



Irish Republic set to back same-sex marriage

'Remembering a Decade of Change & Violence in Ireland, 1912-1922

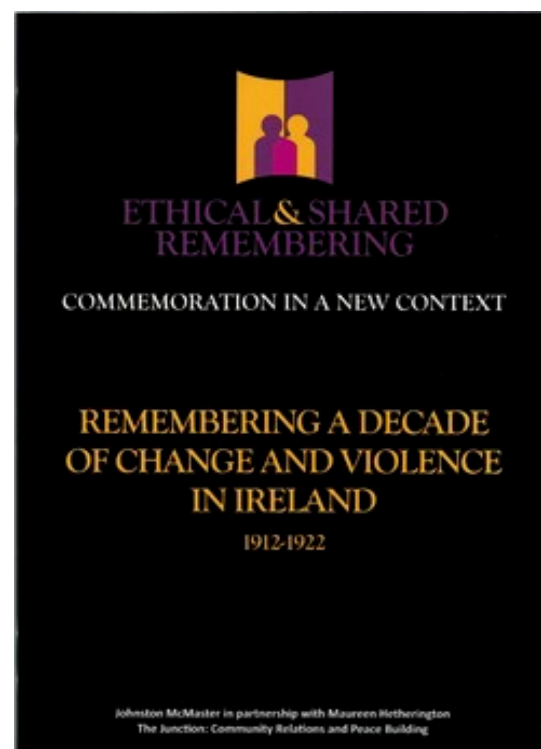
A seven-week education and training programme on 'Remembering a Decade of Change and Violence in Ireland, 1912-1922,' will be delivered by Rev Dr Johnston McMaster and Dr Cathy Higgins each Tuesday from 21 October to 2 December at the Lansdowne Hotel, 657 Antrim Road in Belfast. The evening begins with tea/coffee/sandwiches from 6 pm and the training runs from 6.30-9.30 pm.

McMaster and Higgins have been working for the Junction in Derry on its '[Ethical and Shared Remembering](#)' project for the last several years, and this course pulls together some of the most pertinent insights of their research so far. Both McMaster and Higgins are theologians, and their work features a blend of historical, theological and ethical reflection.

McMaster and Higgins have well-established reputations in adult and community education, most notably [working for 15 years to develop the Irish School of Ecumenics' 'Education for Reconciliation' programme.](#)

I've previously reviewed [McMaster's book *Overcoming Violence: Dismantling an Irish History and Theology*](#) on this blog, as well as [McMaster and Higgins' *Signing the Covenant: But Which One?*](#)

[The Junction lists a number of publications](#)



[by McMaster and Higgins which are available for purchase on its website.](#)

Core themes of the upcoming course include:

- Imperialism and nationalism
- Religion and labour relations
- Ethical Framework for Remembering
- Integrative complexity: a way of seeing
- Covenant, guns and militarised politics
- Rising, blood sacrifice and equality deferred
- Covenant and proclamation in the 21st century
- The Somme, slaughter and sectarianism
- An Irish Parliament and a War of Independence
- Partition, Civil War and Legacy
- Violence against women, 1912-1922
- Shaped by Patriarchy: Feminist Response
- The dance with death: Yeats, Pearse and Milligan
- An Alternative to Violence: Synge, Joyce and O'Casey

To register contact [\[email protected\]](#) or ring 02871 361942.

The £50 registration fee includes training manual, DVD, and Ethical Framework Booklet. Places are limited so booking is required. Funding support has been provided by the Columbanus Trust and Community Relations Council.

Dublin & Glendalough Ministry of Healing service

The Dublin & Glendalough Diocesan Committee for the Church's Ministry of Healing will hold their annual service on Sunday, 19th October 2014, at 5pm in St Patrick's, Church, Powerscourt (Enniskerry).

Archbishop Michael Jackson will preach at the service and will also commission newly appointed prayer ministers. A reception will follow, and everyone is warmly invited.

Equality and religious freedom discussed at Presbyterian conference

The aim of the conference was to bring together a number of leading thinkers in the UK to consider the role which Christians and the Church can play in wider community life. The theme for the event, a follow up from January's first conference, was 'Equality, freedom and religion'.

The subject of equality and its implications for freedom of conscience and action is highly contentious in an increasingly secularised society, and the conference speakers each brought a different perspective. Their presentations are available as audio files downloadable below.

