



Padre Bell and Padre Donald in the Buffer Zone in Cyprus ministering to 2 Royal Irish - report below

Ashers Bakery discrimination appeal halted

A high profile appeal by Christian bakers who were found to have discriminated against a gay customer has been dramatically halted to

facilitate an intervention by the north's top legal adviser.

Irish News - Attorney General John Larkin QC has made a last-minute request to make representation in the case about any potential conflict between the region's equality legislation and European human rights laws.

The McArthur family's refusal to bake the customer's order for a cake bearing a pro-gay marriage slogan was ruled unlawful last year.

Lord Chief Justice Sir Declan Morgan said: "It is most unfortunate this issue has arisen only two days before this hearing.

"Although we have all tried to see if we could proceed with the case given the amount of work that has been done.

"It seems to us that it is simply not possible to do that without running into some risk of fairness in the hearing.

"We are not going to proceed with the hearing today."

Gay rights activist Gareth Lee, a member of LGBT advocacy group Queer Space, had wanted a cake featuring Sesame Street puppets

Bert and Ernie with the slogan Support Gay Marriage for a private function marking International Day Against Homophobia in May 2014.

More at -

http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2016/02/03/news/asher-s-bakery-discrimination-appeal-halted-404815/?mc_cid=139bf78e98&mc_eid=23f2f80c40

Ashers bolstered by 8,000 signing petition

News Letter

More than 8,000 people have signed a petition in support of Ashers Baking Company ahead of their court appeal in the 'gay cake' row case.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/ashers-bolstered-by-8-000-strong-petition-ahead-of-appeal-1-7194510>

Ashers appeal against 'gay cake' ruling dramatically adjourned after intervention by Attorney General Larkin

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ashers-appeal-against-gay-cake-ruling-dramatically-adjourned-after-intervention-by-attorney-general-larkin-34419992.html>

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Derry parish's weekend celebration in renewed centre

This weekend, the Christ Church, Culmore, Muff and St. Peter's (CCCMSP) Group of Parishes will gather to celebrate and give thanks for the recent refurbishment of their Parish Centre, on the Culmore Road.

Over the past nine months, more than £100,000 has been raised to finance the work, which brings the centre up to the necessary health and safety standards. Among the improvements are a new kitchen, toilets, heating system and internal doors, and new flooring has been laid throughout. The building has also been painted inside and out, and new insulation fitted.

The money for the refurbishment was raised through donations from parishioners and groups who already use the centre, and with funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation and Awards for All.

The public are invited to visit the Parish Centre this Saturday, 6th February, between 2.30pm and 5.30pm, to see the improvements. Existing user

groups will be putting on demonstrations and providing information for people who wish to enquire about classes. Refreshments will be served throughout, and the afternoon will finish with a Service of Celebration and Dedication at 5pm.

A number of local groups already use the centre weekly, including Zumba, Weight Watchers, Irish Dancing, Baby Sensory and a Quilting Class. It is also used by the parish badminton group, bowls group, Sunday School and Mothers' Union.

Throughout the year, other groups use the centre for fundraisers, meals, parties and youth events. They include Mencap, the City of Derry & District Gardening Society, Marie Curie Cancer Care, Limavady Grammar School, Badgers and the Church of Ireland. The Parish Centre can be hired for weekly classes or one-off events.

Army Chaplain's tour in Cyprus

Soldiers of 2nd Battalion of the Royal Irish currently deployed on Op TOSCA with the 1 SCOTS Battlegroup, said goodbye yesterday morning to their Padre after he spent four weeks with them in Cyprus. Padre Mark Donald had



Padre Bell and Padre Donald outside St Columba's Church, UNPA, Nicosia

deployed to cover the R&R period for Padre Bell of 1 SCOTS.

During his time in Cyprus, Padre Donald joined the soldiers as they patrolled the UN monitored Buffer Zone and was involved in all aspects of daily life for the soldiers ... including the 0615 PT sessions each morning!

Padre Donald was responsible for taking Sunday morning services at St Columba's Church in the

UN Protected Area, Nicosia, in his wider role as Padre for all soldiers that make up the British Contingent in UNIFCYP.

