



Northern Ireland Assembly rejects abortion up until birth

Proposals to allow abortion up to birth in Northern Ireland failed on Wednesday night after Stormont assembly members voted 59 to 40 against.

The legislation, which would have applied to abortion in the case of fatal foetal abnormality, incest and sexual crime, was defeated after

Democratic Unionists and SDLP representatives voted against it.

The proposal to legalise abortion where the unborn child cannot survive outside the womb was tabled by Alliance party representatives Stewart Dickson and Trevor Lunn.

Mr Lunn spoke of his own “painful” decision to choose abortion because of a fatal abnormality many years ago.

“The pain of that decision lives with us today,” said Lunn.

“This is important. It is important to women and to men and it is important for the self-respect of this little country. Sooner or later we are going to have to do something about it.”

The amendment relating to pregnancies which are the result of rape or incest was put forward by Anna Lo, also of the Alliance party.

Ahead of the debate the DUP said it wanted the health minister to convene a commission to examine the issue of abortion and report back in six months.

Abortion is still restricted in Northern Ireland, where the 1968 Abortion Act does not apply.

Repeated attempts by abortion groups to change the law have failed so far. Last year a judge ruled that a mother's inability to access abortion in the province for a baby with severe disability was a "gross interference with her personal autonomy" while a disproportionate burden was placed on victims when a sexual crime occurred.

MLAs vote against legalisation in fatal foetal abnormality cases

BBC

A mammoth debate on abortion strained the emotions of MLAs, with one appearing close to tears as he and his colleagues prepared to vote

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35546399>

Vote falls after emotive debate

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/bid-to-change-abortion-law-fails-after-emotive-debate-1-7208996>

Forcing vulnerable women to travel outside Northern Ireland to access abortion services is "shameful", the devolved Assembly has heard

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/emotive-debate-on-abortion-continues-in-the-assembly-1-7208909>

First Ecumenical Ash Wednesday Service at DCU Inter Faith Centre



Philip McKinley, Fr Séamus McEntee, Archbishop Michael Jackson, Professor Brian MacCraith and Dr Anne Lodge.

Dublin City University's Inter Faith Centre hosted its first ever ecumenical Ash Wednesday Service today (February 10). The service was led by

Archbishop Michael Jackson with assistance from DCU Chaplain Fr Séamus McEntee, the Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education Dr Anne Lodge and DCU Chaplain Philip McKinley.

The service, which was attended by DCU President Professor Brian MacCraith along with university staff and students, included the imposition of ashes.

In his sermon the Archbishop spoke of witness during Lent. He referred to the early Christians and said that faith, witness, proclamation and presence were born out of a situation of violence and colour. Drawing on the readings [Joel 2: 1–2, 12–17; 2 Corinthians 5: 20b – 6:10; Matthew 6: 1–6. 16–21] he said that Paul outlined the relationship between justice, righteousness, grace and mercy. He said these needed to work together.

Catholic Church's Instagram and web initiative for Lent 2016

Archbishop Eamon Martin has launched a special web resource and a new Instagram

initiative for Lent 2016 which began on Ash Wednesday.

Archbishop Martin said, “In his message for Lent 2016, which I encourage everyone to read, Pope Francis has invited the faithful to place a special emphasis on undertaking corporal and spiritual works of mercy as part of this Jubilee of Year Mercy because, as the Pope says, ‘God’s mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to become merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbour and to devote ourselves to what the Church’s tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them.’ I also welcome Pope Francis’ invitation to the faithful to rediscover, during this season of Lent, the new life and joy of God’s mercy, which is to be found in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The ‘24 Hours for the Lord’ initiative in March will be a graced opportunity to receive the mercy of God in Confession during this Jubilee Year of Mercy.

“For Lent 2016 we continue to provide online resources to assist in our spiritual preparations for the joy and hope which comes with the Easter season. I encourage everyone to visit and avail of our online resources and to consider taking part in our #lentwordsofmercy initiative on Instagram or on Twitter, and to consider being digital missionaries this Lent,” Archbishop Martin said.

