



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

New C of I Synod Secretary

The Standing Committee of the Church of Ireland this week elected the Revd Gillian Wharton as Clerical Honorary Secretary of General Synod. Ms Wharton, who is Rector of Booterstown and Carysfort with Mount Merrion in Dublin, succeeds the Ven Robin Bantry White who retired last month.



The election has been welcomed by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson who said:

“It was a great pleasure to me to be in the chair at the Standing Committee and to announce the appointment of the Revd Gillian Wharton as Honorary Secretary of the General Synod. Gillian makes history in undertaking this role. She brings considerable energy, enthusiasm and experience to the central workings of the Church of Ireland. We in Dublin and Glendalough are very proud of Gillian in this regard and wish her God’s richest blessing in her new responsibilities.”

Ms Wharton said that she was honoured by the appointment but slightly daunted by the job ahead. She commented:

“I am very honoured that Standing Committee has elected me, but slightly daunted too, as I’m conscious that there are big shoes to fill; Archdeacon Robin Bantry White was an excellent Clerical Honorary Secretary; his knowledge of the Church of Ireland and his wise thoughtfulness meant that he brought clarity to complex issues. There is a lot ‘take on board’ so I will be

relying heavily on the other three honorary secretaries to bring me 'up to speed'. I look forward to working with them and to doing the job to the best of my ability."

Ms Wharton has been Rector of Booterstown and Carysfort with Mount Merrion since 2004. Prior to that she was chaplain to Rathdown School for four and a half years. From 1996 to 2000 she was part time Curate of the Leixlip Union and part time Diocesan Youth Officer. She was Curate of Glenageary from 1993 to 1996.

Currently she is Honorary Clerical Vicar and Chapter Clerk of Christ Church Cathedral. She is a member of General Synod, Standing Committee, the General Synod Board of Education and Diocesan Councils of Dublin and Glendalough among others.

Ms Wharton's appointment by Standing Committee must be ratified by General Synod when it meets in May.

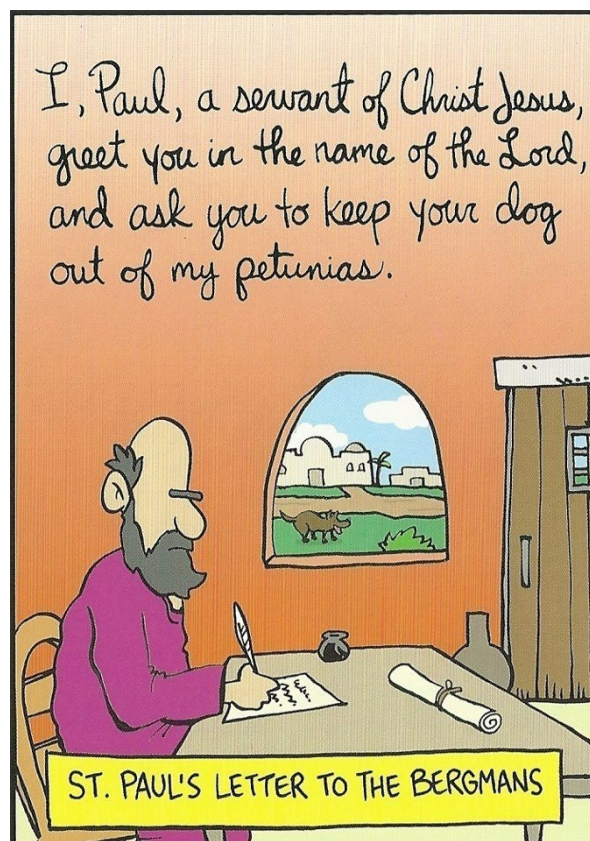
'The Big Ask' Will Pray for Transformation of the Nation

St Catherine's Church, Thomas Street, Dublin, will be the venue for the launch of *The Big Ask – Praying for the Transformation of Society in Ireland* next Tuesday, March 18, at 8.00 pm.

