



‘No surprise’ at Leo Varadkar’s historic visit to Orange Order HQ today



Leo Varadkar - Ireland’s premier is to pay an historic visit today to the headquarters of the Orange Order in Northern Ireland.

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Orange historian Dr David Hume



An Orange historian has said that although the Orange Order would be “at odds” with the taoiseach on a number of issues, his visit to

Schomberg House on Friday is not unexpected, the News Letter reports.

Dr David Hume said: “This is not the first time that the Grand Lodge has hosted a senior political figure from the Republic of Ireland, as former president Mary McAleese and her husband Dr Martin McAleese were at the official opening of the Museum of Orange Heritage in 2015.

“What possibly makes this more interesting is the politics which attends the taoiseach’s visit in the midst of the Brexit debate, and the abortion referendum, not least since the Grand Lodge entered the latter debate very publicly by calling on its members in the Republic to vote ‘No ‘in the referendum.”

Mr Varadkar, who is the first taoiseach to be openly gay, will make history by becoming the first head of the Irish government to visit the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland’s headquarters.

Dr Hume, from Ballycarry who is an Orange historian and commentator, added: “The Orange Institution is a conservative body in general terms and clearly would be at odds with the taoiseach on a number of contemporary issues.

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“However, I suspect this visit will be viewed by Leo Varadkar as a natural extension of interest and understanding in all aspects of Irish cultural heritage, which the Orange tradition certainly forms a part of.

“He will know he is unlikely to win over many supporters through the visit, but the optics will still be important from the point of view of the Dublin government.

“There may be some Orangemen who will grumble about the visit, but given that the Museum of Orange Heritage was funded on the basis of outreach and understanding across the community, there is little that can be unexpected in this visit.

“The museum is open to anyone from any political background who chooses to visit, and since 2015 many nationalists have done so.”

Christian groups welcome Supreme Court's abortion decision on Northern Ireland

The Supreme Court ruled that Northern Ireland's Human Rights Commission had no right to challenge the country's abortion law but also said the law is incompatible with human rights.

Currently, terminations are only legal if a woman's life is at risk or there is a permanent or serious danger to her mental or physical health.

On Thursday, the court ruled they had no jurisdiction to declare the current rules 'unlawful' but did say Northern Ireland's laws are incompatible with the European



Pro-life demonstrators gather outside the Supreme Court in London

Convention on Human Rights, namely Article 8, which protects the right to respect for private and family life. They therefore suggested that the law should be changed by saying what ruling they would have made had the case been valid.

Although 'radical reconsideration' was recommended, Christian groups have welcomed the ruling that the Northern Ireland Human Rights commission cannot interfere with the law themselves.

Peter Lynas, the director of the Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland said: "This is a welcome judgment. It is obviously not a cause for celebration, but rather a moment



to pause and be thankful for the lives this judgment will save."

"We acknowledge that this is a technical victory; however, it is important to note that the Supreme Court has dismissed the case brought by the Human Rights Commission. In doing so, it has made clear that there is no human right to abortion."

He also made the distinction between the the right to terminations in extreme circumstances and the right generally: "From a human rights perspective, the only discussion is about life-limiting conditions and sexual crime. Changes beyond that, such as decriminalisation, have nothing to do with human rights."

Pro-life group, Life Northern Ireland addressed the part of the judgement which stated there would have been a verdict of incompatibility: "Life NI is disappointed to note that the Supreme Court has indicated how it might have ruled had there been a case to answer.

"The suggestion that the Supreme Court would have ruled an instance of incompatibility of Article 8 in the case of fatal foetal abnormality and sexual crime is disappointing."

Dawn McAvoy from Both Lives Matter welcomed the limit the judges put on changing the law: "All seven judges have also made clear that they would not have allowed abortion on the grounds of a serious malformation of the unborn child."

Pope Francis to visit World Council of Churches as part of its 70th anniversary celebrations

The [World Council of Churches](#) (WCC) is celebrating its 70th anniversary. To mark this occasion, Pope Francis will visit the WCC in Geneva on 21 June 2018. The theme for the visit is *Walking - Praying - Working Together*, which is intended to echo the pilgrimage for justice and peace, a theme adopted by the WCC at its last assembly.

The Holy Father's visit will take place at the end of the WCC Central Committee meeting and will be at the centre of the ecumenical commemoration of the 70th anniversary. When announcing the visit, on 2 March 2018, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, His Eminence Kurt Cardinal Koch, remarked, "The visit ... will be a sign of recognition of the unique contribution of the WCC to the modern ecumenical movement."

The WCC is a fellowship of 348 member Churches, including Orthodox Churches, along with dozens of Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, and other

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Churches that together represent roughly half a billion Christians around the world.

