

Changing Attitude Ireland Lecture Marks 20 Years Since Decriminalisation



29th October 2013

Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness in a lecture sponsored by Changing Attitude Ireland observed that it was not often that the letters page of the Irish Times were filled with a purely Church of Ireland controversy.

She suggested that Archbishop Michael Jackson's comments, which were the focus of the letters, were likely to disturb the comfort and complacency among the members of the Church of Ireland.

Changing Attitude Ireland was marking the 20th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland with a public lecture in St Ann's Church, Dawson Street on Saturday last, October 26.

"Leaving aside the challenges that have been made to his definition of sectarianism, the main theme of his message is that Church of Ireland people are unwilling to fully accept outsiders into their flock. He gives examples of those born outside Ireland and those from other religious

groups who have become members of the Church of Ireland through conviction. He calls for a change in attitudes to such people," she stated.

"Changing attitudes is a call that is dear to the heart of the members of this organisation. But both letter-writers and The Irish Times itself remark on a notable exception in the list of victims of sectarianism – those of a different sexual orientation. While there are many notable exceptions it is not rare for gays, lesbians and transgender people to find the Church of Ireland a cold enough house," she said.



• ***Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness (right) is presented with flowers by Pat Barker following the Changing Attitude Ireland public lecture in St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, on Saturday October 26. Her lecture marked the 20th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland and focused on the next steps for same sex couples.***

She added that at the annual gathering of Changing Attitude Ireland, members should draw some conclusions and perhaps some hopes for the future from the Archbishop's speech to the Diocesan Synod and from the reaction to it.

Mrs Justice McGuinness highlighted the publication of a new discussion document called Living Diversity – A Dublin and Glendalough contribution to Human Sexuality in the context of Christian Belief.

A structured panel of people were asked to respond to a number of questions. “The questions were searching and the replies, I consider, were encouragingly reasoned and thoughtful. The biblical analysis was helpful. The conclusions represented ‘the silent people of the middle ground’ referred to Archbishop Jackson in his address. There was little to be seen of rejection or sectarianism,” she said.

The conclusions, she suggested, would not fully meet the wishes of members of Changing Attitude Ireland. But as a whole it represented a visible change in past attitudes, she said. Particular mention was reserved for a recommendation that a Form of Prayer and Dedication after the registration of a Civil Partnership and Same Sex Union be drafted in anticipation of a possible change in the law and that these be brought before General Synod.

Mrs Justice McGuinness said that the next crucial step must be consideration of the position of the children of same sex couples. She added that indications that the government had put a change in the Constitution in the direction of same sex marriage were hopeful but would not solve all the problems in either Church or State.

Afterwards tributes were paid to Senator David Norris for his courage and leadership in the pursuit of the decriminalisation of same sex relations. He was unable to attend the lecture due to illness but sent a message to the organisation. Canon Mark Gardner of St Patrick’s Cathedral, where Senator Norris worships accepted a presentation on behalf of the senator from Richard O’Leary of CAI.

Web Links -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/former-judge-in-call-to-address-legal-position-of-children-of-same-sex-couples-1.1574928>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/former-judge-in-call-to-address-legal-position-of-children-of-same-sex-couples-1.1574928>

Also

Homophobia on NI airwaves out of step with GB – Crawley
<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/homophobia-on-ni-airwaves-out-of-step-with-gb-crawley-1-5630090>

Tánaiste expresses hope for same-sex marriage referendum by early 2015

www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/tanaiste-expresses-hope-for-same-sex-marriage-referendum-by-early-2015-1.1575173

Autumn Issue of Search

The autumn issue the [Church of Ireland Journal Search](#) is now available and includes articles on a number of topical issues.

Much attention has been focussed this year on Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin Welby, elected within months of each other to lead the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches respectively; and much hope is being placed in these two “new brooms”, whose style is different from their predecessors. Peter Admirand and Yazid Said, Roman Catholic and Palestinian Anglican theologians respectively, both teaching in the Mater Dei Institute in Dublin, reflect on their words and deeds, both recent and less recent, in an attempt to consider the challenges that lie ahead in our two communions

Closer to home, Bishop Harold Miller considers the deep concern at the street violence prompted by flag riots and Orange marches around Belfast over the past eighteen months and reflects on the lessons the Church needs to learn from them, and how we can best minister to those involved so as to go forward into a truly Christian future.

