



*Richard Moore of the charity Children In Crossfire was the keynote speaker. He is pictured with 3rd year Mount Mercy College student Sara Ann Biju.*

## Launch of Catholic Schools Week 2016

Catholic Schools Week 2016 was launched in Mount Mercy College in Cork on Monday 26 January. Principal Pádraigín Uí Riordáin

welcomed representatives from schools across Cork and from Catholic education across Ireland. The CSW launch opened with prayer, and was addressed by guest speaker Richard Moore of Children in Crossfire on the theme of mercy.

Bishop John Buckley was chief celebrant at Mass in the close-by Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dennehy's Cross, which was concelebrated by Bishop Brendan Kelly, Chair of the Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Very Reverend Canon Bartholomew O'Mahony PP, Reverend Dr Tom Deenihan who preached the Homily, and by other visiting priests, representative of Catholic Education.

In his homily Father Tom Deenihan said:  
“Seeing the face of God in others brings me to the current and topical issue of the Catholic school and inclusion. Inclusion is not just about religious denomination. Inclusion must also take nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic background and ability into consideration. When these five criteria are taken into consideration, I would challenge anyone to tell me that Catholic Schools are not as inclusive as any other type of school. They must be true to their ethos! Indeed, a recent ESRI

publication on School Sector Variation in Ireland bears adequate and independent testimony to this.

Mount Mercy School was founded by the Sisters of Mercy from Saint Maries of the Isle in the City.

A primary school exists at that convent still. Today, there are 265 pupils on the roll book of Saint Maries of the Isle NS from 38 countries and are from ten different faith backgrounds as well as atheist. In fact, 40 are Muslim, 11 are Hindu and four are Buddhist!

The school has three special Autism Spectrum Disorder Classes which are attended by 18 pupils. It has a further 39 children availing of Resource Hours. It has 11 SNA's and 25 teachers including 3 EAL teachers. The Department conducted a WSE there before Christmas and sent a questionnaire to all parents. 100% were happy with the school.

Who can say that this Catholic school is not inclusive? That vision of Mercy permeates the classrooms, the corridors, the staff room and the yard of that school.”

Click [here](#) to read the full text of Father Deenihan's homily.

This was the first time that a school in Cork hosted the national launch of Catholic Schools Week which takes place from 31 January – 2 February on the theme ‘Catholic Schools: Called to Proclaim God’s Mercy’.

## **Three nominees for this year’s Presbyterian Moderator**

The next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will either come from Armagh, Ballyclare or Belfast.

Rev. Tony Davidson, Minister of First Armagh Presbyterian Church, Rev. Robert Bell, Minister of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church and Rev. Frank Sellar, Minister of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in east Belfast have been nominated for election, which will take place next Tuesday evening.

Presbyterians from across Ireland will meet on 2<sup>nd</sup> February to select one of the three Ministers to become the Church’s most senior office bearer and principal public representative to succeed the current Moderator Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie.

The voting will take place in the Church's 19 Presbyteries, which are local Church bodies made up of a minister and an elder from each congregation in a particular area, who will meet independently at different locations around Ireland.

The Rev. Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, explained that next week's vote is the second stage of an annual process that began in the autumn of last year.

“Democracy is one of the strengths and hallmarks of Presbyterianism. Around November each year members of Presbyteries throughout Ireland suggest the names of ministers that they would like to see considered for the office of Moderator. Once those ministers suggested have agreed for their names to go forward for consideration, the second stage of the process takes place when Presbyteries will prayerfully consider their preferred candidate and vote,” he said.

“The process is laid down in our constitution and always takes place on the first Tuesday in February. The vote is by simple majority, so whoever receives the most votes within a

particular Presbytery becomes the nominee of that Presbytery. The person who receives the most nominations from our 19 Presbyteries across Ireland becomes Moderator-Designate," he said.

While a relatively straightforward process, if there is a tie in the number of Presbytery nominations received on the first count, Presbyteries will continue to meet that night until one Minister is clearly ahead. This has happened four times in the last 15 years, most recently in 2014 when there was a three-way tie. A result is usually known around 10pm.

The culmination of the process will take place on the opening night of the General Assembly, which this year takes place on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> June. Here, the Moderator-Designate will be formally elected by the General Assembly and installed as Moderator, the 177<sup>th</sup> since the election of the Very Rev. Dr. Samuel Hanna in 1840.

