



## Ireland's young pro-lifers are confounding stereotypes



**The new generation of campaigners includes Wendy Grace (second left)**

**In the campaign to protect the Eighth Amendment, the most visible pro-lifers are educated women, Mary Kenny writes in the Catholic Herald.**

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The mainstream media – British and overseas – is starting to report on Ireland’s referendum on May 25 to repeal, or retain, the Eighth Amendment to the Irish constitution, which protects the life – “where practicable” – of the unborn child.

Such reporting tends to fall into predictable clichés about “modernising” liberals versus “conservative and Catholic” Ireland.

But in setting up this rather tired duality, it seems to me the media are missing a more interesting story – which is the increased prominence of an intelligent and articulate generation of Irishwomen who are defending the pro-life cause with poise and confidence.

Two younger pro-life women now often seen on Irish television are notably impressive: Maria Steen, 37, of the Iona Institute, and Wendy Grace, 31, a presenter on a Dublin Christian radio channel called Spirit Radio. Both are terrific speakers, fearless yet compassionate, and either of them could be candidates for a brilliant political career. As it happens, both are also pretty, which shouldn’t matter, but in a visual age appearance can bolster communication. Both are married and are mothers.

So while the overseas media relapses into tired old tropes about the declining power of the Catholic Church, the Church itself, while stating its position on life issues, is not so much to the fore in the current referendum campaign.

Instead, the most visible elements defending the pro-life cause are ... women. Cora Sherlock, an accomplished lawyer, of the energetic Pro Life Campaign, and Dr Ruth Cullen, a clinical psychologist of Love Both (mother and baby), are equally remarkable. Caroline Simons is another clever and knowledgeable lawyer, who last weekend appeared on RTÉ’s *The Late Late Show* arguing the case against liberal abortion for Ireland.

Nobody would deny that there are difficult and anguishing cases – rape, incest and a diagnosis that the baby is so handicapped it cannot survive – and in public debates, these women have faced tough questioning. And it’s quite right that the public discourse should involve hard questions, addressing difficult cases.

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But it's time to recognise the political narrative here: it's not the "conservative" power of the Catholic Church that is sustaining the campaign to protect the Eighth Amendment: it's the driving force of a cohort of educated and motivated Irishwomen, who are bringing some of the fierceness of the maternal instinct to this serious constitutional matter.

## General Synod overview



**A 2019 calendar from the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal to support community initiatives in the developing world will be aunched at General Synod.**

The General Synod begins in Armagh City Hotel next Thursday morning and continues until Saturday. The preacher at the Synod Service in St Patrick's cathedral on Thursday morning will be the Bishop of Clogher and the Synod's chaplain will be Canon Shane Forster, writes the C of I Correspondent to the Irish Times

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In addition to the reports of the Standing Committee and the RCB, the Synod will consider proposed legislation for an order for Morning and Evening Prayer for use on Sundays, for adult safeguarding, and for ecumenical and lay canons for St Fin Barre's cathedral. There will also be bills to provide for the future unification of the Diocese of Limerick & Killaloe and Tuam, Killala & Achonry, and to amend the diocesan representation at Synod.

On Thursday, in the context of the report of the Standing Committee, there will be a launch of a new prayer app. This is an initiative of the Bishop of Meath and Kildare and has been developed through the Central Communications Board.

A book of reflections, by the Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, on the subject of the empowerment of women through literacy will be launched on Thursday. Over seven days in September 2017, Bishop Burrows visited 66 churches and schools giving a short sermon at each venue related to one of the 66 books of the Bible. The sermons provide a 2017 social, spiritual snapshot as well as an insight into the Church of Ireland mind set of the present day.

The Council for Mission will have a Mission Breakfast on Friday morning at which the guest speaker will be the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland. John Bell, a member of the Iona Community, Presbyterian minister, broadcaster, hymn-writer and international lecturer, will be the Changing Attitude Ireland speaker at their lunch-time session on Friday. He will speak on 'God, Delight and Diversity', and plans briefly to explore problematic approaches to scripture, the created order as diverse by design, and the need for the laity to have their intelligence, experience and aspirations inform the Church's deliberations on sexuality.

## **Enniskillen Cathedral's Iona Prayer Room opens as part of 'Thy Kingdom Come'**

The parish of St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen, is opening its Iona Prayer Room in the Cathedral Hall each day from Thursday,



## The Iona Prayer Room.

10th May until Sunday, 20th May to facilitate private prayer as part of “Thy Kingdom Come” initiative.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has encouraged

people to make prayer a priority in their private and public worship and has endorsed and supported the “Thy Kingdom Come” initiative.

He wrote: “If we’re honest, most of us would admit that prayer is not always easy, or enjoyable, and rarely comes naturally. We struggle with distractions, anxious thoughts and commitments.

“Prayer is not about us making efforts to knock on the door of a God too busy or distant to listen, but instead, it is responding to a God who has already started the conversation with us. A God who wants nothing more than to spend time with us, help us grow, and surprise us,” he said.

