



Image of the day - Belfast Cathedral

Conversion therapy: Protections, balance and clarity needed - Moderator

Following yesterday's (20 April) debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly on conversion therapy, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, welcomed the opportunity for locally elected representatives to discuss and debate an issue that is important to many, including people of faith, highlighting the need for clarity and balance.

Speaking after the debate, Dr Bruce said, "Today was an important opportunity for MLAs to debate this sensitive issue, and state their opposition to harmful, coercive interventions to bring about changes in a person's sexual orientation.

"As a Church we are also clear on this issue, we oppose such coercive approaches, do not sanction them and they should never be suggested. We support moves to introduce legislation where it does not already exist to outlaw these abuses, which are evidently damaging to people.

"We also recognise that not everyone struggles with their sexuality, yet for those Christians who do, and ask their minister, or youth leader, to walk alongside them pastorally and prayerfully as they talk about this area of their lives, any future legislation should not criminalise either for fulfilling their pastoral duties responsibly. Where protection from coercive interventions and 'therapies' is needed, clarity and balance are also required. We welcome the fact that a number of MLAs recognised the important point of principle

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that freedom of thought, conscience and the practice and observance of religion should also be protected.

Dr Bruce concluded by saying, “As we seek to live out our lives as disciples of Jesus with love, compassion, empathy and respect for others, we look forward to engaging with the Department of Communities on this matter in due course.”

Inter-Faith Forum deplures attack on Jewish graves in Belfast City Cemetery

The Executive Committee of the NI Inter-Faith Forum issued the following statement -

Members of the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum were saddened to learn of an attack on Jewish graves in Belfast City Cemetery on Thursday of the past week. We deplore such pointless and destructive acts and offer our full sympathy and support to members of the Jewish Community who have once again been at the receiving end of disrespect and prejudice. We stand in solidarity with them and with people of all faiths and beliefs, especially minority communities in Northern Ireland, and will continue to work with them to build a shared and inclusive society in which all can feel safe and secure. Since 1993, the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum has been actively committed to involvement in constructive dialogue, communication and the development of good relations between members of a range of faiths and belief communities in the Province. The Forum can be contacted via ni.interfaith@gmail.com.

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Funding boost as Belfast Cathedral looks beyond pandemic

Some of the funding will be used for repairs to the Baptistery in Belfast Cathedral.

Belfast Cathedral has been awarded £62,200 to help it recover from the impact of Covid-19.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has announced grants to help 50 organisations and 41 individuals adapt, recover and re-open in the wake of the pandemic.

Grants from the Heritage Recovery Fund were awarded to a wide range of organisations and individuals in the heritage sector, from historic sites, attractions and landscapes, to tour guides and specialist heritage conservators.

The funding will help Belfast Cathedral make essential repairs to the Baptistery and Ambulatory whilst the building remains closed to visitors outside of services.



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The Heritage Recovery Fund is part of the £29 million Executive allocation that was made to the Department for Communities to support the arts, culture, heritage and language sectors which have been severely impacted by Covid-19.

This is the latest package of support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the heritage sector across the UK throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Last year, the organisation committed over £600 million of National Lottery and Government funding to more than 1,500 heritage organisations, along with expertise and advice on adapting to the pandemic.

Paul Mullan, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “We are grateful to the Department for Communities for providing this funding and enabling us to help a wide range of organisations and individuals in Northern Ireland’s heritage sector to recover from the current crisis.

“The risks to heritage sites, attractions and organisations from a sudden and dramatic loss of income as a result of the pandemic, have put the heritage and visitor economy in crisis, and this funding will play a vital role in their recovery.

“Heritage has an essential role to play in making communities better places to live, creating economic prosperity and supporting personal wellbeing. All of these are going to be vitally important as we emerge from the current pandemic.”

To find out more about The National Lottery Heritage Fund, go to: www.heritagefund.org.uk.

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Lambeth Conference Working Group Chair, Bishop Emma Ineson, given new role as Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.



The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell, have announced that the Bishop of Penrith, Dr Emma Ineson, is to become the new Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

In the new role, which replaces the Bishop at Lambeth post, Bishop Emma will have specific oversight of the programme for the 2022 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops.

Bishop Emma has been a member of both the Lambeth Conference Design Group, which had been preparing for the Lambeth Conference in 2020, and also the Lambeth

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Conference Working Group, which was convened after the Covid-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the 2020 event.