**Rev. Robert Bell B.S.Sc (Q.U.B.), B.D. (Edin.)**

Born in 1954, Robert is currently minister of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church. He was ordained as assistant in Second Comber in 1980 and installed as minister of Leckpatrick in 1982, before moving to his current role in 1989. He served as convener of the Youth Centres

Committee between 1984 and 1988, Personnel Planning Committee 1993 to 2000, Central Ministry Fund 2002 to 2004 and Clerk of Strabane Presbytery from 1986 to 1988. He was Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh in 1986.

**Rev. Tony Davidson B.A. (Q.U.B.), B.D. (Aber.)**

Currently minister of First Armagh Presbyterian Church, Tony was born in 1957. He was ordained as assistant minister in Stormont and installed as minister of Christ Church, Limerick in 1986, moving to First Armagh in 1994. Tony was convener of the Irish Church Relations Committee from 1995 to 2002; Inter-Church Relations Board from 2002 to 2004, Church Relations Committee 2004 to 2007 and Nomination Committee 2014 to date.

**Rev. Frank Sellar B.A. (Lancs.), B.D. (Aber.),  
P.G.C.E. (Q.U.B.), M.Min (P.T.F.I)**

Frank was born in 1958 and is currently the minister of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in East Belfast. He was ordained as assistant at Hamilton Road, Bangor in 1988. He was installed as minister of Adelaide Road in Dublin in 1990, moving to Bloomfield in 2007.

## **Holocaust Memorial week programmes on Belfast Local Television**

On Holocaust Memorial week, NVTv (Belfast Local Television) have a number of programmes relating to the Shoah and the local Jewish community.

NvTv Belfast Local Television - Freeview 8 & Virgin 159

**In Focus** - Mel Goldberger visits the NVTv studio as he shares the story of his father's escape from Vienna to Northern Ireland after Kristallnacht

Duration: 30:00. January 27th - 19.45 repeated: January 27th - 22.45, January 29th - 21.15, January 31st - 20.15

**I remember the Holocaust** - Rare archive of Belfast choreographer Helen Lewis who survived Auschwitz. She survived two so called 'selections' by Dr Josef Mengele. She moved to Northern Ireland in 1947 and passed away in 2009.



Duration: 30:00. 28 Jan - 21:45 repeated; 29 Jan - 19.45

From the archives - **A Century Later, Short Stories** - With Ronnie Appleton QC. Reflections on the Jewish community which gave much to the development of Belfast.

Duration: 15:00, January 26th - 21.00 repeated: January 27th - 20.15, January 29th - 18.45

**I remember little Jerusalem** - Rare archive of the late Raphael Siev who talks about his childhood memories in the old Beth Hamedrash Hagodel Shul in Walworth Road, Dublin - now the Irish Jewish museum

Duration: 15:00 27 Jan 16 20:30 repeated: 28 Jan 20.30

**Discover the Archives** - Archival interview with Rabbi Avraham Citron, former rabbi of the Belfast Jewish community, who shared his experiences and insights into Jewish culture and community with Northern Visions in 2006.

Duration: 30:00. 28 Jan 16 22.45 repeated: 29 Jan 17.45

Schedules can be subject to change - please check here: [www.nvtv.co.uk](http://www.nvtv.co.uk)  
<http://www.northernvisions.org/>

## 1916: A Hundred Years On, A Contemporary Christianity Project

There has been a significant response to Phillip Orr's new play, 'Halfway House', exploring the events of 1916. There were packed audiences at most venues last week.

There will be two final performances in the Linenhall Library in Belfast on Tuesday 26 January. There are still some seats available, reservations are not necessary, but if you wish to reserve a seat see contact details below.

The following resources will shortly be available on Contemporary Christianity's website for the many people who have expressed an interest:

- A copy of the script of "Halfway House" with permission for it to be used to stage a reading or performance
- A DVD of the play "Halfway House"
- A copy of the script of "Stormont House Rules!", another play by Philip Orr exploring the events of 1916 and their contemporary relevance. There will be a dramatic reading of this play on 4 February in the Duncairn Centre as part of the [4 Corners Festival](#).

## **TUESDAY 26 JANUARY - BELFAST**

Linenhall Library, Belfast, BT1 5GB : 1:00pm  
(doors open 12:30pm) **and** 6:15pm (doors open  
5:45pm)

There will be a suggested minimum donation of  
£5.00 per person to support the production of  
the play. (Gifts can be made payable to  
Contemporary Christianity)

For further information contact: Stephen Adams  
- [info@contemporarychristianity.net](mailto:info@contemporarychristianity.net)  
Linen Hall library - [d.douglas@linenhall.com](mailto:d.douglas@linenhall.com)

(Note: car parking is free from 6.00pm in Belfast)

## **Irish Presbyterian heritage tour launched**

Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie  
welcomed guests to Assembly Buildings to  
launch a major tourist initiative that charts the  
rich history and global contribution of Ulster  
Presbyterians.

