



Image of the Day - Ballintoy Harbour

Reports

Changes have removed the legal protection for unborn children - Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has said that there is nothing ‘moral’ about the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland’s direction to Executive Ministers and departments to commission abortion services here as soon as possible.

A joint statement issued on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland by Rev Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary, and Rev Daniel Kane, PCI’s Convener of the Council for Public Affairs, said, “As a Church with a strong pro-life position we have, in no uncertain terms, consistently put on record our total opposition to the imposition by Westminster of the most liberal abortion laws in these islands. These changes have removed the legal protection for unborn children, and for instance, leaves those babies diagnosed with Down’s syndrome potentially unprotected and incredibly vulnerable.

“Before issuing today’s direction, it is deeply regrettable that Mr Lewis did not take time to reflect on how destructive his imposed legislation will be for future generations of unborn children in Northern Ireland. It is also astonishing that in today’s Written Statement seeking to further impose his will on the devolved institutions, he describes this as his ‘moral obligation.’ There is nothing ‘moral’ about this destructive

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direction, nor indeed the original legislation that he previously inflicted on the people of Northern Ireland.

“At the same time, to say that his imposed 2020 legislation is ‘sensitive to the circumstances in Northern Ireland’ is, to say the least, an interesting interpretation of the facts. The Secretary of State’s regulations went against the express wishes of 80% of the more than 21,000 individuals and organisations who responded to the Northern Ireland Office’s own 2019 consultation on this matter. The Secretary of State was under no obligation to bring forward his maximalist approach to the implementation of the CEDAW recommendations, which have imposed such a radical abortion regime on Northern Ireland. To say that in doing this he was being ‘sensitive’ to Northern Ireland’s circumstances, and was respecting ‘the deeply held views that individuals hold on this issue’ is simply disingenuous and insulting.”

“As a Church, we recognise the great pain involved in the extremely difficult circumstances faced by women and their families experiencing a crisis pregnancy. This is why we have consistently called for the provision of state-of-the-art perinatal care for every woman, in every part of Northern Ireland, who find themselves in these circumstances. More must be done to bring forward practical, emotional and spiritual support for women and their families, which is absolutely essential, if we are truly committed as a society to life, well-being and human dignity. This is where resources and effort should be focused, rather than the destructive ideologically driven path the Secretary of State has chosen.”

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PCI's statement concluded by saying, "Over the past few years the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has consistently warned of the fundamental danger of Westminster politicians unilaterally overriding the devolved institutions. Last week we witnessed the Secretary of State's stated intention to impose his will upon victims and survivors against the unanimous views of the elected representatives of Northern Ireland. This undermining of the devolved settlement began with the imposition of the Secretary of State's abortion regulations. That was a sad day, which not only undermined and devalued devolution, but also removed protection of the lives of unborn children."

NI Health Minister says he will not act unilaterally on abortion

Northern Ireland's Health Minister has promised he will not act unilaterally in expanding abortion services in the province.

Robin Swann said he would instead bring the matter to the Stormont Executive before any decision is made.

The commitment was made in response to a threat of last-minute court action by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) a day before Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, was expected to issue a directive moving forward with the expansion of abortion services.

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The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021 give Lewis the power to side-step the devolved administration and direct Stormont ministers to implement a "fully-funded abortion service".

SPUC is challenging the legality of this in a case due to be heard in October.

Liam Gibson, SPUC Northern Ireland Political Officer, accused Westminster of a "devolution power grab".

He said: "Abortion is not healthcare, it is an act of lethal violence directed at an unborn child.

"It is essential that the pro-life people of Northern Ireland contact the Health Minister and the Office of the First and deputy First Ministers and urge them to take no action to implement Mr Lewis's abortion agenda, at least until the courts have had the opportunity to decide on the lawfulness of the powers the Secretary of State has conferred upon himself.

"If the London Government is able to impose an agenda which will condemn to death an untold number of unborn babies it will also fatally undermine the devolution settlement by stripping locally elected Ministers of power and denying the people an accountable government."

Westminster voted in 2019 to drastically alter Northern Ireland's abortion laws, making it available on demand within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and widely available until the 24th week. The changes also permit abortion up to birth for babies with disabilities.

