



**20,000
doves
soaring high
in the Nave
of Lichfield
Cathedral. A
wonderful
community
project
featuring
messages
from
thousands
of school
children
across the
Midlands**

January 5, 2019

‘Irish feted first baby of 2019 – but won’t applaud first life terminated’

The Republic feted the first baby to be born in 2019, but will probably not repeat the celebrations for ‘the first human life to be terminated’ under abortion legislation which came into force the same day, according to one NI campaigner, the News Letter reports.

Dawn McAvoy of ‘Both Lives Matter’ was reflecting on the launch of the Republic of Ireland’s new abortion services, which came into force on January 1.

A referendum in May gave overwhelming support for the measure by 66.4% to 33.6%.

As a result, Dublin now provides abortions up to week 12 of pregnancy, or where there is serious risk to the mother, or where the baby is likely to die shortly after birth.

Despite a spate of recent legal challenges, an abortion is currently only lawful in NI where the pregnancy seriously risks a woman’s health.

Ms McAvoy said: “On January 1, the Republic of Ireland celebrated the first baby to be born in 2019. That same day the country’s new legislation on abortion came in to effect. The first human life to be terminated will probably not be celebrated; publicly at least.”

She added: “We would urge our politicians [in NI] to resist the lobbying from abortion activists and instead provide a



Since January 1 women in the Republic of Ireland can access lawful abortions for a range of reasons

more hopeful future for women facing pregnancy crises, a future which is inclusive of them and their children.”

Nola Leach, chief executive of the charity Christian Action Research and Education, said the Republic’s new law provides little practical support for women

“It only contains the ‘quick-fix’ of an abortion with little mention of extra funding for support services, counselling, or better provision of information, fostering and adoption for mothers,” she said.

There are 100,000 people in NI today, she said, who would not be alive had GB legislation been extended here; a

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recent Comres poll found 93% of people in NI agreed that “both lives matter” in a pregnancy, she added.

But Grainne Teggart of Amnesty said the new law and commencement of abortion services are “significant milestones” in a country which had “one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world”.

Amnesty welcomes the fact that women from NI can now access abortion services in the south, she said. However, this serves to underscore “the absurdity of the position women here now find themselves in” because they can board a train or plane for abortions in Dublin or GB but cannot access the same service in NI.

“We call on the secretary of state and UK government to ensure 2019 is the year change happens,” she added.

Alliance for Choice activist, Goretti Horgan, said the vast majority of southern abortions will be through pills prescribed by GPs – medication which she said women on both sides of the border have been using for over a decade.

“The change in the south is unlikely to help women here very much,” she said. “We can access abortions in the Republic but would have to pay.”

In addition, the three-day ‘cooling off period’ now required to access abortion in the south means an NI woman would have to travel south twice in a week for pills that she could order online in NI without leaving her house.

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Ex-Sinn Fein TD Pedar Tobin, who is hoping to set up an all-Ireland pro-life political party, lamented the south's new abortion services.

“Leo Varadkar stated this week that the introduction of one of the most extreme abortion regimes in Europe was a sign of social progress,” he told the News Letter. “It shows how upside down our world has become that when the state seeks to end the lives of thousands of individual human beings it is considered progress.”

The majority of women who seek abortions “do so for socio-economic reasons” yet nobody addressed this during the referendum debate, he said. “Shockingly, FF, SF and the SDLP are in lockstep in the promotion of abortion services across Ireland north and south,” he added.

Sinn Fein MLA Megan Fearon said: “Sinn Fein supports access to quality and safe abortion care for all women on the island of Ireland.”

GAFCON chair slams CofE transgender guidance as 'false teaching'

The chairman of GAFCON, the global conservative Anglican grouping, has hit out at the Church of England over guidance for services to mark transitions for transgender people.

In a message for Epiphany, Archbishop Nicholas Okoh, Primate of Nigeria, contrasted the 'revealed wisdom of God' and 'the wisdom claimed by secular ideologies'. He said

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**The
Archbishop,
Metropolitan
and Primate
of All Nigeria,
Nicholas
Okoh**

calls for
'dialogue'
masked the
continuing
spread of
'false teaching'.



