



***Clergy and representatives of 14 Christian Churches at Dublin Unity service***

## **Easter Rising a reminder of the danger of deafness, former Moderator at Dublin Unity service**

“As we commemorate the Easter Rising of April 1916, what lessons can we learn, what progress can we celebrate, and what vision do we need to embrace for the future?” This was the question asked by the Very Reverend Dr Kenneth Newell OBE, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and Minister of the Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, Belfast, at the inaugural

service of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2016 in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay, Dublin, on Monday night (January 18).

The service was organised by the Dublin Council of Churches and brought together the leaders of 14 different Christian traditions. It marked the beginning a week of special services and events which, as the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Diarmuid Martin put it, highlight the many things that unite us. This year's theme is 'Salt of the Earth' and materials have been put together but the Christian Churches in Latvia.

As the centenary of the 1916 Rising approaches, Dr Newell asked what vision could be embraced that would shape an Ireland that could be confidently inclusive, peaceful, just, compassionate and prosperous. He suggested that the Easter Rising was a reminder of the danger of deafness – from the time of the Great Famine certain sections of the Irish population felt that their complaints and grievances were not listened to.

“Part of me wants to scribble across the pages of carnage within Ireland North and South over the last one hundred years two words – ‘Never Again’. But that is much too easy. The challenge

is to listen carefully and respectfully to those sections of our community that today are in pain and groan for understanding, acceptance and hope. Our lives begin to disintegrate morally, spiritually, socially and politically when we become silent about the things that really matter to ordinary people. Pray for ears to pick up the cries of distress today within our country and together work to transform the lives of those who feel excluded and in pain. Revolution is much more than smashing something; it is bringing something beautiful to birth and watching it grow for the benefit of all, not just the few,” he said.

Dr Newell spoke about the huge changes that had happened since Ireland won the freedom to determine its own future. He referred to Vatican II in 1962, the IRA and Loyalist ceasefires in 1994, the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and all that followed from that, and the State visit of the Queen to Ireland in 2011.

“All of these luminous moments inspire us as Christians to reach out and work for an Ireland that is inclusive, compassionate, just, reconciled, peaceful and prosperous. They act like rockets of hope exploding in the night sky into shards of colourful light and dropping into a thousand lives. They are the glimpse that God gives us of

a brighter future for all, and he always promises to guide us along the route to it; grace–nav is the Gospel’s equivalent to sat–nav,” he stated.

You can read Dr Newell’s sermon in full by [clicking here](#).



## **Events of Easter 1916 focus of Navan Shamrock Festival’s ecumenical service**

As part of this year’s Navan Shamrock Festival and to launch its programme, an ecumenical service, during which the events of Easter 1916

will be remembered, takes place at St. Mary's Church (Church of Ireland), Navan, on Tuesday 15th March, at 7.45p.m.

Having marked the 100th anniversary of the First World War in 2014, the Gallipoli Campaign in 2015, the focus of this year's festival launch is on "Ireland 1916".

All are welcome to attend.

## **Belfast cathedral choirs combine for Unity service**

The annual joint Cathedral service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was held on Tuesday January 19 in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

The choirs of St Anne's and St Peter's Roman Catholic Cathedral were united for the anthem *If you love me, keep my commandments*. St Peter's choir sang How's *Amor Vincit Omnia* and St Anne's choir contributed a beautiful French setting of the Lord's Prayer.

The preacher was the Most Rev Bernard Longley, RC Archbishop of Birmingham. Others who took part were the Methodist President, the Rev Brian Anderson; former Moderator of the



***Christian Unity in St Anne's Cathedral are, l to r: The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; RC Bishop of Down and Connor, Bishop Noel Treanor; the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke; the Rev Dr Ruth Patterson; the R.C. Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Rev Bernard Longley; the Revd Brian Anderson, Presbyterian Church; Bishop Tony Farquhar, and Rev Dr Hugh Kennedy, St Peter's Cathedral.***

Presbyterian Church; the Rev Ivan Patterson; the Bishop of Down and Connor, Bishop Noel Treanor; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev Richard Clarke and Fr Hugh Kennedy, Administrator of St Peter's Cathedral.

The service was repeated in St Patrick's (C of I) Cathedral, Armagh, on Wednesday January 20.

## **Pope Francis: for Christians, baptism is stronger than differences**

In his general audience during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope Francis focused on the common baptism Christians share, saying the strength of this bond is stronger than existing divisions.

