

Consultation on petition P-03-262 Wales Peace Institute
Response from Minny Street Independent Chapel Cardiff



Mিনny Street Independent Chapel Cardiff

www.minnystreet.org

Minister : **The Reverend Owain Llyr Evans**

Dear Madam

In response to the request for comments on the establishment of a Peace Institute in Wales, I wish to bring the following comments to your attention.

Since its incorporation in 1884, Minny Street Independent Chapel, one of the 'largest' independent chapels in Wales (with 314 members), has had a tradition of radical pacifism. This was particularly evident during the Second World War, during the ministry of the Reverend RJ Jones. The Gospel of Peace and Reconciliation remains the basis and focal point of the work of this chapel under its current minister, the Reverend Owain Llyr Evans. All activities relating to Christian Citizenship Witness at Minny Street Chapel is co-ordinated by its Citizenship Circle. The Circle includes representatives of chapel members from across the age range of its congregation.

Following the National Assembly's announcement that it is to begin public consultation (19 October 2011) on the possibility of establishing a Peace Institute in Wales, the Citizenship Circle discussed the matter and sought the views of chapel members. Following that discussion, the Citizenship Circle at Minny Street Chapel now declares that it wishes to join the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales, Cynefin y Werin and CND Wales to "call upon the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the potential for and practicality of Wales having a Peace Institute concerned with Peace and Human Rights, comparable with those supported by state governments in Flanders, Catalonia and elsewhere in Europe".

The main impetus for our standpoint is our Lord Jesus Christ's Gospel of Love, Reconciliation and Peace. Now, as ever, we see the 'big' and 'important' countries responding cautiously to international events. By and large, they believe that peace will be secured through trade and financial agreements between them; when this does not succeed, they rely on violence, war and oppression to survive. At best, this leads to a fragile peace, a peace without foundation and an irresolute peace. History points to the weakness of such a

peace. Real peace depends on something much deeper than trade and financial agreements. Real peace is a spiritual ideal.

It could be argued that Wales is a small country without wealth or influence. But is not its strength over the centuries its confidence in the force of peace and the value of goodwill? Our conviction stems from our Welsh Christianity. It was a patriotic Welshman who established the Message of Peace and Goodwill by the Children of Wales, and the zeal and determination of Gwilym Davies for the continuation of that Message was proof that his love for his country was subordinate to a greater love – the love of fellow man – and that that love grew from his love of God; the God who manifested himself in Jesus Christ.

Led by Our Lord Jesus Christ's command to love one another, it is not surprising, therefore, that we declare our strong support for the call to establish a Peace Institute in Wales. There are similar establishments in many countries and regions, including Finland, Flanders and Catalonia, along with some states of the USA. In addition to arranging training and research into peace matters, the arms market and military expenditure, many of these establishments conduct research into the effect of policies and actions by governments on peace and justice – within society as well as nationally and internationally. Specifically, and as an example, the main focus of the work done by the Flanders Peace Institute is to enquire into the effects of the political decisions and role of Flanders in the context of international peace. The Senate in Flanders consults and takes advice from the Institute in deciding relevant policies. Would not a similar body in Wales not only be true to the peaceful and Christian principles of our country, but create a totally different attitude in society? We venture to suggest that if all the implications of decisions such as building the Military Academy had been placed before our politicians and the public, the response would have been quite different. The discussion's focus would not so much have been on the number of jobs that would be created, but on the effect of the development on all aspects of our culture, our economy and our environment, and on Wales's image in the world. We believe also, with Christian conviction, that a Peace Institute would play a prominent role in education and peace studies, in promoting non-violent values and in building international relationships.

Living as we do in a time of horrific cruelty and hatred between men, and of conflict between countries, we stand as a congregation of Christ's Followers, firm and unshaken in our belief that peace, freedom and coexistence will not come to our world through conflict and killing. It requires a change of disposition – politically, socially, culturally and personally. This is not easy! Establishing a Peace Institute similar to those found in other countries could be a tremendous help in bringing about that change. It is our privilege, and our duty as a Christian Church, to support the call for the National Assembly for Wales to begin to investigate and give serious consideration to the possibility of establishing in our country, "a Peace Institute concerned with Peace and Human Rights, comparable with those supported by state governments in Flanders, Catalonia and elsewhere in Europe"

Yours faithfully

Margaret Davies

Co-ordinator of the Citizenship Circle, Minny Street Independent Chapel