquiry is not established into outstanding issues of concern surrounding the mother-and-baby homes, then it is important that a social history project be undertaken to get an accurate picture of these homes in our country’s history.”

Archbishop Martin also said that “where there are reasonable grounds,” he supports “excavating what may be unmarked graves” and “the setting up of monuments at any unmarked grave sites with, where possible, the names of those who died.”

Following research by local historian Catherine Corless into the operation of the mother-and-baby home that was run by the religious order, it emerged that up to 796 children may have died at the home during its 36 years of operation. Corless has been unable to locate a grave, and locals believe the children are buried in the disused septic tank. However, local police disputed the claim that any human remains buried in the site date from the Irish Potato Famine in the 19th century.

Flanagan said the government is giving “active consideration” to addressing the issue of children who died years ago in the homes.

“I am particularly mindful of the relatives of those involved and of local communities,” he said. “There are a number of government departments involved in this process. The cross-departmental initiative underway will examine these matters and report to Government on how they might be addressed.”

Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam was scheduled to meet the Bon Secours sisters to discuss the issue.

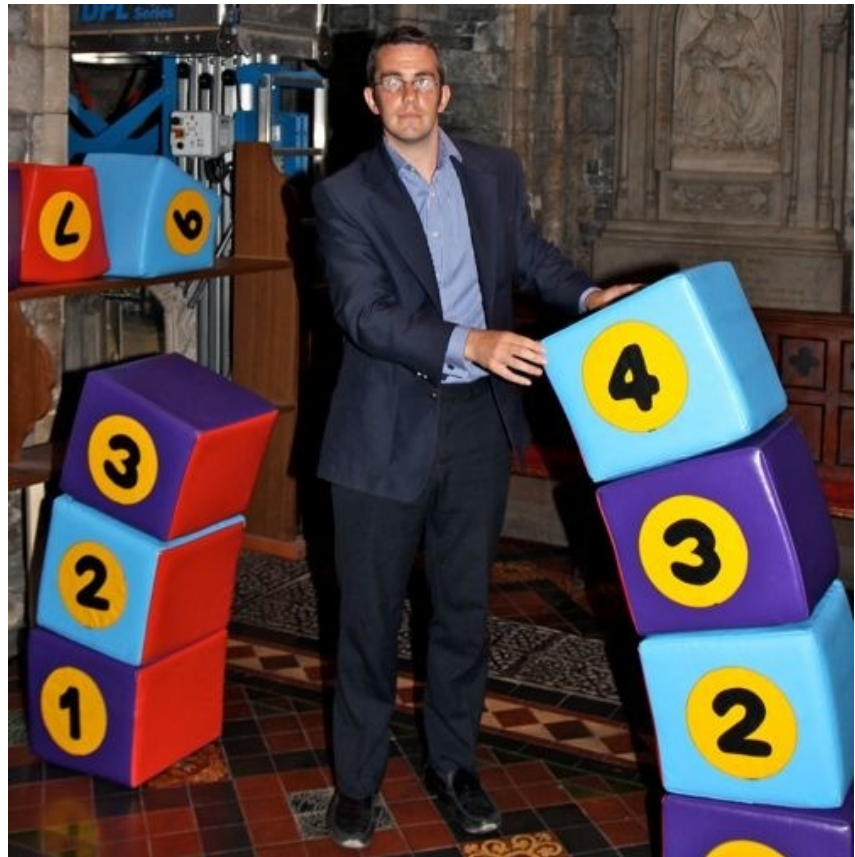
“The archbishop will be meeting the sisters to discuss the matter of the memorial and also the holding of a memorial service for those who died there. I understand a suitable plaque is planned to contain the names and dates of death of all the 796 children,” an archdiocesan spokesman said.

“There is nothing in our archives about this,” the spokesman added. “The home closed in 1961 and all the records were handed over to the county council and the health board, I understand.”

