



Methodist Church calls on NI politicians for post-election negotiations on Brexit, RHI and HIA

The Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland issued the following

statement regarding the forthcoming elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly:

In the light of the forthcoming elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland urges all candidates to conduct themselves with civility and decorum so that none of the fears or promises of something more brutal will materialise.

Petty point-scoring and perpetual fault-finding further insults the electorate and adds to our collective sense of public disillusion and cynicism with the elected politicians and political parties which form the backdrop to this election, leading to real concerns of voter apathy and alienation.

The Council strongly urges the electorate not to shirk its democratic responsibility even if voters feel that politicians have. We owe it to ourselves to consider who is best to represent us in improving the current situation, healing divisions and creating a more forward-looking society and to make our voices heard at the ballot box.

We also urge all parties to engage in a short, focused, positive post-election negotiation phase so the important business such as the

budget, Brexit, the Renewal Heat Incentive Inquiry and the consequences of the Historical Institutions Abuse Inquiry can be dealt with swiftly and in the interest of all the people of Northern Ireland.

If political parties do not respond positively and with humility to the obvious public dismay at present or are unable to accept that performance levels need improved then the Council respectfully requests that they should be honest with the electorate so that effective means of governance can be devised and delivered expeditiously.

Finally, the Council calls on all our Methodist people to vote and to be persistent in prayer for this election and the negotiations that will follow.

Moderator joins Hungarian Reformation celebrations

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, is in Hungary this week with leaders of the Hungarian Reformed Church (HRC) as it celebrates the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Accompanied by former Moderator, Very Rev. Dr. Ivan Patterson, both ministers will travel to Debrecen (today 30 January), a designated 'Reformation City' in the north-east of the country. "This week I am looking forward to two events that celebrate the Reformation, our own 'Luther 500' conference in Belfast on Thursday and the 500th anniversary celebrations in the Great Reformed Church in Debrecen, where I will bring the greetings of the General Assembly," Dr. Sellar said.

"The city is Hungary's second largest and has rich connections with the Reformation from its earliest years. The ideas of Martin Luther and the influence of the Swiss Reformation lead the city to become known as the 'Hungarian Geneva' and 'The Calvinist Rome'.

"Through Ivan and others, PCI has established a strong partnership with the Hungarian Reformed Church. I am looking forward to joining with them and representatives from other European reformed churches as well as some from further afield, in celebrating the continuing legacy of the Reformation," he said.

Known in Hungary as Magyar Református Egyház, HRC incorporates Hungarian Reformed congregations in and outside the country, in



Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, is in Hungary this week with leaders of the Hungarian Reformed Church

particular Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Croatia.

Dr. Patterson's relationship with the Reformed Church in eastern Europe goes back to 1994. As the minister of Newcastle Presbyterian Church at the time, the congregation established links with a Hungarian-speaking HRC church in Romania. "The Hungarian Reformed Church is made up of many Reformed congregations in Hungary and areas that were formerly part of the

country prior to the First World War,” Dr. Patterson said.

“The HRC Presiding President, Bishop István Szabó, was our guest at the General Assembly three years ago and I look forward to meeting him again and joining with our brothers and sisters in celebrating this 500th anniversary and the ongoing development of our relationship with the Reformed Church.”

PCI began to develop its relationships with HRC in the mid 1980s and by 1988 a number of direct congregation-to-congregation links had been established. In more recent years other links have been established and personnel have been sent to serve with the Church in a number of locations and countries. Based in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, PCI overseas mission personnel Csaba and Ilona Veres serve in areas of youth and children's ministry that come under the influence of HRC, PCI's partner church in Romania.

Irish link up for Biblical training in the Arctic

The Rev. David Luckman a C of I clergyman, is leaving for the Arctic to lead a two week School



The Cathedral of the Arctic

of Biblical Training. He is going at the invitation of Dundrod man, Bishop Darren McCartney, who is a former incumbent of Knocknamuckley parish in the Diocese of Down and Dromore.

Schools of Biblical Training (SBT) are short conferences that help equip church leaders to teach God's Word clearly and faithfully.

David Luckman is the Team Leader of Crosslinks Ireland, a mission society which has historic links with the Arctic. In 1928 the Rev. Arthur Turner went to Pangnirtung in the Arctic as a Missionary with the newly formed Bible Churchmen's



Rev. David Luckman

Missionary Society (Crosslinks). His brother, the Rev. Jack Turner, joined him the following year and both men ministered faithfully in the Arctic for many years.

The Arthur Turner Training School (ATTS) was opened in the 1970's in the south Baffin community of Pangnirtung to serve the churches in the Arctic. ATTS has now moved its location to the capital city of Iqaluit. On the 27th February 2017, the School will host a Crosslinks School of Biblical Training (SBT)

David Luckman, will teach basic principles for preaching the Bible, studying the Gospel of Mark and Philippians over the SBT's two week duration. SBTs are currently being organised in Myanmar, Kenya, Nepal, Cambodia, East Africa and Serbia.

