



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches



C of I differences on equal marriage motion at Stormont

The Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland, issued a press statement which it claimed expressed “the stated position of the Church of Ireland on marriage and to draw it to the attention of MLAs in their discussions on the issue.

“As recently as its General Synod meeting in May 2012 the Church of Ireland affirmed its position on marriage:

“ ‘The Church of Ireland continues to uphold its teaching that marriage is part

of God’s creation and a holy mystery in which one man and one woman become one flesh ... The Church of Ireland affirms, according to our Lord’s teaching that marriage is in its purpose a union permanent and life-long, for better or worse, till death do them part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side ... The Church of Ireland recognises for itself and of itself, no other understanding of marriage.’ “

Changing Attitude Ireland - a C of I group - which states it is “an alliance of heterosexual and gay Anglicans, lay members and clergy, fully affirms same sex couples and calls on MLAs in the Northern Ireland Assembly to vote to extend civil marriage to same sex couples in Northern Ireland. We note that this has already happened in England, Wales and in Scotland.”

The CAI statement continues - “Members of the Church of Ireland hold a variety of views on the subject of gay people and the extension of civil

marriage to same-sex couples. Although a majority at the Church of Ireland General Synod in 2012 voted for a motion stating a conservative view of marriage, we were encouraged that a third of Synod members including two Bishops - the Bishops of Cork and of Cashel - did not vote for the conservative motion.

“We also note that the Church of Ireland now accepts the reality of divorce and permits remarriage in church and look forward to a similar development of its position on same sex couples.”

Dr Richard O'Leary, Chair, Changing Attitude Ireland said the statement issued by the C of I was “conservative”.

The matter was due to be discussed at the NI Assembly today. However it is likely that the debate may be nullified by use of procedures which afford political parties a veto on issues.

Sexuality is focus of fringe synod event

Prominent church historian, Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch from Oxford University, has accepted an invitation to speak at a lunchtime event on the fringe of the General Synod on Friday May 9 at 1.00 pm in St Audoen's Church of Ireland, Cornmarket

The event will be chaired by Bryan Dobson of RTE and hosted by Canon Mark Gardner at the church which is close to Christ Church Cathedral where General Synod will take place. It is intended as a

contribution to the Church's ongoing consideration of Human Sexuality in the Context of Christian Belief. It is co sponsored by the Church of Ireland chaplaincy of Trinity College Dublin and Changing Attitude Ireland, in the hope that all those concerned to explore the issues further, whether from a conservative or an inclusive starting-point, will attend.

Those who find gay and lesbian presence in the Church less than acceptable will be particularly welcome and questions for Professor MacCulloch can be



Revd Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch Kt DD FBA, Professor of the History of the Church, University of Oxford.

submitted in advance to info@changingattitudeireland.org for inclusion in Bryan Dobson's interview. However given that only 50 minutes are available for the session, no questions will be taken from the floor.

Professor MacCulloch has always acknowledged his status as a gay man and is a long-standing member of the Gay Christian Movement. Although his sexual orientation stood in the way of his being ordained priest in the Church of England, he has shown no bitterness as a result, only regret. "I was ordained deacon; but being a gay man, it was just impossible to proceed further, within the conditions of the Anglican set-up, because I was determined that I would make no bones about who I was. I was brought up to be truthful, and truth has always mattered to me. The Church couldn't cope and so we parted company, It was a miserable experience."

Since then Diarmaid MacCulloch has become a celebrated and prize-winning church historian and broadcaster. Among his major works are *Thomas Cranmer* (1996), *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (2003), *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* and accompanying TV series (2009) and *Silence* (2012) in which he considers the negative as well as positive aspects of silence, which can indicate shame and evasion as well as mysticism, through the history of the Church.

Admission to the event is free and all are welcome.

