

## Irish News 14th February



*Choir concert in St Mary's Limerick in aid of special Olympics*

### **PCI gives evidence to support human trafficking bill**

**A delegation of the Presbyterian Church has met the NI Assembly's Justice Committee.**

The delegation comprised Very Rev. Dr. Norman Hamilton, convener of the Presbyterian Church and Society Committee, Mr. Lindsay Conway, the Church's Director of Social Service and Rev. Richard Kerr, convener of the

Presbyterian Church's Panel on Race Relations told the committee that the Presbyterian Church welcomed many of the measures in the proposed legislation.

Emphasising its consistent view that the protection of the victims of trafficking is of paramount importance, the Presbyterian delegation said that, "we welcome the comprehensive measures contained in the Bill; including tackling the demand factors which drive trafficking, given that the issue is not confined to those trafficked for prostitution or sexual exploitation."

Mr. Conway expressed some concern over the potential criminalisation of children and suggested that this area of the draft bill needs further consideration. "It is important not to criminalise children any more than is absolutely needed, and we have concerns that this issue of the potential criminalisation of children needs more clearly addressed in the draft Bill."

In its earlier written submission to the Committee the Presbyterian Church had made the request that "special provision is afforded to children and that every attempt is made to keep them outside the Criminal Justice System."

Rev. Richard Kerr explained that the Presbyterian Church appreciated the provisions that the draft Bill would provide in terms of detection, protection and support given to victims of trafficking. However he suggested that these could be further strengthened and that particular attention should be given to adequate resourcing of the agencies involved to the point of the Bill needing to be specific about what is expected of them in order that the needs of victims would be met.

Mr. Kerr continued, "The Presbyterian Church would like to see the introduction of what it describes as a 'reflective period.' The purpose of this would ensure that unconfirmed or suspected victims of trafficking are not removed from the jurisdiction until such time as they can be screened and a definitive judgement made as to whether they are trafficked or not."

One of the most controversial aspects of the draft bill is its clause 6 which would make it illegal in Northern Ireland to pay for sexual services. In its written submission the Presbyterian Church did not consider that the case has been adequately made for such a blanket provision being included in a bill that is primarily dealing with human trafficking and thought such an issue would be better dealt with in legislation specifically concerned with prostitution.

Addressing the issue at the Justice Committee hearing, Rev. Norman Hamilton made the following points.

“We unambiguously support the key aim of the Bill – to deal seriously in Northern Ireland with the evil issues of human trafficking and exploitation.

“As we have indicated in our written submission, we also believe prostitution to be evil and a blight on a civilised society, and we are currently of the view that to deal adequately with prostitution and the scope of the sex industry, full primary legislation is required.

“We welcome the thorough investigation by this committee into the many issues raised by the bill – and look forward very much to your detailed reflections and final recommendations.

“At no time have we been in contact with or been lobbied by any group or individual in relation to the contents of the Bill.

“We agree that every effort should be made to reduce the demand for prostitution, though we note that sexual services and prostitution are not synonymous terms. Like many others, we look forward to real clarity as to what is and what is not covered by this term.”

Dr. Hamilton raised various issues with the Committee.

“Does the Committee believe that there is the legislative framework, and the capacity for law enforcement, to adequately carry through the implications of this clause? We are currently of the view that to deal adequately with prostitution and the scope of the sex industry, full primary legislation is required.

“Where payments are made for sexual services by credit or debit card to accounts outside the UK, or perhaps in due course by the use of bitcoins, is the Committee satisfied that there is adequate legislation for the investigating authorities to access the relevant bank accounts, and what are resource implications of bringing many hundreds of cases to the courts?

“Linked to this, is it likely that short term tourists who avail of sexual services will actually be caught and subsequently brought to trial even though they may live in another jurisdiction?

“Is the Committee satisfied that any trafficked woman and any vulnerable

women involved in prostitution and the provision of sexual services will actually be able to be brought to court as a credible witness – given the likelihood that she will have suffered severe emotional trauma before appearing in court?