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The changes have not yet been implemented, though, due to disagreements over the legislation in the Executive.

At this painful time I ask for prayers of comfort for victims suffering on all sides in the conflict - Archbishop Martin of Armagh

Archbishop Martin said in a recent statement - The British government's decision to ban all Troubles-related criminal and civil actions, and legacy inquests, will be seen by many victims as a betrayal of trust which denies justice to them and to their loved ones.

It is disturbing that victims and survivors, those who have paid the highest price for the fragile peace we all enjoy today, once more feel marginalised and neglected.

I was particularly disappointed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's naïve comments in the House of Commons suggesting that his legacy proposals would allow Northern Ireland to "draw a line under the Troubles". At this painful time I ask for prayers of comfort for victims suffering on all sides in the conflict, and for truth and justice to prevail in the interest of the common good.

Dealing with the legacy of our shared past is not an easy task. It is a complex undertaking which belongs to all of us. It has no "quick-fix". No "line can be drawn" to relieve the

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deep hurt still carried in the aftermath of years of violence, death and life-changing injury.



The 2014 Stormont House Agreement, signed up to in good will by all parties, sought to deal with our legacy in a collaborative and honest way which respected fully the input of victims in achieving consensus. It is therefore deeply disheartening to witness a key signatory renege on this joint commitment.

Sadly, this week's announcement has been expected. In April 2020 the Catholic bishops in Northern Ireland published a considered statement criticising the UK government's approach towards the legacy of the past. Its content included correspondence to the Secretary of State, Mr Brandon Lewis, and it remains relevant.

The bishops supported the ongoing pursuit of appropriate criminal, legal and civic justice for all victims. They addressed prioritising victims as the focal point of a

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response to dealing with the legacy of the past; equal access to justice for all; facing the past however painful; achieving authentic reconciliation for a just and stable peace; and concern that the proposed legislation for Northern Ireland would mirror the provisions of the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Act 2021* which does not honour human rights, avoids the rule of law, does not offer justice to victims, nor provides for a modality to underpin long-term peace and stability in a transparent, fair and equitable context, *

see: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2020/04/08/catholic-bishops-in-northern-ireland-criticise-uk-governments-approach-to-legacy-of-the-past/>

As the British government is now facing criticism from all quarters concerning its unilateral decision, the announcement begs the age-old question: “Cui Bono?” (“Who benefits?”).

Exposure: Focusing the lens on gender-based violence

This year’s 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence will be the 30th such event since it was launched by the Women’s Global Leadership Institute in 1991.

During the 16 Days, which run from The International Day For The Elimination Of Violence Against Women (25 November) to Human Rights Day (10 December), individuals and organisations around the world engage in



Mothers Union - Connor Diocesan banner

public advocacy and high profile campaigns to call for an end to all forms of gender-based violence (GBV).

GBV comes in many forms, including sexual violence such as rape and forced marriage, other acts of physical violence such as beatings and assaults, and psychological abuse such as controlling and coercive control and online harassment.

Over the years, a large number of Anglican Churches and mission agencies have embraced the 16 Days in a number of different ways. They have been supported in this by the Anglican Communion Office and the International Anglican Women's Network.

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For the 16 Days of Activism in 2021, the Anglican Communion Office is inviting young Anglicans (aged 35 and under) to submit short videos which expresses their perspectives of gender-based violence. Between 25 November and 10 December, we will release a selection of those videos on our official social media channels as part of our response to the 16 Days.

Our campaign: “Exposure – Focusing the lens on gender-based violence – will highlight different regions, languages and cultures across the Anglican Communion on the issue of GBV during the 16 days. The campaign will ensure that young people’s perspectives and views are given a platform.

This could be a specific focus on a particular issue within their own community, context, or country. It could be a focus on work already being done by young people. It could be an advocacy campaign that they have joined in.

We want to provide a voice for young Anglicans to highlight their concerns, solutions, and work on preventing and ending gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is a sensitive and painful subject for many people, so we have prepared some guidance to keep participants safe and to ensure an effective campaign:

For this project, it is important that survivors of gender-based violence should not be identified as such in the videos. The videos that we select for publication may end up being shared far and wide and, being an international project, we can’t be sure that appropriate resources are

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available locally to support survivors who may find themselves subject to such widespread coverage.