Guidance issued by the House of Bishops commends the rite of Affirmation of Baptismal Faith as a template for recognising a person's gender transition. Okoh said: 'A form of service which is intended to mark a renewed commitment to Christ and the new life we receive through him is instead used to celebrate an identity which contradicts our God-given identity as male and female (as affirmed by Jesus himself in Matthew 19:4) and is still controversial even in secular society.'

The CofE, he said, was 'rejecting biblical authority' in line with the US Episcopal Church and other 'revisionist' provinces.

He said: 'So, much as we thank God for the rich history represented by the See of Canterbury, we cannot avoid the sad truth that insistence on full communion with Canterbury as an essential mark of belonging to the Anglican

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Communion now risks jeopardising the apostolic faith itself. Let us pray that there will be repentance and that God will give courage and boldness to those who remain faithful.'

GAFCON argues that the Church of England has become too theologically liberal to act as a unifying force in global Anglicanism, and seeks to provide an alternative framework for what it describes as 'biblically faithful' Anglicans to relate together.

Scandalous Forgiveness theme of Belfast 4 Corners Festival

Scandalous Forgiveness has been announced as the theme of the next 4 Corners Festival which will take place from 30 January – 10 February at various venues across Belfast.



One of the principal speakers will be Belfast man Canon David Porter (left), who is Chief of Staff and Strategy to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. David previously worked as the Archbishops' Director for Reconciliation and was

on the staff of Coventry Cathedral.

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Canon Porter said: “The 4 Corners Festival is one of the most innovative church–based initiatives and continues to demonstrate it is not afraid of the hard issues. I look forward to sharing in the programme in February.”

The festival seeks to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all. It consists of innovative events designed to entice people out of their own ‘corners’ of the city and into new places where they will encounter new perspectives, new ideas, and new friends. The theme will be explored through music, prayer, storytelling, discussion and more.

The co–chairs and co–founders of the Festival are Revd Steve Stockman, minister of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, and Fr Martin Magill, parish priest in St John’s parish, both in Belfast.

Revd Steve and Fr Martin recently wrote a joint article in the Belfast Telegraph saying:

“In Northern Ireland many will see it as scandalous if someone forgives the person who killed their husband or wife or son or daughter. It could easily be seen as a scandal if a paramilitary murderer was forgiven. Some might suggest that that isn’t justice. Yet, it might also be scandalous if those of us who talk so much about God’s forgiveness are not acting in forgiving ways – if forgiveness is not at the forefront of all that we do”.

Find out more at the **[Festival website here](#)**.

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Pope tells US bishops to rethink their approach to sex abuse scandal

Pope Francis has warned US Catholic bishops they need to deal with the issue of sexual abuse that has devastated the church there.

The bishops are meeting for a spiritual retreat directed by the Preacher to the Papal Household, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa.

In his 3,600-word letter, Francis tells the bishops: 'Combating the culture of abuse, the loss of credibility, the resulting bewilderment and confusion, and the discrediting of our mission urgently demands of us a renewed and decisive approach to resolving conflicts.'

He says the US Church has been 'shaken' by scandals. 'The Church's credibility has been seriously undercut and diminished by these sins and crimes, but even more by the efforts made to deny or conceal them,' he adds. 'This has led to a growing sense of uncertainty, distrust and vulnerability among the faithful. As we know, the mentality that would cover things up, far from helping to resolve conflicts, enabled them to fester and cause even greater harm to the network of relationships that today we are called to heal and restore.'

He urges bishops to cultivate a 'spirit of discernment' so their actions may have the 'flavour of the gospel'.

'Loss of credibility calls for a specific approach, since it cannot be regained by issuing stern decrees or by simply

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Pope Francis has called on US bishops to focus less on administration and more on discernment.

creating new committees or improving flow charts, as if we were in charge of a department of human resources,' he says. 'That kind of vision ends up reducing the mission of the bishop and that of the Church to a mere administrative or organizational function in the "evangelization business".'

