

World Vision ambassador Meghan Markle will bring 'vast energy' to royal work, Christian charity says



Christian charity World Vision has paid tribute to Prince Harry's bride-to-be Meghan Markle, saying the "true humanitarian" will bring "vast energy" to her royal work.

The former Suits star is giving up her current charitable commitments with the organisation to focus on her new life as a member of the royal family with a "clean slate". World Vision's Lara Dewar, who travelled to India with Ms Markle



earlier this year, thanked the actress for her support and praised her passion for improving children's lives and campaigning for girls' rights.

"Meghan is a true humanitarian," the chief marketing and development officer said.

"We're deeply grateful for her contribution as a global ambassador for World Vision over the past two years and for helping to raise awareness for the world's most vulnerable children.

"I personally witnessed Meghan's passion to improve the lives of children, and know her heart to advocate for the rights of girls - to hear and amplify their important voices.

"She will undoubtedly bring vast energy to her charity work as a member of the royal family.

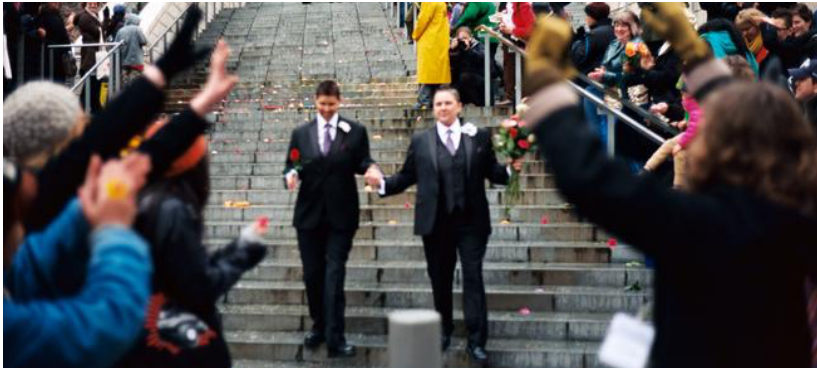
"We can't wait to see what the future holds for her and Prince Harry - a couple who clearly have a heart for social justice."

Ms Markle will become a full time royal after marrying Prince Harry in May at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. She will join the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry as its fourth patron.

Kensington Palace said on Tuesday that the American star would become a British citizen, and also would be focusing on her new life, rather than past charities. Harry's communications secretary Jason Knauf said: "She has made the decision that she wants to start with a clean slate and focus on the UK, and getting to know this country, and travelling around the Commonwealth."

Revealed: number of gay weddings at churches

The number of same-sex weddings held at places of worship in England and Wales since the ceremonies were legalised four years ago has reached 83, a new study has found.



Researchers at Leeds and York universities have concluded 182 venues have registered to hold same-sex weddings, while approximately half of those have actually hosted one.

They reported: "Over half of the places of worship that have solemnized a same-sex marriage have done so on only one occasion.

"Nineteen places of worship report that they have solemnized one same-sex marriage, eight report that they have solemnized two same-sex marriages, and four report that they have solemnized three same-sex marriages.

"Only five places of worship have solemnized four or more same-sex marriages, with the highest number of same-sex marriages solemnized in any place of worship reported as 10."

The academics said the number remains "very small", compared to the 40,000 places of worships currently prohibited from holding same-sex weddings.

Baptists, Lutherans, Unitarians, the United Reformed Church, and other designated religions - included Buddhists - were included in the study.

The academics conclude that same-sex couples wanting to marry in a religious setting face a "significant disadvantage", compared to heterosexual couples.

Study co-author, Dr Silvia Falcetta, from York's Department of Sociology, said: "This report shows that same-sex couples are at a significant disadvantage to different-sex couples, because same-sex couples are more likely to live in an area where there is no scope to be married in a place of worship according to a desired religious ceremony."

The academics also concluded that a move by an individual church to perform gay weddings can create tensions on varying levels.

They found it can strain ties between individual churches and their broader denomination,

relationships between a church and its local area and relationships within the church itself.

Performing a same-sex wedding at a church building remains prohibited at some Christian denominations including the Church of England and the Church in Wales.

Christ Church Concert Raises Funds and Awareness for Refugee Accommodation Programme

The soulful Discovery Gospel Choir and the inspirational High Hopes Choir entertained a packed Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday evening (November 27) for 'A Place to Call Home', a benefit concert for the Dublin & Glendalough Refugee Housing Appeal. Organised by the Dean's Vicar, the Revd Abigail Sines, the concert raised €1,831.57 for the appeal which supports the Irish Refugee Council's pilot housing project. This project aims to help people who have been granted leave to remain in Ireland move from Direct Provision to independent living by providing transitional accommodation along with individually tailored support to help them find work and integrate in their local communities.



High Hopes Choir and Discovery Gospel Choir singing in the 'A Place to Call Home' concert in Christ Church Cathedral.

