

April 3, 2018



Image of the day
Fair Head, Ballycastle, County Antrim



Presbyterian and Methodist Churches 'Grave concern' at NI Office proposals

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has expressed its 'grave concern' at proposals to allow the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health, over the head of the Northern Ireland Executive.

In a statement it said, "The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's General Council Standing Committee, meeting today (19 March), noted with grave concern the proposal of the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland to seek powers to give direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health.

April 3, 2018

“To do so at a time when the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive is functioning, represents a serious undermining of the devolved settlement, when there is already significant tension regarding other aspects of the way Northern Ireland is being affected post Brexit.

“The Presbyterian Church in Ireland objected strongly to the Westminster government previously imposing laws on Northern Ireland that removed the protection of the lives of unborn children. This damaging step was taken over the heads of our elected Assembly, with the excuse given that the devolved institutions were not functioning at that time. No such excuse for the undermining of devolution can be used at this time.



Rev Dr Tom McKnight, Methodist Church President

April 3, 2018

The statement concluded by saying, “The Presbyterian Church calls upon the Secretary of State not to take the step he proposes and to let the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly seek to find a consensus way forward, in line with the principle upon which devolution is founded.”

A statement issued by The Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland also stated its grave concern “at the proposal to empower the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give directions to the Department of Health on abortion services, usurping the role of the Northern Ireland Executive.

It continues, “At the time we lamented the extent to which abortion legislation for Northern Ireland was liberalised at Westminster. It was done while the Executive here was not functioning. It is functioning now, albeit with various difficulties and we counsel against the Secretary of State acting in any way that undermines the role of the Executive.

“This is about more than the difficult matter of abortion, about which there are differing and sincerely held opinions. This is about the purpose, value and integrity of devolution. We hope that the Secretary of State will tread wisely and cautiously and enable the Assembly and the Executive to fulfil the roles entrusted to them by the people of Northern Ireland”. The statement was issued by the Secretary to the Council, Rev Dr David Clements.

[The statement issued by Most Rev John McDowell, Primate of the Church of Ireland may be found on CNI March 20.](#)

Church's treatment of Smyth victim 'horrendous', admits Archbishop Brady

Maeve Sheehan in the Sunday Independent - The former archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Seán Brady, has expressed his "sadness" and "pain" over his role in an internal church inquiry into paedophile priest Brendan Smyth, which involved swearing a 14-year-old victim to secrecy.

Cardinal Brady, who was part of an internal canonical inquiry into Smyth's activities, said he was "too focused" on getting a statement from the boy and acknowledged it was a "horrendous" situation for the child.

In a new book about Catholicism in Ireland, Cardinal Brady told the author, Derek Scally, an Irish Times journalist:

"Hauled into a room with three fellows there, his father wasn't there, it was horrendous, really.

"That is only dawning on me now, really... his double victimisation."

In his first interview on the Brendan Smyth controversy since he appeared at an abuse inquiry in 2014, Cardinal Brady tells the author it was "strange" it did not cross his mind at the time that he had a moral obligation to report Smyth to the gardaí.

Scally interviewed Cardinal Brady for his book, *The Best Catholics in the World*, which examines the hold of the



church in Ireland and its demise in recent years. Scally interviewed him on four occasions and addressed the Smyth affair at their final meeting.

Cardinal Brady faced a torrent of criticism in 2010 when it emerged that, two decades earlier, he had been part of an internal church investigation into Smyth, Ireland's most notorious paedophile priest.

In 1975, as a priest and canon lawyer, Cardinal Brady was present at interviews with two boys who had been abused by Smyth. The boys were bound to an oath of secrecy and were not allowed to tell even their parents.

April 3, 2018

Further details were revealed by one of the two boys, Brendan Boland, in a documentary aired on BBC Northern Ireland in 2012, and later in his book, *Sworn to Silence*.

Transcripts of the Boland interviews, which he obtained through legal discovery, revealed the inappropriate and intrusive line of questioning he was subjected to, such as whether he had done such things before.

Cardinal Brady stood down as archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland in 2014 on reaching the age of 75. A year later, he appeared at a historic abuse inquiry in Northern Ireland, at which he offered an "unreserved apology" to all of Smyth's victims.

C of E to impose quota for BAME clergy, report reveals

The Church of England will introduce a quota for BAME clergy, roll out anti-racism training and contextualise church statues "that may cause pain or offence", a leaked report has revealed.

Last year, church officials set up a task force to investigate racism after the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, admitted that he was "sorry and ashamed... that we are still institutionally racist".