Reflecting on the day, conference co-chair Very Rev. Dr. Norman Hamilton said, “In making the main addresses available to a wider audience through the website, it is our hope that they will encourage thoughtful, gracious and yet rigorous discussion about how Biblical faith should relate to equality legislation.

“There are some big unanswered questions such as, is it actually desirable or possible for the law to allow for the exercise of conscience, without this becoming a ‘let out’ clause for anyone who simply doesn’t like the law in question? How can we ensure that freedom of religion is not confined largely to the freedom to worship with only very limited acceptance of or opportunity to practice faith in the public square?

“What do we understand a coherent and compelling theology of ‘equality’ to look like? Does it even exist – and if so, are there not other more important issues to address? How do Christian people understand and value religious freedom in a society where there are many other faiths seeking freedom of expression as well? How should we decide what is to be ‘tolerated’ (or encouraged), and what is to be ‘confronted’ in the realm of religion and faith?

“The very fact that we are able to run such a conference and debate the issues in such an open way is a great freedom in itself and a great blessing from God to us all. Few will need reminding that such freedom and opportunity are most certainly not available to all Christians in all countries across the globe, and so we should not lapse into using the language of pressure or persecution too quickly. Equally of course, long standing freedoms can be eroded quite quickly, and so there is an urgent need to think through what a God honouring and Biblically faithful approach to equality, human rights and freedom should look like in our ever changing society.

“We invite you to listen to the talks, think about what you have heard, and, provided that your contribution is both thoughtful and gracious, you can email me via nhamilton@presbyterianireland.org with your reflections on any of the issues raised by the speakers – or indeed not addressed by them.”

Professor Roger Trigg, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Warwick University, argued that there ought to be much more scope to exercise

freedom of conscience, and that we should strive for “reasonable accommodation” in situations where there was a genuine conscientious problem.

Professor Colin Harvey, Professor of Human Rights Law at Queen’s University in Belfast, was explicit in saying that human rights law was founded on centuries of Christian theology, and that the churches should be fully engaged in the debates that are still very much “work in progress” as the law develops.

Dr. Michael Wardlow, the Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission NI, used a great deal of Biblical material to under gird his conviction that strong Christian faith and a commitment to human rights and equality are entirely compatible.

Tens of thousands flock to church as Irish priest starts 'novena selfies' craze

Irish Independent - The Pope started clerical ‘selfies’ and now hundreds of Irish people are taking ‘novena selfies’ and uploading them to Facebook.

The request to take the ‘novena selfies’ was made to the ten thousand people who go daily to St Gerard’s novena in Dundalk.

Now the Facebook page of the Redemptorist’s church is being inundated with selfies from old and young alike.



Father Brian Cusack pictured with visitors Matthew and Louise.

The novena is organised by Fr Michael Cusack who has embraced social media – last month he uploaded his comical ‘ice bucket’ challenge where he disrobed from his priestly garb to reveal Bermuda shorts.

Now he has asked the 90 thousand people, some who travel long-distances to the church, to take the selfies and post them on the Facebook page of the Redemptorists in Dundalk.

Fr Michael gave the go ahead for the selfies and said the idea came from Matthew Cregan (27), a former technical director at the Gaiety Theatre who is now a student for the priesthood with the Redemptorists in Dundalk.

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/tens-of-thousands-flock-to-church-as-irish-priest-starts-novena-selfies-craze-30659015.html>



Project to commemorate Irish Church Lads' sacrifice in the Great War

The centenary of the outbreak of war is an appropriate time to remember the sacrifices of the brave men of the Irish Church Lads Brigade. The [Church Lads' & Church Girls' Brigade's](#) planned project has a number of elements – the provision of a War Memorial Banner, the publication of a book, research into the life of a soldier and the design of a commemorative badge to be worn in uniform.

In 1921, the St. Martin's Banner was dedicated and placed into the care of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey in memory of those who had been killed. At the time, members of the Brigade were asked to contribute one penny towards its cost.

Our members will be asked to contribute one pound to provide a new banner in memory of Irish Church Lads who were killed. The banner will be dedicated at a special service and in the ensuing years will have a treasured place at important Brigade occasions. It is hoped that the banner will be displayed in parish churches throughout Ireland.

