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*Independent Senator David Norris said he had written to the Committee on Procedure and Privileges to give priority to an invitation to Pope Francis to address the Seanad.
Photograph: Brenda Fitzsimons*

C of I Senator's Request to invite Pope Francis to address Seanad

Independent Senator [David Norris](#) has requested that [Pope Francis](#) be invited to address the Seanad.

Irish Times - Mr Norris, a member of the Anglican Church, said he had written to the Committee on Procedure and Privileges to give priority to such an invitation.

He hoped to bring an all-party motion to the Seanad early in the new year for a debate on the issue.

Mr Norris said people would ask if he would address the Seanad.

"I think he might," he said. "Nelson Mandela came to the Mansion House, which was scarcely an international location of any great renown."

He added that “this pope has an unusual background in the fact that he spent several months in Dublin in [Milltown College](#). So he knows this country, this city and he also knows the very special place throughout history that Ireland has played in the development of Christianity and in particular the Roman Catholic Church.”

Mr Norris said “international political figures have unanimously, entirely in my opinion, let us down because they never think of values. Here we have somebody who is expressing values of economic justice, of decentralising of the Vatican, of attacking power, of speaking about economic justice,” he said.

Independent Feargal Quinn said that “even just issuing an invitation would greatly increase the stature of the House”.

Broadcasts of Archbishops’ Christmas message

The Archbishops’ Christmas Day Message from The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland and Cardinal Sean Brady,



Archbishop of Armagh will be broadcast on RTE One television on Christmas Day, 25 December 2013, 12.10–12.25pm and on Radio RTE Radio One, 1.05–1.15pm and is also available on the RTE Player.

The broadcast this year will include contributions from Christians Against Poverty (CAP), the St John of God community at Drumcar and carol singing by Armagh primary school children at The Shambles, Armagh.

[Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin](#)

The Nine Lessons and Carols services and will be available via the cathedral’s live streaming page or the Radio on Christmas Eve.

A copy of the order of service is now available to download so you can join in and sing to your hearts content in the comfort of your own home!

<http://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/media/file/9%20Lessons%20&%20Carols%20Order%20of%20Service%202013.pdf>

A Canon's century

Revd Canon Dr. Ernie Long celebrated his 100th birthday on 21 December 2013. Canon Long is most likely the oldest minister in the Church of Ireland.

He is also one of the world's oldest published authors, having recently written 'Famous Clergy' (Slieve Croob Press, 2013) – a book on seven famous Church of Ireland clergy and 'The long of it' (Slieve Croob Press) – a book of reflections on his own life experiences. As author and academic, Canon Long has written much on Church and Society, Orange Order history and philosophy, Unionism and Protestantism. He is a recognised authority not only in Ireland, but throughout the world. He is the Senior Grand Chaplain of the Grand Loyal Orange Lodge of Ireland.

Canon Long has shared academic studies on Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies in Corrymeela, Holland and several other places with churchmen, politicians, industrialists, sociologists and government ministers.

He has written much on social and missional issues for the Church of Ireland, and represented the church at various events and functions.

Canon Long is the founder of The Orange Standard, the monthly newspaper of the Irish Institution, and has been a regular contributor, writing 'Comment' and 'The Pulpit'. He has lectured on the Order in Ireland, Scotland, England, Canada and USA, and has recently authored the first purely religious publication of the Institution, 'Think on These Things' (Schomberg Press, 2006).

Bishop Harold Miller visited Canon Long to mark the occasion

Derry's Free Church - of Ireland - recalled

The Parish of Christ Church, Culmore, Muff & St Peter's has a new web site which contains interesting aspects of the history of the churches in the group

Christ Church was once called the Free Church. The site informs "The Episcopal Free Church was built by Bishop Knox - at his own expense. The architect was a Mr Ferguson. It was called the Free Church - people did not have to pay for their 'sitting' - in other words there was no pew rent.



Archdeacon Robert Miller - rector

Bishop Knox built the Church for the poor people who lived in the area. According to the Ordinance Survey Report of 1833: 'The Free Church, situated without the city, on the north, was built by Bishop Knox, at an expense of £760, and consecrated on 22nd August 1830.

It was intended for the lower classes alone, but the congregation is no longer confined to them. Robert Simpson's 'Annals of Derry' goes further and states that the Free Church 'has a large congregation of well-dressed,

comfortable looking people'. The Church, including the West Gallery seated 340 people - which soon was not big enough. In 1832 a West Gallery was added, 'by subscription, the expense of building which and a vestry-room with that of providing gas pipes, amounted to £145.00' In 1865 a harmonium was added (cost £44.00) - so for the first 35 years there does not appear to have been a musical instrument in the Church. In 1868 an organ was purchased at a cost of £223.00, £100 of which was contributed by the Honourable the Irish Society. Old photographs would suggest that the organ was situated in the centre of the West Gallery. In 1882 the Church was enlarged to more than twice its original size, but the tower was left unchanged. North and South Transepts and Chancel were also added at a cost of £300.00.