· Archbishop Eamon Martin is Archbishop of Armagh and Chair of the Communications Council of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference. Follow Archbishop Martin on Twitter @ArchbishopEamon. See www.catholicbishops.ie for the Lenten resources and for links to the #lentwordsofmercy initiative on Instagram.

The Catholic Bishops’ Lent Facebook page can be accessed at the following link <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lent/506371582805408>

The Lenten resources available on catholicbishops.ie are:

- o Pope Francis’ message for Lent on the theme “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13). The works of mercy on the road of the Jubilee”.
- o Lenten tweets from Pope Francis
- o Lenten reflections which will be made available throughout Lent with the first one available for Ash Wednesday from Father Michael Drumm, chair of the Catholic Schools Partnership
- o Prayers and Pastoral Letters for Lent

- o Suggestions on observing Friday Penance during Lent
- o Explanations of Lent and Lenten practices
- o Events taking place in parishes and dioceses across Ireland during Lent
- o Details of Trócaire's Lenten Campaign for 2016.

Terence McCaughey, cleric, academic and social activist

Rev Terence McCaughey (83), a leading member of the Dublin and [Munster](#) Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has died.

Patsy McGarryin Irish Times - Prominent in academic and social justice circles for many decades, he was a founder member of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and was involved with the [Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association](#).

He was also active in the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

He served as chaplain to Mountjoy prison and worked with Prisoners Aid through Community Effort (PACE).

Rev McCaughey was a lone dissenting voice at the church's 1969 general assembly in the RDS when delegates passed a vote of confidence in the RUC and the then Stormont government.

He was described then as having received “a lukewarm reception.”

Most of his academic life was spent at [Trinity College](#) Dublin where he lectured in Irish and was a founder member of the Department of Religions and Theology.

Dr Maureen Junker-Kenny, Prof of Theology at Trinity College paid tribute to Rev McCaughey.

She recalled how he had lectured on St Paul and the New Testament there, and that his “very insightful” book *Memory and Redemption* was part of their course on ethics and memory.

Born in Belfast, Rev McCaughey studied English at Cambridge before deciding on the church in his late 20s.

He studied for ministry in Edinburgh and spent his career in the Republic. He is survived by his wife Ohna and their four children.

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Prince Charles visits church pioneering multi-racial community work

London church at the heart of one of Britain's most diverse multicultural communities has this week been visited by the Prince of Wales. Prince Charles made the lunchtime visit to St John's Church, Southall, in the London Borough of Ealing, to meet members of the town's faiths forum and to see a little of the community work of the church.

Some 95 per cent of the community of Southall are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Sikhs make up 35 per cent of the population; 30 per cent are Muslim and the remainder are a mixture of Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and people of no faith.

But despite the diversity it is, the Revd Mark Poulson, associate vicar of St Johns, says, a community that is thriving, harmonious and resilient. Speaking to ACNS, he said that the community of Southall was "faith literate" and that members of the various faith communities "know each other and live cheek by jowl."



The Prince of Wales chats with young people from the Onside Project, which takes a small football cage to local neighbourhoods and provides an opportunity for young people to talk about Faith, Food and Football.

It wasn't always so. In the 1970s, Southall was caught up in race riots that afflicted a number of multiracial areas of the Britain. But the work of the various faith leaders and members of the different faith communities over the years since then had brought about a transformation in community relations.

“Back in 2011 the country was torn apart by urban disturbances and riots,” Mark Poulson,

who is also the secretary for inter-religious affairs for the Archbishop of Canterbury, said. “Ealing Borough, of which we are a part, was affected very seriously and there was loss of life in this borough.

“Everywhere around Southall was affected but Southall itself saw people of faith coming out onto the streets and protecting one another’s places of worship. That is systematic of the depth of relationship that there is here.

“We are not going to pretend that we are the finished article or that we are there yet. We still have tensions and difficulties but we also have a forum for people who are committed in relationship.”