Statement of Archbishop Neary in Support of Home Inquiry :
<http://tuamarchdiocese.org/2014/06/statement-of-archbishop-neary-in-support-of-home-inquiry/>

St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, Receives Major Tourism Grant

St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin has received a significant funding boost with the announcement of State funding for city centre tourism projects. The cathedral will receive €152,650 to develop a new exhibition area and education space where visitors can learn about different aspects of the Cathedral’s cultural and religious history.



St Patrick’s Cathedral Education Officer, Andrew Smith, demonstrating how to build an arch in the cathedral’s South Transept.

The first phase of this project will be open in July and will entail a major new exhibition focusing on the First World War, the effect that the conflict had on the cathedral’s community and the changing nature of Remembrance within the Cathedral. This exhibition, designed by the cathedral’s education officer Andrew Smith, Liam Furlong of Space.ie and Edward Bisgood of Bushypark Ironworks will run until 2018.

The next phase of the project will include touch screen facilities, animations showing how the city developed from 800AD to 1500, themed video clips on

local attractions, and a detailed history of the Cathedral. A new audio visual area will play themed videos showing how the Cathedral developed within the wider city.

Visitors will also be able to practice calligraphy, and try out brass rubbing, which should prove popular with some sections of the UK market. The visitor centre will put the Cathedral's history into context with other local sites such as Christ Church Cathedral and Dublin Castle.

The funding is being allocated under Fáilte Ireland's Capital Investment Programme and the other project to benefit is the development of a new whiskey museum on College Green.

Announcing the grants, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar, said: "These two city centre projects should prove a hit with tourists. St Patrick's Cathedral gets more than 370,000 visitors every year and many of them want to learn more about the cathedral. The new interpretative centre will tell the story of the Cathedral, and the development of Dublin".

Fáilte Ireland CEO, Shaun Quinn emphasised Dublin's strategic importance for overseas tourism to Ireland. Mr Quinn added: "Increasingly, a successful tourism destination needs to be able to tell its story and to provide opportunities for visitors to engage with that narrative. The projects announced today – as part of the Dublin Discovery Trail – allow us to do just that and contribute to our overall ambition of marketing Dublin as a 'must-see' and 'must-do' destination".

St Patrick's Cathedral is located in an important position adjacent to the Dublin Discovery Trail route next to a cluster of visitor attractions including St Werburgh's Church, Dublinia and Christchurch. The Dublin Discovery Trail runs across the city from College Green to Kilmainham, and focuses on Dublin's culture and heritage.

Major South African Evangelist To Speak In Kilkenny

A South African farmer and evangelist who has spoken to gatherings of up to 200,000 people will speak at The Hub in Kilkenny on 11 June at 7.00 p.m. This is a new conference centre built two years ago. The main conference hall seats 1400 people.

The organisers want to reach out to farmers, church leaders, husbands, wives, children and everyone in Ireland to attend this free outreach event in Kilkenny.

This is a unique nondenominational event and all are welcome to attend. The organisers believe that Angus Buchan's background as a farmer in South Africa allow him to relate to those who attend this event. As a farmer displaced from his native land of Zambia by both racial and political unrest he moved his family to South Africa for a better life.

His first book, also a major motion picture, 'Faith Like Potatoes', tells how God transformed his life. It describes his journey of faith through deeply personal and family challenges. Buchan does not financially benefit from his ministry, which he funds from his farming activities. The only thing he asks for is that his flights are covered.

He says that generations of people in Africa have been blessed by the 'Good Seed' that was planted by missionaries from Ireland over the centuries. Angus now wants to return to Ireland with this 'Good Seed' and plant it back into our fertile soil. He has preached all over the World from the biggest stadia to small church fellowships.

This free event is sponsored and supported by a collection of people from the Presbyterian, Pentecostal and Catholic Churches in Ireland.

Free tea and coffee is available on presentation of your ticket.

Only 1400 seats available so early booking is advised. Please book your tickets online at www.togetherforireland.com or ring Robert on 087 2220507 or Geraldine on 086 2575124

20 parish teams are trained for 24–7 prayer in Down & Dromore

Donaghcloney church hall was filled on 4 June as over 100 people representing 20 parishes got together for 24–7 prayer training.

