

July 20, 2019

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Proposed Westminster legislation 'blatantly disregards deeply held Christian values' - Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland yesterday expressed its deep disappointment and dismay at the inclusion of

July 20, 2019

provisions within the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill proceeding through its final stages at Westminster, which will pave the way for liberalisation of abortion law and the introduction of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland.

It has also called for meaningful and detailed local consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny before any regulations are introduced to the Houses of Parliament.

Rt Rev Dr William Henry, Moderator of the PCI, said, “Our Church’s position has always been that decisions on abortion and same-sex marriage should remain the responsibility of our locally elected MLAs.

“At a time when courageous and compassionate leadership is required to find a balanced accommodation that can serve the common good in Northern Ireland, it is deeply disappointing that parliamentary process has been used to bypass the devolution settlement agreed over 20 years ago.

“This legislation blatantly disregards our deeply held Christian values which for centuries have provided a positive and cohesive framework for the protection of individuals and the benefit of society at large. We will continue to speak out in particular for the rights of unborn children who are among the most vulnerable in our society, and to encourage support and compassion for those expectant mothers who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

“The breadth and scope of the provisions of this Bill raise many questions with regard to its implementation, including what protections, if any, might be included. We therefore call

July 20, 2019

on the Government to publish its legislative proposals with the utmost urgency to allow adequate time for local consultation and amendment within the restrictive timescales, before regulations are laid in the Houses of Parliament.

“The events of the past weeks only serve to emphasise the importance of restoring functioning devolved government. At the same time, only the Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to transform society and bring hope and justice for all. Accordingly I encourage our members and all Christians to pray to that end.”

CNI background -

The House of Commons voted on the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill, which aims to get the Northern Irish assembly functioning again.

Added to this bill were amendments on legalising same-sex marriage and abortion in Northern Ireland, both issues which cannot be changed currently due to their assembly not sitting.

Seven of the 10 DUP MPs voted against the amendments, two acted as tellers (those who reveal the results) and Northern Irish independent MP Lady Sylvia Hermon voted for the amendments.

Abortion is now set to be decriminalised in Northern Ireland from 22nd October and regulations will be in place from 31st March 2020.

July 20, 2019

The repealing of the 1861 Offences Against the Persons Act will mean that the laws around abortion in Northern Ireland will be the most liberal in the UK.

Aborting a pregnancy would then be allowed up to 28 weeks (it is 24 in the rest of the UK).

Right To Life UK spokesperson, Clare McCarthy, said: "The people of Northern Ireland have thirteen weeks to stop the introduction of one of the worlds most extreme abortion regimes to the province.

"Many thousands of people in Northern Ireland are deeply angered and distressed by this action by the Westminster Parliament. The manner in which MPs from Westminster have attempted to impose abortion on a people that do not want it, and who they do not represent, is grossly disrespectful and unconstitutional."

19,000 people from Northern Ireland have signed a letter that was delivered to Theresa May on Tuesday, asking her to intervene.

Clare McCarthy said: "It's those 19,000 people, organisations and wider Northern Irish society that now need to come together as soon as possible to build a movement to ensure that Stormont is reconvened."

The Evangelical Alliance commented - "Some people are considering legal challenges and political options while we will all have the opportunity to respond to the promised government consultation. One of the most important things we can do is to communicate clearly to our local politicians just how important this issue is among all the other political issues being discussed in the current talks to restore an assembly. Keep an eye on our website and communications

July 20, 2019

and our friends and partners at Both Lives Matter for more information on how you can respond in the coming days and weeks.

“In the meantime we have been so encouraged by the prayerful and practical response of thousands of individuals and the Church across the denominations. Please continue to pray for wisdom and grace and creative life-affirming responses in the face of whatever lies ahead.”

Golden year of celebration as the united Church of North India marks 50th anniversary

The Church of North India (CNI) will be using its 50th anniversary this year to review, consult and then re-set its mission priorities for the next 10 years as thousands of people come together from around the country. Starting in November 2019, the golden jubilee to mark the formation of the united Church in North India, will include a year-long celebration including programmes, processions, consultations and events.