Church will back rural revival efforts, says Irish bishop

Killaloe's Bishop Fintan Monahan has welcomed an ambitious new plan to revive rural Ireland and said the Church will do its best to be proactive in maintaining rural life.

The bishop's comments come following the announcement of 'Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development', a €60 million plan intended to revive Ireland's rural towns and generate 135,000 jobs.

"This action plan is a most welcome announcement for rural areas," Dr Monahan told *The Irish Catholic*, continuing: "Country towns, villages and remote areas have been struggling terribly in recent years and any grant aid will be a huge boost."



Bishop Fintan Monahan

Dr Monahan, who spoke ahead of his September ordination about how boosting life in rural Ireland should be a key task for the Church, later saying the Government should give it more attention, said, “Over the past six months in various Church areas in the diocese of Killaloe many people have expressed great concern about the struggle for communities to continue to thrive. In the few weeks before Christmas in almost every rural Church area, day centre and home for the elderly this, sadly, was a constant refrain.”

The bishop complimented those tasked with authoring and giving effect to the plan, saying: “Well done to the public representatives who are working in this area to bring about this important initiative which will help overcome rural isolation and hardship,” and added, “The Church will continue as far as possible also to be proactive in this area to ensure services are maintained, as far as resources will allow.”

However, others have reservations about the plan, with Fianna Fáil’s Éamon Ó Cuív TD saying it “lacks substance”, while NUI Maynooth’s Professor Jim Walsh said it “should be welcomed”, but would be “challenging” to implement. Expressing particular concern about the plan’s meaningful targets, he drew attention on RTÉ’s Morning Ireland to its failure to identify key issues. “What is missing from the plan is a prioritisation – of over 270 actions in there, there isn’t a shortlist of what are the top 10,” he said.

Farewell service for the Archbishop of Wales

The longest-serving Archbishop in the Anglican Communion, Dr Barry Morgan, is stepping down this week as leader of the Church in Wales, as he marks his 70th birthday. More than 500 people attended an emotional farewell service at

Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff, in celebration and thanksgiving for the contribution made by Dr Morgan during his years at the helm - nearly 14 as Archbishop and 17 as Bishop of Llandaff. In his sermon, the Archbishop told the congregation it had been an “enormous privilege” to have served them and he thanked people for their support.

He, in turn, was thanked warmly for all his ministry and given a standing ovation.

Representatives from every parish and from different areas of the Church’s life in Wales and from significant projects in which the Archbishop had been involved attended. Reflecting on his time in office, he said his years as Bishop of Llandaff had been very happy ones and he praised the role of local parishes and deaneries: “There is the joy of realising that without the input of churches, fewer food banks would exist, less help would be given to the homeless, the poor and asylum seekers.

Church people are at the forefront of most voluntary organisations and enable them to exist,” he said.

“I felt and feel embraced and supported by the clergy and there was and is a willingness to try



Archbishop Barry Morgan bids fond farewell on his retirement

new things and to think about doing things differently and a preparedness by parishes to work with diocesan officers in setting up ministry areas. For all of that, I give thanks. It has been an enormous privilege trying to serve you.”

At the end of the service, Paul Marshall, chairman of the Llandaff Diocesan Board of Finance, paid tribute to Dr Morgan and presented him with a gift on behalf of the diocese, saying: “The mark of any great human being is that they have both achieved an office and made a difference. You have more than achieved that and you will always be

remembered in the Province and in Llandaff with great affection as someone who truly did that.”

The Dean of Llandaff, Gerwyn Capon, thanked the Archbishop on behalf of the clergy. He said, “In each generation of the Church’s life, someone is raised up from among us to serve God’s people and in you, Barry, we have had such a person....the intense level of your commitment to fulfil the charge laid on you when you were consecrated has marked you out as a Welsh bishop of remarkable charisma, courage, wisdom, vision and most of all, humanity.”

Dr Morgan has strongly supported the ministry of women over the years and recently expressed delight at being able to ordain the first woman Bishop in Wales. Looking back on his own decades of ministry, he said the job of a Bishop or Archbishop is to try to give a lead “while still respecting those who disagree.” The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has described Dr Morgan as “gracious, encouraging and full of the presence of Christ.”

Bishop vows to continue campaigning for change on gays In C of E



Bishop of Liverpool Paul Bayes, formerly associated with the C of E's evangelical wing, said his views were 'profoundly changed' by meeting LGBT people, especially within his own family.

The Bishop of Liverpool has vowed to continue campaigning for gay marriage, days after the C of E announced it would not change its teaching following more than two years of debate.

Known for his pro-LGBT stance, Rt Rev Paul Bayes, described himself as a "bastard bishop" as he stood by a report published last week that refused to offer gay couples an official blessing in church.

Giving an insight into the depth of division in the Church, he admitted conservative colleagues could not even be in the same room as him because of his liberal stance.

The report published by the C of E's House of Bishops on Friday refused to change its stance that marriage is exclusively between one man and one woman. It insisted it would offer "maximum freedom" for LGBT couples within the current laws and teaching of the Church and promised "a fresh tone and culture of welcome and support for lesbian and gay people".