“We are truly the Holy People of God, even if, due to our sins, we are not yet a people fully united,” the Pope said in his Jan. 20 general audience, adding that “the mercy of God, which works in baptism, is stronger than our divisions.”

The Pope's audience, which took place in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall, fell during the Week of Prayer Christian Unity. It runs Jan. 18-25, and is organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, the Commission on Faith and the Order of the World Council of Churches.

This year's theme, “Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord,” is taken from



***Pope Francis speaks to pilgrims in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall during his general audience on Jan. 20, 2016.***

chapter two of the First Book of Peter, and was chosen by a group from Latvia, which is home to a strong presence of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

In his address, Francis pointed to a 12th century baptismal font in the Lutheran Cathedral of Riga in Latvia, where St. Mainardo evangelized.

The font, he said, is sign of the origin of the faith recognized by all Christians in Latvia, and explained that this origin “is our common baptism.”



Referring to the Second Vatican Council document “Unitatis redintegratio”, the Pope affirmed that baptism “establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it.”

Above all, this shared baptism means that all are sinners and are in need of being saved, redeemed and freed from evil, he said.

When Christians say that they share one baptism, it’s an affirmation that all of them – Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox included – share the experience of being called from “unforgiving darkness and alienation from the encounter with the living God,” who is full of mercy.

Francis noted that despite our common roots, all Christians unfortunately experience egoism, which plants seeds of division, closure and contempt in our minds and hearts.

He said a good way for all Christians to work together in this announcement is by performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which are “a concrete witness of unity among us Christians: Protestants, Orthodox and Catholics.”

Pope Francis concluded his speech by pointing to the common mission Christians have in transmitting the mercy they have received in baptism to others, beginning with the poor and abandoned.

“During this Week of Prayer, we pray so that all of us disciples of Christ find a way of collaborating together in order to bring the mercy of the Father to every part of the world,” he said, and greeted pilgrims present from different countries around the world before leaving the building.

## **Two leading Catholic grammar schools are to stop 11-plus tests**

Two leading Catholic grammar schools are to stop 11-plus tests - a major coup in the Church's drive to end academic selection.

Irish News - In a joint move, Omagh Christian Brothers' Grammar School and the town's Loreto Grammar plan to phase out selection entirely by 2020.

Pleas from the Catholic Church, politicians and unions to abolish transfer tests have, by and large, fallen on deaf ears in recent years.

The Omagh announcement is being seen as hugely significant - the area has a large Catholic population and a good grammar pedigree.

That two prestigious schools have now decided to end selection is expected to convince others to follow suit.

More at -

[http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2016/01/19/news/two-top-grammars-intend-to-abandon-transfer-tests-387247/?mc\\_cid=cc5e8b8e51&mc\\_eid=23f2f80c40](http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2016/01/19/news/two-top-grammars-intend-to-abandon-transfer-tests-387247/?mc_cid=cc5e8b8e51&mc_eid=23f2f80c40)

## **Omagh Catholic grammar schools flying in face of growing demand**

Two Omagh Catholic grammar schools which are proposing to stop selecting pupils by academic tests are flying in the face of growing demand from parents, it has been claimed.

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/academic-selection-demand-is-growing-despite-opt-outs-1-7170463>

## **Including people with intellectual disabilities in Christian communities**

Belfast Bible College's Centre for Disability Theology and Ministry is running a 'Me Too'

January 21

conference in First Holywood Presbyterian Church on January 30.

It is hoped that by forming questions, providing insights and sharing experiences, the conference will be a catalyst to help individuals and Christian communities to move towards a fuller reality of inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.



***Dr Ian Dickson will lead one of the two sessions at the conference.***

The course is designed for church leaders, parents, carers and those already involved, or wanting to begin, disability ministry.

The conference is a starting place. There will be two plenary sessions and three workshops. In session one, Dr Ian Dickson, Director of the Centre for Disability Theology and Ministry at Belfast Bible College, looks at the biblical basis for inclusion in church, what inclusion will look like and how the continuing process might take shape.



***Dr Jill Harshaw also leads a session.***

In session two, Dr Jill Harshaw, Lecturer in Practical Theology at Belfast Bible College, will explore some personal and biblical examples of support and look more closely at the complexities of support of people with intellectual disabilities and their families within the local church.

Participants can choose two out of three workshops:

- Life as a parent of a child with Autism
- Down Syndrome and spiritual learning
- Profound disability and theology – a parent's reflection.

Registration begins at 9am and the conference runs from 9.30am until 1.30pm with light lunch included. Anyone wishing to attend is asked to register by contacting 028 9042 5035 or email [office@firsthollywood.co.uk](mailto:office@firsthollywood.co.uk).