The General Secretary of CNI Synod, Alwan Masih said: “God has blessed and led this Church while it celebrated its unity, witness and service through all these years. What we’re very excited about is going to the place in Nagpur where the church was founded and the whole church gathering together there. This is one very exciting thing. People will be able to know each other more. The churches here are thousands of kilometres from one another and many people have not seen other areas.



The congregation at a Church of North India Festival of Peace Gospel Convention last year

“People will have the chance to feel the richness of this church. We have so many languages, so many cultures, different dresses people wear, different foods people eat . . . it will be quite an event.”

Alwan Masih said one of the highlights would be the whole church sitting together and debating the mission priorities for the future over two days. “We will also share our challenges and the difficulties we face,” he said. “Sharing the moments when we have faced the worst kind of persecution.”

Talking about the violence in Orissa in 2008 when 103 people were killed or burnt alive and some 300 churches were burnt down, he said: “last year in 2018, after 10 years, we thought we would organise a festival of hope and peace.

July 20, 2019

We were praying for 100,000 people to come. On day one we had 100,000 people. On day two we had 60-70,000 people, but after 3 pm in the afternoon people just came rushing in, and by the evening around 5.30 pm to 6pm we had more than 250,000 people.”

“This is what the Church of North India is. This is what we share with each other. Our persecution and our joys, our challenges and our blessings. So, when this whole church comes together we will talk about these joys and these persecutions and we will see how the whole body of Christ can come together at one place and take decisions for their church.”

A whole programme of events is planned for the year beginning with the gathering in Nagpur and a procession to All Saints Cathedral followed by a celebration service.

The church of North India was formed through uniting six different denominations, including the Anglican Church, the Brethren Church, the Church of the Disciples of Christ, the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian Church. The General Secretary said that the Church of North India today was an ecumenical expression of how they are still working together as one.

The year-long anniversary will include six separate celebration programmes in different areas for each of the original traditions.

Other items included in the programme will be an exhibition and a new monument at All Saints Cathedral.

July 20, 2019

Same-sex marriage canon narrowly fails in Canada

The Anglican Church of Canada will maintain its traditional definition of marriage, as a resolution to amend the church's marriage canon to allow for same-sex marriage fell two votes short of passage by General Synod at its meeting in Vancouver on July 12.

A majority of delegates in all three orders (laity, clergy and bishops) voted to back the change, and it crossed the necessary two-thirds threshold for canonical revision among the laity (80.9%) and the clergy (73.2%). Among the bishops, it mustered 62.2%, with 23 bishops voting for the change, 14 voting against (37.8%) and two abstentions. If two of the bishops voting no had voted yes instead, the measure would have passed.

Reaction to the vote was dramatic within the synod meeting room, according to Matt Gardner of [*The Anglican Journal*](#), with an audible scream in the hall and one young delegate running out in tears as the final tallies were announced. Delegates rushed to the microphones to urge a reconsideration, but the primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, closed the proceedings for the day.

“Our children are crying. And many of you are crying, for a variety of reasons,” the archbishop said to the delegates. “So I think it’s time to adjourn. It’s time to leave this hall in silence. It’s time for you to go and do what you need to do — to cry, or to gather with delegates from your own diocese; to gather with friends, to gather in circles of prayer, just to try and be attentive to one another.”



Archbishop Fred Hiltz, center, led General Synod in a moment of silence before results were revealed.

Hiltz noted that other legislation about same-sex marriage could be brought before the synod before the body adjourns for three years on July 16. “If there are proposals for other resolutions on the same matter, there are provisions for how to deal with that,” Hiltz said, “But it needs to be at another moment in this synod.” A great deal of other business remains to be considered, however, including the election of a new primate.

Resolution A052-R2 was the required second reading of the canonical change, which had been narrowly approved for the first time in 2016. The marriage canon would have been amended so that its provisions “applies to all persons who are duly qualified by civil law to enter into marriage” and

July 20, 2019

would have replaced all references to husband and wife with “the parties to the marriage.”

The vote came almost one year to the day after the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (TEC) [enacted a hard-fought compromise](#) on July 13, 2018, mandating that Episcopalians in every diocese must have access to same-sex marriage rites.