“We fully accept that the naming and shaming in public of those caught paying for sexual services is very likely to act as a deterrent to their seeking those services in the first place. However, as a former mayor of New Orleans famously said ‘You can make prostitution illegal, but you can’t make it unpopular’. We are particularly concerned that as the tourist trade increases in Northern Ireland, that such a deterrent will cut little ice with men from overseas, and that the demand may well be sustained – even if we are reasonably successful in stopping the trafficking of women for this purpose.

“A number of other queries have come to our minds: Are there any lessons to be learned from our experience of facing the evil of drug dealing? Drugs are everywhere even though there is legislation in place to deal with the scourge. What consideration has the Committee given to shifting the main emphasis towards pursuing the ‘sex barons’ behind the trade, rather than those who use the services on the front line?

“Further, what consideration has been given to other models of dealing with those who consume sexual services such as compulsory counselling or therapy for those convicted? Is the Committee satisfied that a criminal conviction is the totality of what should be done for such people?

“Given that the Swedish evidence is still highly contested, we would wish the Committee to be fully satisfied that the evidence and results can be readily transferred here – given that this is a different culture and with an underbelly of societal violence.”

## New Archdeacon of Cork

**The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton, has announced that, following the retirement of Archdeacon Robin Bantry White on 1st March next, the new Archdeacon of Cork, Cloyne and Ross is to be the Reverend Adrian Wilkinson.**



The Reverend Adrian Wilkinson is Rector of Douglas Union of Parishes with Frankfield: parishes which include the south suburbs of Cork city and adjoining areas of County Cork, including Blackrock, Mahon, Douglas, Grange, Frankfield, Rochestown and Passage West. It was in these same parishes that the new Archdeacon began his ministry as curate between 1994 and 1997. Following an interlude as Rector of the Dunboyne Union of Parishes in the Diocese of Meath from 1997 to 2002, he returned to Douglas as Rector in 2002.

Archdeacons are appointed by the bishop of the diocese, and their role is to assist the bishop in his or her pastoral care of the diocese, as well as the general oversight and administration of the diocese.

Bishop Colton said:

This is a very ancient office within the Church, but one which is still of immense practical significance today. The bishop and archdeacon work closely together, and I am delighted that Adrian Wilkinson has accepted my invitation to him to take on this additional work within his ministry. He will bring many valuable gifts, insights, and abilities to his new role.

The Reverend Adrian Wilkinson said:

I feel very humbled to have been invited by the Bishop to take on this office within the Church, to support him in his work as Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, and also to serve the Diocese in this capacity. It is also an immense responsibility to follow in the steps of someone of the stature of Archdeacon Robin Bantry White who has served faithfully for over two decades. I look forward to the task ahead.

The new Archdeacon will be installed at a Service in St Fin Barre's Cathedral on Sunday, 30th March at 4 p.m.

## **Irish bishops will not be releasing results of survey**

**The Irish bishops have said they will not be releasing the results of a survey of Catholics ahead of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops which is due to take place at the Vatican in October.**

Catholic Herald - The Vatican ordered the worldwide survey on 'Pastoral Challenges in the Family,' exploring issues such as cohabitation, contraception, and Holy Communion for the divorced and remarried.

[After publishing some statistical information from the survey](#), the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said last week it would not release detailed results, unlike the German and Swiss bishops' conferences.

Both Ireland and the English and Welsh Churches claim that the Vatican asked them to keep the outcome of the survey confidential. A spokesman for the Irish bishops told [The Irish Catholic](#) that they would not be releasing a statement about the results.

However, the German bishops' report elaborates on the differences seen in the survey, "above all when it come down to pre-marital cohabitation, the status of divorced and remarried, birth control and homosexuality."

## Methodist President visits Gorey

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Dr. [Heather Morris](#), was given a warm welcome to Gorey recently, as she visited the local congregation.

