



## Irish news 18th February

### **Evening Conversations**

**An informal evening exploring experiences of Faith and Gender**

7 March 2014, 7-9 pm. The Dock, Titanic Quarter, Belfast. Free event, tea/coffee available

[info@contemporarychristianity.net](mailto:info@contemporarychristianity.net)

### **Women in the Bible and the Church**

A Day Conference for church leaders, students and lay-people.

This conference will give meaningful consideration of the place of women in the church, explore relevant Biblical passages and encourage honest dialogue arising from people's experience in church. Belfast Bible College. 7 March 2014, 10.30am - 3.30pm

Cost £20 (concession £10)

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### **Day Retreat: Positive Role Models**

Relating to the Wisdom Literature. This day will provide a safe place for women and men to support one another, to move beyond unhealthy stereotypes and to get a sense of how Jesus can transform issues that have left people feeling unwanted in a church setting. 8 March 2014, 10:30am - 6:30pm. Glenada House, Newcastle. Suggested contribution £30. Includes: tea/coffee at arrival, lunch, afternoon tea/coffee and dinner.

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## **The Untold Story: The Middle Eastern Church Behind the Headlines**

**The media is full of reports of sectarian divides and conflicts, of persecution and hopelessness in the Middle East.**

But there is another story going unreported, one of hope and reconciliation. It is the story of a Church which is uniting under great pressure to be a source of light in the darkness.

**David Porter** (former director of Contemporary Christianity and currently Canon Director for Reconciliation Ministry at Coventry Cathedral and Director for Reconciliation at Lambeth Palace) will be speaking at an event organised by Belfast Bible College

7.30pm-9.15pm, Saturday 12th April 2014

## **Dispelling Myths - Science and Faith In Dialogue**

**Unravelling myths associated with creation and evolution, Galileo and the Church, where truth is to be found, and the relationship between science and reality.**

Queens University Catholic Chaplaincy Elmwood Avenue Belfast. Wednesday 19th of February at 7pm.

## **Breaking the Silence - Videos online**

**On Saturday, 1st February, around 200 people gathered in Assembly Buildings to “break the silence” on adolescent mental health.**

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 addresses given are now available on video at -

<http://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/Article/February-2014/Breaking-the-Silence>

## Follow C of E lead - Eco congregation

**Rev Andrew Orr, Chairman of Eco-Congregation Ireland (ECI), is calling on all churches in Ireland to follow the lead of the Church of England in its decision last week at General Synod to fight climate change.**

He has written the following statement:

“Eco-Congregation Ireland is delighted that the Church of England General Synod has overwhelmingly passed a motion calling on the Church to take action on climate change. This includes the setting up of a special environmental panel to oversee the Church's response in areas such as administration, parish life and investments.

“We would ask that all the churches in Ireland would follow the lead of the C of E and begin a similar process that would see every faith community engage constructively with their call to care for God's Creation, especially around the damage to the planet caused by climate change.”

**Web:** <http://ecocongregationireland.com/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/ecocongregationireland>



## Church ‘moving towards acceptance’ of gay people

**More Christian tolerance in Catholic communities than in hierarchy, TD tells Trinity College debate**

Irish Times - The [Catholic Church](#) may be moving to a stage where gay people are no longer treated as “second-class citizens”, [Fine Gael](#) TD [Jerry Buttimer](#) has said.

Mr Buttimer, who is gay, said during a debate in [Trinity College Dublin](#) on the future of the Catholic Church that the church had signalled a change of direction since [Pope Benedict](#) XVI stepped down a year ago this week to be replaced by [Pope Francis](#).

He said Christian understanding was exhibited far better in Catholic communities than in the hierarchy, and there was now a need for a third

[Vatican](#) council dealing with the issues of morality and sexuality, as the current model of morality was from a different society. More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/church-moving-towards-acceptance-of-gay-people-1.1689449>

## Women bishops, yes... but female Pope a long way off

**Once again it is women who are making the headlines with the news that the [Church of England](#) should be able to ordain a woman bishop by Christmas**

Alf McCreary in Belfast Telegraph - This is the result of the so-called fast-track process agreed on Wednesday by the General Synod to pass the necessary legislation after the embarrassing setback in 2012 when the measure was rejected....

