



***Martin McGuinness insists that it is possible to be a Catholic and disagree with Catholic teaching***

## **Is Sinn Féin Catholic? Its embrace of abortion says 'no'**

Martin McGuinness says that the Catholic Church contains many different opinions about abortion. Perhaps, but Catholic theology is rather more united, says Tim Stanley in The Telegraph. Is Martin McGuinness a Catholic? A bear I met in

a queue for the lavatories at Charing Cross station told me that he has his doubts...

The Sinn Féin politician and deputy first minister of Northern Ireland [has defended his party's new pro-choice stand on abortion in terms that suggest he didn't stay awake during Sunday School](#). Defending legalisation of terminations in certain circumstances, he insisted that it was perfectly possible to be both Catholic and in favour of abortion. "The Catholic Church is made up of people who have different opinions on different issues," he said with the wisdom of Solomon. "I try and be the best Catholic I can be," he added – although this would seem to stop short of obeying Church doctrine.

This is irritating for two reasons. First, it's a misrepresentation of the theology of the matter. One can indeed turn up at church and be pro-abortion. But one cannot turn up at church and be outspokenly pro-abortion and be a "faithful" Catholic. Just in case anyone's missed this, *the Catholic Church is opposed to abortion*. And I don't mean "opposed" in the sense of thinking "life's complicated but on balance, at the end of the day, terminating a pregnancy probably isn't all sunshine and lollipops." No, I mean "opposed"

in the sense of believing it to be murder. There is absolutely no ambiguity and no room for debate. If a politician claims to be a Catholic and works to legalise abortion, he has ruptured from his faith and can no longer claim to speak for it.

Second, Sinn Féin's volte-face on abortion, like its endorsement of gay marriage, says a lot about the invisible decoupling of Irish nationalism and Catholicism. A few old romantics might have once imagined that to desire a united Ireland was to dream of a country where the Church and the treasure of its doctrine enjoyed a unique spiritual authority. But when neo-Marxist Sinn Féin talks about Catholicism it's really just stoking up sectarian division in the North, while in the South it has totally reinvented itself as a socialist vulture picking meat off the bones of Fianna Fáil's corpse. Moreover, this party has never made the apology for the violence and murder committed by the nationalist movement that a Christian conscience would demand. Mr McGuinness may well be tying his "best" to be a good Catholic but the historical record indicates that his best just ain't good enough. If his local bishop had any guts, he'd excommunicate him – and denounce his party before Catholics of genuinely good conscience make the mistake of voting for it.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/northernireland/11352473/Is-Sinn-Fein-Catholic-Its-embrace-of-abortion-says-no.html>

## Married, female and ordained: Rev Eileen Cremin is part of progress in Church of Ireland



***“Society has changed:” Rev Eileen Cremin, Fermoy’s Church of Ireland minister, in Christchurch, Fermoy, Co Cork.***

Despite a name that would sound at home in the Co [Cork](#) countryside that she now calls home, the Rev [Eileen Cremin](#) was born in Hackney, in east London. She is also the child of Antiguan

immigrants, who arrived in [England](#) in the 1950s, alongside waves of Irish settlers.

Irish Times - Born Eileen Lake, and named after an Irish friend of her mother, she picked up the Cremin name when she married a man from Passage West, Co Cork. The couple now live in Fermoy, where she is rector of the union of parishes.

She was raised Anglican but felt like an outsider when first considering ministry in London. “My experience of priests at the time was that they were white, male and middle-class, and I was totally the opposite to that in all sorts of ways. My family background has been very much working class, so I went forward for selection not thinking that I would get through.”

Nonetheless, she was ordained a deacon in 1988, just a year after church rules made that possible for women. She was more concerned with ministry than with the title of priest, but she felt frustrated watching male colleagues progress.

“I was a member of the movement for the ordination of women, but it wasn’t something I pushed too much,” she says. “All I wanted to be

was a full-time minister.” But she was exuberant in November 1992, when the Church of England decided to allow female priests. (The [Church of Ireland](#) had voted in favour of women priests and bishops in 1990.)

“For the first time we at least could be on an equal par with our male colleagues, who we were doing exactly the same work as.”

Late last year the Church of England voted to allow female bishops; the first was appointed just before Christmas, when Libby Lane was made suffragan bishop of Stockport. While the wider Anglican communion remains divided on the role of women, Cremin believes her female colleagues will excel in positions of leadership.

“It’s been a long time coming, and I know. When I left England, I left behind many capable women and there’ll be plenty of them ripe as candidates when it comes. It has been frustrating in that it has taken so long.”