The movement is being organised by a number of Dublin churches and aims to hold a series of gatherings in the city throughout 2014 to pray into some key areas of influence in society. These include business, public square, media and entertainment, education and family and the church.

The Big Ask follows on from the 24/7 Prayer gathering which took place in Dublin last October.

At next week's launch the organisers will share more of their vision and will pray for the church in Dublin and the nation.



Memorial service - Victims of Homophobic Violence

Jerry Buttimer T.D. to speak at Trinity College Dublin Rainbow Week Service

A service of Choral Evensong in Memory of the Victims of Homophobic Violence will be held in Trinity College Chapel on Thursday 20 March at 5.15pm. The guest speaker at this Rainbow Week event will be Mr. Jerry Buttimer, T.D., member of Dail Éireann for Cork South Central and Chairperson of Oireactas Committee on Health and Children. There will be a reception after the service in House 27. All welcome.

Connor MU Festival Service



Connor Mothers' Union's Annual Festival Service and Commissioning of Officer Bearers takes place in St Anne's Cathedral , Belfast, on March 23, at 3.30 pm.

The Preacher is the Venerable Dr Stephen McBride, Connor Mothers' Union Chaplain, vicar of Antrim and Archdeacon of Connor.

Cathedral to mark anniversary of Rwanda genocide

The Dean and Chapter of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, will host a special service to mark the 20th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide.

This takes place on Monday, April 7 at 7.30pm

The preacher will be the Rt Rev Dr Rob Craig, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.



A collection will be taken up to go towards relief work in Rwanda. Everyone is welcome.

Pastoral Visitation Course

Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, is the venue for a course in pastoral visitation in Connor Diocese facilitated by the Rev Don Gamble.

Don is the Lead Chaplain of the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust.

The course will take place on the following dates Wednesday 30th April, 7th, 14th, 21st May & 4th June, from 8.00 pm – 9.30 pm in the church

Outline of topics for each week is:

1. Why Pastoral Visitation?
2. Listening skills
3. Your Pastoral image
4. Your focus – Awareness of...
5. Reflection & Resources



To book a place, contact the Bishop of Connor's secretary Mrs Rosemary Patterson– Email: rosemary@diocoff-belfast.org or telephone: 028 9082 8870 before Monday April 28.

Opportunities in ministry at The Hub

Recruiting is underway for some exciting ministry opportunities at The Hub, Belfast – home of the Church of Ireland and Methodist Chaplaincies at Queen's.

The organisers state - We are looking a a full time Student Support Worker (Assistant Chaplain) who will play a senior role in our ministry team from the summer of 2014 onwards. This role is an amazing opportunity for anyone who has a God-given passion, and the God-given gifts to engage with ministry and mission in a student context. It promises to be both demanding and rewarding. By following the link to