... The [Church of England](#) seems particularly out of touch with modern society, and it is hard to take seriously most of its stately Bishops gliding along in gorgeous dress-like regalia and funny hats, just like some of the Church of Ireland bishops in the Irish Republic.

The Northern bishops have more sense – living as they do in a no-nonsense and still surprisingly puritanical society which has no truck with the trappings of Popery and Rome – even though the Church of Ireland still remains a child of the Reformation, apart from a few High-Catholic eccentrics.

They have been upstaged, of course, by the Church of Ireland which last December ordained the Rev Pat Storey as the first female bishop in the British Isles, and the wrath of God did not diminish the Irish Anglicans.

Even the Irish Methodists were ahead here in appointing the Rev Dr [Heather Morris](#) as its first female President.

Last week, the Presbyterians just missed making history when the Rev Liz Hughes became one of the two close runners-up in the election for Moderator.

That was a vote of confidence in Liz Hughes, and also an indication that the Presbyterians at last are prepared to consider a woman Moderator.

The [Roman Catholic Church](#), which venerates Mary, has strict views on women in the church, lay and otherwise. That view will not change in my

lifetime or yours, so don't hold your breath for a female Pope, though there are rumours that Francis may soon appoint a token woman as a cardinal.

In the long run, however, the ordination of women as leaders in all the main churches will depend on their limited man-power. One reason for the Church of England's urgent requirement for women bishops is the lack of good male candidates for these key posts – as one Anglican representative pointed out "the shallow pond of male-only candidates has been over-fished".

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/alf-mccreary/women-bishops-yes-but-female-pope-a-long-way-off-30012138.html>

## On a mission to save Burt's landmark local church



### *St Aengus' Church at Burt*

**A cross-border fundraising campaign has been launched to help preserve one of Ireland's most distinctive churches.**

Derry Journal - St Aengus' Church at Burt - close to the Derry/Donegal border - is regarded as an architectural gem.

Built in the 1960s in a unique style, the building is now in need of major restoration.

Faced with the mammoth task of saving St Aengus' Church, local parishioners have rallied together. Last year alone, the community raised an astounding €99,000 and plans are well underway for the year ahead.

But now, campaigners are calling on the help of the wider community to help them accomplish the project.

Vice Chairman of the Fundraising Committee, Micheal McLaughlin, explained: "As part of fundraising efforts, the [Parish](#) has run a highly successful Draw.

"In this first year the parish have raised €99,000, with a further €23,400 being paid out in prizes ranging from a monthly first prize of €1000, second prize of €500, third prize of €250 and a monthly promoters' prize of €50.

"The people of Fahan, Burt and Inch have taken the cause of 'The Building of the Century' (Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland 2000) to their hearts.

"Over the past year, the community has hosted several fundraising events, from calendar sales to 'A Night at the Races', with many more events planned for 2014.

"I am genuinely amazed at the generosity of the parishioners. Every member of the [parish](#) community has helped secure a truly significant legacy for future generations."

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The Vice Chairman continued: "Phase Two, which will involve re-wiring, new lighting and work to the internal fabric of the church will begin soon.

"On behalf of the Parish Priests and the Fundraising Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the local community and those from outside the parish for their efforts in 2013 and ask for their continuing support in 2014."

St Aengus' Church sits on the main N13 road to Letterkenny.

Long regarded as a landmark building on the busy route, the [Catholic church](#) was designed by award-winning architects Frank Corr and Liam McCormick in 1964-65 and construction was completed in 1967.

More at -



<http://www.derryjournal.com/what-s-on/arts-culture/on-a-mission-to-save-burt-s-landmark-local-church-1-5873246>

## Cecil hailed as top Chaplain in Grand Lodge of Ireland

*Bro Cecil Allen  
District Chaplain  
Portadown District  
LOL No 1 receives  
his award from  
W.Bro Roy Kells. Bro  
Allen was chosen as  
Chaplain of the Year  
at the Grand Orange  
Community Awards.*



**The Chaplain of the Portadown No 1 Orange District Cecil Allen has received the accolade as the top Chaplain within the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland.**

Portadown Times - Mr Cecil Allen has been Portadown Chaplain for seven years, his main public profile being connected with Drumcree, where he conducts a short religious service on Sundays as the District resolves mounts a weekly protest in its bid to find a solution to the return march to Carleton Street Orange Hall.

