



CNI



Gay marriage proposal to be debated by Kirk Assembly

A report to be debated at the Kirk's General Assembly in May said ministers should be permitted to perform same-sex ceremonies, Reveel Alderson BBC Scotland's social affairs correspondent reports.

It also said the Kirk should apologise for failing to recognise the Christian vocation of gay people.

The report has been welcomed by the Reverend Scott Rennie, the gay minister whose appointment to an Aberdeen parish in 2008 caused controversy.

It will be presented to the General Assembly by the influential Theological Forum of the Church of Scotland, which challenges and expresses the theology of the life and work of the Kirk.

The Church of Scotland's principal clerk authorised early publication of [the report](#) following media coverage.

The General Assembly is being asked to consider:

- Authorising the Legal Questions Committee to undertake a further study on the legal implications of conducting same-sex marriages and report back in 2018
- Inviting the Church to take stock of its history of discrimination at different levels and in different ways against gay people and to apologise individually and corporately and seek to do better.

The report stated: "We recognise that as a Church we have often failed to recognise and protect the identity and Christian vocation of gay people and believe that the Church as a whole should acknowledge its faults, whose identity and Christian vocation it has failed to recognise and protect."

Image caption The Reverend Scott Rennie says he looks forward to the day when he can conduct weddings for all couples, gay or straight Mr Rennie said the report was far-reaching, thorough, and impressive.

He said: "The request that the Kirk recognise its damaging failure through the years to value, encourage, and support gay people in its pews - and to do better in the future - is one of the most positive and hopeful things I have read in a report to the General Assembly in many years.

"It recognises, at last, the diversity of people that make up the Church of Scotland, and Scotland at large.

"It says in its own theological language: you are valued; you are part of us; and we have to do better at including you - and being just in our treatment of you."

The report reflected a range of theological thinking on the issue of same-sex relationships.

It acknowledged the traditionalist view that Biblical writers condemned same-sex acts, making the only appropriate response for the Church was to proclaim they are contrary to God's intentions for humanity - meaning gay marriages should be prohibited.

But it also examined the revisionist arguments.

It said: "Scriptural condemnations of same-sex sexual activity were framed in cultural contexts very different from our own and referred to individual acts rather than committed and faithful people willing to enshrine their relationships in vows before God."

Long-running

The principal clerk to the General Assembly, the Very Reverend John Chalmers, said the issue had been a long-running argument in which there would not be a sole victor.

He said the Kirk called it "constrained difference", meaning that within limits it can make space for more than one approach among ministers and congregations.

He said: "When mutual flourishing is what you aim for, then you try to heal where you can.

"In an argument over 20 years, some people have been hurt on both sides. Some have felt unheard, marginalised and denied.

"That is why we think the recognition that some apologies all round are needed may help promote reconciliation and help us live with our differences where they exist."

Commenting on the early publication of the report, he added: "It is unfortunate that this report has found its way into the public domain before this year's volume of Assembly Reports has been published.

"However, it is important that people are now able to access the full report."

The Reverend Mike Goss, parish minister of Barry with Carnoustie Church, told BBC Scotland he did not think it was right that ministers should be allowed to perform same-sex ceremonies.

"Same-sex relationships are not what God has planned for us as human beings," he said.

"We are all messed up in different ways in our lives. I don't see that people in straight-sex relationships have got it all sorted. We know too many of them have gone wrong as well.

"But we don't bless that which is wrong and that has got to be key in terms of the Gospel."

Equalities laws

Mr Rennie added: "Loving marriages, whether they are gay or straight, can make for a good and happy life.

"Christ's love for us, his people, is reflected in loving relationships. Marriage is something to be celebrated.

"I look forward to the day when I am able to conduct weddings for all couples, gay or straight, in the name of God."

The General Assembly will be asked to accept the report - but gay marriages in the Church of Scotland may not happen quickly.

The Kirk is keen to ensure it will not lose its current protection under equalities laws, and that those ministers or deacons who decline to carry out same-sex services cannot be prosecuted.