Bayes acknowledged many on the liberal wing of the C of E would feel an acute "sense of betrayal" after he spoke in support of gay marriage but endorsed the report by the body of bishops as a whole.

"I believe that the suggestions in the report, insufficient as they are, are nonetheless necessary; that they will help LGBT people in the church, will make a church less toxic than the one we have now," he wrote in a post on the blog [ViaMedia.News](#). But he added he would continue to work for "greater freedom" for LGBT couples in the Church.

"I will continue to seek the right way to be a bishop, in this season on this matter when those who disagree with me outnumber me," he wrote.

"I will struggle for a church where the love of the loving will be honoured, whomever they love.

"I will reach for and advocate for and enable the maximum freedom now, and I'll pray and work and hope for still greater freedom later."

The Bishop of Liverpool's comments come after the conservative Bishop of Maidstone, Rt Rev Rod Thomas, welcomed the report but raised concerns the promise to allow "maximum freedoms" might lead to "a wide range of church activities and practices which effectively undermine the Church's doctrine".

In a statement on Saturday he wrote: "Our current agreement to work together is provisional and that future work must take place within the parameters of the Church's doctrine."

GAFCON UK, a conservative grouping within the wider Anglican Communion, also welcomed the report but said it was not confident it would maintain the status quo for long.

"We need to express our serious reservations about the many ambiguities in the text relating to how we as Anglicans understand truth and goodness, sin and salvation, and how we should carry out pastoral and liturgical practice," a statement released on Friday read.

"We are concerned that the emphasis on freedom given to clergy in terms of pastoral practice, and the possibility of further revision to the church's teaching in future, will do nothing to prevent a trajectory which aligns with the ethics of contemporary culture rather than the challenging but life-giving teaching of the Bible."

Scots Moderator horrified by US travel ban

Right Rev Dr Russell Barr, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland says he has been horrified by President Donald Trump's Executive Order on Immigration.

In a statement, Dr Barr comments: "As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, I am horrified that President Trump has signed an executive order suspending admission of refugees to the United States for 120 days, and banning travellers from



Right Rev Dr Russell Barr

seven countries from entering the US for the next three months.

“Over the weekend thousands of people have gathered in US airports to protest and there has been international condemnation of the order.

“The protests and the condemnation has my full support.

“History is littered with instances in which human distrust, xenophobia, and discrimination has sown hatred and conflict; our own desire for self-preservation taken at the exclusion of others.

“And yet throughout history the bible has called Christians to live beyond hatred and fear, demonstrating a radical hospitality where the stranger finds welcome and refuge is provided for those who are oppressed.

“This faithful call is reflected in the [recent statement given by Rev J Herbert Nelson II](#), stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and we must be vocal in our support for them as they seek to hold their government to account.

“As for us, it is vitally important that the Church of Scotland shines a light on this injustice, that we pray for all those concerned, and that we act to make our own governments aware of Christs call to care for others, not just ourselves and our own.”

Christian Aid tells President Trump to read his Bible on refugees

A rejection of refugees, whatever their faith, is a rejection of Christian values, UK-based charity Christian Aid warned yesterday.

Responding to President Trump’s comments over the weekend, in which he asserted his

intention to prioritise Syrian Christian refugees, Christian Aid has spoken out against favouring specific religious minorities, saying that to do so ignores the central message of the Gospel.

Tom Viita, Head of Advocacy at Christian Aid, commented: 'At the heart of the Christian faith is a clear command to 'love the stranger' and to stand with the vulnerable, whoever they may be. To follow Christian teaching means to welcome people in need - whatever their faith - not prioritise people who happen to share one's own beliefs.

'A rejection of refugees, whatever their faith, is a rejection of Christian values. Trump would do well to read his bible before enacting discriminatory policies.'

Responding to President Trump's executive order to halt all refugee admissions and bar people temporarily from seven Muslim-majority countries, Viita continued:

'Six decades ago we came together to establish international laws to avoid repeating the horrors experienced by millions of people during the first two world wars. President Trump is now effectively ripping up the principle that every



Students from the choir of St Mary's College, Derry, singing at an ecumenical service at First Derry Presbyterian Church during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

person, irrespective of their faith or nationality, has the right to seek protection and sanctuary.

‘World leaders and ordinary people need to take a stand against Trump’s attempts to destroy hard won freedoms and human rights.

‘President Trump is not alone in his abhorrent attitude towards refugees. We are seeing the normalisation of an increasingly hostile rhetoric

towards people whose suffering is, frankly, beyond what most of us can imagine.

‘More than eleven million people from Syria alone have been displaced from their homes, owing to the bloodshed of the six-year civil war in the country. The reality is that most Syrian refugees are hosted in, and by, developing countries. Rich nations, including the UK and the US, must not turn a blind eye to people in desperate need. Resettlement of refugees is part of the path to peace.’

Christian Aid works through its local partners around the world to support refugee communities displaced by conflict. In the UK and Europe, we advocate for long-term practical solutions to global displacement, including the resettlement and relocation of refugees, as well as greater investment in addressing the root causes of displacement worldwide.