"The enlarged Church, now called Christ Church, was dedicated in 1882 by Bishop William Alexander, husband of the hymn writer Mrs Cecil F Alexander. The architect was Mr Guy Ferguson, son of the architect of the Free Church."

<http://cccmsp.derry.anglican.org/>

Books for Christmas

For those who are inclined to use the Christmas break to catch up on reading or, through the medium of gifts, to encourage others so to do, the last year has produced an interesting batch of publications about the Church of Ireland. As usual, history looms large.

The C of I correspondent to the Irish Times writes - Most topical is *The Church of Ireland. An Illustrated History*, published earlier this month by Booklink. Designed by the acclaimed Wendy Dunbar, this is a lavishly illustrated book with a general introduction by the Church of Ireland Historiographer, Dr Kenneth Milne, and sections on each of the dioceses. Another well illustrated book is Professor J.S. Curl's *Funerary Monuments & memorials in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh*, from Historical Publications.

Clergy of Ossory is an updated edition of Canon J.B. Leslie's *Ossory Clergy and Parishes* which was published in 1933. This new edition has been prepared by Canon David Crooks and published by the Ulster Historical Foundation. *Famous Clergy*, from Slieve Croob Press, is a book of short studies by Canon Ernest Long – among his subjects are George Walker, Thomas Percy, Richard Mant and William Shaw Kerr. Clergy are also the subject of the privately published *An Reifirmeisean, na Protastunaigh agus an Ghaeilge, 1534–1800* by Riobead O hEanna.

Individual clergy have also received some attention. Leo Damrosch's *Jonathan Swift . His Life and his World* has been published by Yale and a book of essays on the 14th century, Archbishop of Armagh, Richard FitzRalph, edited by Michael Dunne & Simon Nolan, has appeared from Four Courts Press. The third volume of *Letters from Abroad: the Grand Tour Correspondence of Richard Pococke & Jeremiah Milles*, edited by Dr Rachel Finnegan, was published by the Pococke Press.

Canon James Goodman, who has been the subject of both RTE radio and television programmes recently, is the subject of *Tunes of the Munster Pipers 2*, edited by Hugh & Lisa Shields and published by the Irish Traditional Music Archive. Rector of Abbeystrewry, 1867–96, and Professor of Irish in TCD, Goodman, who is memorialized by a statue in

Skibbereen, is becoming recognized as an important collector of Irish traditional music.

The laity have not been completely ignored. Julia Turner's important study of Daphne Wormell, who was to the forefront in advocating the ordination of women, entitled *With Dignity and Grace*, has been published by Hinds as has Rosa Pilcher's *Trinity Hall, 1908–2008* where many Church of Ireland women lived when students in TCD.

GB NEWS

Archbishop of Canterbury in joint plea to South Sudan leaders

The Archbishop of Canterbury last weekend joined an appeal to leaders in South Sudan to lay down their weapons and cooperate in seeking peace through dialogue and negotiation.

The joint statement, signed by Archbishop Justin; Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; and Lorna Hood, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, offered a prayer that all in South Sudan become 'instruments of peace'.

The full statement follows:

On behalf of our churches we appeal to the leaders in South Sudan to lay down their weapons and co-operate in seeking peace through dialogue and negotiation.

As we approach the celebration of the birth of our Saviour, the Prince of Peace, this is a time for the vulnerable, the weak and the poor to be spared the trauma of civil conflict.

We bear in mind the call of the Holy Father for peace in 2014, especially because in God's design at creation, we are all brothers, the sons and daughters of the one God and Father.

Let us not yield to fratricidal tendencies in the name of our ethnic differences (which is what God created us to be). With all Christians, we pray for peace in South Sudan. We pray that all of you in South Sudan may become instruments of peace!

We issue this appeal together, knowing that Christian leaders in South Sudan are working in unity and courage of faith for peace.

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Rob Craig, has given his full support to a statement issued by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and Rt. Rev. Lorna Hood, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, appealing to leaders in South Sudan to lay down their weapons and co-operate in seeking peace through dialogue and negotiation.

[Context on Conflict](#)

As the world watches South Sudan, the Rev. Jesse Zink has been writing about the deeper context behind the conflict, and the church's role in the new country's history.

He writes: "Bishop Nathaniel's successor, Ruben Akurdit Ngong, is reported to be in the UN compound just outside Bor. He, along with an unknown—but large—number of other people are seeking refuge there. Again, this is what bishops in this part of the country do. They go to where the people are and stay with them. During the civil war, some bishops were forced to seek refuge in Juba, Khartoum, or abroad. I once asked Nathaniel Garang why he went into the bush with his people, rather than to a city. He looked at me like the answer was the most obvious thing in the world: "Because I was there with the people. If I leave them, the church would not happen. My staying with the people, that's how they received the gospel."

For more, his entire blog post is at - <http://jessezink.com/2013/12/21/bor-and-jonglei-the-church-and-state-a-history-of-deep-inter-connection/>

Irn Bru Advent message

Scotland's "other national drink", Irn Bru, has been enlisted by a Glasgow church for its novel advent calendar.