The Anglican Communion Office will not publish a video unless it is satisfied that it has the consent of everybody featured in the video.

The video should not include any copyright material, such as music, photos or other video content, unless the permission of the copyright holder has been obtained.

Submitted videos should be no longer than two minutes in duration so that they can be shared effectively on social media.

Videos can be filmed using mobile phones – professional recording equipment is not required but should be filmed in landscape mode (see our video guidance note here).

Videos can be in any language from the Anglican Communion. If possible, we ask that an English translation is provided in written form.

If the Anglican Communion Office is considering publishing a submitted video, it will contact the submitter to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place.

Submit your video

To submit your video, please send it to us by:

WhatsApp: +447842272238

Email: exposure@anglicancommunion.org.

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To email video, you may need to use a service like WeSendIt or WeTransfer because large files are not suitable for sending via email.

Please include your full contact details and, if the video is in a language other than English, let us know which language the video is in.

The closing date for submissions is 31 October 2021.

CLICK HERE for promotional material

<https://anglicancommunion.org/mission/gender-justice/exposure-focusing-the-lens-on-gender-based-violence.aspx>

People and places

Thanks to priests and pilgrims of Croagh Patrick pilgrimage

Father Charlie McDonnell thanks priests and pilgrims for supporting the 2021 Croagh Patrick pilgrimage

The annual Reek Sunday Pilgrimage on Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo, which was cancelled last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has been going ahead this year in an extended format from Wednesday to Saturday, throughout this month of July, instead of the traditional focus on the last Sunday of the month, Reek Sunday. This change of format was made in the interest of public health due to the pandemic.

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In thanking priests and pilgrims for their support in making the 2021 Croagh Patrick pilgrimage so far a success, the Administrator of Westport Parish, Father Charlie McDonnell, said, “The 2021 Croagh Patrick pilgrimage, which is operating differently this year, continues to work well. By spreading the pilgrimage-out over the month, we have placed safety first and have given tremendous flexibility to pilgrims who wish to climb Ireland’s holy mountain.

“In previous years, the pilgrimage season has stretched from June to September and religious facilities were only afforded to pilgrims on the last Sunday of July, Reek Sunday. However, this year’s novel and adventurous departure has successfully broadened the availability of sacramental and other faith ministries provided by the Church, not only on the summit of Croagh Patrick, but also for the first time ever at the base of the mountain where Adoration and Confessions have been made available. I sincerely wish to thank priests and pilgrims for all their support and cooperation in making the 2021 pilgrimage season a success to date.”

Father McDonnell concluded, “There is now one week left for pilgrims to avail of what is being provided for this year’s pilgrimage, throughout Wednesday to Saturday. We thank God that it has been a case of ‘so far so good’ and I encourage pilgrims to plan their trip carefully from a personal safety perspective. This year the pilgrimage will conclude on the morning of 31 July, the day after Garland Friday, when by tradition the last Friday in July is dedicated to local people who wish to climb Croagh Patrick.”

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Kilkenny College rightly proud

Kilkenny College is proud of their two Past Pupil Olympians representing Ireland at the Tokyo Olympics 2021. Lisa Jacob is Manager of the Irish Women's Hockey Squad. Foster Horan is a member of the Irish men's 7-a-side Rugby Squad. "All at Kilkenny College wish you both every success at the Olympics and congratulate you as you represent Ireland".

Conservative Evangelicals plan new diocese in Australia

The conservative Evangelical group GAFCON Australia has formulated plans for the creation of a diocese for "Anglicans who will be forced to leave the Anglican Church of Australia",

European Churches urge EU to secure religious freedom post-pandemic

The Geneva-based Conference of European Churches (CEC) has urged the European Union to ensure that religious freedom is fully restored in the wake of the pandemic, and to begin reinforcing it more assertively around the world.

Urgent appeal from Anglican Centre in Rome

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The Anglican Centre in Rome has launched an urgent appeal, after reporting “dangerously low” reserves and a financial position that “places the survival of the Centre in its current form at serious risk”....

Poem for Today

Father and Son by Frederick Robert Higgins

Only last week, walking the hushed fields
Of our most lovely Meath, now thinned by November,
I came to where the road from Laracor leads
To the Boyne river-that seems more lake than river,
Stretched in uneasy light and stript of reeds.