This was the fourth of five training events around the diocese created to guide and inspire churches as they set up their prayer rooms, many for the first time.

Faith Like...

ANGUS BUCHAN
SHARING THE 'GOOD NEWS' WITH IRELAND

Come and listen to a Blessed Christian speaker Angus Buchan at the Hub in Kilkenny and be inspired by his encouraging words. Angus is a straight talking, tough South African Farmer who is still involved with his sons running their family farm. God has used him mightily, as he is able to communicate with ordinary people and loves to preach the good news of Jesus.

THE HUB, KILKENNY
7.00PM WEDNESDAY
11TH JUNE 2014

THIS IS A FREE EVENT
so please book your tickets online @
www.togetherforireland.com
or contact any of the persons below.
Sponsored and supported by Christians in Ireland from
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Robert: e: cobblershill@gmail.com
t: 087 222 0507

‘Excellent!’ ; ‘Really helpful.’; ‘I can’t wait to get home and try out some ideas’ - was some of the feedback after Tash Creaney, the 24–7 Prayer Coordinator, gave the group 90 minutes of background, ideas, practical tips and lots of encouragement.



The prayer room is a multi-sensory space set up with creative stations, each with a different focus to guide and stimulate people in their praying. Tash shared some great prayer station ideas from parishes that have already held the prayer scroll and the group also split into smaller teams to do some brain brainstorming of their own.

The scroll began its journey on 1 January in the Titanic Quarter at the Dock Cafe and is currently making its way along the beautiful South Down coast. All of the parishes will hold the scroll at some point during the year and with it the responsibility for sustaining prayer as the foundation is laid for a Year of Mission in 2015.

A diocesan spokesperson said - It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience so far and we’re confident that the group of parishes just trained will be blessed as they embark upon their 24–7 prayer slot in the next couple of months.



Connor’s Take the Castle youth weekend

Registration forms are now available for Engage Connor Youth’s Take the Castle weekend in Castletwellan in September.

This event, taking place in the beautiful Castlewellan Castle on the shores of Castlewellan Lake from September 5–7, will be a special weekend, according to the Rev Peter Ferguson, chair of Engage Connor Youth.

“The weekend programme is already in place with four sessions including worship and teaching on our theme You’re in the Army Now! Living in the Lordship of Christ (Ephesians 6) looking at areas of Christian discipleship such as identity, courage and prayer,” said Peter.

“There will be lots of time for fun and action with evening games, night walks, cheesy disco, it’s a knock–out and much more. Oh and there will be lots of food and a hot dog supper on the Friday!”

Download a [group registration form](#) or an [individual registration and consent form](#) at - <http://www.connordiocese.org.uk/news/Sign-up-for-Connors-Take-the-Castle-youth-weekend.cfm>

GB Methodist Conference 2014

This year's Methodist Conference will take place at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel from 26 June to 3 July.

The Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church and meets annually to discuss matters affecting the life of the Church, the nation and the world.

The Conference's representative session will open at 2.15pm on Saturday 28 June with the induction of the President of the Conference, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft, and the Vice-President, Gill Dascombe. Following Sunday morning worship on 29 June, Methodist presbyters and deacons will be ordained in venues across the Birmingham District. Over 5,000 tickets have been distributed for the weekend events of the Conference.

The debate on the Church's response to same-sex marriage legislation and civil partnerships will take place on the morning of Wednesday 2 July.

Video of the debates will be streamed live online through the [Methodist Conference website](#) from Saturday 28 June onwards.

The Conference is a gathering of 306 full members drawn from each Methodist district, along with some who have been elected by the Conference, together with some ex officio members, international, ecumenical and youth representatives, and associate members.

Leaving for love: Portuguese priests quit ministry in favour of marriage



Following the news that 26 women, each of whom declared herself in love with a Catholic priest, [signed a letter](#) to Pope Francis

begging him to relax rules on celibacy, it transpires that Portuguese clergy are taking matters into their own hands.