The Canadian measure, if it had passed, would have authorized same-sex marriages, subject to the approval of the diocesan bishop. TEC enacted a similar measure at its 2015 General Convention. Last year’s vote eliminated the bishop’s veto power.

The resolution in Canada had been amended earlier in the day so that the canon’s preface would have acknowledged that “faithful members of the Anglican Church of Canada have different understandings and teachings about the nature of marriage.” The amendment to the canon’s preface also encouraged mutual respect for the integrity of the convictions of all in these contentious matters

A second amendment to the resolution aimed to secure a degree of autonomy in the matter for Indigenous communities, who have been particularly vocal in their criticism of the proposed marriage changes. It stated that General Synod “recognizes that Indigenous communities have particular understandings about the nature of marriage as well as their own ways of making decisions.” It also acknowledged that Indigenous people “will continue to discern whether same-sex marriage would be acceptable in their communities.”

July 20, 2019

The vote came a day after Archbishop Hiltz offered [an extended apology](#) to Indigenous communities for “spiritual abuse” by church leaders in the past. After his emotional confession of the church’s sins, Hiltz urged the establishment of a committee to guide the Anglican Church of Canada’s work for “truth, justice, and reconciliation,” taking responsibility for “enabling healing for all who were deeply hurt by spiritual arrogance; helping the whole Church to learn from the spiritual wisdom of the elders and to listen with a heart to the spiritual hopes of Indigenous young people.”

The vote also followed [a three and a half hour session](#) designed to facilitate compassionate and respectful conversation across serious ideological divisions. The presenters of the workshop on “being a synod” were Bishop Lynn McNaughton of Kootenay and Native American scholar, priest and psychologist Martin Brokenleg. They acknowledged an intention to set a new course for the synod after the acrimony that marked its 2016 same-sex marriage debates

“During the General Synod in 2016, dialogue and decision-making were not done very well,” Brokenleg said to the delegates. “In fact, portions of that synod were so contentious that our church leaders were embarrassed, many people were wounded and several people I know were so deeply disturbed by what they saw that they have since left the Anglican church. This leaves us with the task of setting the right course for ourselves.”

In the runup to General Synod, *Covenant*, TLC’s blog, published [a series of nine essays](#) by bishops, priests and

July 20, 2019

scholars, examining the same-sex marriage issue and its implications for the ACoC.

This article incorporates material from the [Anglican Journal](#), which is closely covering General Synod.

The Crystal Cathedral was a monument to televangelism - it's about to become a Catholic church

What happens when an icon of feel-good theology and California kitsch gets born again as a Catholic church?

For years, Christians, Southern Californians and design devotees alike have anticipated the resurrection of the Crystal Cathedral, the Orange County church designed by modernist architect Philip Johnson. It was the home of televangelist Robert Schuller and his “Hour of Power” TV program, watched in its heyday by tens of millions, in 156 countries.

Touted as the largest glass building in the world when it opened in 1980, the megachurch was purchased by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange in 2012, thanks to a messy bankruptcy. The diocese renamed it Christ Cathedral and, in fact, acquired the whole architecturally significant campus, including buildings by Richard Neutra and Richard Meier.

It's not every day that the Roman Catholic Church occupies a New Age monument, and the unorthodox pairing provokes certain questions. Could the glitzy building, countercultural



The Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. After a \$44 million makeover, the glass-paned church that once housed a booming televangelist ministry will be rededicated Wednesday as a Catholic Church.

in its way, be a fitting home for a faith rooted in tradition? Is Schuller's house of "Possibility Thinking" an apt home for the Sorrowful Mysteries? (The former is the name the late televangelist gave for his affirming worldview, and the latter is a group of Catholic meditations on suffering.)

"It does feel like a weird marriage," says Alexandra Lange, an architecture critic for Curbed.

There's something "New Age-y" and "kitschy and cheery" about the cathedral that seems at odds with the "formality and sternness" associated with many Catholic buildings,

July 20, 2019

says Dallas Morning News architecture critic Mark Lamster, who wrote a biography of Johnson.

“The idea was this open, bright, optimistic message that corresponded to the sunny values of California Americanism,” Lamster says of Johnson’s building. “The building very much meets that philosophy.”