The number of clergy who identify as of a UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) background has historically been low. Of the 42 diocesan bishops across the country, the only one to currently hail from a black or minority ethnic (BAME)

April 3, 2018



background is the Bishop of Chelmsford, Guli Francis-Dehqani.

According to the 2019 Ministry Statistics, 93.7 per cent of “senior staff” – which includes bishops, archdeacons and cathedral clergy – described themselves as “white British”. This marks a minor decrease from 2012, when the figure was 96 per cent.

April 3, 2018

Now a leaked report has revealed how the task force plans to address such imbalances, with a series of recommendations such as: a 30 per cent quota for BAME clergy, an overhaul of education within CofE schools and clergy curriculum, for all recruitment shortlists to include “at least one appointable UKME candidate”, and plans to “deal with” controversial statues and monuments.

The report, **From Lament to Action: Report of the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce**, leaked to The Spectator, said that there should be “one UKME clergy elected from each region”.

All of the reforms, the report concludes, will be funded and overseen by the creation of a “Racial Justice Unit” for a five-year fixed-term basis. The report is due before the Archbishops’ Council next week, with a final version being published on April 22.

In February 2020, the General Synod, the Church of England’s legislative body, resolved “to continue, with great effort and urgency, to stamp out all forms of conscious or unconscious racism” and to commit to “increase the participation and representation of lay and ordained BAME Anglicans”.

Four months later, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that the institution should reconsider portraying Jesus as white and think “very carefully” about its controversial monuments in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests, adding that “some will have to come down”.

April 3, 2018

The draft report also suggests that church officials must “acknowledge, repent and take decisive action to address the shameful history and legacy” of the Church’s involvement in the historic transatlantic slave trade and “deal with any part of the church building that may cause pain or offence”.

It also suggested that a fast-track leadership programme for clergy deemed “ones to watch” should have a minimum of 30 per cent UKME participation “in order to build up pipeline supply”, that the CofE develops an “online module for anti-racist learning programme”, and that all recruitment shortlists include “at least one appointable UKME candidate”.

Among the other recommendations, it also suggests that all CoE primary and secondary schools “develop a broad RE curriculum with specific reference to the promotion of racial justice”, mark Black History Month, and celebrate “diverse” saints and models.

After the report was leaked, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York released a statement saying: “The time for talking about tackling systemic racism has long since passed: this is a moment for decisive action.”

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Daily Prayer: Common Worship Morning and Evening Prayer

April 3, 2018

The Church of England

[<https://cofe-daily-prayer.captivate.fm/>]



Annual Connor Diocesan Mother's Union Festival Service

At 11am on Sunday 21 March on the theme Rebuilding Hope and Confidence. Although this service was livestreamed only, it will be available to view for a month on the Belfast Cathedral Facebook page. In accordance with regulations, there was no congregation in the cathedral. However Mothers' Union members across the diocese were invited to watch the service at the time of streaming or later.

The service was led by the Very Reverend Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast, assisted by Mrs Sally Cotter, Connor

April 3, 2018

Diocesan President. The preacher was Mrs June Butler, Mother's Union All-Ireland President. Music was provided by Jack Wilson, with a choir of 4 voices under the direction of Matthew Owens. The Anthems are "Geistliches Lied" by Johannes Brahms and "Ave Maria" by Sir Edward Elgar.

The orders of service can be downloaded from the cathedral website at

[www.belfastcathedral.org/news]

You can listen to the service on the Telephone Audio Service by phoning 028 9532 0355.

Farewell to Clogher

On Thursday at 7.30pm there will be a Farewell Service by Zoom for Archbishop John McDowell to mark his farewell from Clogher Diocese.

Belfast Cathedral Daily Lent Reflections

Monday to Saturday by Rev. Ron Elsdon, are posted on the cathedral website from 8am each day.

C of I Marriage Council webinar

For all Ministers or Church representatives interested in running Marriage Courses, CIMC are hosting a 1 hour webinar on Thursday 29th from 2pm - 3pm to walk through the Alpha Marriage Course. If you are a church leader or work with couples and you would be interested in finding out about this great resource, please consider signing up for this free event.

April 3, 2018

[<https://coimarrriagecouncil.eventbrite.ie/>]

New Belfast Harbour Community Awards

The Belfast Harbour Community Awards Fund is a new programme designed to help support the work of grass-roots community organisations and charities in Northern Ireland.

Organisations can apply for grants of up to £2,500 to help transform their communities.

So, if you're a sports coach who needs equipment; an environmental volunteer who needs litter pickers; or you run a community Arts project, Belfast Harbour Community Awards Fund i want to hear from you.