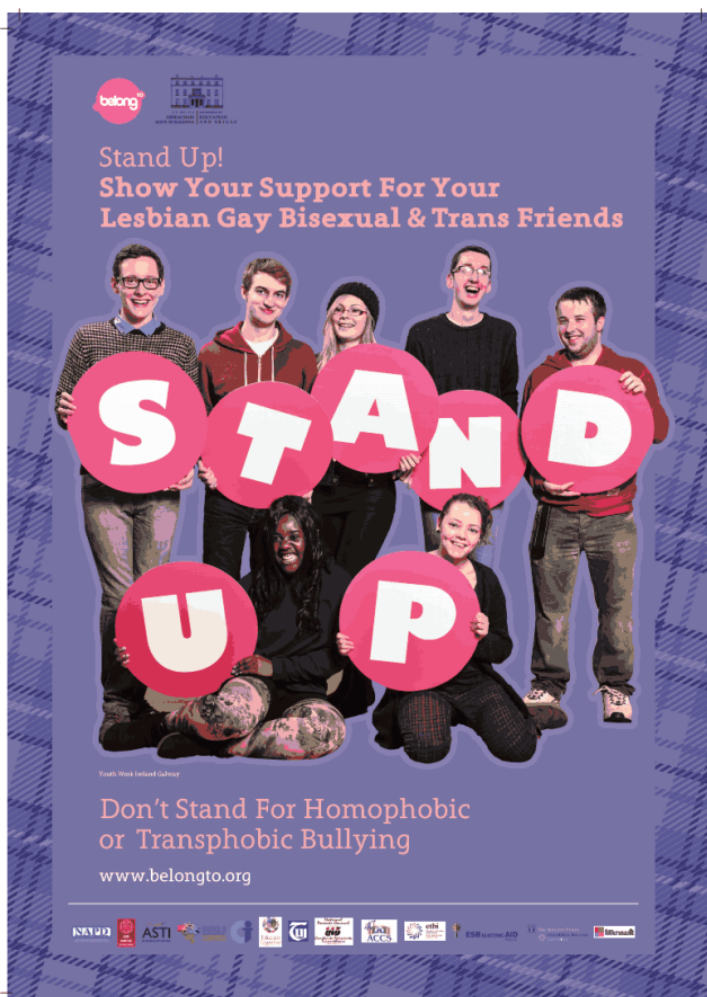
the Job Vacancies you will find full information on the role, the centre, how to apply and so on.

<http://www.thehubelfast.org/about-us/people/job-vacancies/>

This is a hugely strategic and important role in the lives of many young adults.. please give it your prayerful consideration...

The wheels are also now turning as we seek to recruit Ministry Interns for what we truly hope will be a foundational and formational year of discipleship and service. The same link works to gain access to the application information and Intern advertisement...

We are now recruiting for both the senior position of Student Support Worker (Assistant Chaplain) on our ministry team, and for our Internship program for 2014/15. For further information follow the link and please share with all you you think may be interested..



<http://www.thehubbelfast.org/exciting-ministry-opportunities-at-the-hub-belfast/>

C of I School stands up against homophobic bullying

Midleton College, a Church of Ireland second level school in the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross is planning an active week ahead (10 – 14 March 2014) participating in Stand Up! Awareness Week Against Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying.

This national awareness week is supported and funded by the Department of Education and Skills, and the national organisation for LGBT young people, BeLonG To, which aims to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Midleton College Principal, Simon Thompson said:

'Midleton College is committed to being an open, tolerant and welcoming community. The College believes that no young person should be allowed to suffer or to have their education suffer simply because of prejudice towards who they are. The objective of the 'Stand Up' initiative is to prevent and tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying in all schools by increasing respect for diversity and LGBT identities. This objective is one that our College seeks to live out through prioritising mutual respect and inclusivity among and between students and indeed all who work in the College. In doing so we aim to further develop a positive school culture and climate.'

Stand Up! posters will be on display around Midleton College throughout the week. The programme has already been discussed with staff members. The Student Council will discuss the main aims of the Week at its meeting on Tuesday. Class resources developed by 'BeLonG To Youth' will be available for use in classes throughout the week.

Bishop Paul Colton, Chairperson of the Board of Management said:

'This initiative has my full support. Research reported as recently as this month shows that 79% of Irish teachers are aware of homophobic bullying in our schools. This is horrific. We all – especially Christians – have a role and special responsibility to play in changing this.'

Hub Coffee Morning

The Hub in Ashford, County Wicklow, held a successful coffee morning today (Tuesday, March 11) to help raise funds for a local girl who needs to travel to France for treatment.

The Hub is an initiative run by Killiskey Parish and the event drew support from across the local community and beyond.

Twelve year old Chloe McCall from Brittas Bay underwent an 11 hour life saving operation to remove a tumour from her brain in 2009. The operation left her weakened and needing rehabilitation for her speech and motor skills.

While she receives only half an hour a week of physiotherapy and rehabilitation in Ireland, her family say she could be placed on a five day programme in France. They are raising funds to bring her there after Easter.