RC Bishops' open letter to Stormont MLAs on marriage equality

In an open letter to MLAs at Stormont, the Catholic bishops whose dioceses lie within Northern Ireland stated -

As a Church we believe every person is equal in the sight of God and should always be treated with dignity and respect. Inspired by the Gospel, we oppose all unjust discrimination, harassment and violence and are committed to working for the common good in which the needs of the vulnerable, the marginalised and the poor are of fundamental concern.

We write to you today out of concern that the 'Marriage Equality' motion undermines a key foundation of that common good. We say this not only out of religious conviction, but also as a matter of human reason. Religious and non-religious people alike have long acknowledged and know from their experience that the family, based on the marriage of a woman and a man, is the best and ideal place for children. It is a fundamental building block of society which makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common

good. It is therefore deserving of special recognition and promotion by the State.

The proposed 'Marriage Equality' motion before the Assembly effectively says to parents, children and society that the State should not, and will not, promote any normative or ideal family environment for raising children. It therefore implies that the biological bond and natural ties between a child and its mother and father have no intrinsic value for the child or for society. As Pope Francis stated recently, "we must reaffirm the right of children to grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child's development and emotional maturity" (16 April 2014).

There will always be situations in which the best interests of a particular child can only be met in a different type of arrangement. It is important that the State provides for and gives practical support to these arrangements. This is different, however, from saying that having children raised by their biological parents in a life-long committed marriage is no longer essential to the common good and deserving of special recognition by the State. Even where a husband and wife cannot have children of their own, the nature of their marriage can still provide a mother and a father to a child in adoption or fostering. We believe that the State should urgently provide more and better services in support of marriage in which mothers and fathers can provide the optimum loving and stable environment for children to grow and flourish.

The 'Marriage Equality' motion also misuses the principle of equality. It is a fact of nature that same-sex unions are fundamentally and objectively different from the complementary sexual union of a woman and a man which is of itself naturally open to life. It is not discrimination for the State to treat different types of relationship differently. The European Convention on Human Rights does not recognise same-sex 'marriage' as a right and the European Courts have consistently upheld the right and freedom of member States not to redefine marriage in this way. This is not therefore a question of 'rights' or 'equality' but of recognising the objective difference between these two types of relationship.

Same-sex relationships are already comprehensively provided for in Northern Ireland legislation through recognition as civil-partnerships and associated equality legislation.

Full text at -

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/04/28/open-letter-catholic-bishops-northern-ireland-mlas-ni-assembly-debate-marriage-equality/>



Maynooth Seminary Open day

The Seminary Community will be hosting an Open Day on 3rd of May 2014. This day is designed to help those discerning a vocation to priesthood.

It will begin at 10.00 and finish at 14.00.

The Seminary at Saint Patrick's College Maynooth is delighted to announce an OPEN DAY invitation to all men discerning a Vocation to the Priesthood. This year it will take place on Saturday the 3rd May 2014.

It is not necessary to notify or pre-book your intention to accept and there is no cost involved for those who do come to our OPEN DAY. You are very welcome to arrive on the day unannounced and anonymous, if you wish. It is also not necessary to consult with your Parish Priest or a Diocesan Vocation Director. Schedule at -

<http://maynoothcollege.ie/seminary/2014/04/07/seminary-open-day-3rd-of-may-for-those-discerning-a-vocation-to-priesthood/>

Prayers for cancer sufferers

A medical doctor is to address a service of prayer for those suffering from cancer.



Dr Stephen Rodgers, who is a Belfast G.P. is to share his insights into Divine Healing, from both a medical and spiritual point of view. The service is to be held in St Anne's Cathedral on Monday evening 5th May at 8.00pm. Dr Rodgers combines his ministry as a medical practitioner with his role as pastor of the Kingsway Fellowship in Dunmurry.

Alongside Brother David Jardine and the Divine Healing Ministries team, personal prayer and anointing will be offered.

Yei Connor Partnership is Focus of CMSI South Sudan evening

The partnership between the Diocese of Connor and the Diocese of Yei will be the focus of a South Sudan Evening taking place in Ballymoney on Tuesday May 13.