She decided to switch from England to [Ireland](#) after years in London when she took up a role as curate’s assistant in Douglas, just outside Cork city. Douglas seemed attractive on multiple levels, especially as the union, or group of

parishes, included Passage West, where her husband's mother still lived.

More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/married-female-and-ordained-rev-eileen-cremin-is-part-of-progress-in-church-of-ireland-1.2068425>

## **Living and Dying Well - Church in the Public Square conference**

Union Theological College, in co-operation with the Church and Society Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, is hosting the third Church in the Public Square conference on Thursday, 22nd January 2015 on the theme "Living and Dying Well". The conference will address the ethical, pastoral and legal issues surrounding the attempts to legislate in favour of assisted suicide.

In recent months there has been increasing debate on whether or not the law should be changed in this country to permit a doctor to kill his terminally ill patients or to assist them in their suicide should they so request. The big questions that many lawyers, doctors and pastors are facing are these: Does medically-assisted death

have a place within healthcare? Is medically-assisted death just another end-of-life choice that some people have to make? Would a change in the current legislation put pressure on vulnerable people to consider assisted dying because they were making demands on their carers? These questions raise major theological and ethical issues which cause much concern for individuals who are directly affected, as well as for legislators and those in the legal, medical and caring professions.

Three well-qualified speakers will lead discussion of these critical issues.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff is chairwoman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dying Well. She is a professor of palliative medicine at Cardiff University, a past president of the Royal Society of Medicine and current President of the British Medical Association.

Robert Preston worked in Whitehall as a civil servant for 30 years and in Parliament as an official for five years. In the latter capacity he was Clerk to the House of Lord's select committee which examined Lord Joffe's Private Member's Bill, "Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill" in



2004-05. He is now Director of the think-tank, Living and Dying Well, which works to examine the objective evidence surrounding the controversial end-of-life debate and publishes research to help inform Parliament and the public.

John Wyatt is Professor of Ethics and Perinatology at University College, London. He has lectured widely on issues in ethics from a Christian perspective and his most prominent book is *Matters of life and death: Today's healthcare dilemmas in the light of Christian Faith*. Professor Wyatt has been a member of All Souls Church in London since first coming to London as a medical student and has worked as a specialist in the medical care of newborn infants for more than 20 years.

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Training-Events/Events/Church-in-the-Public-Square-Living-and-Dying-Well?eventType=2>

See also -

The Church of England's opposition to a change in the law on assisted suicide remains "absolutely clear", the Bishop of Carlisle said, as

peers prepared to debate Lord Falconer's Assisted Dying Bill in the House of Lords.

Writing in a blog for The Huffington Post, James Newcome, the Church of England's lead bishop on health care issues, said there is a "fundamental responsibility" to care for and protect the most vulnerable, including elderly people at risk of abuse. He added that many disability charities are "deeply concerned" about the potential implications of the Bill.

[www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/james-newcome/assisted-dying\\_b\\_6479690.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=tw](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/james-newcome/assisted-dying_b_6479690.html?utm_hp_ref=tw)

## **New diocesan choir forming**

The C of I diocese of Down and Dromore is forming a new choir.

Bishop Harold Miller has invited Lorna Palmer to form a choir to proclaim the gospel through a variety of musical styles and genres during the diocesan Year of Mission.

‘Kerygma, The Good News Choir’, will perform 3 times this year, the first being at the St Patrick’s Day Celebrations on 17 March when the



Archbishop of Canterbury will be the principal guest.

Lorna studied voice and piano at the Royal College of Music, London, and with her expertise and enthusiasm she inspires choir members of all ability and experience. Could you commit to six rehearsals on Saturdays: 31 January, 7, 21 and 28 February, and 4 and 11 March?

Please email Lorna Palmer as soon as possible with your details and voice type ie. soprano, alto, tenor or bass.

Email: [lorna@palmer.gb.net](mailto:lorna@palmer.gb.net). Otherwise, telephone (028) 40 625 625 and leave a message.

## Young Adults Ministry Presents Singer/Songwriter Martin Smith in Dublin's Button Factory



Singer/songwriter Martin Smith will bring his  
God's Great Club Tour to Dublin on Thursday

[churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

February 26 when he will perform in the Button Factory. This concert is organised by Dublin and Glendalough's Young Adults Ministry in cooperation with a number of ecumenical partners and follows two very successful events last year where worship bands, Matt Redman and Rend Collective, played in mainstream venues and sold out.

Martin Smith is the former front man of well known worship band Delirious? which impacted a generation of young people for over a decade starting in the mid 1990s. The band is credited with changing the landscape of worship music. While Delirious? is no more, Martin Smith continues to write songs and recently released his second full length studio album, God's Great Dance Floor Step 02.