The project has the added benefit of diverting some of the pressure from State and non-governmental organisations dealing with homelessness by ensuring that less people coming from Direct Provision end up on their books.

CEO of the Irish Refugee Council, Nick Henderson, thanked everyone for supporting the concert and Abigail for organising it. He highlighted the increasingly challenging situation for the 450 people who are currently stuck in

direct provision, unable to move on because of the challenge of finding accommodation.

“We often use the analogy of climbing two mountains. The first mountain is getting out of the country in which you have been persecuted and getting to Ireland. The second mountain is getting recognised as a refugee in Ireland, which is a really tough process. A third mountain, which has got tougher in recent years, is getting out of direct provision,” he explained.

He described Direct Provision as “entirely inappropriate accommodation” which also has the effect of contributing to people losing the skills and resources that they have come to Ireland with. “The project aims to offer transitional housing. That housing has come from religious congregations or members of the public and people would live in that accommodation for a transitional period. During that time they receive supports around education and employment. So they hopefully have the resources to move on and out and into the private rented market which is so vicious at the moment for everybody let alone for people who have come to Ireland, often with very little, whose baseline is so much lower than ours,” he added.

Nabil Allam from Syria spoke about life in Syria. He joined the Direct Provision but in order to get his qualifications as a plastic surgeon recognised in Ireland, he needed to improve his English. With the support of the Cappucin Friary and the Irish Refugee Council he moved to Dublin and after 10 months he finished the advanced certificate and is just a step away from achieving his goal. He acknowledged the support of all donors.

Dublin & Glendalough diocese has pledged to raise €300,000 for the project over three years. To contribute to the appeal, cheques can be forwarded to: the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, Church House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6 (marked Housing Appeal). Donations can also be lodged directly to: DIOCESAN FUNDS OF DUBLIN AND GLENDALOUGH, Bank of Ireland, College Green, Dublin 2, BIC: BOFIE2D, IBAN: IE50 BOFI 9000 1769 3548 78. Please use the reference: Housing appeal.

Moderator affirms Forces Chaplaincy as a unique kind of ministry

On a visit to Thiepval Barracks in Lisburn, Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely, met with a number of Forces

Chaplains and praised what he described as ‘a unique kind of ministry.’

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has a long pastoral association with the Army at Regular, and Reserve levels, and with the various youth organisations such as Cadets. As one of the recognised ‘Sending Churches’, PCI has ‘sent’, or provided chaplains to the military in the UK for over 100 years. Today there are ten full and part-time PCI Forces Chaplains, eight of who serve with the Army or Army Reserve. A further seven PCI chaplains work with youth organisations sponsored by the Armed Forces.

During his visit he also met senior officers and soldiers and sailors with the British Army’s 38 (Irish) Brigade, which is headquartered at Thiepval and HMS Hibernia, the HQ of the Royal Navy Reserve in Northern Ireland.

Speaking at Thiepval, Dr. McNeely said, “A number of my friends at Union Theological College became chaplains in the services and I have always admired the commitment they made to a unique kind of ministry that demands total devotion and a very special kind of self-discipline.

“Chaplains have a strategic role to perform in supporting soldiers and their families, and especially younger soldiers who are away from home for long periods and require support and encouragement.

“There is also a willingness among chaplains to be totally open to God’s providence, as I am sure they are never sure of where a posting will be, or in what circumstances they will have to serve.

“I very much admire those who are called to this ministry for the discipline they demonstrate and the sense of duty they are committed to.”

Also known as padres, recruits must be ordained ministers in one of the Sending Churches and a citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. Normally assigned to a unit of about 700 troops, they neither carry weapons, nor bear arms.

The Church’s Forces Chaplaincy Panel is responsible for recruiting and interviewing candidates for the chaplaincy. The panel, which falls under the Council for Mission in Ireland, also provides on going support to them and their families. Convener of the Panel, Rev. Prof. Patton Taylor, a former Army Reserve Chaplain

himself who served in different parts of the world including Afghanistan, accompanied the Moderator on his visit.

Cork's Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral Choir launch new CD of Christmas Carols

Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral Choir held a launch for their new CD of Christmas Carols on Saturday 25th November in the Cathedral. The production of a choral CD is a significant step forward in music making at Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral as the last time the choir was recorded was on an LP conducted by Andrew Padmore in the 1980s.

The CD is being sold to raise funds both for the choir and also for the Simon Community in Cork. Speaking at the launch were the Dean of Cork Very Rev'd Nigel Dunne, the Cathedral's Director of Music Mr Peter Stobart, RedFM presenter Mr Neil Prendeville, UCC's Adjunct Professor of Creative Writing Cónal Creedon, and Trudy McQuaid from Cork Simon.



The Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork, Fergal Dennehy opened proceedings, thanking the people of the Cathedral and the people of Cork for supporting the Cork Simon cause and for turning out in such huge numbers. The Cathedral had approximately 500 people in it and consequently some late arrivals unfortunately had to be turned away.

The Cathedral Choir initially performed four carols from the CD accompanied by Assistant Director of Music Ms Phoebe Tak Man Chow on the organ. One of these was in fact the world premiere of a carol written by Mr Peter Stobart especially for the CD and it gives the CD its title: *A night full of promise*. In an interview with Neil

Prendeville, Peter explained that he was following in a tradition of carol writing and of composing sacred music for cathedral choirs, but without trying to be avant-garde in any way. The carol had been written with the voices of the Cathedral Choir in mind, and when it was performed this came across, along with the choir's obvious enthusiasm for the whole project.

The Cathedral had been decorated (prematurely of course) for Christmas and the atmosphere was indeed festive. The audience participated lustily in three further carols led by the choir and encouraged to do so by the Dean of Cork. Copious amounts of food and drink were on offer, perhaps in order to encourage CD buying! Whilst the launch was very successful, the effort and support needed to sell the remaining CDs is enormous. The CDs can be obtained across Cork City including Golden Discs, Oasis, Liam Ruiséal, Pro Musica, as well as Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral shop.

CNI

New booklet challenges church members to become Missionaries of Mercy and Ambassadors of Reconciliation

A new booklet, *Merciful like the Father*, published by the Irish Theological Committee, was launched last week in Maynooth by Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam.

A collection of reflections on the theme of God's mercy, the booklet gets its title from a talk given by Pope Francis during the Year of Mercy when he said "'Merciful like the Father' is not just a slogan for effect, but a life commitment'.

Speaking at the launch in St Patrick's College, Archbishop Neary said, "Although the Year of Mercy may have closed, the Irish Theological Committee considers that it is important that all of us ought to reflect on mercy and not lose sight of the richness of Pope Francis' approach, and the challenging realities of that central message. In a retreat to priests Pope Francis emphasised that 'mercy' is a verb rather than a noun."

The Theological Committee is an advisory body of the Irish Bishops' Conference under the direction of the Council for Doctrine. Three

years ago, to coincide with the 50th International Eucharistic Congress, which was held in Dublin in 2012, the committee published *O Sacred Banquet*, which looked at ways of revitalising the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. The aim of this new booklet, edited by Dr Mary McCaughey, is to help readers understand more fully the many aspects of God's mercy.

“In Part One, we have reflections on the scriptural background and on the writings of Saint Thomas,” said Dr Neary. “Part Two, dealing with mercy and the Church, challenges us to transform our lives through an encounter with the merciful face of the Father through Jesus Christ, especially through the sacraments. In this we are challenged to become Missionaries of Mercy and Ambassadors of Reconciliation, encouraging and enabling the prodigal to return to a merciful Father. In Part Three, we are introduced to mercy and the Christian calling. Here mercy is contemplated as fundamental to our Christian calling and providing a sense of direction for us, a kind of compass to help chart the way in a complicated and complex world where compassion is frequently seen as an impediment to progress.”

Archbishop Neary is chairman of the Theological Committee and said, “It is our hope that this book reflects our conviction about the centrality of mercy in scripture, theology and Church life, and will make a worthwhile contribution to all who wish to deepen their understanding of mercy from a Christian view point.”

He concluded his speech in Latin: “*Tolle et Lege* – Take and Read.”

Study: young Catholics divided between traditionalists and modernists

There are two groups of young Catholics: those who want to “draw the Church back” to a previous era, and those who think the Church should conform to social trends, according to a report from the bishops of England and Wales.

The bishops surveyed around 3,000 young Catholic Britons ahead of next October’s synod of bishops, whose theme is “Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment”.

Describing the two main groups, the report said the first is “a small but vocal group who want to draw the Church back into an era which they have been told was far better than it is today”.

The other group, which the report describes as “much larger, though less evident”, adheres to the “predominant narratives in society, wanting the Church to follow suit”.

“The first group asks for clarity, the second for authenticity,” the report claims.

“If we’re brave enough not to dismiss either of them, it’s possible to hear their yearning for a compelling narrative of how to live as Christians both faithfully and authentically.”

The report also says that while the percentage of young Catholics is declining, a young person who identifies as a member of the Church is more likely to practice their faith than older generations.

Young people of all faiths and none were invited to take part in the survey, although the majority of the respondents described themselves as Catholic.

Bishops' conferences around the world are sending out similar surveys ahead of next year's synod.

Similar surveys, handed out before the synod on the family in 2014 and 2015, were criticised for being too complex and taking too long to fill out. The Youth survey, by contrast, could be completed in less than half an hour.

The synod on the family was marked by sometimes acrimonious debates over the Church's teaching on divorce and the sacraments.

**Help CNI grow...
... Please commend
CNI daily news to your
friends**

www.churchnewsireland.org

CNI