The event is organised by CMS Ireland, and will involve several of CMSI's Global Partners who will be visiting Ireland during May for the organisation's 200 year celebration events.

The Focus Evening will take place in St Patrick's Parish Church Hall, Ballymoney, beginning at 7.30pm and the evening will be facilitated by St Patrick's Parish.

It will provide an opportunity for people and parishes from across Connor Diocese and beyond to come and hear the stories of what God is doing in South Sudan, and the evening will also strengthen the connections between Yei and Connor Dioceses.

Global delegates from South Sudan will give an update on the current situation in South Sudan and how the church is responding to the crisis caused by civil unrest which erupted last December. There will also be an opportunity to hear about the progress of the Yei diocesan schools, health and development programmes, to learn about the future vision of the diocese and to meet others who are engaged with Yei through their parishes.



Moravian Burial Ground Highlighted in New Publication

A new publication on the Moravian Burial Ground at Whitechurch, County Dublin, will be launched on Wednesday May 14.

Entitled “The Moravian Burial Ground at Whitechurch, County Dublin” the launch takes place in Whitechurch Old Schools (1823), in the grounds of Whitechurch Church of Ireland Parish Church, Whitechurch Road Church, Dublin 16 at 8.00 pm.

This illustrated publication has been researched and written by Dr Rosemary Power, a member of the Moravian Church and a historian and folklorist, who also previously led the Clare Methodist pioneer ministry in that county. Rosemary is currently in training for the Moravian ministry. The speakers at the launch will be Professor Patricia Lysaght and Canon Patrick Comerford.

Prior to the launch the author will lead a guided tour of the Moravian Burial Ground from 6.30 to 7.30 pm. The first burial in the newly consecrated Burial Ground, known as ‘God’s Acre’, took place in 1764. This Moravian Burial Ground represents a significant strand in the evolving religious and social history of this island. It is located just a few minutes’ walk from Whitechurch Parish Church on Whitechurch Road. For directions please see: www.whitechurch.dublin.anglican.org.

The invitation to these events comes from the Revd Sarah Groves, Minister of Gracehill Moravian Church, County Antrim, in association with Whitechurch Church of Ireland Parish.

Any further information can be obtained from the Revd Sarah Groves sarah.groves4@btinternet.com or Canon Horace McKinley, Rector, Whitechurch Parish whitechurchparish@eircom.net or tel: 01 4934972 (Office).

Youth emphasis at Derry canonisation mass

Many young people from across the diocese who are participating in the Pope John Paul II Award attended the Mass.

Bishop Donal McKeown was the main celebrant at a Mass held today in St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry to celebrate the canonisation of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II. More photos at -



<http://derrydiocese.org/index.php/item/293-mass-to-celebrate-the-canonisation-of-pope-john-xxiii-pope-john-paul-ii>



Parish farewell to Dutch intern

Seagoe C of I Parish Portadown recently said a sad farewell to Eddy Jongkees, (pronounced junkees) their Dutch intern.

Eddy had been partnering with Seagoe and [Ambassadors in Football](#) since January, helping in the parish in a variety of ways.

“Eddy has been such fun and a great

encouragement to us in

Seagoe,” said the rector, Canon Terence Cadden. “We are so grateful to him for all he has brought to us and we wish him God’s richest blessing as he returns home to Holland for a week to get ready for his trip with Ambassadors to Brazil where he will minister for several weeks.”

Eddy will also have the opportunity to take in some of the World Cup and everyone at Seagoe will be hoping to hear all about it when he visits again in the summer.

Church concerned at evidence of rising funeral costs

The Church of Scotland has released figures which highlight the rising costs of funerals across the country.

In some areas charges have increased by almost 300% in the past five years.

The average increase for both interment and cremation across the country was found to be 62% from five years ago, with a 36% increase in the past three years.

The largest increase in cost for the purchase of a lair in the last five years was in South Lanarkshire.

Shetland has seen the steepest increase for the cost of burials. Cremation costs have risen most in Glasgow.