"Anybody can get on the dance floor... that's the great thing about Christianity. It doesn't matter where you come from, or what you've done... everyone is invited to the party," Martin says.

Tickets for the concert in the Button Factory cost €15 in advance and are available from Fuel Events <https://www.musicglue.com/fuelevents/>. They are available to buy on the door on the night at €20. This is a strictly over 18s event.

Young Adults Officer, Greg Fromholz, says that the gig is being run ecumenically and he is delighted to seize the opportunity to do something that represents the Church in a wider setting. “We are trying to continue to be the church without walls. We’re saying ‘here’s a venue you all know – come and hang out with us’,” he explains.

## **DUP attacks Nesbitt over role in Enniskillen schools closure row**

The DUP has attacked the Ulster Unionist leader for his role in the row about the closure of two Enniskillen grammar schools, accusing Mike Nesbitt of “sitting on the fence” over the issue.

News Letter - However, the UUP has dismissed the accusation, claiming that Stormont’s biggest unionist party is “attempting to divert blame away from themselves”.

Many unionists in Fermanagh have been strongly opposed to Sinn Fein Education Minister John O’Dowd’s decision to close Portora Royal and Enniskillen Collegiate and create a new school for the area.

Members of the public, former pupils and unionist politicians have been campaigning against the move.

But on Tuesday, the Assembly's new Sinn Fein Speaker Mitchel McLaughlin stopped a DUP attempt to veto the move.



***Portora Royal School - the C of I bishop of Clogher is chairman of the board of governors. Several recent bishops were educated here including the current Archbishop of Dublin.***

All 38 DUP MLAs had signed a petition asking for the issue to be referred to the Executive — where the DUP could block it.

However, the Speaker ruled that the petition did not relate to a matter of “public importance”, and therefore should not go to the Executive.

Prior to making that ruling, Mr McLaughlin had consulted with the party leaders and yesterday it emerged that while Peter Robinson, Jim Allister and David McNarry had responded firmly in support of the petition, Mr Nesbitt had responded by suggesting that the Speaker should take legal advice.

Mr Nesbitt wrote: “The Collegiate/Portora issue is a significant issue of importance to the people of Co Fermanagh. Whether it is a matter of public importance in a wider Northern Ireland context is a more open question.

“We suggest that Speakers’ office should ask for the Assembly’s legal service to give an opinion on what constitutes a ‘matter of public importance’ in law.

“We have no objection to the Executive re-examining the decision, subject to legal advice.”

Fermanagh and South Tyrone DUP MLA Arlene Foster accused the UUP of letting down the campaign against the amalgamation.

She said: “This should have been a straightforward process where the Speaker referred the matter to the Executive.



“However, having asked the Speaker to review his decision it has now transpired that the UUP gave the Speaker a confused and equivocal answer.

“I was very disappointed by the Speaker’s initial statement on the matter but to then establish that the UUP was complicit in undermining this mechanism is a further disappointment.”

Mrs Foster said she knew that at least two UUP councillors support the merger and accused the UUP of either supporting the decision or not being able to make a decision.

A UUP spokesman said that party leader Mike Nesbitt had made clear that the party had no objection to the Executive re-examining the decision “subject of course to legal advice, which we would not see as a hindrance”.

He added: “It is not unusual that the DUP are attempting to divert blame on the matter away from themselves.

“We must remember that it was that party who was responsible just the day prior to this controversial decision for putting that Sinn Fein

representative into the powerful position of Speaker.

“If there is any blame to be attributable to this decision it is the DUP who, including Arlene Foster, proudly filed through the Assembly voting lobby to support Sinn Fein’s Mitchel McLaughlin as the Speaker.”

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/dup-attacks-nesbitt-over-role-in-schools-closure-row-1-6527454>

## **Church of Scotland Moderator visits Nigeria and South Sudan**

The Moderator of the General Assembly is currently on a 10 day tour of Nigeria and South Sudan today.

In a packed schedule Rt Rev John Chalmers was a guest of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and is preaching at a series of services commemorating 100 years since the death of extraordinary Scottish missionary Mary Slessor, whose legacy in Nigeria is still felt today. On the eve of his trip to Africa, Mr Chalmers said: "While Liz and I have had many opportunities to visit

churches around the world, Africa is a completely new experience.



***The Moderator is a guest of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and has preached at a series of services commemorating 100 years since the death of extraordinary Scottish missionary Mary Slessor, whose legacy in Nigeria is still felt today.***

"Although we have read much and met many Church leaders at our own General Assembly, we cannot wait to experience the sounds and sites, the hospitality and the music, the church and the people for ourselves."