And walking longside an old weir
Of my people's, where nothing stirs-only the shadowed
Leaden flight of a heron up the lean air-
I went unmanly with grief, knowing how my father,
Happy though captive in years, walked last with me there.

Yes, happy in Meath with me for a day
He walked, taking stock of herds hid in their own breathing;
And naming colts, gusty as wind, once steered by his hand,
Lightnings winked in the eyes that were half shy in greeting
Old friends-the wild blades, when he gallivanted the land.

For that proud, wayward man now my heart breaks-
Breaks for that man whose mind was a secret eyrie,
Whose kind hand was sole signet of his race,

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Who curbed me, scorned my green ways, yet increasingly
loved me
Till Death drew its grey blind down his face.
And yet I am pleased that even my reckless ways
Are living shades of his rich calms and passions-
Witnesses for him and for those faint namesakes
With whom now he is one, under yew branches,
Yes, one in a graven silence no bird breaks.

Pointers for prayer

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee,
that the course of this world
may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance,
that thy Church may joyfully serve thee
in all godly quietness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord of the Church, we pray for our brothers and sisters throughout
the world who acknowledge your presence and power in their lives.
We pray for those who are laughed at or victimised because of their
faith in you. We pray that you will give us strength to be true to our
faith when it is questioned or belittled.

We pray for our church and our community and for a renewal of our
vision and dedication to the work you have called us to do.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of all nations, we pray for the needs of this world.

We pray for those nations where communities are broken by
prejudice and hatred, where the fear of violence is never far away.
We pray that where human endeavours to find peace and
reconciliation seem so inadequate your power to draw people
together will bring renewed hope for the future.

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We pray for those who have knowledge and power in the fields of medicine and science. Let them not be corrupted by greed and ambition but grant them wisdom, integrity, humility and compassion to use the knowledge they have gained only for the good of all people.

Throughout the world-wide community of nations may there be a sense of responsibility for each other and a desire for equality and justice for all your children.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion, we pray for all those who are suffering with anxiety, stress, grief or pain and illness.

Long ago a woman believed she would be healed if she could just touch the clothes of Jesus. May we today believe that if we pray to you for those we know and love, your healing power will also flow into their lives bringing wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

In a moment of quiet our hearts reach out to you in prayer for the needs of those we love.

Grant us strength in our weakness, comfort in our sorry, peace of mind in our anxiety and stress and the renewed hope for life which only your presence and power can bring.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of time and of eternity, we pray for those who have died and are now with you in your kingdom

We thank you for the communion we share with all those who have gone before us and pray that our lives may reflect on earth the light that surrounds them in your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, be present among us this morning and may the transforming power of your Spirit work in us and through us today and throughout the coming week.

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Merciful Father accept these prayers, For the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

Philippians 1:21-24 NLT

During the two years that I lived in India a number of people in our community died and I deeply appreciated the way in which their deaths were handled. Soon after the person passed away their body was prepared and laid out on a bed in the middle of the main room of the house. Visitors would then come and pay their respects, light candles around the body, and say prayers. This would continue until the body was taken in an open coffin to church for the funeral service. All so very different from the way in which our society handles death. When I returned to this country I deeply regretted the way in which we seems to be kept well away from death. In our verses today Paul talks about death in a way that would probably shock many people. He is totally open about the fact of death and he reflects on the varied benefits of being alive or dead.

Paul's confidence in Christ shines through his words. He knows the Lord so well that he is absolutely convinced that

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death is the preferable option. For Paul, death was bound to be much better than life, because he would be set free from all those things that obstruct our relationship with Christ here on earth. But he realises that, for the moment, he has responsibilities here on earth and so he is content with staying alive for the time being.

One of the greatest blessings of being a Christian is that we need have no fear of death. Earlier today I learnt that a friend of mine had died. He was 88 and had cancer. When I last visited him he shared with me how entirely peaceful he was at the idea of his death. What a wonderful blessing that is and it is one that we can all share as we place our life in God's hands.

QUESTION

Do you share Paul's thoughts about death?

PRAYER

Lord God, thank you that my relationship with you will not be brought to an end by death. Amen