The Roman Catholic Church opposes same-sex marriage, while [Scottish Episcopalians will make a decision in June](#) - potentially putting them at odds with the Church of England.

Legislation allowing same-sex marriage in Scotland was passed by MSPs at Holyrood in February 2014 and [came into effect in December that year](#).

A Scottish government spokeswoman said: "Decisions on whether or not to take part in same-sex marriage are a matter for individual denominations.

"The legislation was framed to reflect that some religious bodies would wish to take part and others would not, and within those religious bodies choosing to take part, some of their celebrants would not wish to do so."

[Deacon from Clogher ordained in Rome](#)

Sean Mulligan, a native of Tydavnet parish in Co Monaghan and a seminarian at Rome's Pontifical Irish College, was ordained yesterday, Tuesday 18 April, to the first of the three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, in the Church of St Alphonsus Liguori on the Via Merulana in Rome.

The ordaining prelate was the Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland. The Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Clogher, Monsignor Joseph McGuinness and several other priests of the diocese were among the concelebrants. Two other men from Dublin Archdiocese were also ordained during the liturgy. Robert Smyth and James Daly – a former parish pastoral worker at St Fintan’s parish, Sutton – are also students at the Irish College in Rome.

Ordination to the diaconate is the final stage before ordination to Priesthood. This was the fifth such ordination for the Diocese of Clogher in the past five years.

Seán Mulligan, aged 46, is the son of the late Michael and Philomena Mulligan (R.I.P). One of three brothers, he was educated in St. Joseph’s N.S, Knockatallon, and Beech Hill College, Monaghan, before obtaining a National Diploma in Civil Engineering from Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT). After working for three years in the concrete business, Seán took up a post with Monaghan GAA, coaching the skills of Gaelic Football and Hurling to primary school children in the north-Monaghan area. It was during this period that Seán felt a renewed inner-desire to serve God through the priesthood, but

he chose instead to pursue a career in Intellectual Disability Nursing through DKIT. and St. Mary's Residential Centre, Drumcar, Co. Louth. He spent five years working as a staff nurse in St. Mary's before finally answering the call to priesthood, entering formal studies for the Diocese of Clogher in 2007.

Seán spent the first year of his formation in a propaedeutic year at the Royal English College in Valladolid in Spain, before studying philosophy for two years in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. After this, Seán spent a period of time discerning community life with two different religious communities, before returning to the diocese. He then underwent a pastoral year in Dublin, working alongside Fr. Peter McVerry, S.J., where he gained a great deal of experience in working with the homeless, individuals with drug and alcohol addictions, and with prisoners. Following this, Seán moved to the Pontifical Irish College in Rome to study for a degree in theology at the Angelicum University.

Seán is an avid sports fan, and a devoted follower of his home club, Scotstown G.F.C., and the Monaghan county teams. He represented his club, Scotstown, at all levels, winning two Monaghan Senior Football Championships with them in 1992 and 1993. He has also represented

Monaghan county at Vocational Schools', Minor, U'21, and senior level.

Seán is also a lifelong member of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association.

Coming events

+++Divine Mercy Sunday in St. Macartan's Cathedral - will be celebrated in St. Macartan's Cathedral on Sunday 23rd April at 3pm. The celebration will consist of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and benediction; recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Rosary and veneration of the Divine Mercy image and a relic of St. Faustina. A number of priests will be available for individual confession. Everyone welcome

+++ Fields of Life East Africa benefit concert - Thurs 4th May at 7.30pm in at Granshaw Presbyterian Church, Comber, for an evening with **Nathan Jess Music** and band, to raise funds to provide safe, clean drinking water for refugees in Uganda who have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. Tickets cost £5 per adult and £3 for children under 16 (under 5's free). Purchase online now or pay at the door...