On Saturday 17th January, just a few hours after landing in Calabar, the Moderator preached in

Akpap Okoyog at the Mary Slessor Memorial Parish.

Yesterday the venue was Duke Town, Calabar where Mary Slessor is buried.

Then after a road journey to Umuahia, Mr Chalmers rounded off the Centenary commemorations by preaching on Mary Slessor Day at St. Peter's, Umuahia Parish.

Mr Chalmers added: "I anticipate that the vitality of the people and the vibrancy of their faith will inject us with all the energy that we will need to meet the demands of the busy programme which, apart from the preaching engagements, is jam packed with opportunities to meet people and experience the life of their church."

Then Mr Chalmers will begin a three day visit to South Sudan. One major feature of the programme will be a workshop conducted by the Moderator on peace and reconciliation within the church.

Mr Chalmers said: "Our time in South Sudan may be the most challenging days of the Moderatorial year, however, our General Assembly this year was illuminated by the presence of [the Moderator](#)

[of the South Sudanese Presbyterian Church, the Rt Rev Peter Gai](#), and I could not pass up this opportunity to show our solidarity with his church."

The Moderator and his wife will also visit camps to meet people who have been displaced by the current wave of civil unrest and there will also be an opportunity to see at first hand the work being done by both the Bible Society and by Christian Aid.

[\*Read a feature on the life of Mary Slessor.\*](#)

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news\\_and\\_events/news/recent/scots-missionary-honoured-across-two-continents](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/recent/scots-missionary-honoured-across-two-continents)

## **Leaders before lay people - What the Church of England gets wrong about discipleship**

Discipleship is worked out in ministries such as Street Pastors, but the Church of England lacks a clear discipleship theology.

The Church of England's understanding of ministry is "lopsided", its mission is too narrowly focused on the Church and it is failing to equip

Christians to live out their faith in daily life, says a new report to be presented to the General Synod next month.



***Discipleship is worked out in ministries such as Street Pastors, but the Church of England lacks a clear discipleship theology.***

Introduced by the Bishop of Sheffield, Rt Rev Steven Croft, the Developing Discipleship report says that there are "significant obstacles" to the growth of individuals in the Church, among them a concentration on the development of

ministers at the expense of lay people. In an Archbishop's Council survey, "It was widely perceived that the biggest obstacle in lay development is the clericalised culture of church and ministry."

While lay discipleship is worked out through initiatives such as foodbanks, Street Pastors and other forms of ministry, the report says that the "lack of a coherent and concisely stated common understanding of discipleship" means that

"Our vision for the Church and for discipleship is not as clear as it could be," that "Our understanding of service becomes restricted to the life of the Church" and that "Our theological understanding of ministry becomes lopsided" as lay people are marginalised.

It says: "Finally, and most seriously, the witness and mission of the whole Church is impoverished as Christians are neither encouraged nor sustained in the living out of their Christian faith in daily life."

The report proposes adopting 10 "marks of a diocese committed to developing disciples", including recognising gifts of leadership among

lay people and encouraging innovation and experimentation.

Introducing the report, Bishop Croft said: "The main focus of the paper is the need for the Church of England to take more seriously the call to all of us, lay and ordained, to be and to become a community of missionary disciples called to love God, to love one another and to love God's world."

An online comment forum has been created to allow Anglicans to engage with the issues that Developing Disciples identifies.

The report comes after the Archbishops of Canterbury and York warned that decline in the Church of England had to be reversed if it were to continue its nation-wide ministry.

Average attendance at Sunday services has dropped by nearly half during the last 40 years and currently stands at around 800,000.

## **Resourcing the Future - C of E major papers released**

The Church of England has published two further papers as part of the "reform and



renewal” programme to be discussed at the February meeting of the General Synod.

The report Resourcing the Future Task Group is published [here](#). In a [video](#) and [blog](#) introducing the report Canon Dr. John Spence, Chair of the Finance Committee of the Archbishops’ Council, who chaired the task group said:

“We are here to help every parish, deanery and diocese achieve its goals. The totality of the reports published this week represent a coordinated response to a proven and vital need....the need to respond to those dioceses who have asked for us to help inject other expertise on strategy to help turn their ambitious plans to reality.”

In a summary of its recommendations the report “proposes a fundamental shift: removing the current formula systems which provide mechanical, ineffective subsidy and replacing them with investment focused on fulfilling dioceses’ strategic plans for growth, and with a strong bias towards the poor.”