Pope Francis has said celibacy is "not a dogma of faith" and the "door is always open" to changing celibacy laws in the future. Will the swarms of Portuguese clergy leaving the Church for love be an impetus?

[According to the BBC](#) more than 400 practising priests in Portugal have recently left their vocation in the Church, many because they want to get married, which is currently against Catholic teaching.

Fernando Felix Ferreira, a former priest, told [Portuguese TVI 24](#) that "the number of priests requesting exemption has been increasing".

Ferreira himself applied for dispensation from the Church in 2000; a lengthy process that took a year and a half to complete. Many priests, "some young, and some not-so-young" according to Ferreira, however, are now refusing to adhere to this formality and are instead choosing to "simply abandon the ministry".

Ferreira also shared that in a single day, six priests quit their jobs in the diocese of Santarém in Lisbon.

Despite these figures, Pope Francis has said he is "in favour of maintaining celibacy, with all its pros and cons, because we have ten centuries of good experiences rather than failures," though he has raised hopes that this could change in the future.

"If, for the sake of argument, western Catholicism reviewed the celibacy question I think it would do so for cultural reasons (as in the East), not so much as a universal option...It is a question of discipline, not faith. It can be changed," he said in a 2012 interview.

The Pope also admitted that though he "never considered marrying," he was "dazzled" by a girl he met at a wedding in his youth.

A Family Synod focussing on "the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation" will be held in October this year, during which priestly celibacy is expected to be discussed. The Pope is said to be "open-minded" about finding a solution to the shortage of clergy, after declaring that celibacy is not "a dogma of faith".

Nigeria is most violent country for Christians

A church stands torched and plundered by Boko Haram militants in Nigeria. The country has suffered a wave of violence against Christians since the group's uprising in 2009.



A leading persecution charity has released a [Top10 Violence List](#), revealing the countries in which Christians are most violently persecuted for their faith.

Based on a period between November 2012 and March 2014, researchers at Open Doors International have found Nigeria to be the worst place for extreme violence, with Syria and Egypt placing second and third.

Other countries that made the top 10 include Pakistan, India, Iraq and Kenya.

According to the World Watch List, a branch of Open Doors, 2,073 Nigerian Christians were killed in faith-related violence during the reporting period, out

of a total of almost 5,500 across the globe. Researchers have noted, however, that the true figure may well be "significantly higher".

"The alarming increase of violence against Christians in Nigeria over the past months highlights the lack of religious freedom they have and the daily dangers they face from the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram and other violent Islamic organizations," Open Doors USA CEO Dr David Curry said in a statement.

"Going to school, attending church or identifying yourself as a Christian is a very brave decision in Nigeria. It is turning into a bloodbath. Christians in the West must stand in the gap with our prayers and support."

Members of Boko Haram, a Muslim extremist faction, are responsible for thousands of deaths in Nigeria since their initial uprising in 2009 and have recently been brought to international attention following the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno state, who are yet to be rescued.

Boko Haram has been labelled a "Foreign Terrorist Organisation" by the US Administration, and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby recently denounced it as "utterly merciless". UK Prime Minister David Cameron has also condemned the kidnapping as "an act of pure evil".

The group's leadership have declared intent to cleanse the country of Christians, eradicate Nigerian democracy and replace it with an Islamic state guided by Sharia law, though some Muslim communities believed to have betrayed Islam have also been targeted.

It is interesting to note that North Korea, officially recognised as the worst country for Christian persecution by the WWL for the past 12 years, does not feature in the new list on violence.

Jan Vermeer, Open Doors field worker for North Korea, explains that this is due to it being "impossible" to record accurate data in a country so closed to the outside world.

"It is a fact that thousands of Christians are starved, abused and tortured in North Korea's extensive prison system," he says.

"But due to an inability to derive sufficiently accurate figures about the reasons for killing Christians in this most secretive society, North Korea is excluded from the total number of killings."