But there is more to his post than that, with Mr Allen conducting various religious service for the District and being spiritual adviser and confidante for the District, as well as conducting the opening prayers of the various meetings.

He is a member of Kilmoriarty LOL 31 at Loughgall Road, having joined in 1972. "My father (the late Arthur Allen) was a member of Kilmoriarty and I used to drive him to the meetings and functions there," Cecil recalled. "So I thought I might as well join and save myself the double journey."

People will remember Arthur Allen as the man who drove the lorry for Hamilton Robb's linen firm at Goban Street in Edenderry for many years.

Cecil is committed to the District's call for talks with the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition without pre-conditions "and we will continue to work responsibly for that".

He misses the occasional Sunday at Drumcree when duty calls in his role as lay preacher within the Church of Ireland. He is a dedicated member of St Columba's Parish Church, a former vestry member, joining early in its history when it was formed in 1981. He and his late wife Anne joined a few months after Rev Herbert Cassidy started the church.

"I've very pleased to receive the award," he said. "It was totally unexpected and the District officers are very pleased for me."

## **Three C of I Dioceses Confer on Difference and Unity**

**Members of the dioceses of Tuam and Killala, Clougher and Limerick, Kilalloe and Ardfert gathered together on Saturday 15th February at the McWilliam Hotel in Claremorris to explore ways in which the Church of Ireland could constructively handle the wide and fraught differences which have developed over the issues of human sexuality.**

The conference was not intended to address the rights and wrongs of any particular position regarding sexuality, and certainly did not seek to come to any conclusions on these matters. Instead the conference lead those present into an exploration of how we might both differ, even deeply differ, and yet have respect for one another and continue to live together as one Christian community.

The conference was one of a series of "tri-partite" conversations involving groups of three dioceses from both Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland. The representatives were split into small groups, each with members from the different diocese, each seated around a round table.

The conference facilitator was Rev'd Douglas Baker. Douglas grew up in the USA but has been resident for 37 years in Northern Ireland. He is a Presbyterian minister, employed by the Presbyterian Church of the USA, and has been a member of the programme staff of Corrymeela, and a staff member at Mediation Northern Ireland and the Irish School of Ecumenics. He has considerable training and experience as a mediator and has facilitated dialogue in a number of Christian communities over contentious issues. Douglas led an excellent morning programme exploring the virtues of Humility, Patience, Integrity and Mutual Respect, under the theme of "Transforming Conflict By Grace". The presentation was interspersed throughout by exercises and conversations held amongst the small groups.



The second half of the day involved a panel of three speakers, each with a different perspective. **Malcome Macourt** was brought up as a member of the Church of Ireland, but has lived for many years in England with his civil partner, now a retired Anglican vicar. He has been involved in issues relating to human sexuality for very many years, and is editor of a series of papers published as "Towards a Theology of Gay Liberation" (SCM 1997). **Peter Ould** describes himself as "post gay". He is married to Gayle and writes for a number of on-line publications from the perspective of a conservative Christian. He is also a member of an advisory board of the Church of England for social media. **Professor Samuel McConkey** is head of department for International Health and Tropical Medicine at the Royal College of surgeons in Ireland. He has wide experience in Africa and expertise in the areas of HIV/ AIDS Hepatitis B, Malaria and HTLV1.

Each of the speakers offered a different perspective on human sexuality and human relationships. Most importantly the thread running through all the speakers' thoughts was the place of sexuality within the wider context of what constitutes good and constructive or bad and destructive human relationships. There was then opportunity for some further reflection and questions.

The conference was both important and highly constructive in the way that it covered the important issue of living with very deeply differing views on a particular issue. As human beings we cannot possibly hope, or even desire, to all hold the same views on any particular subject, but as Christians we are absolutely and without prevarication obliged, by our faith in God who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility in Jesus Christ, to find constructive and Christ like ways of living with our differences.