The new Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York role replaces the existing position of Bishop at Lambeth. That post is currently held by Bishop Tim Thornton, who will retire later this year. The new role will facilitate closer working relations between the staff teams at Lambeth Palace and Bishopthorpe – the official residences and offices of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

Bishop Emma will work directly for both archbishops, as well as with the whole College of Bishops. She will play a key role in work being done on the future of the Church of England, appointments and liaising with the House of Bishops.

“I am absolutely delighted to be taking up this new role at such a time of great opportunity and challenge for the Church of England, as we emerge from the Covid pandemic”, Bishop Emma said. “I am very much looking forward to working with the Archbishops and their teams at Lambeth and Bishopthorpe to enable the work of healing, renewal and hope that will be needed in the Church, and in wider society, in the coming years.

“We have good news to share in Jesus, and it will be a privilege to play whatever part I can in ensuring that good news is heard and received by all.”

Archbishop Justin said that he was “delighted” to welcome Bishop Emma to Lambeth Palace. “I know she will bring her considerable wisdom, humour and humility to the role, as

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well as her wealth of experience as a chaplain, teacher and outstanding preacher”, he said.

“As we look forward to the Lambeth Conference, in which Bishop Emma will continue to play a crucial role, her authentic and practical ministry will be invaluable to the global Anglican Communion. I will be praying for her and her husband, Mat, as they prepare to join this community of communities at Lambeth Palace.”

Archbishop Stephen said that Bishop Emma’s “theological depth and pastoral heart will be a huge blessing in this important ministry, not just to the Archbishops, but to the Church of England as we strive to be a simpler, humbler and bolder church.”

In her new role, Bishop Emma will not serve as Bishop to the Forces or Bishop to the Falkland Islands – in recent years these roles have been held by the Bishop at Lambeth.

Rethinking Church – ‘We don’t have to go back to everything we used to do’

“I have never known a mission moment like this in my 70 years.” These are the words of the Ven Bob Jackson who was leading a webinar for the Church of Ireland Theological Institute exploring ‘Online Church in a Post Lockdown World’

He described this moment, as we are poised between lockdown where church services can only take place online and reopening where there is the possibility of in-building worship, as a hinge moment. “We can’t go back to the way

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it was. If we try that the church will be half of what it was before. We have to embrace the new world,” he stated. He said churches had done brilliantly in setting up online services and keeping them going during lockdown. Now they have to explore how to continue online and in–building services, he contended.

Bob Jackson was a Government Economic Adviser. After 20 years of parish ministry in Yorkshire, he became a missionary working for the two English archbishops, and then an archdeacon. More recently, he has focussed on the theory and practice of church growth. Having tried to retire, he came out of retirement to help think through good practice and the future of online church.

Archbishop Michael Jackson addressed participants at the beginning of the webinar. He said we now stood at a crossroads. “What will the new old look like – that is the expression of the inherited traditions when we return to in–church worship? What will the old new look like – that is the expression of the new ways of delivering worship when we return to in–church worship? I can guarantee that neither will commend itself without a lot of rethinking and new effort. The real question already is: What will the new new look like? It would be unhelpful were we to think that filling and emptying the ecclesiastical dishwasher will suffice. While people have greatly appreciated everything that we have done, they have become selective and sophisticated. They can with impunity shop around and still call it: going to church. Where they go may indeed now be somewhere other than their neighbourhood denominational church and it may be a staging post in their spiritual journey over a



<p>The lockdown question: “How do we get through the next few weeks?”</p>	<p>The new question: “What should we do in the long term?”</p>
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One of the slides used by Bob Jackson

lifetime of exploration and fulfilment in the exploration itself,” he stated.

Bob Jackson told participants that most churches were planning to stay online post-lockdown but were not quite sure how they were going to do it. He said the church could not go back to the way it was. The world had changed and the technology would not go back in its box once restrictions were lifted. People had found new rhythms of life, some had found different churches and new people had emerged to join online services. “The marriage of onsite and online church feels like a momentous moment in history,” he stated.

Doing online mission and evangelism well in this new world was about applying old mission principles to the new situation, he suggested. The old principles are: invite – this is easier to do online; advertise – again advertising online is

easy; identify – there needs to be an effort put into finding out who is coming to church online; welcome – consider how this can be done online; sense of belonging – this needs to be cultivated online; and identification by contribution – this is the ultimate sense of belonging and every online service needs to let people know how they can contribute.