The report also notes that “The Church as a whole needs greater ‘institutional agility’ – its legal structures and its ministry and resource patterns need to be more flexible to respond to its mission challenges. The National Church

Institutions need to develop a more effective partnership with dioceses. The dioceses' aspirations to grow and have more leaders are likely to require significant new investment."

Describing the origins of the work of the group Canon Spence writes "We started with all the research findings contained in the Anecdote to Evidence book published a year ago. That pointed to a declining and ageing Church of England population. Projecting the findings forward made us see the real threat to the presence of our Church, not only in every community but in large parts of rural and urban England.

Each of us has a personal Christian mission to help the Word of the Risen Christ reach out. In other words, we need to change this trend and start securing growth – not just in some places as at present, but with a more uniform pattern across the country."

The second paper released today is from Andreas Whittam Smith, the First estates Commissioner.

Entitled "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it", the paper addresses the questions of funding for the

reforms proposed by the “reform and renewal” agenda of the task group reports and papers. The paper also reflects on the history of the Church Commissioners funding of the mission and ministry of the Church and what lessons can be learned at a time when increased levels of funding may be sought.

Introducing the paper in a [blog](#) and [video](#)  
Andreas Whittam Smith reflects:

“Rightly the Commissioners are the go-to body for any Church institution that is seeking additional funding. To provide a basis for responding to requests, the Commissioners have for twenty years relied upon the advice of their actuaries. Each year the actuaries calculate how much can safely be distributed after paying pensions and meeting statutory duties. The test is that this amount would still leave the endowment in a position to preserve its real value through time....

The question now arising is whether this admirable rule can apply when the membership of the Church is shrinking. One doesn't want to arrive in a situation when a small Church of England has a huge endowment. Our successors might then wonder why we hadn't

used our financial strength to arrest the decline when there was still time.

This is precisely the issue that is now up for debate.”

Reflecting on the next steps Andreas comments: “However, before the Commissioners can make a final decision whether we should ‘over-distribute’ given our other pressing commitments and, if so, with what safeguards, we wish to know what is the opinion of Synod as expressed in next month’s debates. Indeed, without synodical support, we should not go forward.” See -

[www.churchofengland.org/rtfreport](http://www.churchofengland.org/rtfreport)

[www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/church-commissioners-and-the-task-groups-2015.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/church-commissioners-and-the-task-groups-2015.aspx)

## **Rain-soaked pope braves storm to comfort typhoon victims**

Pope Francis, wearing a plastic poncho against gusting winds and driving rain, kept a promise on Saturday to comfort survivors of a devastating 2013 typhoon but a new storm forced him to leave early.

The pope flew to Tacloban, ground zero of Typhoon Haiyan, which devastated the area

around Leyte Island 14 months ago, killing at least 6,300 people, leaving a million others homeless and displacing four million.

The strong wind blew the white skull cap from Francis' head and rippled his white cassock as he disembarked from his plane. He donned the same type of yellow, transparent poncho worn by the hundreds of thousands of people in the area as tropical storm Mekkhala hit, with wind gusts of up to 130 km/h (80 mph).

At a Mass near the airport, he put aside his prepared homily and delivered a very personal, emotional message of comfort to survivors, who stood amid puddles in mud-soaked fields and along roadsides.

He told them that he had vowed to make the trip in November 2013 when he saw reports of the devastation Haiyan had caused. "I felt that I had to be here ... I am here to be with you, perhaps a little late, I have to say, but I am here," he said.

The Pope, speaking through an interpreter who translated his comments into English from his native Spanish, said he "respected the feelings" of those who felt they had been let down by God

because of the disaster but implored them to move forward in their faith.

"Many of you have asked the Lord, 'Why?' And to each of you the Lord is responding to your hearts from his heart ... so many of you have lost everything. I don't know what to say to you but the Lord does know what to say to you," he said.

Nearly 3,000 victims are buried in the city's almost half-hectare mass grave site. Hundreds are still unaccounted for.

He asked the crowd to hold a moment of silence and thanked those who helped in the rescue effort after the worst recorded storm ever to make landfall.

"This is what comes from my heart and forgive me if I have no other words to express," Francis said.

The papal Mass was accelerated and the remainder of the programme - a visit to a nearby cathedral, lunch with survivors and the blessing of a new centre for the poor - was compacted so he could leave four hours early because of worsening conditions.

In the cathedral, he apologised for leaving early. "I'm sad about this, truly saddened," he said.

The Vatican said he blessed the centre from his car. He also stopped briefly at the home of a poor fisherman on his way into Tacloban city after the Mass.

Minutes after the Pope's plane left for Manila, a jet carrying 11 people, including Philippine Cabinet members, overshot the runway at Tacloban because of the storm. No one was hurt but authorities closed the airport.