Chloe's plight featured on the front page of the local newspaper recently and The Hub's Lesley Rue and Jane Hammond decided to act. They hold monthly fundraising coffee mornings in the Ashford village venue and slotted in an extra event for Chloe.

Chloe herself came to the coffee morning. She is pictured (front left) with her sister Julia; the Revd Ken Rue, associate Vicar of Wicklow and Killiskey; her grandmother Gertie McCall; Jane Hammond; and Lesley Rue.



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin's tribute to the late Christine Buckley

“Christine Buckley was a woman of courage. Her courage in coming forward, telling her story and advocating for change played a major role in exposing problems in child protection in the Church and State.

Christine contributed enormously to a sea change in the Church’s attitude to survivors of abuse. In her meetings with me personally, she was always honest and open and I appreciated her insights.

Her life’s work contributed to a vast improvement in child protection in the Church in Dublin and in wider Irish society.

To her husband, children, family and many, many friends, I extend my deepest sympathy. May she rest in peace”

The Search is on for Ireland’s Oldest Brownie!

As part of celebrations marking 100 years of Brownies in Ireland, a nationwide search is being mounted for Ireland's oldest Brownie.

The branch of Irish Girl Guides (IGG) for 6.5-10.5 year-olds, the Brownies started in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, in 1914 and today there are 4,000 Brownies the length and breadth of the country.

Over 3,000 Brownies will descend upon Dublin Zoo on Saturday 12th April in one mega birthday bash and the hope is that they will be joined by Ireland’s oldest living Brownie. Any prospective senior Brownie will have to beat the current oldest known member, Peggy Allbutt, at age 95. The question though is whether there is a Brownie in Ireland who is even older?

Irish Girl Guides Chief Commissioner, Helen Concannon, comments: "For the last 100 years Brownies has been providing an opportunity for girls to discover new things in a fun and safe way. Thousands of girls across Ireland have benefited from this wonderful organisation and I am proud to have been a Brownie myself.

“This year Brownies reach a significant birthday – an amazing 100 years young! Trying to stay relevant and in touch with each new generation of young girls can be a difficult task but it is one the Irish Girl Guides has excelled at. Still as vital as it was back in 1914, involvement in Brownies gives girls unique opportunities to build their confidence and skills in a fun and non-competitive way. If you are a former Brownie and reckon that you can lay claim to the title of Ireland's Oldest Brownie, then we would love to

hear from you and to afford you pride of place at our forthcoming celebrations."

For more information on the mission to find Ireland's Oldest Brownie, telephone 085 8570565.

Catholic bishop Donal McKeown: I would love to have been a dad

The new Catholic Bishop of Derry has spoken of how he would have loved to have been a father.



Bishop Donal McKeown, with Emma McDaid (12), a pupil of St Anne's Primary School

Belfast Telegraph - Bishop Donal McKeown, who is due to be installed in St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry on April 6, added that he loved female company but of marriage he said "it was not my vocation".

The Co Antrim-born bishop also warned the pro-life movement that it needs to stop "screaming" at people over abortion, warning them: "You can't hate people into loving life."

On the issue of clerical celibacy, Bishop McKeown said that he "would have loved to have been a daddy".

Admitting he finds celibacy "difficult," he added: "Single life isn't that easy, neither is married life. Any notion that there is the hard way of life and an easy way of life is a false dichotomy."

He grew up in Randalstown, and because his father was one of 13 and his mother was one of eight, he was surrounded by a large extended family, a network which he describes as "a very healthy environment" in which he was comfortable with women.

"I need female company in my life," he said and explained that thanks to this network of sisters, cousins and married friends, he was able to tune into women's views and perspectives.

When he told his mother in 2001 that he was going to be made an auxiliary bishop, she asked: "Could they not get somebody else?"

The 63-year-old also called on the pro-life movement to "find a way of loving people into loving life", he added: "Screaming in their faces will not do anything in that respect."

He said "screaming at one another is not acceptable from people who are pro-life."