He suggested that in planning for the years ahead churches should consider:

- **Wider doors** – How do we welcome people? “We’ve opened this huge, incredible portal from church to the livingrooms of the parish, we have used technology to make contact, but there is more we can do. Churches may need a ‘wider doors team’ to widen the doors of connection between church and community,” Archdeacon Jackson explained.
- **Deeper wells** – People are newly praying, newly serious and newly needy. They have been shaken deeply. There has been a huge expansion in daily prayer. People are engaging with church online often on a daily basis.
- **Smarter structures** – are our structures in leadership and the organisation suitable for a hybrid church? The tech savvy people need to be in leadership rather than simply being told what to do.
- **Wiser programmes** – “This is a wonderful opportunity. The government stopped everything. When we restart in freedom we don’t have to go back to doing everything we

used to. We can start with a new sheet. It is not so difficult not to restart the old. We can rethink from the bottom up in a way that is tailor made for today or tomorrow.

In looking at an appropriate plan for the future, he suggested that the new programme would have elements from the past and elements from the Covid era as well as new elements. Other elements had to stop, he stated, otherwise the Rector would be burnt out. It said it was important to make this a team effort. The online operation needed an online team. It is important to team up with other churches and share expertise and to ask for help from local communities and the dioceses.

He urged participants to consider who online church is for and tailor the service for them. He outlined a number of online options.

- **Simple livestreaming** – the service in church proceeds normally and the in-church people are the focus while the people online just watch. He said he found this dull but it was better than nothing.

- **Online hybrid church** – start with a clean sheet and devise a service that is suitable for an online congregation. He suggested it should be a maximum of 40 minutes in length and there were online pastors to welcome people using, for example, the Facebook chat facility. The service has to start with an attention grabbing bang, the pace needs to be fast and there needs to be multiple voices involved. There would only be a couple of sung items and there would be a mix of video clips and live action (which requires screens in the church for the in-church people).

There would be virtual and in person mingling at the end of the service. “Frame the service for the onliners,” he suggested. “Say ‘we’re doing this in the church and if you want to come along in person you are very welcome’.”

- **Fully hybrid church** – This is where online and in-person congregations are treated equally. People may oscillate between the two. The service is changed to sustain the online interest. The ‘twiddle your thumbs moments’ are cut out and there is a mix of video and live. The online people can contribute and participate in the same way as those in church. Again this requires screens in church. This service could last an hour, the Archdeacon said. There needed to be training in using the camera and also in using online giving platforms so that those online could give at the same rate as those in person. There would be zoom chats afterwards for those online and they may even meet during the week. This was his preferred option.

- **Online congregation** – In this version you start a new worship community purely online. This creates more work as you are planting a new congregation and the online and in-church members are separated with less graduation from one to the other.

“Local church is still the main event,” Archdeacon Jackson stated. “Most people still want the local. But there could be an online diocesan service. Online daily office is also a whole new way of church going. The incumbent doesn’t need to lead it every day.”

He said there was work to be done in areas such as the Eucharist. He also suggested that when services were

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allowed to take place without masks or restrictions, churches should hold events where people can gather to share and unburden themselves of what lockdown had done to them. “Clergy may need to take a lead in this and say ‘I’m exhausted. This is what happened to me.’ I hope that this could be the start of emotional honesty. We have an opportunity to hold a celebration event. Celebrate freedom. Let the church bells ring. Invite the whole community to celebrate with us,” he stated.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

The Abbey Summer School , Edinburgh - is made up of the Chapterhouse, a Library course, workshops, short TED-style talks, worship and shared meals. There are two registration options: You can register only for the Chapterhouse, the main programme, or you can register for the Chapterhouse + the Library course, which is an additional course that begins earlier in the week and then dovetails with the main programme. The Library course is great for interested laypersons and clergy on study leave.*
[[<https://www.abbeysummerschool.com/>]

*If finances are an issue, please Contact Us as bursaries are available.