In a striking image, he says: 'Clearly, a living fabric has come undone, and we, like weavers, are called to repair it.' He calls for 'not only a new approach to management, but also a change in our mind-set (metanoia), our way of praying, our handling of power and money, our exercise of authority and our way of relating to one another and to the world around us'.

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He urges the Church to abandon defensiveness and to 'stop projecting onto others our own confusion and discontent, which are obstacles to unity'.

In a direct challenge to the Church's leaders, many of whom have faced fierce criticism over their handling of sexual abuse allegations, he says: 'In a word, a new ecclesial season needs bishops who can teach others how to discern God's presence in the history of his people, and not mere administrators. Ideas can be discussed but vital situations have to be discerned.'

Belfast Cathedral Head Verger retires after almost 20 years

After almost 20 years of voluntary service on the verging team of Belfast Cathedral, Mr David Alexander, has stepped down.

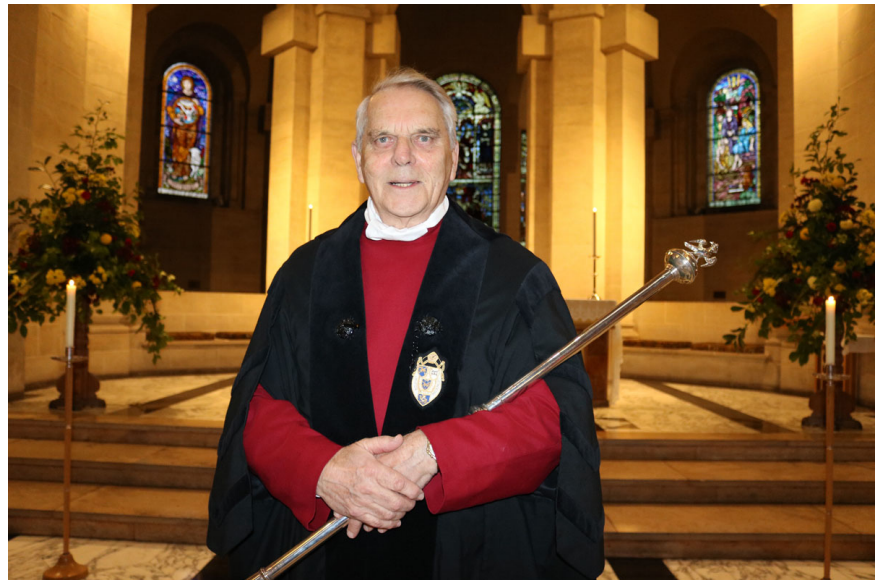
David retired on December 30. In the last two decades he has served in St Anne's as a steward, crucifer, tenor lay clerk, verger, Synod member, parochial nominator and Board member.

David's love for St Anne's Cathedral began almost 70 years ago when, as a boy chorister, he was introduced to and enjoyed the formality and the high standard of liturgy and music.

He experienced the talents of all the Masters of Choristers / Organists who have worked in St Anne's since the Cathedral was built, and served under three. David also

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Mr David Alexander, who has retired as head vergers at Belfast Cathedral after almost 20 years.



witnessed the work and mission of seven Deans.

Born in Banbridge in 1941, David is a past pupil of Oranges Academy, Belfast, and the Royal School, Armagh. His career took him to sea, first as a cadet and then as an officer for 18 years. His main naval qualifications were achieved at John Moore's University in Liverpool.

Soon after obtaining his Master's / Captain's Certificate, David was appointed as a Marine Pilot for Belfast and other local ports, a position he held for 26 years until his retirement.

In 1969 David featured in a BBC documentary as the 2nd Officer / Navigator on the ship SS Carrigan Head which won the annual race to Chicago in the Great Lakes after the winter freeze up – not the only time that he was on the winning ship.

David married Helen in 1968. They have a son David and daughter Suzanne, and three grandchildren.



David when he was a boy chorister at the cathedral

David was asked to help out on the Cathedral verging team by Dean Houston McKelvey in 2001, and that ‘helping out’ soon became permanent.

“The verger has so many little things to check on, the colours (liturgical) lighting, heating etc, preparing for different types of services, leading

the choir procession and the clergy,” David explained.