While the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, various dicasteries of the Roman Curia and different Catholic organizations and religious communities collaborate closely with its different programmatic areas. For instance, the Catholic Church is a member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. As well, since 1965, a Joint Working Group of the WCC and the Catholic Church has been a catalyst for fruitful collaboration in areas of doctrinal dialogue, ecumenical formation, mission and evangelism, youth, justice and peace, and emerging questions relating to the life of modern societies.

[Link to the webpage of the WCC on its 70th anniversary](#)

[Link to webpage of the WCC announcement of Pope Francis' visit](#)

[Link to announcement by Cardinal Koch regarding the visit of Pope Francis to the WCC](#)

German ecumenism chief attacks Vatican Communion ruling

The Vatican is facing a backlash from Germany after the publication of a letter on Communion for Protestants.

A majority of the bishops' conference had approved a plan to allow Protestant spouses of Catholics to receive Communion if they experienced "distress".



After an appeal from a minority of German bishops, Pope Francis originally declined to give a decision. But yesterday it emerged that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a letter approved by the Pope, later told the German bishops that they should not proceed with their plan.

The letter said that the plan had theological implications for the whole Church, and that the bishops should await further clarification from the Vatican.

Yesterday Bishop Gerhard Feige, who leads the German bishops' ecumenism commission, wrote a strongly-worded **response** for the bishops' conference website.

Bishop Feige said that the Vatican's "incomprehensible" decision had caused "wounds" in the German Church. "The

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disappointment is great for many, the damage is not yet foreseeable,” the bishop wrote.

He criticised “black-and-white thinking”, saying that each case had to be taken individually, given the “innumerable exceptions” to general rules.

News briefs

+++ Celebration Praise tomorrow night in Banbridge

Join Kerygma, The Good News Choir, for a Night of Celebration Praise in aid of the 2018 CMS Ireland visit to the Diocese of Kajiado, Kenya. The evening will also feature Junior Kerygma! When: Saturday 9 June at 7.00 pm Where: Holy Trinity, Banbridge (Seapatrick Parish)

Tickets: £10.00 and include a light supper. You may pay at the door or purchase tickets online at

www.ticketsource.co.uk/kerygma The trip is in support of mission partners Ronnie and Maggie Briggs who are engaged in Church Leadership training, Education and Vocational Training Projects (cmsireland.org) *For more information, call 077 7825 5599 or email:*

kerygma.choir@gmail.com

+++The King at the Castle - tomorrow night

The stunning setting of Killyleagh Castle courtyard is the location for songs from Elvis Presley in an outdoor concert in early summer.

The concert, ‘The two sides of Elvis’, on Saturday 9 June at 7.30, features the legendary Jim Brown as Elvis Presley.

According to Sir Tom Jones, Jim is the closest to Elvis he
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has heard and Sir Richard Branson flew him out to perform at his own birthday party.

Killyleagh Parish Church is hosting the concert to raise funds for its new Parish Centre, which was dedicated and opened for use by Bishop Harold Miller in January.

Local Councillors, SDLP's Terry Andrews and DUP's Billy Walker, always keen to support and raise funds for good causes, will be taking off their councillor's normal dress and instead donning Elvis attire to sing one or two Elvis numbers. It will be up to the concert-goers to decide which of the two has a future in show business.

The Dufferin Arms, Picnic Café and Brennan's Ice-Cream will provide food and refreshments. There'll be a children's fun area, with children under 12, gaining free entry.

Tickets are very reasonably priced at £20, with groups of 10 or more and students and pensioners getting a reduced rate of £16. See the Parish Church's [facebook page](#) for more details.

+++ Piano recital at Down Cathedral on Sunday

Gustavo Romero will be performing a piano recital at Down Cathedral on Sunday, June 10. The recital will start at 4.00 pm and will feature music by Scarlatti, Debussy, Albeniz, Liszt, and Gershwin – Earl Wild. Tickets are £15 (including light refreshment) and may be purchased from:

- Down Cathedral Office (028 4461 4922)
- Matchett's Music (Belfast)
- Michael McCracken (phone 077 7384 6028)

Tickets may also be purchased at the door. All proceeds will go to the Cathedral Organ Restoration Appeal.

+++Plans to restore 12th Century Clone Church

Ferns Heritage Archive Group plan to restore Clone Church. Dating back from the 12th century, Clone Church is also thought to have been the site of an earlier monastic settlement and may go all the way back to St. Aidan of Ferns

+++Congratulations Lissadell

Lissadell Church, Drumcliffe, is 160 years old this week.

+++Christian Diamond Award for Cloughjordan Methodist

Congratulations to Sylvia Armitage from Co. Tipp who recently received one of Christian Aid's Diamond Awards. For 20 yrs volunteer Sylvia has organised CA Coffee Mornings in Cloughjordan Methodist Church.