**"That Priest is a Lady!!"**

a talk by

**Rev. Eileen Cremin**

*Local Church of Ireland priest, Rev. Eileen will deliver this witty and engaging account of her life and work as a Rector of a rural parish. Hear her story of London to North Cork & what it means to be a female priest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!*

Organised by the  
**Mitchelstown Heritage Society**

**Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> February at 8pm**  
Mitchelstown Town Hall

Admission  
**€3 members & students - €5 non-members**

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Gorey Guardian - The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Dr. [Heather Morris](#), was given a warm welcome to Gorey recently, as she visited the local congregation.

She spoke at a special Sunday morning service, and was also interviewed by two children during the service. She spoke about her year as President of the Methodist community in Ireland. The new Praise Group also took part in the service, providing music and leading the congregation in the newer worship songs.

A conference elects the

President each June, one year in advance, and Dr. Morris is the first female leader of the Church. Rev. Steven Foster who welcomed her to Gorey said she has become known for encouraging the Church to step out in faith and make a difference in the community.

Currently based in [Belfast](#), Dr. Morris has been the Director of Ministry for the Methodist Community for the past ten years, overseeing the training of Ministers.

Up to 60 members of the community attended the service which was followed by lunch in the church hall afterwards. Rev. Foster said that everyone was delighted to meet her, especially in the informal setting.

'Heather is very much a people person,' he said. 'During the service the children asked her if she had met any famous people. She said she met President Higgins a few times and a few politicians, but she far more appreciates meeting ordinary people in the churches on the ground.'

## **Treasurer pleads guilty to stealing church funds**

**A former treasurer of the Culmore Church of Ireland parish has pleaded guilty at Londonderry Crown Court to stealing £21,000 from church funds.**

BBC - Lyndsey Bredin, 27, from Primity Crescent in Newbuildings, pleaded guilty to committing ten offences between March 2010 and October 2011.

She pleaded not guilty to nine other charges of stealing just over £11,000 between the same dates.

The defendant was released on continuing bail until February 27.

Several parishioners and a clergyman appeared at the arraignment.

The case was adjourned for two weeks to enable discussions to take place between the defence and the public prosecution service.

## **Breaking the Silence**

**“Breaking the Silence” was the result of speeches that two young women made at the Presbyterian General Assembly in June 2013.**

They spoke about the rise in mental health issues that teenagers and young adults are facing, the personal experiences they have faced with their friends and asked the church to respond to this crucial issue. As a result of this, a

resolution was passed to work with the SPUD Youth Assembly on a project to engage the church with these issues – the conference was **part one** of this project.

The Moderator, **Rev. Dr. Rob Craig** opened the conference and reminded delegates that the church needs to “break the silence” on the issues that affect us. He encouraged delegates to “be Christ” to the young people in their care, to give them a listening ear and share their time with them.

**Dr. Gavin Davidson’s** address provided the delegates with a solid picture of adolescent mental health in Northern Ireland at the present time. He provided examples of what the statistics look like in reality and highlighted the challenges that we are facing with regards to the future of mental health.

**Dr. Ken Yeow** then challenged the delegates about how the church should be responding to these issues and how they become mental health friendly places that support teenagers and walk alongside them as a loving community.

And crucially **Professor Peter McBride** reminded the delegates about the importance of taking what they have been challenged about and what they have learned and use it in their local context.

Keep up to date with the SPUD Youth Assembly at [www.pciyac.org/spud](http://www.pciyac.org/spud) and the Board of Social Witness on [www.pcibsw.org](http://www.pcibsw.org)

## **Derry Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes - Youth Group**

**Are you aged 16-18 yrs and interested in travelling to Lourdes July 1st to 6th 2014?**

Join the Youth Group in Lourdes for a fun week filled with prayer, music, new experiences and the opportunity to meet new friends.

The Youth Group will come together prior to Lourdes and fundraising will be possible at local level.

Cost is £599 and includes flights, transfers, accommodation and all meals. If interested please contact 7126 0293 or 07714882955 before Feb 28th for an application form or more details.

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