CHAPTERHOUSE

Faith, Hope, and Christian Imagination

(11 - 12 JUNE 2021)

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To be human is to be a storyteller and story lover. Our world is filled with tales of heroism and cynicism, worldliness and fantasy. There are stories that end in happily ever after, others that end in despair, and others with a bittersweet mix. With all that is told and competes for our attention how can our storytelling, past and present, point towards true hope? Drawing on our literary heritage from the Old Testament to the Inklings, join us with speakers Iain Provan, Joy Clarkson, and Judith Wolfe as we together explore how storytelling shapes us and may bring us towards a better love, hope, and faith.

LIBRARY COURSE

Reading and Preaching the Psalms

(10 - 12 JUNE 2021)

The Library course can be taken in addition to the main Chapterhouse. Consider this the Reading Room of The Abbey, for those who want something a bit more intensive. You may also take this course for one credit through Regent College.

The course will meet online in the afternoon and evening on Thursday and Friday, 10 and 11 June, and on the afternoon of Saturday, 12 June.

For this year's Library course, we are excited to offer a class with Professor Iain Provan.

Description

After an introduction to the Psalter in respect of its literary shape, contents and history of interpretation, this short course proceeds to examine various of the psalms in detail,

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both in their own terms and in terms of their position and function in the Psalter as a whole. A particular focus of the course will be upon the Psalter not only as a collection of worship songs, but also as a spiritual guide to the pilgrim on his/her journey through life, and as an expression of eschatological hope in the kingdom of God and the Messiah.

Media review

Covid-19: Irish Catholic Church leader meets government over Mass ban



BBC News

The leader of the Irish Catholic Church has met with the Irish government to discuss what he calls a "draconian" ban on public Mass. Archbishop Eamon Martin said he shared his concerns over the "criminalising" of leading public worship.

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56799513>]

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Catholic Primate calls for the pastoral work of priests to be deemed essential

The Irish Times

The Catholic Church said it was taking legal advice following the ... time in Ireland despite the consistent support from the Churches for public health ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/catholic-primate-calls-for-the-pastoral-work-of-priests-to-be-deemed-essential-1.4541815?>]

Woman claims mother and baby home report should have identified her as Protestant

The Irish Times

A woman has challenged the final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes on grounds including that it should have identified her as a Protestant to properly convey her experience in two homes. The High Court challenge is the seventh to be taken over the commission's report, which was published in January.

... incorrectly stated her father brought a parish priest in to talk to her when he had rather brought in a Church of Ireland Canon to do so, she claims.

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/courts/high-court/woman-claims-mother-and-baby-home-report-should-have-identified-her-as-protestant-1.4541535>]

Is the Church Racist?

BBC broadcast its Panorama programme Is the Church Racist?, yesterday evening. Follow up pieces appear in several newspapers.

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000vc34/panorama-is-the-church-racist>]

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[[] <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/bbc-panorama-programme-church-racist?>]



Pointers for prayer

Almighty God,
who hast given thine only Son
to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin,
and also an ensample of godly life;
Give us grace that we may always
most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit,
and also daily endeavour ourselves
to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,

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we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it...
...Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and

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enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God —truly righteous and holy.

Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT

Do you like change? If I'm honest I have a love hate relationship with change and I suspect we're all a bit like that. There is much about life that is comfortable and congenial and I would be happy if it stayed the way it is, but there are other things that I would be happy to change in an instant. In these verses Paul confronts us with the fact that, as Easter people, we need to get used to the fact that God is looking for revolutionary change in our lives. And he wants that because his desire is that our lives should be completely blessed, and not merely an improvement on what they used to be.

This process of change is so radical that it has to start in our thoughts. Only if God can renew our thinking will any real change take place in our actions. I know that this could sound ultimately scary. But when we realise that God is motivated by perfect love and that his intentions are that we should reach our true potential we can be completely confident as we place ourselves in his hands. God's

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amazing intention is that our new nature should be just like his. So we need have no apprehensions about the changes that God wants to see in our lives. They will all be for the best in every possible way.

Since God is holy and perfectly loving it might seem sensible if he were to impose his changes on us. But God is always unwilling to do that. The decision always lies with us. And that's why Paul uses the language of changing clothes. God looks to us to throw off the old suit of clothes. He wants us to make the deliberate decision that we want to change our way of life before he will give us a wonderful new suit of clothes to put on. In his love he lets us decide.

QUESTION

Are you willing to let God change your attitudes and thoughts?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you that you only ever ask me to change because of your perfect love for me. Amen



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