Padre Donald presented Padre Bell with a R IRISH plaque to mark the service of what is now forty 2 R IRISH soldiers on Op TOSCA 23. The plaque will be displayed at St Columba's Church alongside those of the Royal Ulster Rifles and Royal Irish Rangers, presented by the antecedent Regiments during their time in Cyprus in the 1950's and 1970's.

Creative approach to Lent at Christ Church, Dublin

Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, will be hosting a creative project entitled 'Give Us Grace' during Lent 2016. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 10, the project will be exploring the Lenten themes of journey, temptation, challenge and reliance on God's grace through a variety of creative activities and experiential prayer.

Throughout the day on Ash Wednesday, a team of designers led by locally based artist Laura Petit will be preparing a large labyrinth on canvas in one of the cathedral's side chapels. Visitors to the cathedral that day will be invited



to participate in the project as well, and with the direction of the artists will have the opportunity to join in the painting, concluding their work just before the Ash Wednesday service that evening at 6.00 pm. Once the labyrinth creation has fully dried, it will remain installed in the cathedral until Easter for any who would like to walk the labyrinth as an aid to prayer.

Tuesday evenings in Lent will feature ‘Cathedral Nights’, during which the cathedral will be open from 7.00 until 9.30 pm. In this time there will be space for individual prayer, walking the labyrinth, a quiet cup or tea or coffee and also a variety of directed, reflective activities including:

February 4

Tuesday February 16 Lectio Divina, meditative reading of scripture – 7.30 and 9.00 pm, led by the Revd Garth Bunting

Tuesday February 23 Look Within – 8.00 and 9.00 pm, contemplative dance meditation created by Maria Nilsson Waller, Lucia Kickham and Dagmara Jerzak. When did you last look inwardly? When in the desert, what do you encounter? What are your temptations, the things that bind you? What voices do you here in the wind?

Tuesday March 1 Taizé prayer service – 7.30 to 8.15 pm

Tuesday March 8 Prayer through creative expression – 7.30 pm and 9.00 pm, led by Carol Casey

Tuesday March 15 Lectio Divina, meditative reading of scripture – 7.30 and 9.00 pm, led by the Revd Garth Bunting

For further information, please contact the Rev. Abigail Sines, abigail@christchurch.ie.

C of I dean at reunion of 1965 Queen's expedition to Morocco

In 1965 nine Queen's students – Stanley Bell, John Clarke, Nick Crichton, John Hall, Dick Scott Kerr, Robin Martin, Roy McClelland, Philip Reilly and Ivan Robinson – and John Dinnen, a C

of I divinity student from Trinity College Dublin, took part in a 10-week trek to South Morocco.



Back row (L-R): John Hall, John Dinnen, Philip Reilly (MB BCh BAO 1968), Stanley Bell (BSc 1965), Dick Scott Kerr (BA Geography 1965), and Roy McClelland (MB BCh BAO 1967) on bonnet of Land Rover. Front row (L-R): Nick Crichton (BA 1965), Ivan Robinson (BA Geography 1965), Robin Martin, John Clarke (BA Geography 1965)

Funding was, in part, provided by the World Health Organisation and the Medical Research Council, in return for which the team investigated options for immunisation programmes amongst the nomadic tribes in the region, and carried out physiological and psychological tests on themselves.

The group comprised of four geographers, two medics, two linguists, a mechanic and a photographer and together they carried out a study of the effects of dehydration on body



functions. The associated psychological tests were undertaken on behalf of the Medical Research Council (London).

Studies were also made of the comparative life styles of the Arab desert nomadic tribesmen, with that of the sedentary people living in the oases and villages, skirting the edges of North West Sahara, many of whom had forsaken the harsh nomadic existence.

The journey took them over the Pyrenees, the Sierra Nevada Mountains of southern Andalusia and the Atlas Mountains which was in contrast to the time spend in the desert environment.