It’s noteworthy that this takeover is happening in the West, an increasingly important center of influence for a Catholic Church that is transforming. Many of Southern California’s Catholic parishes are growing and multicultural, a contrast to the aging, white community that Schuller’s church represented. The diocese of Orange is itself home to 1.3 million Catholics.

Cost savings may have been a motivating factor for the purchase. As cathedrals go, the diocese picked it up for a song, just \$57.5 million. Some see the deal as an act of architectural preservation, if not devotion.

“We’re giving it a life as a worship space and also trying to continue some of the traditions that were here, like the great music that used to be on this campus,” said David Ball, Christ Cathedral’s organist and assistant director of music.

“It feels very California” to recycle a used cathedral and make something new out of it, says Heather Adams, a freelance religion writer in Los Angeles, who covered the renovation for Religion News Service. The Catholic Church doesn’t generally buy hand-me-down churches, she said in an interview.

July 20, 2019

The late Schuller called his dream church “a shopping center for God.” He preached a message of plugging into Jesus — guilt free — and attracted a huge flock of believers. Some came in their cars, pulled up outside drive-in theater-style. It was a spread in Vogue that drew Schuller to Johnson, according to Lamster’s biography.

Now, after years of anticipation and \$77 million in renovations, the Catholics will get to test drive Schuller’s telegenic cathedral. The faithful have been invited to celebrate a [Solemn Mass of Dedication](#) at the Garden Grove church on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. Pacific time. The inaugural Mass will be live-streamed via the diocese’s site. Later on Wednesday, the cathedral will be open to the public, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. After that, Masses will be celebrated regularly on Saturdays and Sundays, and the church is expected to be open for public daily tours beginning in February 2020, the diocese says.

The soaring, sunshine-drenched spaces that many Americans will remember from their TV screens will look quite different. While the diocese has reconditioned the mirror-like exterior of Johnson’s structure, it has made plenty of changes inside.

“For people who saw it before, you’re going to notice some major things,” says Adams.

One of the most significant is the architectural equivalent of a pair of Raybans, an elaborate, \$6 million sunshade. Thousands of quatrefoils, or triangular, sail-like window shades, will reduce glare and heat and improve the acoustics.

July 20, 2019

“It lets the sunlight in in really beautiful ways and sort of filters the sun as the day goes on,” says Ball of the effect of the quatrefoils. “And at night it does sparkle. . . . It’s like a box of lights.” Ball gets the cathedral to himself sometimes, including at night, to rehearse.

He calls the retrofitted interior “serene” and believes the attention-getting architecture may inspire the congregation to connect with its contemporary side. Wednesday’s dedication program, for instance, will showcase contemporary music, commissioned for the occasion and the space, though inspired by ancient music, he adds.

Other changes to the church were needed to accommodate the Mass itself. A marble altar — the site where Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is made present, according to Catholic teaching — was given a place of prominence, for instance. Bishop Kevin W. Vann went to Italy to pick out the white and blue-gray Carrara marble for the altar and baptismal font, according to the diocese.

A crucifix typical of Medieval art, weighing 1,000 pounds, has been installed high above the altar, according to the diocese. It was made of blackened steel in Nebraska.

When plans for the interior were first unveiled, Christopher Hawthorne, former architecture critic for the Los Angeles Times, wondered if the Catholics could embrace the kind of “trippy futurism” that Johnson and Schuller espoused. The plans, which he experienced via a virtual reality headset, appeared “heavy, earthbound and handsome to a fault,” he wrote then.

July 20, 2019

“It is a design more suggestive of the offices of a high-end law firm than the kinds of early experiments in postmodernism — including the AT&T tower on Madison Avenue in Manhattan, with its pediment famously copied from a Chippendale chest of drawers — that Johnson was beginning to pursue when he met Schuller,” wrote Hawthorne, who is now the chief design officer for the City of Los Angeles.

Lange visited the cathedral when it was still under construction and has not been inside the new spaces yet. From a distance, the changes appear to be sensitive and elegant, she says. However, “on a purely aesthetic level, I think it’s better as a piece of architecture the less figurative objects that are there, because then you see [the building] as a kind of wild, giant, minimalist, mirrored object.”