“I like the dignity of the role, and I like trying to do everything right. I have verged for Prince Andrew, the Earl of Wessex, senior clergymen including the Archbishop of Canterbury, and senior politicians.”

A dedicated family man, David’s hobbies include water colour painting and the Anglican Church, particularly its liturgy and tradition of organ and choral music. David and

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Helen still sing in a local Belfast choir. He is also known to fly light aircraft and gliders!

David said he felt the time was right to retire as he would like to spend more time with the family and enjoy his grandchildren.

“I would like to thank the clergy, congregation and sextons for their help and encouragement over the years, especially those who helped with linen laundry, coffee cups, candles etc,” David said. “A special thanks to the team of volunteer vergers who supported me throughout and willingly turned out for services when requested.”

Expressing his gratitude to his wife Helen, David said his duties in the Cathedral were only possible because of her support and help. “Helen herself worked carefully and quietly in the background so a special thank you to Helen,” he said.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, paid tribute to David, saying that since he arrived as Dean 10 months ago, David had been ‘a constant source of advice and guidance.’

“He has prepared for services both large and small. Each week he has ensured that everything is in its correct place, from microphones to communion wine, and from Deans to Archbishops!” Dean Forde said.

“David has almost 20 years of experience behind him as a Cathedral verger, but each service has always been prepared for with meticulous detail. He has also been a

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team leader, organising and guiding the other vergers, acolytes and crucifers in their weekly duties.

“As Dean I will miss David for both his accumulated wisdom, and his gentle kindness. He has been to me, as to previous Deans, a real support to ensure the smooth working of many Cathedral services across the decades.”

David and Helen will maintain their close relationship with St Anne’s as members of the Cathedral congregation.

Woman jailed for handbag theft from church worshipper

A Belfast woman who stole a handbag from a worshipper in church has been jailed for six months. Victoria McKay, 28, was told she had committed a “mean” offence against a victim who trusted those gathered with her.

Belfast Magistrates’ Court heard McKay and a co-accused carried out the theft at Sandy Row Methodist Church on October 7 last year.

A woman attending the Sunday service had left her handbag beside her chair while she went for lunch being provided. When she returned the bag, containing her purse, cash, cards and reading glasses, was gone.

A witness reported seeing McKay, of Avoca Street in Belfast, and her male accomplice leave the church with the stolen belongings. They were located and arrested by police in Great Victoria Street a short time later. Prosecutors said the

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handbag and contents were then handed over, with McKay admitting the theft.

C of E's new guidance on reporting serious incidents, approved by the Charity Commission

The Church of England has published this week new House of Bishops' guidance on reporting safeguarding and other Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission. This is the first time the Church of England has produced Charity Commission approved guidance.

The Charity Commission updated its guidance on Serious Incident Reporting in October 2018, with a particular focus on the reporting of safeguarding Serious Incidents following recent high-profile incidents in the charity sector. All PCCs and DBFs and most Religious Communities are charities and their trustees (eg PCC members, DBF directors) are required to report any Serious Incidents – both safeguarding and non-safeguarding - to the Charity Commission.

[The CofE's bespoke new guidance](#) for PCCs (Parochial Church Councils), DBFs (Diocesan Boards of Finance) and Religious Communities - all charities – seeks to support them to understand what needs to be reported as a serious incident and to do so in a timely and effective way.

A safeguarding Serious Incident is an actual or alleged safeguarding incident, which results in or risks significant harm either to people linked with or employed by the charity or to its reputation. Other Serious Incidents are actual or

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alleged adverse incidents, which result in or risk loss of the charity's money or assets, damage to its property or harm to its work or reputation.

The new CofE guidance sets up a system which provides for the reporting of all safeguarding serious incidents by PCCs to be through their diocese. The Charity Commission has also agreed to the bulk reporting of safeguarding serious incidents by DBFs every six months - unless an incident is very serious, for example it presents a live risk, in which case it must be reported immediately. Religious Communities (except closed communities which are not charities) will continue to report directly to the Charity Commission, but will now use the new template reports to assist them.