The 50th reunion in September 2015 started in the Senate Room where the eight members who attended watched film coverage of the trip, this being the first time the majority of them had seen it. Two expedition members travelled from Canada and three from England. The two who were unable to attend sent their best wishes.

That evening, there was much reminiscing, storytelling, leg-pulling and singing over a special meal in local restaurant, Deanes at Queen's.

“Throughout the day the recollections of the team's combined memories of the numerous incidents and events, which occurred during our ten weeks trip brought home just how remarkable and how unique an experience it was for us all,” said organiser, Stanley Bell.

On what was a beautiful Belfast evening, the former ‘desert rats’ and their wives were happy to pose for photographs on the quad lawn, opposite the former Geography Department from where they had left in two long wheel-base Land Rovers on their epic journey 50 years earlier.

Black Santa funding will benefit more than 220 charities

More than 220 charities will this weekend benefit from money raised during the 2015 Black Santa Sit-out on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral.

The 39th annual Sit-out raised £195,000 and at the annual Good Samaritans Service on Sunday February 7, well-loved local comedians May McFettridge, Jimmy Cricket and William Caulfield will give up their time to present cheques to charities and community groups who strive to make life better for others.

This was Dean John Mann's fifth Christmas Sit-out as he maintains a tradition established by the late Dean Sammy Crooks almost 40 years ago.

The Good Samaritans Service takes place on the first Sunday in February each year, which the Dean said was "always a happy day in St Anne's Cathedral."

Smiles are definitely guaranteed this year with the line-up of special guests!

Dean Mann said: "More than 200 charities will benefit, representing a huge amount of voluntary and community work. This must be one of the most comprehensive gatherings anywhere in Northern Ireland of a spectrum of charitable

work taking place, from organisations aiding young people to those supporting the elderly, from those struggling with medical conditions to those working in reconciliation and healing in its broadest sense. They include many cross-community initiatives and those working in places of social deprivation.

“It is a celebration of much that is good and praiseworthy in our community, and an opportunity to thank those who turn money into action and goodwill into improving the lives of others. It is a privilege to be part of it.”

Chancellor's tax reform plan must start now says Christian Aid

.George Osborne’s announcement that multinationals should have to publish currently secret information about their global affairs could hail a tremendous breakthrough in the war against tax dodging, Christian Aid said this week.

“We are excited to see that the Chancellor has accepted the need for multinationals to go public about the business they do, and the taxes they pay, wherever in the world they operate,”

said Joseph Stead, Christian Aid's Senior Adviser on Economic Justice.

“What is vital now is that Mr Osborne follows up his good words with immediate action.

“With the UK and scores of other countries, including the poorest, haemorrhaging billions every year as a result of the irresponsible tax practices of multinationals such as Google, we cannot afford any delay. Rapid action is the only way to rebuild the public trust in our companies and our government.”

Christian Aid believes the Chancellor could begin by introducing the reform very rapidly within the UK – this is something that is within the power of the UK Government and should be possible within a matter of months.

The reform in question is public country-by-country reporting, which in the wake of the Google tax row Mr Osborne has said he favours. It would see multinationals publicly revealing details such as their taxes paid, profits made, staff employed and assets owned, separately for every country in which they operate.

Such information is hugely powerful because it will help to highlight which multinationals are shifting their profits

into tax havens in order to avoid or even evade taxes in the countries where they are due.

This in turn will generate public demand for governments to act against companies seen as abusive – and give companies an incentive to clean up their own acts. Country-by-country reports will also highlight responsible behaviour by companies that are already contributing their fair share of tax in all jurisdictions where they operate.

The UK Government is currently drafting regulations requiring multinationals to provide country-by-country reports to HMRC and it would be simple to make the reports public at the same time.

Polling shows that the UK public are overwhelmingly in favour of increased transparency, while a recent survey of FTSE 100 companies by Christian Aid showed that the majority would accept such a move.

Mr Stead added: “At the same time as introducing the reform within the UK, the Chancellor should push for its adoption across Europe and by OECD and G20 countries. If the UK takes the lead, then there is little doubt that other countries will follow. There is already a proposal on the table from the European Parliament that the UK could support immediately.