For more information or to download your application form, visit

[<https://www.belfast-harbour.co.uk/corporate/community-awards-fund>]

Media review

DUP will bring down Stormont, says LCC Chief

Sunday Independent

The loyalist group that includes representatives of the UVF, UDA and Red Hand Commando has claimed the DUP may bring down the Stormont Executive if the Northern Ireland Protocol isn't scrapped.

April 3, 2018

Loyalist Communities Council chairman David Campbell, who wrote to Prime Minister Boris Johnson earlier this month to reveal the organisations were withdrawing support for the Good Friday Agreement, has revealed the issue was raised during talks between the organisation and the party three weeks ago.

“We make no secret of the fact we see this ending in the bringing down of the Northern Ireland Executive. Arlene Foster was left under no illusion that this is something she would have to take responsibility for,” Mr Campbell tells yesterday's Sunday Independent.

Loyalists threaten: 'Nobody is off-limits'

Sunday Independent

Tensions are rising over the NI protocol as politicians in the south are being blamed, writes Rodney Edwards

In east Belfast, tattered Union flags hang from lampposts and murals depicting loyalist gunmen with words of defiance leap off gable walls. Amid the red, white and blue are black-and-white images featuring balaclava-wearing paramilitaries poised for violence.

The slogans hark back to Northern Ireland's violent past, but these days there are fresh tensions over what loyalists rail against as "the new enemy of Ulster": the Irish government.

They are angry over the last government's role in a Brexit deal that has resulted in Northern Ireland being effectively cut off from the rest of the United Kingdom through a sea Border.

April 3, 2018

The source of their anger is the Northern Ireland Protocol which was negotiated and agreed by the UK government and European Union, including the Irish government. Security sources say the loyalist threats are all "bluster" and are anxious to play down reports of widespread unrest.

A failure of unionist diplomacy has left it more isolated than for decades

News Letter

Sam McBride writes - More than a decade ago, one of the most influential but least well known Northern Ireland civil servants wrote something which received little attention. Robert Ramsay set out concisely a reality which has existed for more than a century, but which is more starkly clear now than has been the case for decades.

Dr Ramsay, who as principal private secretary to Brian Faulkner was at the side of the last Prime Minister of Northern Ireland as the old Stormont parliament was swept away in 1972, was also principal private secretary to the first Northern Ireland Secretary of State and eventually a senior Brussels bureaucrat.

The Ulsterman would become the European Parliament's director general for research and then chief of staff to the President of the European Parliament, Henry Plumb, in the late 1980s.

[\[https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/sam-mcbride-a-failure-of-unionist-diplomacy-has-left-it-more-isolated-than-for-decades-3172052?utm\\]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/sam-mcbride-a-failure-of-unionist-diplomacy-has-left-it-more-isolated-than-for-decades-3172052?utm\)

April 3, 2018

The legal EU action and roadmap to a deal.

RTE

The Northern Ireland Protocol: EU legal action and the roadmap to a deal

[[] <https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/0320/1205052-northern-ireland-protocol-brexit/>]

SDLP and Alliance voice support for Stormont centenary stone monument that Sinn Féin 'vetoed'

The Irish News.

[[] <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2021/03/19/news/sdip-and-alliance-voice-support-for-stormont-centenary-stone-monument-that-sinn-fe-in-vetoed--2260147/>]

Focus - The Church of England has something to say to Meghan Markle

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's claim they secretly tied the knot three days before the 2018 royal wedding has been called into question by members of the Church of England.

During the pair's bombshell Oprah Winfrey interview, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex revealed they got married in a private ceremony conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby (via Bustle and The Sun). "You know, three days before our wedding, we got married. No one knows that," Markle told Winfrey, adding, "The vows

April 3, 2018

that we have framed in our room are just the two of us in our backyard with the Archbishop of Canterbury”.

This would have been a romantic idea, but Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's claim that they got married in a backyard three days before their actual ceremony has heads turning, because the "wedding" would not have been legally binding. In order for someone to get married in the UK, a ceremony needs to be carried out by a "religious minister," priest or a member of the clergy, and in one of two places: a church, a registry office, or in a venue approved by a local council. The ceremony also needs to be conducted in front of at least two independent witnesses (via UK Government). The Spectator took the additional step of tracking down the special license for Harry and Meghan's wedding, which shows that the ceremony was always meant to take place at St. George's Chapel in Windsor, where it was held in May of 2018.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's claims of a wedding before the globally televised event were also debunked by a vicar, the Rev. Mark Edwards, who had gone to the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury to get some clarification about a private ceremony, because he was at the receiving end of many requests for private ceremonies during the coronavirus lockdown. In a conversation with Chronicle Live, Edwards revealed he was told the Archbishop of Canterbury "had a private conversation with the couple in the garden about the wedding," but also that "no wedding took place until the televised national event."