At the launch, cultural tourism company Heritage  
Experience unveiled 'An Independent People' –  
a triple DVD and booklet plus a unique **six day**

guided tour tracing the history of Ulster Presbyterianism.



***At the launch of ‘An Independent People’ were Ken Nelson, Heritage Experience Chairman and Chief Executive of LEDCOM, broadcaster William Crawley and Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie.***

Heritage Experience acquired the rights to the acclaimed BBC Northern Ireland Series ‘An Independent People’ and it is this series and accompanying booklet that sets the scene for the new tourism venture aimed at developing and promoting Ulster’s rich cultural heritage.

Dr. McNie launched the initiative with broadcaster William Crawley, who presented the series, which was shown in Northern Ireland two years ago.

“This exciting new project will enable visitors to discover iconic sites and find out more about a strong, determined people that provided the New World with presidents, prime ministers, generals and leading industrialists,” Dr. McNie said.

“Presbyterians, along with many others, helped to create great nations with their hard work, resilience and pioneering spirit. But first and foremost they brought with them the good news of Jesus Christ.

“The preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is central to Presbyterianism and the best test, perhaps, of our Church lies in what our faith and the Word of God compels us to do for others.

“In that sense, we are not an independent people – but a people yoked to Christ, for His yoke is easy and his burden is light - a people deeply concerned for others.”

The six day tour from September 26th to October 1st, 2016 will visit key areas of significance including Belfast, Ards and North

Down, Derry and Donegal, the Giant's Causeway and Glens of Antrim, the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh and East Antrim and the Sixmilewater Valley.

As William Crawley explained, the programme would reach a new audience including descendants of those who left Ulster to create a new life in America.

“‘An Independent People’ tells the remarkable story of Ulster’s Presbyterians, and their remarkable legacy, and it provides the narrative that could attract thousands back to these shores to explore their cultural roots.”

The triple DVD set and booklet charts the Ulster Presbyterians fascinating history from the early 17th century to the present day. It tells the story of an epic journey spanning four centuries from the time they first set foot in Ulster, to thousands of families leaving for the New World in the 18th century. It also features communities in India’s Gujarat Province established by the Irish church in the 19th century, which are still thriving today.

Ken Nelson, Heritage Experience Chairman and Chief Executive of LEDCOM said: “There are millions of people throughout the world who can trace their heritage back to the Ulster Presbyterians who emigrated from this shores in

search of a better life in the New World. We want to give them the opportunity to come here and experience at first hand where it all began.”

## **Ulster rugby players draw over 1,000 people to hear about their faith**

More than 1,000 people were in St Anne’s Cathedral on Monday January 25 to hear three Ulster rugby players talk about their sporting careers and their Christian faith.

The event was jointly organised by Christian Vision for Men (CVM) and Interdenominational Divine Healing Ministries, and took place in the context of the weekly divine healing service.

Ruan Pienaar joined Ulster from Natal Sharks in 2010 and was a member of the Springboks team which won the Rugby World Cup in 2007. Wiehahn Herbst was signed for Ulster, also from the Sharks, in 2014. Peter Browne, who previously played with London Welsh, is in his first season with Ulster. His father, the Rev Leonard Browne, is a Church of England minister who is originally from Northern Ireland.



***Ulster Rugby players Ruan Pienaar, Peter Browne and Wiehahn Herbst who spoke in St Anne's Cathedral on Monday January 25.***

Ulster Rugby Chief Executive Shane Logan was interviewed by CVM's Ireland Director, Gareth Murphy, about how he came to faith after seeing God answering prayer in difficult situations. "Life only makes sense when you live the way you're designed to live," Shane remarked.

The three rugby players were introduced and interviewed by BBC journalist Mark Simpson.

Wiehahn Herbst related how he received assurance from God after experiencing injuries



on the pitch: “Every time, God gives you strength and gives you courage to just go through that challenge.” On living the Christian life, he added: “It’s not always easy but you have got God there for you. In a difficult situation, he gives you the power and peace that the world can’t imagine.”

Ruan Pienaar explained that he prayed for God’s protection and favour over the team before each match and also for his family. “I think it’s a small way to say thanks to God for giving us the talent,” he said.