The Southall Faiths Forum was created in 2012 and is planning an event later this year which will, in effect, be an open day for the community. This will involve the various faith communities, local business and others throwing open their doors “for people all round London and the country to come and visit” and for community initiatives such as Southall Transition and A’Rocha to “show their wares” and for local restaurants to offer free food on the streets.”

The community cohesion in Southall is possible because of “relationships where we don’t take things for granted and where people are not scared to speak to one another,” Mark Poulson said.

The Church runs English language classes with a core group of between 50 and 70 women from Somali, Afghan, Tamil, Pakistani and Punjabi backgrounds attending each week.

Relaxing Sunday trading laws will hurt working mothers, Church of England warns

Relaxing Sunday trading laws will hit working mothers and shows that the government is siding with “big business” over communities, the Church of England has warned.

In its first comments since the government’s response to a consultation on the changes, the Church said ministers had “failed to provide any new evidence” to support their reforms.

The Bishop of St Albans, the Rt Rev Alan Smith, said extending opening hours on Sundays would



“exacerbate” the decline in time that people spend together seen in recent years.

He also said that concerns the policy would “damage family and community life” had not been addressed and urged the government to “think again”.

The intervention increases the backlash against Tory ministers who last week announced they were launching a renewed attempt to change Sunday trading laws

More at -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/ben-riley-smith/12151167/Relaxing-Sunday-trading-laws-will-hurt-working-mothers-Church-of-England-warns.html>

Open your wallets and give to poor in Jubilee year says Pope Francis

A jubilee year that does not open people's wallets to share what they have with others is not a true jubilee, Pope Francis has said.

“This Pope isn't inventing that,” he insisted. “It's in the Bible.”

At his weekly general audience yesterday in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis spoke about the description of a jubilee year in the Book of Leviticus.

The religious feast also had serious social implications, he said, because it proclaimed a forgiveness of debts, the freedom of indentured servants and special generosity toward the poor and the stranger.

“It was a kind of ‘general amnesty,’ which permitted everyone to return to their original situation with the cancellation of every debt, the

restitution of land and the possibility of enjoying once again the freedom proper to members of the people of God,” he said.

For God’s chosen people, who are called to holiness, the Pope said, the jubilee prescriptions help “to combat poverty and inequality, guaranteeing a dignified life for all and a fair distribution of the land on which to live and draw sustenance.”

During the Catholic Church’s jubilee year, each Christian should think about what they have, he said, and “if they have too many things,” they should “give some to someone who has nothing; 10 percent or 50 percent. The Holy Spirit will inspire you.”

Pope Francis told the crowd gathered in St Peter’s Square that “a jubilee is for conversion so that our hearts become bigger, more generous, more (like) a child of God, with more love.”

“I’ll tell you something,” he said, “if this jubilee doesn’t reach our pockets, it’s not a real jubilee. Do you understand? This is in the Bible, eh, this Pope isn’t inventing that. It’s in the Bible.”

“The biblical message is very clear: courageously open yourselves to sharing; this is

mercy,” the Pope said. “If we want mercy from God, let us begin by being merciful ourselves.”

A biblical jubilee is about sharing and solidarity, Pope Francis said. “The biblical jubilee was a ‘jubilee of mercy’ because it was lived with a sincere search of the good of one’s needy brothers and sisters.”

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Government determined to fight ‘pernicious counter narrative’

News Letter

Secretary of State challenges revisionist history of Northern Ireland violence

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-news/government-determined-to-fight-pernicious-counter-narrative-1-7209532>

Full text of speech from Secretary of State Theresa Villiers

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-news/full-text-of-speech-from-secretary-of-state-theresa-villiers-1-7209438>

Mail

Further report on comments made [in a lecture on Tuesday](#) given by the Archbishop of Canterbury who said that Britain must confront its historic responsibility for conflict in the Middle East.
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3441584/Colonialism-inspired-ISIS-extremists-says-Welby-Archbishop-Canterbury-use-lecture-says-Britain-face-responsibility-conflict-Middle-East.html>