<http://fieldsoflife.org/news/east-africa-benefit-concert-nathan-jess/?locale=233>

+++Seminar on equality law and Christian

ethos - A seminar organised by Evangelical Alliance is being held on Tuesday 9 May 2017, 7:30pm – 9:30pm in CFC, Belfast. Are you a church leader or charity trustee? Are you concerned about how equality law might impact your organisation? This free event is being run by employment lawyer Mark Mason and former barrister Peter Lynas. It is free to attend, but please sign up using the link above so we know how many people are coming.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

+++ Leaders focus on Faith in our families - On Thursday 25 May from 10.30am to 12.30pm, at Orangefield Presbyterian Church, Belfast, Care for the Family is hosting an event for leaders.

It is estimated that just 50% of children with Christian parents will have a personal faith of their own as adults. A number of national agencies including Care for the Family, Bible Reading Fellowship and New Wine are working to help support and equip parents and churches with the prayer that many more children 'keep the faith'.

This event will provide plenty of opportunities for discussion and your thoughts and ideas. We will be joined by Andy Frost, Director of Share Jesus International who will help us look at why this matters and what we can do to work together. Peter Lynas, Director of Evangelical Alliance – Northern Ireland will

also present his thoughts on why this conversation is so important. A light working lunch will be provided.

News briefs

+++ Vacancy: Organist and Choir Director And Contemporary Worship Leader/s -

Hollywood Church of Ireland Church seeks to make a number of appointments to the parish staff team. We have a cherished and vibrant musical tradition and are passionate about developing music ministry in both choral and contemporary expressions. In addition to the role of Organist and Choir Director the parish will appoint one or two people to oversee the contemporary music ministry of the parish. Closing date for applications is Friday 5th May 2017. Selection processes will follow soon thereafter. For more information or to request an application pack including an outline of the parish's vision for these roles, job descriptions, details of remuneration etc., please contact:

Jayne Forster e-mail:

hollywoodparish@gmail.com or tel. 07966
106224 www.hollywoodparishchurch.co.uk

Vatican stamp marks Benedict XVI's 90th birthday

The Vatican stamp office is issuing a new stamp in early May to mark pope emeritus Benedict XVI's 90th birthday, which the retired pontiff celebrated on Easter Sunday.

Joseph Ratzinger was born in Marktl am Inn, Bavaria, Germany, at 8:30 on the morning of 16 April 1927. It was Holy Saturday and he was baptised that day.

His elder brother, Georg (born 1924) also became a priest. Their sister, Maria, managed Joseph's household until her death in 1991, fulfilling a promise she made to their parents to take care of her brothers.

As Cardinal Ratzinger, the future pope wrote of the importance of being born on Holy Saturday in his 1998 memoir, *Milestones*:

“I have always been filled with thanksgiving for having had my life immersed in this way in the Easter mystery, since this could only be a sign of blessing. To be sure, it was not Easter Sunday but Holy Saturday, but, the more I reflect on it, the more this seems to be fitting for the nature of our human life: We are still awaiting Easter; we are still not standing in the full light, but walking toward it in full trust.”



Last Wednesday (12 April), Pope Francis visited his predecessor at Vatican City's Mater Ecclesiae monastery to wish him a happy birthday and a happy Easter.

The stamp, which is designed by the artist Daniela Longo, depicts Pope Benedict praying his rosary.

Meanwhile, the Joseph Ratzinger Foundation has launched *Cooperatores Veritatis*, a compilation of essays to honour the former pope.

The essays are written by those who have won the prestigious Ratzinger Prize for theology. The book's editor intends the book to serve as a testament to the former pope's theological and intellectual contributions.

One of the contributors to *Cooperatores Veritatis: Tributes to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on his 90th Birthday* is the Rev Canon Professor Richard Burrige, who was awarded the Ratzinger Prize in 2013.

The Dean of King's College London and Minister in the Anglican Communion was awarded the prize for his contribution to the historical and theological recognition of the Gospels' inseparable connection to Jesus of Nazareth.

He told Vatican Radio's Lydia O'Kane that he first met Pope Benedict just after he became Pope in 2005.