Ruan said he sensed that God had opened a door for him to come to Ulster to spread the gospel as well as to play rugby. “Whenever you go to ask him for forgiveness and to come into your life, he’ll always answer and respond.”

Peter Browne mentioned that his attitude is to play for an audience of one. “It’s not about me. It’s about God and doing my best for God to the best of my ability,” he said. Peter related how he came to faith at a New Wine camp when he realised how sin was preventing him from having a relationship with God, and that God’s grace – shown through the Cross – was ‘beyond comprehension.’

The divine healing service marks its 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary next Monday night, February 1, and is an opportunity for anyone to come and seek God's presence and blessing in their lives.

## **Ask your council to get tough on tax dodgers, Christian Aid urges**

Christian Aid is today urging people across England and Northern Ireland to lobby their local councils to get tough with companies that dodge tax.

“Councils in England alone spend some [£45 billion a year](#) buying goods and services from companies and that gives them a lot of influence over suppliers,” said Helen Collinson, Senior Public Advocacy Adviser at Christian Aid.

“The prospect of losing a multi-million pound contract is likely to concentrate some companies' minds and make them think harder about whether to dodge tax, here or in a developing country.”

Local authorities already have legal powers to ask detailed questions of potential suppliers, about whether they have been found guilty of tax evasion or improperly avoiding tax in the UK or

other countries. Councils may use the powers but unlike central government departments, they do not have to.

Already, some are moving in the right direction. In December, Oxford City Council voted unanimously to investigate whether and how the council can include rigorous questions about companies' tax practices in council procurement procedures. Detailed tax compliance questions have been adopted by **Belfast and Lisburn and Castlereagh** city councils in Northern Ireland and by the University of Oxford. **Ards and North Down Council** in Northern Ireland is also expected to debate the move.

Ms Collinson added: "Our new campaign asks people to get their local councils to use their legal powers – and to discriminate in favour of firms with better tax records. We hope that this will help push companies which supply local authorities to pay their taxes around the world.

"When companies use accounting tricks to pay less tax, there is less funding for public services at local and national level, including for schools and health services."

Today (Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>), Christian Aid will write to 15,000 of its supporters, encouraging them to

ask their local council to use its legal powers to ask detailed companies about potential suppliers' tax records.

## **News links to reports on faith, politics and education**

### **U-turn urged over GCSE gradings as subjects cut in Northern Ireland**

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/uturn-urged-over-gcse-gradings-as-subjects-cut-in-northern-ireland-34395694.html>

### **Plans for new Belfast Islamic centre spark debate**

News Letter

Plans to convert a former Methodist youth centre into a new Islamic centre in Belfast have sparked debate.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/plans-for-new-islamic-centre-spark-debate-1-7180267>

### **Farmers call voters to back fair pricing law**

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/ni-business-news/farmers-call-voters-to-back-fair-pricing-law-1-7180271>

### **Ex-IRA chief to appoint member of 'truth commission' for victims**

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-news/ex-ira-chief-to-appoint-member-of-truth-commission-for-victims-1-7180238>

## **NI abortion law: Attorney general lodges appeal over high court ruling**

BBC News

The attorney general has lodged an appeal to a high court ruling that found Northern Ireland's abortion legislation to be "incompatible" with human rights law.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35402156>

## **BBC/Guard**

The government has lost a vote in the House of Lords on child poverty. Peers voted by a majority of 92 to amend the Welfare Reform and Work Bill to make ministers report annually on income levels in the poorest families. The move was spearheaded by the Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who argued income-related statistics must be recorded so they could be assessed with other measurements of deprivation. (See *News link to speech above*).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35405479>

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/25/house-of-lords-keep-income-related-child-poverty-measures>

## **Ind**

New rules banning secularist groups from raising objections to faith schools' admissions policies are an "affront to both democracy and the rule of law", campaigners have said. Under the Government's proposals, which were unveiled by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan at the weekend, campaign groups will be

banned from making “vexatious complaints” against the admissions systems of individual faith schools. The measure is being taken after the Chief Schools Adjudicator, Dr Elizabeth Passmore, said investigating multiple objections from pressure groups was taking too much time and was a waste of public money (See *comment below*).

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/faith-school-complaints-ban-is-affront-to-democracy-campaigners-say-a6833531.html>

### **Comment**

**Independent:** Education Secretary Nicky Morgan is wrong to block complaints about faith schools

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/nicky-morgan-is-wrong-to-block-complaints-about-faith-schools-a6833711.html>

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