Increasing poverty at home and the threat of climate change world-wide, are two other concerns that have led to animated discussion this past year, and particularly last month. Alec Purser of the [St Vincent de Paul Society](#) and the Revd Andrew Orr of [Eco-Congregations Ireland](#) offer some challenging thoughts on these two subjects. Relating to another topical issue, the noticeably increasing number of people of different faith traditions in Ireland north and south, Celia Kenny takes a radical look at how we read the Bible in relation to pluralism.

To complete this issue, past relationships between different cultures in Ireland are discussed in Mark Empey's careful study of Protestant links with Gaelic culture in the 17th century; the historical theme continues with Bishop Samuel Poyntz's celebration of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, 400 year's after the great churchman's birth; and the Very Revd Dr Robert MacCarthy offers an *In Retrospect* on an episcopal figure of more recent times, Robert Wyse Jackson. - *Irish Times*

Web link
<http://searchjournal.ireland.anglican.org/>

Praying for ourselves

Brother David Jardine will be doing three teaching sessions on how to pray for ourselves. These will take place in the Chapel of Unity in St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast on Thursdays, 7th, 14th and 21st November from 8 pm to 9.30 pm.

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This is a way of praying that involves welcoming the Holy Spirit to flow into every part of us and especially into any areas of our body that need healing. If you remember that the Holy Spirit is the most powerful force in the whole world this way of praying brings a great blessing in body, mind, and spirit.

It involves us either sitting in a chair or lying down on a bed, closing our eyes, relaxing our bodies completely, taking a few minutes to focus on Jesus, welcoming the Holy Spirit to flow into every part of us (this is the main part of the prayer), and then finish off praising God in faith that He is responding to our prayer and bringing healing. All of this lasts about 20 or 30 minutes and it is a very gentle way to pray.

Brother David recommends that people in need of this type of prayer use this method once, or even twice, every day in their own homes.

'We have a number of people coming to our ministry' he says 'who are suffering from serious illness, and they are making good progress. What seems to be the key with these people is, first of all, their motivation. They really want to get well. Secondly, they have caught a vision of praying for themselves, and they practice it every day at home.'

Many people find it difficult to pray for themselves, and this is an opportunity to learn how to do it in an effective way. Each evening Brother David will do a teaching session, take questions and comments, and then lead people in practising this way of praying.

Sponsored abseil raises more than £6,000!

A sponsored abseil by former Archdeacon of Belfast, the Rev Barry Dodds, and a team of 13 has raised an amazing £6,300

for a special young parishioner!

Leah Batchelor, 23, was left with locked-in syndrome after suffering a brain stem



aneurysm in September 2011, but has made a remarkable recovery and is now back at university.

However, Leah still has difficulty with things like walking and speech, and needs intensive

physiotherapy at the Bobath Centre in London to keep her recovery progressing.

Barry, rector of St Michael's, Shankill, where Leah is a parishioner, took part in the abseil off the roof of the Europa Hotel on Sunday September 22, between morning service and evening service! His team was made up of Leah's family and friends and other parishioners from St Michael's. The money they have raised will help fund Leah's specialist treatment.

Anyone wishing to support Barry's fundraising efforts for Leah can still make a donation which can be sent to him at 5 Sunningale Park, Belfast, BT14 6RU or paid directly into bank account sort code 08 91 03 account number 03354232.

Methodist Historical Society launch web site

This week the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland (MHSI) launched a new web site. The site is of interest to local and international historical researchers and those interested in family history.

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It contains information on family history and genealogy, historical information on Methodist churches and ministers, online catalogues and research tools, publications and an online shop where historical pamphlets, the MHSI Bulletins and books can be purchased.

There's also information about upcoming events and details about visiting the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland's Archive and Library at Edgehill College, Lennoxvale in Belfast.

The Methodist Historical Society of Ireland was founded in 1926 and encourages people to explore, preserve and promote an understanding of Irish Methodist history and heritage. As the only Society in Ireland dedicated to Methodist history it is home to many hundreds of printed and manuscript items. Its unique collection encompasses more than 250 years of Irish Methodism's history – from its eighteenth-century origins to the contributions of its present-day members.