A book, 'Irish Church Lads in the Great War', is to be published. Much is already known about C.L.B. men from this island, such as the story of Sergeant Major Harry Hamilton of the 16th K.R.R.C. who, hearing the cries of a wounded colleague, left the trenches to rescue his comrade, was then himself seriously wounded and sent back to a hospital in England to recuperate. This brave soldier was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

However, our knowledge is far from complete. Recently, quite by accident, the story of George Bolster from Cork emerged following contact with a family member. Following his father's death, George emigrated to Canada and settled in St. Mary's, a small town near London, Ontario. He enlisted and returned to Europe with the 3rd Battalion Canadian Machine Gun Corps and was killed in action in Arras, France, on 26th August 1918.

Pictured right, George Bolster's name was inscribed on the St. Nicholas' Church War Memorial in Cork but, until contact with his family, it had not been possible to ascertain whether he had been a member of the Church Lads' Brigade. It is hoped that other families may come forward and help identify servicemen who had previously been in the C.L.B.

The Brigade will be organising two competitions. One will require our lads and girls to carry out research to learn about the life of a Great War soldier from their own parish or family. Another will ask members to produce a design for a commemorative badge. The winning entry will be used to manufacture a woven badge for uniform and will be worn throughout the period 2014 to 2018.

Do you have a story to contribute to 'Irish Church Lads in the Great War'? Please get in touch!

Contact Johnny Conn E: johnnyconn@hotmail.com or Tel: 07925353107

Irish Republic set to back same-sex marriage by large margin next year

News Letter - Support for same-sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland now stands at two thirds of the public, a poll has found.

The survey, by Ipsos MRBI for the Irish Times, sought to gauge how people will vote in the referendum that will be held in Ireland on gay marriage next year.

Asked their voting intention, 67 per cent of those surveyed supported the proposal, while 20 per cent said they planned to vote No.

Another nine per cent had no opinion, while three per cent did not respond.

Excluding the undecided and those who did not express a view, support for same-sex marriage is 76 per cent compared to 24 per cent opposition.

It is the latest poll that suggests that gay marriage will be approved by a comfortable margin in the Republic, which in 1993 became one of the last countries in western Europe to decriminalise homosexuality.

If same-sex marriage is introduced there, Northern Ireland will be the only part of the British Isles not to have it. Scotland brings in such weddings in December.

The Irish Times survey found marked differences in attitudes among age groups in the Republic, with the over 65s mostly opposed (46 per cent, with 38 per cent in favour) and the younger age groups overwhelmingly in favour.

The paper said that support for same-sex marriage among the 18 to 49 age group stands “in the high 70 per cent range”.

The 50 to 64 age group was 61 per cent in favour.

Earlier this year, an Ipsos MORI survey in the UK found that same-sex marriage had overwhelming support in Britain, even among Conservative Party supporters.

The poll found that 61 per cent of would-be Tory voters backed same-sex marriage, while 54 per cent of Ukip supporters also supported such unions.

Support was strongest among Labour and Liberal Democrat voters, with three-quarters in favour. Over 69 per cent of Britons believe that homosexual couples should be able to marry while just over a quarter – 28 per cent – disagree.

In Monday’s Irish Times poll of attitudes in the Republic, support for same-sex marriage was highest among Labour, Sinn Fein and independent supporters, but was “significantly” less high among Fine Gael and Fianna Fail supporters.

The survey found that Sinn Fein voters were the most opposed to a referendum proposal to delete the offence of blasphemy that will also be held next year.

Overall, 50 per cent of those surveyed said that they would back the proposal to delete that offence, while 19 per cent said they would vote No and 26 per cent had no opinion.

The Irish Times also found that there was strong demand for a fresh referendum in the Republic on whether to permit abortion in cases where the mother has been raped, or where the foetus will not be born alive.

Some 68 per cent of people polled backed such a referendum, while 23 per cent were opposed.

The Republic has had a referendum approximately once a decade since the 1983 plebiscite which introduced a constitutional ban on abortion. In 1992 and 2002, government attempts to tighten the ban (specifying that the threat of suicide should not be grounds for an abortion) failed to win majority support.

Legislation clarifying the grounds for abortion was passed by the Dail last year, and was generally seen as a liberalising of the law.

However, in the so-called Ms Y case earlier this year, a woman from eastern Europe sought a termination on the grounds that her pregnancy was as a result of being raped, and that she was suicidal, but she was denied an abortion and her baby boy was delivered by Caesarean section in August.