+++ Knock Parish Summer recital

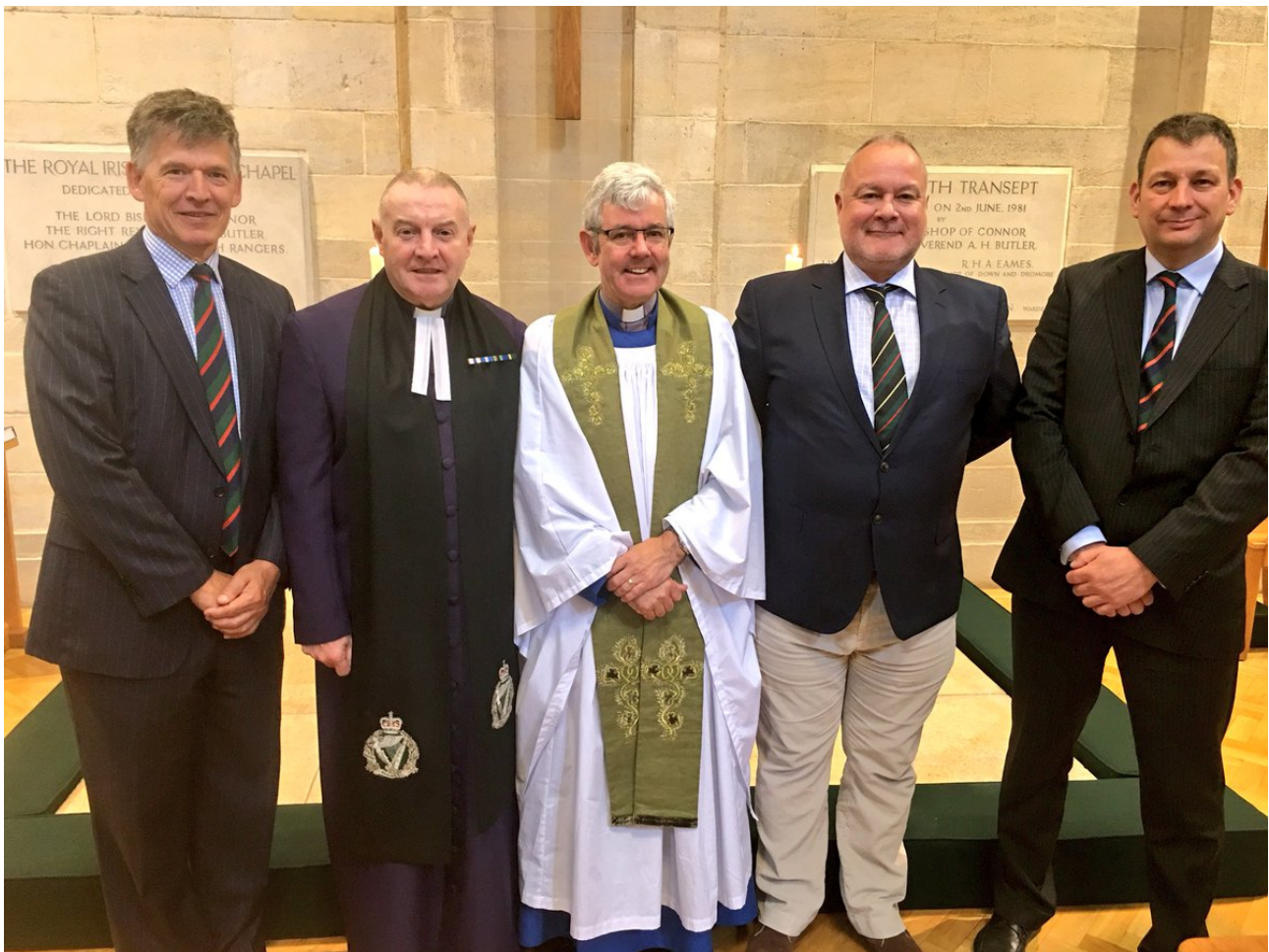
You are warmly invited to a Summer Recital at St Columba's Knock, featuring The Parish Choir and Guests.

Joe McKee Choral Director. Nigel McClintock Guest Organist.

The recital will be followed by refreshments on the lawn.

When: Friday 22 June 2018 at 7.00 pm. Location: St Columba's Church, Knock, Belfast BT5 6JG. Voluntary donations welcome in aid of the Church Refurbishment Fund.

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The Dean of Belfast with representatives of the Royal Irish Regimental Association including their chaplain, Rev Dr Isaac Thompson, DL, TD, at the annual Communion service on June 6 in the Regimental Chapel



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