Renfield St Stephen's Church, in Bath Street, has used jam jars filled with water and the bright orange fizzy drink to spell out the word Jesus in its window.

The dynamic artwork is made up of 192 jam jars and is the creation of St Stephen's minister and resident artist, the Reverend Peter Gardner, his wife Heidi, and trainee

minister Elijah Smith.



Mr Gardner said: "It's the first time we've created an advent calendar that can be seen by members of the public walking past. It's a wee bit of fun for Christmas. We hope people will see it each evening as a welcoming light in a dark world."

Looking out over Jesus in the window are left to right: Rev Peter Gardner, Heidi Gardner and Rev Elijah Smith



The trio get together at 3.30pm each day to change the jars around to spell a new word based on the nativity story and the calendar is backlit from 4pm onwards.

So far they have managed to shuffle the jars without spilling a drop.

Rev Peter Gardner in action as he prepares to make up the next festive 'word of the day'

A special word will appear on Christmas Day,

when part of the church will be kept open round the clock to serve as a night shelter for the homeless under the auspices of Glasgow City Mission.

Mr Gardner and the team are keeping their word for Christmas Day a secret for now.

He added: "I thought we would have to eat a massive amount of jam to get enough empty jars for the idea to work – but members of the congregation were soon handing in jars galore."

WORLD NEWS



Anti-gay bill is new form of apartheid, says Tutu

Uganda passed an anti-gay bill last week, imposing life sentences for some homosexual acts, leading activists to call it "the worst in the world".

Daily Telegraph - In a

move that was branded "a truly terrifying day for human rights", MPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of the bill.

It has been widely condemned by activists and world leaders, with US president [Barack Obama](#) describing the bill as "odious" and Archbishop [Desmond Tutu](#), the Nobel Peace laureate, comparing it to apartheid.

The bill does not include the death penalty, as it did for "aggravated homosexual acts" when first tabled in 2009.

Instead, those caught engaging in homosexual acts for a second time, as well as for gay sex where one partner is a minor or is infected with HIV, will face life in prison.

Ugandan media reported that a proposal for a reduced 14-year sentence was rejected by MPs, who instead upheld the penalty of life imprisonment.

David Bahati, the MP behind the private member's bill, hailed its adoption as a victory against "evil" in [Uganda](#), a deeply religious country where many have embraced evangelical Christianity. "Because we are a God-fearing nation, we value life in a holistic way," he said yesterday. "It is because of those values that members of parliament passed this bill regardless of what the outside world thinks."

The bill must receive final approval from [Yoweri Museveni](#), the Ugandan president.

As in many African countries, gay men and women in Uganda face harassment, violence and death threats.

After the vote, Frank Mugisha, one of Uganda's most prominent gay activists, declared himself "officially illegal".

PANIC

"This is a truly terrifying day for human rights in Uganda," he said. "If this law is signed by President Museveni, I'd be thrown in jail for life and in all likelihood killed. We urgently need world leaders to call on President Museveni and demand he stops this bill of hate from becoming law."

Mr Mugisha told reporters there was "panic" among the country's gay and lesbian community.

"I'm outraged that members of parliament have passed this bill in a very uninformed way. It has been rushed. It has not been scrutinised," he said.

WCC welcomes Pope's 'challenging and inviting' message

The recent Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis concerning the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world has stirred interest and appreciation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a "challenging and inviting document".

"The Apostolic Exhortation is more than simply conveying the message of the Synod on evangelisation, but addresses the need for the renewal of the church at all levels from the

perspective of the call to be a missional church,” WCC General Secretary, the Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, said.

“The tone of the document is open and both challenging and inviting,” he added. “It is really inspiring to read as we now try to implement the mandate from our recent assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea. It provides an inspiring interaction between ecclesiological reflections, missionary perspectives and concerns about economic, ecological justice and peace building as significant missionary dimensions of the church.”

“At the recent WCC 10th assembly in Busan, we too highlighted the need for the renewal of the church both through a new mission statement that speaks of mission being from the margins of society, and the movement of the church and ecumenical movement toward justice and peace,” Tveit said.

Dr Tveit added that he sees parallels between the “pilgrimage of justice and peace” the WCC fellowship of 345 member churches will be embarking on, especially now after the November assembly and the reflections of Pope Francis.

In January 2014, WCC staff will continue their reflection and study of the Apostolic Exhortation through a special day of staff discussions dedicated to the document. The WCC and Vatican have continued to work closely with one another during the past several decades through the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical association of churches founded in 1948, by the end of 2012 the WCC had 345 member churches representing more than 500 million Christians from Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other traditions in over 110 countries. The WCC works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church.

* Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, 2013: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents...

* *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-...>

* Official website of the WCC 10th Assembly: <http://wcc2013.info/en>

* More information on cooperation between the WCC and the Vatican: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/jwg-with-roman-catholic-church>

Prayer for Today

All-powerful God, let the splendour of your glory rise in our hearts like the dawn, that the darkness of the night may be scattered and the coming of your only Son may reveal us as children of the light. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