Convener of the Church and Society Council, Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, said: "These significant rises in cost have the potential to put a huge strain on people at a time when they are already dealing with the loss of a loved one.

"At a time when welfare reforms are causing many more families to struggle financially, we are also concerned that those who can least afford it will suffer most and pressure to 'do right by their loved one' could put them in debt."

A Funeral Director in Carstairs Village, Ian Brown, said: "In the last four years, funeral costs have trebled. This puts financial strain on families who are also having to deal with losing a loved one.

"It is good to see the Church of Scotland taking a stand on this issue as their influence can make an impact." More at -

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/2014/church-concerned-at-evidence-of-rising-funeral-costs

Charities refuse to host forced unpaid labour for unemployed

A new scheme that will force unemployed people into unpaid work is in trouble on its first day, with dozens of charities and faith groups refusing to take part.

A new scheme that will force unemployed people into unpaid work is in trouble on its first day, with dozens of charities and faith groups refusing to take part in it.

The "Help to Work" scheme, announced by George Osborne at the last Conservative Party conference, will require long-term unemployed people to work full-time for six months for a voluntary or community group. Their benefits will be cut if they fail to take part.

The scheme, also known as “Community Work Placements”, begins today (28 April). But over thirty voluntary sector groups – including Oxfam, Anti-Slavery International, the Ekklesia thinktank and a range of local agencies – have condemned the scheme and said they will not participate.

They say that unemployed people need paid jobs and that voluntary groups need real, willing volunteers.

They have urged all faith groups, charities and other voluntary organisations to reject workfare schemes and sign their call to “Keep Volunteering Voluntary”.

Three of the largest supporters of other workfare schemes have said they will not accept placements for the six-month scheme - the Conservation Volunteers, the Salvation Army and YMCA England. They are now being urged to go further by pulling out of all workfare programmes and backing Keep Volunteering Voluntary.

Critics of the scheme point out that it will force people to work for more twice the maximum community service sentence for drink-driving.

**Rev, the
brilliant TV
comedy that
undermines
the church**

**You love Rev. I
love Rev.
Everyone loves
Rev. That's why
the hit**

BBC comedy is so pernicious.



Guardian - Unbelievers who hate the church love the fantastic satire of an institution not long for this world. Unbelievers who like the church adore how it captures all those quaint little foibles.

Believers who hate the church love how it lampoons everything they want to change. Believers who love the church also love it because it's important to laugh about yourself. And vicars? Well, with a million viewers tuning in to every episode, they no doubt think that there's so such thing as bad publicity.

But this love-in masks what is in fact a subtly damaging depiction of the church. Rev is insidious because it's just so good. The third series, which wraps up this evening, has been as brilliant as the first two. Production company Big Talk has put together a masterpiece, pre-sold in 141 countries. And Tom Hollander, who plays the Rev Adam Smallbone, has cemented his reputation as one of the funniest actors of his generation. But when asked why Rev is so good, the usual answer cites "an insider viewpoint" on an inner-city vicar. Which is precisely what it's not. Rev is an outsider's imaginative construction of an insider viewpoint – a secular take on the sacred. The Church of England has of course long proved a comedy piñata. Richard Curtis has been eating the candy his whole career. Yet Hollander set out to do something different from The Vicar of Dibley. He wanted to show an institution operating in a grittier context.

Which is all well and good. Yet it remains an outsider's perspective. An insider view of the church would, by contrast, revolve around the reality of shared faith. From the outset, Rev's operating assumption is that faith is individual. The Rev Smallbone's prayer monologues are purely personal. Faith is not something held in common. Nor is it transformative. Which is, rightly or wrongly, what people of faith think it is. Perhaps the show's most wonderful character, the drug addict Colin, is a parishioner Adam is genuinely friends with. But there's never a question of faith freeing him from addiction. More at -

www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/28/rev-tv-comedy-undermines-church-of-england

See also -

BBC's Rev, Survey of viewers attitudes - Christian Research

www.christian-research.org/resonate/bbc-s-rev-survey-of-viewers-attitudes

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