The Society has become the first port of call for students living in Ireland and overseas interested in the documentation and study of Irish Methodist history. Its unrivalled collection of Irish Methodist printed pamphlets and periodicals, and original manuscript collections of correspondence, diaries and journals of Irish Methodists provide a rich resource for all who wish to explore the story of how Methodism arrived and contributes to life in Ireland today.

For those interested in their Methodist family history there is a large and growing collection of local church registers from around the island of Ireland, together with microfilms of Methodist registers of Northern Ireland circuits.

Web link
<http://methodisthistoryireland.org/>

MU GM returns to Belfast

The Mothers' Union General Meeting is coming to Ireland in 2014 - Saturday 21st June in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast.

- Tickets for the General Meeting 2014 will be available 17th February 2014 from The Waterfront Hall Box Office www.waterfront.co.uk or Tel 028 9033 4455.
- Tickets for the Eve of Meeting Service on Friday 20th June 2014 at 7.30 pm in St Anne's Cathedral will be available on 17th February 2014 from : The Administrator, Mothers' Union Office, St Michan's Church, Church Street, Dublin 7.

Irish man guides new inter-faith centre in London

The Archbishop of Canterbury is supporting an initiative in London - The Coexist House project - which is headed by Irishman, Professor David Ford, director of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme.

Religious faith is a “powerful and increasingly influential global reality” which must be taken seriously, especially in the City of London, according to the Archbishop.

The Most Rev Justin Welby said God and mammon – material wealth or greed – are not mixable, but this did not mean there was no place for faith in the City.

“That’s on the authority of Jesus Christ who said you can’t serve God and mammon. God and the City, by contrast I think, are eminently mixable.”

He was speaking at a Mansion House dinner hosted by Roger Gifford, a senior churchnewsireland@gmail.com

banker and Lord Mayor of London, to launch a new project, Coexist House, intended to be a multi-faith equivalent to St Paul’s Cathedral. Fundraising has begun for the multi-million pound project that will be either a new building near St Paul’s or Westminster Abbey, or incorporated into a new business development or redevelopment.

Guests included the Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, as well as the Archbishop of Westminster the Most Rev Vincent Nichols and leaders of the Muslim, Buddhist, Baha’i, Sikh, Hindu, Zoroastrian and other faiths, along with senior bankers and fund managers from the City.

Archbishop Welby said: “Faith is not a fading inconvenience. Quite the contrary. It is a powerful and increasingly influential global reality.”

He said faith groups across the country were holding many communities together. In places such as Southall in West London they had enormous influence which was “profoundly inspiring”.

The Archbishop said: “Faith is not a fading inconvenience which is there to get in the way of the otherwise enjoyable business of making money. The City of London is also, and sometimes faith leaders need to remember that, it is also not a fading inconvenience. It is in fact – and remains and long may it so remain – the key global centre for international finance in the world, the most heavyweight part of our country internationally.”

The last five years had seen a “significant need” to re-evaluate what the City is there for and how its values serve communities. “We are seeing very significant changes in culture, in ambition, in the vision of what the City is able to achieve both nationally and internationally.”

The increased diversity of experience, faith, culture and nationality in the City had

to be matched with an equivalent sophistication in engaging with religion, he said, adding “there is a huge challenge for faith leaders and faith communities. As we are more and more mixed together we need to sharpen each other up.” A new culture was emerging rapidly; “Something dramatic has changed.”

The Coexist House project is headed by Professor David Ford, director of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme. Professor Ford said: “Religion is one of the world’s key challenges, both locally and globally.

“It is no longer viable not to do God. We’re not good at talking about religion in the UK and yet it’s crucial for our communities and businesses to be more religiously literate in a globalised society. It is our desire and duty to break down prejudice and build understanding between faiths.”

The new centre will be a combination of an exhibition centre, media hub, sacred space, museum, and place for meeting and learning.

On CNI web today at -

www.churchnewsireland.org

FEATURE

GAFCON 2013 is over, and their Communique and Commitment is out. It may be premature to parse this document, but New Zealand Anglican cleric, **Bosco Peters risks some early reflection and possible scenarios.**



Prayer for Today

Gracious and holy God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.