The bishop, who has been an auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Down and Connor since 2001, was appointed on February 27 as the new leader of the cross-border diocese of Derry.

He called on Irish society to foster "courteous dialogue between people on the basis that we are all trying to create a better society."

The bishop signalled a realisation by the hierarchy that the Church cannot dictate to the state on the issues such as gay marriage.

He acknowledged that "the state has to make up its own mind about what in the civic sphere is appropriate legislation and good for social cohesion and what helps to create the sort of society they want to build".

But he added: "On the other hand, I think it is important to talk about the dignity of human life and it is important to talk about intimate relations and help people grow from where they are. We have to find ways of speaking the truth in love."

PROFILE

The Most Reverend Dr Donal McKeown was born in April 1950 and raised in Randalstown, Co Antrim. He was the first child of watchmaker [James McKeown](#) and Rose (née McMeel), a primary school teacher. He has three younger siblings; James, Mary and Teresa. His father died in 1998 at the age of 83 and his 92-year-old mother died in 2008. He was educated at Mount St Michael's Primary School and St MacNissi's College, Garron Tower where he was a boarder from 1961-1968. After that he attended Queen's University [Belfast](#) until 1973.

Christians gather to look forward to Christ's return

Some 500 people gathered in the Ulster Hall on March 10 as part of a 'pre-emptive' celebration of the return of Christ to Jerusalem.

News Letter - Brian Silvester, director of the Northern Ireland and Ireland branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), explained the meaning behind the event.

"Every year since 1980 thousands of Christians have been coming to Jerusalem from over 100 nations to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles," he said.

"This event was just a little taste of what happens in Jerusalem during the celebrations.

"We had praise and worship artists and the Shalom Dance Team, all from different churches around Northern Ireland."

A mainly Christian event, one of the guest speakers was Orthodox Jew Stephen Jaffe, co-chair of the Northern Ireland Friends of Israel.

Mr Silvester explained the Christian interest in the Jewish festival.

"The Feast of Tabernacles relates to the prophet foretelling the day coming in the future when all nations will come to Jerusalem and celebrate the coming of the returning King – King Jesus," he said.

Also speaking was Malcolm Hedding, former executive director of ICEJ, who travels extensively, teaching about the significance of Israel in prophecy.

A third speaker was Allen Jackson, senior pastor of World Outreach Church, Murfreesboro, US, who has been recognised by the Christian Coalition of the Israeli Knesset for his continued support.

Wide range of school issues at conference

The fourth annual Church of Ireland Primary School Management Association Conference will take place in The Kings Hospital School, Palmerstown, Dublin, on Saturday March 22 starting with a Service in the College Chapel at 10.00 am.

This year's line-up of speakers includes:

- Ms Jackie Waters Dewhurst who is the Education Officer with the Diocese of Lincoln, UK, which has a large number of smaller primary schools in rural areas across the Diocese of Lincoln. Ms Waters Dewhurst will speak about the experiences of her diocese in supporting small schools.
- The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Cashel and Ossory, will give insight into being a school patron of a diocese with many schools in rural areas.
- Mr Gary O'Donnachada, the Deputy Chief Inspector at the Department of Education and Skills will give an outline of the work of the Inspectorate and answer related questions from delegates on the various forms of inspection in operation in schools.

In the afternoon:

- Ms Margaret Gorman, Solicitor, who was until recently Deputy General Secretary of CPSMA and is now with Eversheds Solicitors, will give a synopsis of recent developments in the law relating to education.
- The Conference will be joined again by Millett and Matthews Solicitors (Brian and Marie–Anne Matthews) who will deliver an information session on the recently published Anti–Bullying Procedures which all school Boards will be dealing with currently.



Head teacher Fr Kevin Donaghy of St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh

The conference is open to all members of boards of management.

A school principal has lost a long-running battle to keep academic selection at a historic grammar school

The Belfast Telegraph reveals that the head of St Patrick's Grammar in Armagh once warned against all-ability schools.

