



Methodist church calls for action for victims of Historical Institutional Abuse

The Methodist Church's Council on Social Responsibility in conjunction with the Rev. Billy Davison, President of the Church have issued a statement in the light of the continual failure to implement Sir Anthony Harts recommendations regarding the victims of Historical Institutional Abuse.

The Methodist Church in Ireland calls on Mrs Karen Bradley, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, “to act as quickly as possible to bring in a compensation scheme for the victims of Historical Institutional Abuse.”

The statement continues, “We recognise that the failure to implement the recommendations of Sir Anthony Hart is primarily a result of the abject failure of our local politicians at Stormont. Nevertheless, we urge the Secretary of State not to use these victims as a ‘bargaining chip’ in trying to get

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progress in the talks about to take place. These victims deserve so much better.

“We note the apparent willingness of the local party leaders and senior civil servants to facilitate the processes that the Secretary of State will have to implement in order to bring a bill through Westminster. We urge her to do this as a matter of the utmost priority.”

Catholic Church reaffirms dignity of life on Ireland abortion referendum anniversary

The Catholic Church in Ireland has reaffirmed its belief in the dignity and right to life of every human being from conception to natural death.

This comes on the first anniversary of Ireland's abortion referendum where the country voted overwhelmingly in favour of legalising terminations.

[The 25th May 2018 vote](#) effectively repealed the eighth amendment of the Irish constitution, which stated that a pregnant woman and a foetus had an equal right to life.

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran said he was saddened at last year's decision to liberalise the regime surrounding early terminations.

He said many people voted for change with ambivalence and may not be happy with their choices.

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"In marking this anniversary, we reaffirm our belief in the fundamental dignity and right to life of every human being from conception to natural death," he said.

"This is not simply a matter of faith, it is what reason and common sense suggests.

"There remains a real sadness that the majority of Irish people, for a variety of reasons, said 'yes' to abortion if not for themselves, then at least as an option for others."

However, he insisted that many people remain committed to protecting the lives of unborn children.

"The challenge now remains for us, in these changed circumstances, to find new and more effective ways to serve

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life and to bear witness to the essential goodness and beauty of every life," Bishop Kevin added.

"This is the mission of the new Council for Life established by the Irish Catholic Bishops, but it is a mission that we share with all who recognise the right to life, believers and non-believers alike."

Former armed robber is new Carlisle vicar

A former jailed armed robber and drug dealer has been appointed as a new vicar in Carlisle.

The Reverend Matt Martinson was jailed for 11 years in 1995 following an armed raid on a post office in York.

He developed a close relationship with a prison chaplain and after his release **was ordained as a priest with the Church of England in 2010.**

Mr Martinson is moving to Carlisle's Holy Trinity Church next month from his current posting in Hull.

He is married to Haley and they have a 19-year-old son, Seth. He will now also be Priest in Charge of St Barnabas and St Luke's in Carlisle.

He said: "I feel very sad about my past life because of all the people I have hurt.

"If there was some way I could apologise to them, then I would.

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"I understand that would probably mean nothing to them because I ruined people's lives.

"I can't change my past but it's made me who I am today.

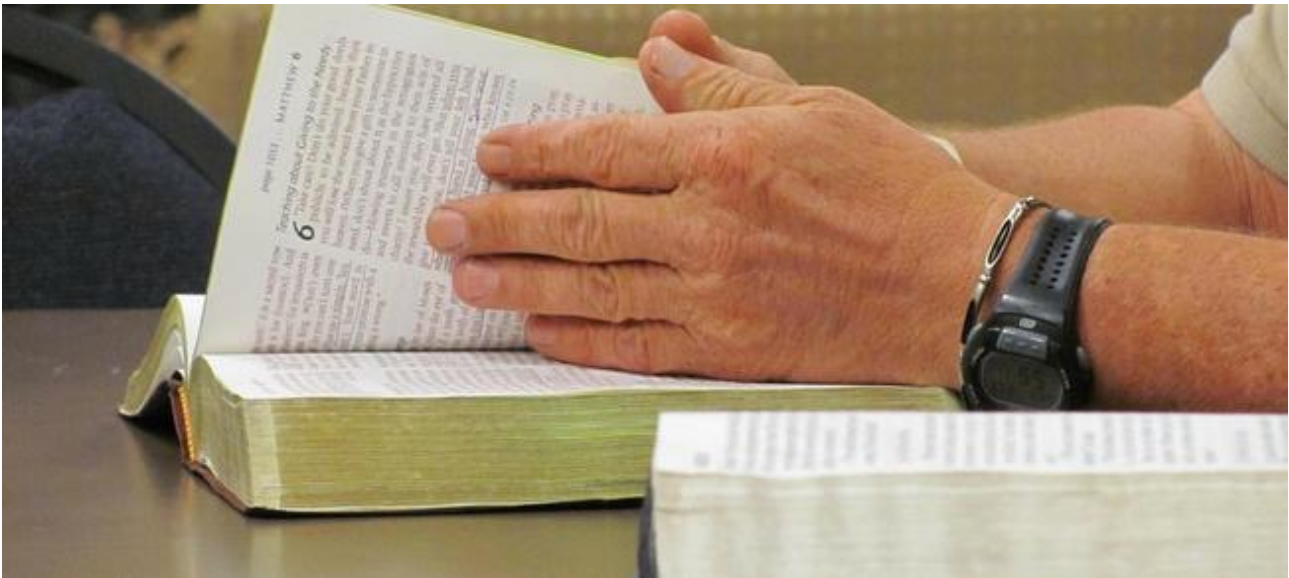
"I struggled to understand how God could forgive me, but one day there was a sudden realisation that he had; the sense of relief was enormous."