The Dean of Clogher, the Very Revd Kenneth Hall said: “Prayer begins with presence. When we turn up, God is already there waiting to hear our concerns, share in our joys, and respond to our questions; he is there to listen, comfort, and encourage.”

“In recent years, the Archbishop has encouraged people to make prayer a priority in their private and public worship and has endorsed and supported the Thy Kingdom Come prayer initiative. This takes place every year in the 10 days prior to Pentecost beginning on Ascension Day; the period when the disciples were told to pray and await the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1).

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“We wish to join with Christians around the world to pray “Thy Kingdom Come”, and we have organised a series of prayer initiatives to run between Thursday 10th May and Sunday 20th May. We do hope that you will join with us in prayer, either in the privacy of your own home, by spending time in the Iona Prayer Room, or joining us in public worship.

Thy Kingdom Come arrangements;

The Iona Prayer Room will be open daily from 10am until 7pm every day for private prayer.

- We encourage everyone to just turn up and pray for 15-30 minutes.
- Resources will be available to help those who want a time of structured prayer.

A service of Evening Prayer in the Iona Room

- This will take place every evening, except Sundays, beginning at 7pm.
- Sunday Evening Services will be held in St Macartin’s Cathedral at 7pm.

Thy Kingdom Come Prayer Letter

- A prayer letter outlining specific prayer points and Scripture readings will be available from Sunday 6th May and may be used by those who prefer to pray at home.

## **Waterford workshop on Church tourism**

Sarah Crossland from the National Churches Trust (UK) will lead a workshop on church tourism and public engagement in Christ Church cathedral, Waterford, on Tuesday at 6.30pm.

This workshop will examine the benefits of developing church tourism and topics such as creating the perfect welcome, interpreting heritage for visitors, large scale events, heritage trails, tours, volunteer training and publicity/tourism promotion. Ms Crossland will also present case studies of successful and innovative projects being implemented across the UK.

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## Europa abseil fund raiser for local parish church

Katrina McKechnie, Giselle Coulter and Jackie Coulter by abseiling from the roof of the Europa Hotel have raised almost £5,000.

The team, along with their 'Manager' Elaine, were raising funds towards a £10,000 target for the purchase of chairs for the newly renovated interior of St Stephen's Church in Millfield.

**Abseillers Katrina, Giselle and Jackie.**



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Team Ministry Leader, the Rev Canon James Carson, said the parish has almost completed phase two of its renovation project.



**There was plenty of vocal support for the abseilers, who stepped over the edge on April 22... from the safety of solid ground.**

## **Installation of Derry canon**

The congregation at Rev Canon Paul Hoey's Installation Service in St Columb's Cathedral, were urged never to forget that buildings like the Cathedral – and the very structure of the Church of Ireland – were built in service of the good news of God, not as a replacement for it. The reminder came from the Rev Stuart Reid, who serves alongside Canon Hoey in the Parish of Faughanvale (Eglinton) and who had been invited to preach the sermon.

The Preacher said when he told people that he was doing his deacon internship alongside Canon Hoey, as his mentor, more often than not he got the response: "Paul Hoey? He's the



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evangelist, isn't he?" Rev Reid said the response was heartening and disheartening at the same time. "Paul loves God," the Preacher said, "Paul loves the Gospel, and the good news is at the heart of his ministry and in this respect Paul is very definitely an evangelist. But it's also disheartening because shouldn't that be the case for all who are Christians? Shouldn't we all have the good news of Jesus at the heart of our lives? Shouldn't we all be known as evangelists?"

"We, at St Canice's in Eglinton, are hoping to be back in our church building at the end of May after last year's flood," Rev Reid said. But the experience of being forced out had taught them something.



"Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that the flood was a good thing – many people here have suffered because of that – but in the process of the last few months we've been reminded that our building is not our church."

### **Above - Canon Paul Hoey**

The preacher urged those who love the institution of the Anglican Church—himself included—never to forget their core purpose: "Let us never be so concerned keeping the magnificent stones of the Church of Ireland standing that we forget why they were put up in the very first place."

"Today's a day of thankful celebration," he continued. "We're thankful for this place [St Columb's Cathedral]. We're thankful for our Church. And we're thankful that Paul is being installed as a Canon. And it's a testament to this Diocese that so many of our leaders are passionate about the good news of Jesus. It's a testament to this Diocese that so many people are very welcoming. It's a testament to this Diocese that so many of the congregations

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here are so full of the Spirit. But most of all today we are thankful for the good news – the good news of Jesus – so let's continue to pray that God will send more workers to the harvest and that we will be willing to go when we are called.”

Wednesday's Service of Installation was led by the Dean of Derry, Very Rev Raymond Stewart. Canon Hoey replaced Rev Canon Mike Roemmele in the Cathedral Chapter. Music for the Service was provided by the Organist and Master of the Choristers, Dr Derek Collins, Assistant Organist Nicky Morton and the Cathedral Choir. Refreshments were served afterwards in St Augustine's Parish Hall on the City Walls.