“Finally, Mr Osborne, should ensure that there is absolute clarity about what information multinationals have to make public. The OECD has already developed a template for country-by-country reporting to tax authorities – and this should be the basis for all public reporting.

“The OECD template contains most of the information we want to see, and using this standard would reduce compliance costs for businesses”.

Christian Aid has campaigned for public country-by-country reporting since 2008 because the reform would help developing countries and others to catch up with multinational tax dodgers and provide information to help improve the design and effectiveness of tax rules.

All the main UK political parties have supported public country-by-country reporting. The Conservative Party’s manifesto pledged to consider the case for making the information public on a multilateral basis while Labour, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party have all expressed their support.

* Christian Aid <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/index.aspx>

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Enniskillen Collegiate ‘very disappointed’ at court ruling

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-news/video-enniskillen-collegiate-very-disappointed-at-court-ruling-1-7196132>

OECD apologises to Northern Ireland students for report error

BBC

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) apologises for publishing the wrong information about the reading, writing and maths skills of Northern Ireland university students.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35474512>

Major Report on NI Students was erroneous

News Letter

Concerns have been raised after erroneous figures from an educational assessment body put Northern Ireland students near the bottom of literacy and numeracy league tables.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/concern-after-error-denigrates-ni-students-1-7194691>

Even Stand

The CofE has published prayers to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday (see above). Two prayers, available in traditional and modern forms, have been written.

They are intended to be used at national events later this year marking the Queen's birthday on April 21st. Dr Matthew Salisbury, National Liturgy and Worship Adviser for the Church of England is quoted.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/prayers-published-to-celebrate-the-queens-90th-birthday-a3171486.html>

Times/Tel/Guard/Christian Today

The Government is pressing ahead with plans to give councils the power to extend Sunday trading hours. The proposals appeared to have been scrapped last November after a rebellion which forced the government to drop a Commons vote. But during a second reading of

the bill yesterday, Sajid Javid, the Business Secretary, said, "Central government will not be dictating how to use this power. The decision will be entirely local, reflecting local preferences, shopping habits and economic conditions." The Bishop of St Albans is quoted.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4681068.ece>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/>

[12137182/Controversial-Sunday-trading-powers-handed-to-councils.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/12137182/Controversial-Sunday-trading-powers-handed-to-councils.html)

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/02/government-plans-amend-sunday-trading-laws>

BBC

The introduction of Universal Credit (UC) will leave working families worse off on average, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said. UC, which combines six benefits into one monthly payment, was intended to be more generous than the current system but the IFS said cuts to the programme meant this would not be the case. But it said UC would encourage people into work and save £2.7bn a year. Ministers said the IFS had ignored other benefits such as extra childcare.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-35475350>

Mail Online

Further report on a CofE primary school head in Blackburn diocese who claimed via her personal twitter account that evolution is only a theory and there is 'more evidence' the Bible is true. Following criticism of the post, a statement from the head, whose Twitter account has since been removed, insisted her pupils are taught about evolution. A statement from the diocese said "We state all schools should teach the full national curriculum which

includes 'adaptation of plants and animals and that adaptation may lead to evolution'."

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3428056/Church-England-primary-school-headteacher-sparks-online-ridicule-claiming-evolution-theory-evidence-Bible-true.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

Ind

Report on a CofE's village primary school's twinning arrangement with a school in Beirut. The 190 pupils of Frances Olive Anderson CofE primary school in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire are in regular video contact with the 850 pupils of the Mohammad Shamel school in Beirut, where 40 per cent of the pupils are Syrian or Palestinian refugees.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/village-primary-in-lincolnshire-sets-up-twinning-link-with-beirut-school-a6849446.html>

Mirror

A Devon vicar has been forced to install iron gates at the entrance to a church in a bid to stop anti-social behaviour. The Revd Tom Honey says he has had enough of nothing being done to stop the late night behaviour, which has been caught on CCTV in the grounds of St David's church in Exeter.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/vicar-fit-iron-gates-church-7298348#ICID=nsm>