For further information visit [www.belfastbiblecollege.com/tio](http://www.belfastbiblecollege.com/tio) or call Stephen on 07816 325899.

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## **General Assembly debate on calling of ministers in same-sex marriage**

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is to debate whether congregations should be allowed to consider calling a person in a same-sex marriage as a minister or deacon.

The discussion will take place in May, 2016 after a majority of Presbyteries voted in favour by approving an Overture amending the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships Act (Act I 2015).

At the General Assembly in May 2015 the Church of Scotland approved legislation which gave leave to individual congregations to call a minister or appoint a deacon who was in a civil partnership.

This legislation, however, did not include recognition of ministers or deacons who might be in a same-sex marriage.;

An amendment was proposed which would extend permission to allow congregations to consider inducting or appointing a minister or deacon who was in a same-sex marriage.

**The General Assembly was careful to note that the matter under discussion was simply to permit ministers in same sex marriages to be inducted or appointed on the same basis as those in civil partnerships.**

**This acknowledgment of legal standing is quite separate from and does not prejudge the Church's theological understanding of marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman.**

The question of the theology of marriage is not under discussion in relation to consideration of this Overture.

The proposed legislation was sent to Presbyteries as an Overture for consideration under a process known as the Barrier Act.

Returns were due by December 31, 2015 and all of these responses were received by the Principal Clerk the Very Rev John Chalmers.

A total of 25 Presbyteries voted in favour with 19 against with one Presbytery tied.  
Presbyters for - 1,207. Presbyters Against - 1,096.



A Church of Scotland spokesman said: "Now Presbyteries have returned their votes, we will begin making arrangements to report the outcome of the vote to Commissioners at the General Assembly next May.

"They will hold a debate and vote on whether to make this proposed legislation into standing Church Law through the passing of the Act."

The General Assembly will have the final say on this matter.

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

### **Is this the answer to the schools' patronage debate**

Irish Times

With ninety percent of schools under religious control, community national schools say they offer a way round the 'baptism barrier'

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/is-this-the-answer-to-the-school-patronage-debate-1.2496735>

### **Go-ahead for two new student accommodation developments in Belfast**

News Letter

Belfast City Council has given the go-ahead for two new student accommodation developments in the city centre – but rejected two others.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/large-scale-student-developments-given-go-ahead-in-belfast-1-7170335>

## **Trinity College Dublin: A bulwark of Empire at the centre of the 1916 Rising**

Irish Examiner

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/trinity-college-dublin-a-bulwark-of-empire-at-the-centre-of-the-1916-rising-376683.html>

### **Tel**

Report that schools inspectors will not be allowed to raid Sunday schools, Scouts' meetings or Christian summer camps, David Cameron has promised MPs. In a letter quoted by the paper he says that the Government is working closely with the Church of England and other faith communities to ensure that the system is targeted, proportionate and focuses on those settings which are failing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12108953/David-Cameron-pledges-to-stop-Ofsted-inspectors-raiding-Sunday-schools-and-Scouts-meetings.html>

### **FT/Ind/Premier**

Reports and comment on announcement earlier this week that a group of investors led by the Church Commissioners and the New York State Common Retirement Fund have urged ExxonMobil to disclose the resilience of its business model in the wake of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/comment/climate-change-can-wait-for-too-many-investors-in-oil-a6822161.html>

[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d008dd3c-be9e-11e5-9fdb-87b8d15baec2.html?FTCamp=engage/CAP/webapp/Channel\\_Moreover//B2B#axzz3xhkRUXc2](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d008dd3c-be9e-11e5-9fdb-87b8d15baec2.html?FTCamp=engage/CAP/webapp/Channel_Moreover//B2B#axzz3xhkRUXc2)

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/World/Church-urges-low-carbon-future-for-Exxon>

## **Mail**

Report on trial of church children's pastor Timothy Storey accused of sexual assault and rape. Storey gave a prepared statement in July 2014 saying he had only engaged in consensual sexual activity with the women. The alleged incidents took place while he was at St Michael's Church, Victoria. The trial at Woolwich Crown Court continues.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3406994/Children-s-pastor-35-raped-two-teenage-girls-grooming-Facebook-Church-England-wanted-look-him.html#ixzz3xlXgBB56>

## **Mail**

Report who parents who would do 'anything' to get their child into a school. Includes ref to parents pretending to have a faith.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3407496/Cheating-Lying-parents-little-darlings-right-school.html>

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