While Schuller was masterful at playing to a global TV audience, including the curious and unchurched, the diocese is still figuring out how to evangelize in the Internet age. It has been sharing peeks of the church on social media, including a photograph of clergy striding in their robes in front of the gleaming buildings. Ball suggests keeping an eye on Facebook Live to see more events at the cathedral, which is still very much a broadcast studio, he says.

A historic photo of Schuller shaking hands with Pope John Paul II was posted to Instagram by the diocese, too, pointing to an interesting bit of history: Schuller asked the pope to bless the architectural renderings before the first dedication, a generation ago.

July 20, 2019

An Instagram feed was launched recently for the cathedral itself. Its number of posts and followers remain modest. One post about preparations for Wednesday's dedication features a shot of a bright orange bucket that reads, simply, "Let's Do This."

July 20/21 - Today in Christian history

July 20, 1054: Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius, having been excommunicated from the Roman church four Days earlier, excommunicates Pope Leo IX and his followers. This precipitates the Great Schism.

July 20, 1910: The Christian Endeavor Society of Missouri begins a campaign to ban all motion pictures that depicted kissing between nonrelatives.

July 21, 1773: Pope Clement XIV dissolves the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), which was founded in 1534. Clement did not condemn the Society, but explained it was an administrative move for the peace of the church. Pius VII restored the society in 1814.

July 21, 1925: Biology teacher John T. Scopes is fined \$100 for teaching evolution. He lost his trial, but because of it fundamentalists lost respect.

July 20 News Links

Northern Ireland is being 'treated with contempt'

Church Times

Northern **Ireland** is being 'treated with contempt' ... by the Government if the Stormont Assembly was not reinstated by 21 October (**News**, 12 July).

July 20, 2019

[No apologies for Westminster's fantasy politics](#)

The Irish Catholic

The **News** Letter, read mainly by people from a unionist and Protestant ... The Presbyterian **Church in Ireland** said that there were "many pressing ...

[MPs vote for abortion to be legalised in Northern Ireland in amendment](#)

Premier

The House of Commons have been voting on the Northern **Ireland** ... mission is to provide the **Church** with the most up to date and relevant **news**, told ...

[Sir Anthony Hart, retired judge who chaired a major inquiry into historical child abuse in Northern ...](#)

[Telegraph.co.uk](#)

In Northern **Ireland**, with its complex sectarian divisions, no one **church** had primary responsibility for care of the young and the institutions under ...

[Archbishop Martin told Taoiseach to use his own profession the next time he is looking for an ...](#)

[thejournal.ie](#)

... during the Papal visit in which he recognised the role the **Church** played when the State failed to deliver services for the people of **Ireland** in the past ...

[Derry City Cemetery Series: The minister who revitalised Burt Presbyterian Church](#)

Derry Now

It was recorded that they were: "Praying and preaching openly, and not according to the established Liturgy and order of the **Church of Ireland**."

[Mummy returns: Dublin vaults reopened after vandalism and theft](#)

Church Times

The Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Glendalough in the **Church of Ireland**, the Most Revd Michael Jackson (right), says prayers outside the cry.

[Meet Reading's first female Bishop - and she has ambitious plans](#)

GetReading

She said: "The Bishop's role is both looking after the church, being the chief pastor and chief minister of **Church of England** churches, so getting to ...

[C of E to back up government guidance on LGBT lessons](#)

Church Times

THE **Church of England** is to provide support for its schools to help them ... The Church has broadly welcomed the new government guidance (**News**, 26 April). The Church's lead bishop for education, the Bishop of Ely, the Rt Revd ...

July 20, 2019

Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse comes a step closer after **Church** support

Church Times

"In the **Church of England**, if a child discloses, you have a duty to report. ... subsequent "silence" from the Church on the issue (**News**, 12 May 2017).

Blurily beloved... I'm offering you a 4pm Sunday service to recover from hangovers

Daily Mail

A **Church of England** reverend has moved its 'morning' service to 4pm on Sundays, so worshippers can recover from hangovers, however, his new ...

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