The new detailed guidance on reporting, which PCCs, DBFs and religious communities must now follow, includes explanatory cover notes and templates for reporting safeguarding and other serious incidents. The National Safeguarding Team will be alerted to all reporting of safeguarding serious incidents and for the first time will be able to develop a national picture of safeguarding serious incidents.

The guidance does not change how any PCC deals with safeguarding as the House of Bishops' policy and guidance must still be followed; any safeguarding concerns or allegations must be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) within 24 hours, who will liaise with statutory agencies, as required.

Bishop Peter Hancock, the Church of England's lead safeguarding bishop said: "This new guidance for reporting

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means that for the first time we will start to have a national picture of emerging trends in serious incidents, particularly around safeguarding. We would like to thank the Charity Commission for offering their support and advice to enable the Church to develop this guidance across its dioceses, parishes and religious communities. It is vital that all institutions follow correct safeguarding governance, including reporting to the Charity Commission, but for the Church it is about the core missional business of who we are, valuing everyone in God's image. Safeguarding is about the prevention of harm and the promotion of wellbeing; everyone's wellbeing. This new guidance is another important step in ensuring we are a safer Church for all."

Kate Waring, Head of the Charity Commission's Risk Assessment Unit said: "It is important that charities report serious incidents to the Charity Commission so we can ensure that trustees comply with their legal duties and manage incidents responsibly. We're clear that reporting a serious incident alone is not necessarily a sign that there have been failings within a charity. In fact, making a report to us is an important way for trustees to demonstrate that they are responding responsibly to an incident. The Commission recently updated its guidance on serious incident reporting and the new House of Bishops' guidance helpfully supplements this with information that is specific to PCCs, DBFs and Religious Communities. So we were pleased to be able to approve this guidance and the associated reporting process, which we hope will assist trustees in ensuring that the right incidents are reported to us at the right time with the right information."

See Church Times report at -
churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/4-january/news/uk/safeguarding-pccs-must-report-serious-incidents-to-charity-commission>

January 5 in Christian history

January 5, 459: Simeon Stylites, who lived at the top of a 60-foot pillar nonstop for 36 years, dies on it "dripping with vermin."

January 5, 1066: Edward the Confessor, the only English king ever canonized a saint by the Roman Catholic Church, dies. Builder of Westminster Abbey, he was buried there January 6.

January 5, 1527: Swiss Anabaptist reformer Felix Manz is drowned in punishment for preaching adult baptism, becoming the first Protestant martyred by other Protestants.

January 5, 1964: Roman Catholic Pope Paul VI and Greek Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras meet in Jerusalem, the first meeting of the two offices since 1439, more than half a millennium before.

News links

Church will keep central abuse record

The Times

The **Church of England** will keep a central record of sexual harassment, child abuse and bullying across its 12,000 parishes, reporting serious cases ...

WATCH: NI church's sing-along video is an online hit

Belfast Newsletter

St Paul's **Church of Ireland** on the Ballinderry Road in Lisburn posted the video, which features church members singing along to 'My Lighthouse' – a ...

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[Gardaí had €350000 taken from salaries over discipline breaches Independent.ie](#)

... from the account to the Catholic Obsequies Association for chaplaincy services each year, while €2,500 is paid to the **Church of Ireland** Archdeacon.

[Primary has pupils from right across the globe!](#)

Fermanagh Herald

These children are from a wide range of religious backgrounds, such as Islam, Pentecostalism, **Church of Ireland**, Hinduism, Catholicism, and of no ...

[When do Christmas decorations come down? When is Twelfth Night and Epiphany?](#)

[Express.co.uk](#)

According to the **Church of England**, Twelfth Night is January 5. But the Church also says the day of Epiphany – when the three wise men came – is ...

[Twelfth Night 2019: Is Twelfth Night the 5th or 6th of January? - Express.co.uk](#)

[Full Coverage](#)

[The poems of TS Eliot](#)

Angelus News

Born into a Unitarian family, the poet T.S. Eliot entered the **Church of England** in 1927—although he preferred the designation “Anglo-Catholic.

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