BBC

Video report on the St Anselm Community based at Lambeth Palace, a group of 36 young people who have been living together as part of a quasi-monastic community since September 2015. They come from many different Christian denominations, from around the globe.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35544527>

Tel

Relaxing Sunday trading laws will hit working mothers and shows that the government is siding with "big business" over communities, the CofE has warned. In its response to a government consultation on the changes the Church said ministers had "failed to provide any new evidence" to support their reforms. The Bishop of St Albans, Alan Smith, said extending opening hours on Sundays would "exacerbate" the decline in time that people spend together seen in recent years.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/ben-riley-smith/12151167/Relaxing-Sunday-trading-laws-will-hurt-working-mothers-Church-of-England-warns.html>

FT (Weds)

Report that trustees of the parliamentary pension fund are coming under pressure to improve disclosure after refusing to give MPs detailed information about the fund's investments. Article includes ref to the Church of England's commitment to reduce investment in fossil fuel companies and also how it was embarrassed by its investments in Wonga three years ago when the Archbishop of Canterbury had spoken out against payday lenders.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/91299538-cf16-11e5-92a1-c5e23ef99c77.html#axzz3zqlTNhEu>

Premier

A new campaign has been launched encouraging Christians to change to an electricity supplier who only uses renewable energy. The Big Church Switch has been created by Christian Aid and Tearfund and will invite hundreds of thousands of Christians to switch energy suppliers.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Christians-urged-to-switch-to-greener-energy-providers>

Even Stand

The Prince of Wales has held discussions with a group of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians at St John's church in Southall before meeting some of the congregation. The Revd Mark Poulson, the Archbishop of Canterbury's adviser for inter-religious affairs, chaired the meeting. He was the vicar at St John's for 12 years until his wife the Revd Anna Poulson took over the parish.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/prince-charles-holds-talks-with-community-leaders-from-different-religions-who-stood-arm-in-arm-a3177556.html>

Ind

Practicing Christians are now a "minority" in the UK, two of the country's leading Anglican and Catholic figures have said. The Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, and Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, compared the state of modern day Christianity to persecuted Catholics during the Reformation. Speaking at a unique service in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace, Cardinal Nichols said Catholics now existed as a "significant minority" in British life, while Bishop Chartres said, "We are all minorities now".

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/christians-now-a-minority-in-uk-like-roman-catholics-at-reformation-say-leading-clerics-a6865471.html>

TES

Michael Bailey, head of St Peter's Church of England Primary in Leicestershire, has launched a petition calling on Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, to sit Key Stage Two tests so she can understand how difficult they are.

<https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/one-heads-challenge-nicky-morgan-take-new-sats-and-lets-see-if-you>

Times

Dan Walker has been announced as the new presenter on BBC Breakfast. Mr Walker, a devout Christian and son of a Baptist preacher insists on taking Sundays off to practise his faith, is also a creationist, as confirmed by his spokeswoman last night.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/medianews/article4688035.ece>

Ind

Report that the Catholic Church is telling newly appointed bishops it is "not necessarily" their duty to report accusations of clerical child abuse to authorities. A document explaining how senior clergy members ought to deal with allegations of abuse suggests only victims or their families should make the decision to report abuse to police.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/bishops-do-not-have-to-report-child-abuse-vatican-says-a6866061.html>

Guard

Two women have abseiled from a motorway bridge and unfurl banner as backlash grows against Australian government's plans to relocate 267 asylum seekers back to the remote island of Nauru. The three hour protest ended peacefully when the women abseiled to the ground. Ten Anglican and other Christian leaders have defied the government, invoking ancient right of sanctuary in offering their churches as refuges for those facing removal to Nauru.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/11/protesters-with-let-them-stay-banner-hang-over-melbourne-freeway>

Tel

An explanation of Ash Wednesday, its customs and how it is fixed by the date of Easter. The article notes Archbishop Justin's discussions with other Christian leaders about the possibility of fixing the date of Easter.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12150264/Ash-Wednesday-2016-beginning-Lent-why-give-things-up.html>

Comment

[Brighton and Hove Argus](#): Apologies from the Church are not enough - it must protect us