Canon Burrige was the first non-Catholic to be awarded the Ratzinger Prize.

Commending Benedict's contribution to ecumenical dialogue, he said, "It's been very important ... particularly because of his personal friendships with other theologians."

'Grow and bear fruit' theme for Presbyterian Women's Annual Meeting

Nicola Clark the Youth Worker in Orangefield Presbyterian Church is the guest speaker at this year's



Presbyterian Women
Living for Jesus

Grow and bear fruit

...bearing fruit in every good work,
growing in the knowledge of God.
(Colossians 1:10)

Invitation

Join with us as we come together to worship and celebrate all that the Lord is doing throughout His church. We look forward to hearing what the Lord has to say to us through His Word as we focus our hearts on the theme, *Grow and bear fruit*.

Guest Speaker Nicola Clarke
Nicola is the Youth Worker in Oranmore Presbyterian Church and is excited to have been asked to speak at the PW Annual Meeting events. She sits on the Board of The Big House and is a Professional Practice Tutor for students studying Youth & Community Work at the Centre for Youth Ministry Ireland.

Thursday 4th May 2017 in Assembly Buildings, Belfast

Annual Meeting @ 2.00pm
During the afternoon meeting we hear from our guest speaker, Nicola, when she will give her first talk on the theme *Grow and bear fruit*.

Evening Celebration @ 7.30pm
The evening meeting will take the form of a celebration as Nicola gives her second talk and further unpacks God's Word and what it means for us to *grow and bear fruit* for His kingdom.

Praise led by Erin McBride and Emma Smyth.

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Presbyterian Women

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Presbyterian
The Church of Scotland

annual meeting which will be held on Thursday, 4th May 2017 at Assembly Buildings, Belfast.

The PW theme for 2017 and the focus of this year's Annual Meeting is....*bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God* (Colossians 1:10).

The Annual Meeting begins at 2pm and the Evening Celebration at 7.30pm.

During the afternoon meeting Nicola will give her first talk on the theme *Grow and bear fruit*. The evening meeting will take the form of a celebration as Nicola gives her

second talk and unpacks further God's Word and what it means to *Grow and bear fruit* for His Kingdom.

Nicola Clark is the Youth Worker in Orangefield Presbyterian Church. She sits on the Board of The Big House and is a Professional Practice Tutor for students studying Youth & Community Work at the Centre for Youth Ministry Ireland.

<http://www.presbyterianireland.org/Events/Grow-and-bear-fruit-%E2%80%93-PW-Annual-Meeting.aspx>

Today in Church History - April 19

April 19, 526: Justinian I is crowned Roman Emperor in Constantinople's magnificent cathedral, the Santa Sophia. Attempting to restore political and religious unity in the eastern and western empires, he ruthlessly attacked pagans and heretics and created the Code of Justinian, a massive restructuring of law (including much regarding the relationship of church and state) that would be the basis of legislation for nearly a millennium.

April 19, 1054: Pope Leo IX dies. Because Leo refused the title of Ecumenical Patriarch to Michael Cerularius (Patriarch of Constantinople) and demanded recognition of the filioque clause (the western addition to the Nicene creed that

asserts "the Holy Ghost . . . proceeds from the Father *and the Son*), he is usually assigned responsibility for the final break between Eastern and Western Christianity, though the conventional date for the schism is July 16.

April 19, 1529: At the Diet of Speyer (Germany), princes and 14 cities draft a formal protest of Charles V's attempt to crush Lutheranism, defending religious freedom for religious minorities, e.g. those involved in the Reformation movement. From then on, the Reformers were known as "Protestants."

April 19, 1560: German reformer Philip Melancthon dies. The leader of the German reformation after the death of his friend, Martin Luther, Melancthon composed the Augsburg Confession of 1530. Much more a peacemaker than Luther, he called for Lutherans and Zwinglians to put aside their differences for the sake of the reformation of the church. In addition, he led extensive efforts to develop the German educational system, for which he has been called "the teacher of Germany" .

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