Now with mounting pressure from the Catholic Church, its governing body and the Education Minister John O'Dowd, St Patrick's will open its doors to boys of all abilities from September.

The news comes after Mr O'Dowd yesterday gave St Patrick's the green light to immediately abandon academic selection and increase its enrolment to cater for the phased closure of St Brigid's High, a secondary school in Armagh.

St Patrick's had initially sought to retain academic selection, accepting up to 55% of its intake through the GL Assessment, but at the eleventh hour the development proposal was revised to scrap academic selection.

Ironically, principal Fr Kevin Donaghy, a supporter of the secondary and grammar school system, had in June 2002 warned against all-ability schools.

"We have major concerns about proposals emanating from many parties to this debate to replace existing structures with a system of all-ability schools.

"We do not regard a system of all-ability schools as presenting the best option to replace our current secondary and grammar schools," he said.

The comments were made in a paper, in which Fr Donaghy is named, by the Catholic Heads' Association in response to a report by the Post Primary Review Body.

One educationalist was "surprised" by the decision, particularly given Fr Donaghy's "pro-academic" stance.

The teacher priest is also a past chairman of the Governing Bodies' Association, which represents 52 voluntary grammar schools and is a member of the Catholic Heads' Association, which supports selection.

There are suggestions that, as a priest, Fr Donaghy was under pressure from the Catholic Church, which has urged schools to stop using selection.

He was unavailable for comment, but a statement from St Patrick's Grammar School said it "welcomes the minister's decision".

It continued: "A recent inspection report observed that 'the high standards of achievement at A-Level are a feature of the work of the school'.



"Thus we know that we are very well placed and well experienced to provide for pupils of very high academic ability while also ensuring that we look after those for whom school is more of a challenge."

The Belfast Telegraph can also reveal that at least three opponents of academic selection have recently been appointed to the board of governors of St Patrick's.

Sinn Fein members Noel Sheridan and Gerard White were appointed in January alongside Kevin Scally, the former head of St Joseph's High in Crossmaglen and a prominent member of the Catholic Principals' Association, which has been lobbying for an end to academic selection.

DUP education spokesman Mervyn Storey said: "It has been a concern for some time that the appointment process to boards of governors of grammar schools has been driven by the minister's particular view on the use of academic criteria as an admissions policy and this has led to the appointment of those who have been very vocal in their opposition to grammar schools and their ethos."

Danny Kinahan, the UUP's education spokesman, also described the "tactic" as "sly" and called on Mr O'Dowd to find a joint way forward instead of undermining schools.

A spokesman for the Department of Education said it and the Education and Library Boards were responsible for filling only about one-third of the posts available for school governors.

"The minister makes appointments based on merit but also to promote diversity in public life.

"This does not alter the primacy of the merit principle but does mean that he will also have regard to the need to ensure that public appointees are more representative of society than is presently the case."

Mr O'Dowd said: "The time has long passed for grammar schools to begin the process of ending selection by academic means. I hope that yet more grammar schools will show the bravery and fortitude to consider how they might make the change themselves."

Move is a game-changer for locality

The move by St Patrick's means academic selection in the Catholic sector has been wiped out in the Armagh and Craigavon area.

It follows last week's decision to merge St Michael's Grammar in Lurgan with two nearby non-selective schools, St Mary's High and St Paul's Junior High.

Although the new school catering for 1,750 pupils will be a voluntary grammar for 11 to 18 year-olds it will not use academic selection to determine its intake.

St Patrick's will be the third Catholic grammar school in the past year to drop academic selection.

Sources have said Catholic grammar schools that accept lower grades using unregulated GL Assessment tests are the most vulnerable to pressure from the Catholic Church and Education Minister to ditch academic selection.

According to the most recent figures from the Department of Education, 92.2% of pupils achieved five GCSEs including English and Maths at grades A* to C – making it one of the lower achieving grammars.

More at - <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/head-loses-fight-to-keep-grammar-school-armagh-principal-opposed-change-he-must-now-accept-30080562.html>