Chronicle Live says Harry and Meghan's story was questioned by the Church of England's vicar precisely



because of the two-witness requirement. Matters were further clarified for Edwards when a member of the Archbishop's staff at Lambeth Palace told him that: "Justin [The Archbishop] does not do private weddings. Meghan is an American, she does not understand."

The vicar explained that he had done his homework because he felt the need to get some clarity on the Church of England's wedding policy. Edwards had said that it was "in the public interest for the leader of the church to put the record straight [because] It puts us priests in a difficult position on what constitutes a Church of England wedding" (via Honey).

The couple were married in an elaborate ceremony at Windsor Castle on May 19, 2018.

Harry and Meghan's claim that they had married three days before the official ceremony is not the only part of the

April 3, 2018

interview that is raising eyebrows. Meghan also left Britons especially confused when she said: "I didn't grow up knowing much about the royal family. It wasn't something that was part of conversation at home. It wasn't something that we followed." She also denied going online to research Prince Harry (via Hello). In response, one British journalist tweeted: "I support you Meghan babes but you definitely googled him." Another viewer said: "Meghan didn't do research about Harry before she met? Could not be me, I would have it all memorised."

As if to question Meghan's claim as well, Hello, which reports extensively on royal families across Europe, pulled out and reported on a 2014 post from Meghan's old blog "The Tig" where she brings up, and then talks about the wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton. Meghan wrote: "Little girls dream of being princesses. I, for one, was all about She-Ra, Princess of Power. For those of you unfamiliar with the '80s cartoon reference, She-Ra is the twin sister of He-Man, and a sword-wielding royal rebel known for her strength. We're definitely not talking about Cinderella here."

Meghan adds: "Grown women seem to retain this childhood fantasy. Just look at the pomp and circumstance surrounding the royal wedding and endless conversation about Princess Kate." Courtesy of The List

**Meghan is an American, she does not understand':
Vicar says Church of England told him that ...**

Daily Mail

April 3, 2018

Rev Mark Edwards urges the Archbishop to clarify after claims by Duchess of Sussex that her and Harry had private 'garden wedding' have 'caused ...

[[] <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9363159/Vicar-says-Church-told-Meghan-Harrys-garden-wedding-conversation-Archbishop.html>]



Pointers for Prayer

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
Grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross,
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

April 3, 2018

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and
simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy
friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

As Jesus, in the days before his passion,
offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears,
we pray for those who suffer, those who are in need,

April 3, 2018

and those who seek reconciliation...

God of compassion,
you know our faults and yet you promised to forgive.
Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom.
Open our hearts to gladness,
call dry bones to dance,
and restore to us the joy of your salvation. Amen.

God of suffering and glory,
in Jesus Christ you reveal the way of life
through the path of obedience.
Inscribe your law in our hearts,
that in life we may not stray from you,
but may be your people. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

**Have you never heard? Have you never understood?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the
earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can
measure the depths of his understanding. He gives
power to the weak and strength to the powerless.**

Isaiah 40:28-29 NLT

It was Samuel Butler the 19th Century author who observed,
“Life is one long process of getting tired.” However young
and fit you may be the time comes when you need to rest.
Our bodies demand it! Isaiah points out that God is
completely different and is able to work continually without
any rest. He never grows weak or weary.

April 3, 2018



What an encouragement this is! It means that God can be completely relied upon at all times. We are more than aware that our work level changes with our moods and the time of day. If we are tired or it is getting towards the end of the day our work rate is very different from what it is when we are feeling refreshed and alert. How wonderful that God is not subject to these variations because it means that we know that we can reach out to him at any time with confidence. Even though people are making demands upon him all over the world he never needs to take time off or go on holiday. He is always available to help.

The amazing truth is that there is no limit at all to God – not to his strength nor to his understanding. However much we know, our understanding is always severely limited. But not so with God. He understands everything and so when we

April 3, 2018

place ourselves in his hands we can have the confidence of knowing that he not only comprehends everything about us but he can also meet our needs perfectly. I love the way in which Isaiah puts it. He expresses surprise that his hearers had not understood these things. In more contemporary language it is as if he is saying, “Where have you been? How have you missed out on this?” But the sad truth is that many people are quite unaware of how amazing our God is – and we need to take every opportunity to tell them.

QUESTION

In what ways are you encouraged by God’s unlimited strength and understanding?

PRAYER

Lord God, I worship you. You are worthy of all my praise and adoration. Amen.