The Bishop of Carlisle, the Right Rev James Newcome, said: "We are delighted to welcome Matt and his family to their ministry in the city of Carlisle.

"His story demonstrates the amazing healing power that God offers up to us all through his love and grace.

"Matt, Haley and Seth will all be in our prayers as they prepare for their move to Cumbria."

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Theology and Religious Studies risk disappearing as student numbers decline

Theology and Religious Studies are at risk of disappearing from universities, according to the British Academy.

A new report by the UK's national body for the humanities and social sciences has released a new report showing a steep decline in student numbers studying Theology and Religious degrees.

The report revealed that there were about 6,500 fewer students on such degree courses in 2017 - 2018 than six years ago, when fees were increased.

The decline has led to the closure or reduction in size of several university theology departments. For instance, the UK's specialist theological institution, Heythrop College, founded in 1614, closed its doors in 2018 after over 400 years of teaching.

Sir Diarmaid MacCulloch FBA, Professor of the History of the Church at the University of Oxford, said many students are unaware of the transferable skills a theology degree can

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bring: "I don't think schools really appreciate what a good move it is to do a degree in theology and religious studies, the outcomes for students in terms of their future careers is extremely good."

Sir MacCulloch stressed the vital role religious education plays in modern life: "We live in a multicultural, multi-faith society here, and despite all its faults, it's been a success.

"But it can't go on being a success, if there are not enough people to appreciate the differences in particular religious cultures."

The report also highlighted significant gender imbalances between Theology and Religious Studies students and staff.

While women made up 64 percent of students on first degree programmes in 2017 - 2018, they made up only 35 percent of doctoral students and 37 percent of academic staff.

In other similar humanities subjects 53 percent of academics are women. Meanwhile, the average age of academic staff is 47 years old compared with around 43 in Philosophy, Classics or History - and the average age has been rising.

If unaddressed, the profile of TRS teaching staff could prove to be a stumbling block to recruiting students from the next generation, who increasingly value diversity, leading to further 'pipeline' problems in the disciplines.

Warning of the 'pipeline' problems, Professor Roger Kain FBA, Vice-President of Research and Higher Education Policy at the British Academy, said:

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"This report comes at a critical time for Theology and Religious Studies. Not only are the subjects' popularity on the wane but the problem is confounded by the profile of their teaching staff; if more ethnically and gender diverse groups do not rise through the ranks, there is a danger that these highly relevant disciplines disappear from our universities."

Hong Kong's cathedral celebrates 170 years – part of the birth of the city

Hong Kong's St John's Cathedral is holding a year of celebration to mark its birth 170 years ago in 1849. Its chequered history includes surviving the shelling and subsequent Japanese occupation during the Second World

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War and going on to celebrate its centenary in 1949 as the People's Republic of China was born. This was followed by an influx of political refugees from China, who further swelled the city's population, as it began developing into a major industrial and commercial centre.

Archbishop Paul Kwong launched a year-long celebration of the 170th anniversary of St John's Cathedral in Hong Kong during a service last December.

St John's Cathedral charts its foundations back to 1843 when a British Royal Navy chaplain, Vincent Stanton, stepped ashore on the small island and began leading worship. A few years later in 1847, after the Treaty of Nanking secured Hong Kong for the British, the Governor, Sir John Davis, laid the cathedral's foundation stone. Two years later the first service was held on 11 March 1849.

The Dean of St John's, Matthias Der, said: "We should be very proud that St John's Cathedral was there at the very beginning. What is more important is, that after 170 years we remain strong and faithful, for the Church and for the city of Hong Kong."

The Cathedral is marking the anniversary with a variety of services and events under the theme of "Faith in the City". The Dean said: "I am personally very excited about these celebrations. On the one hand they will strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ as his disciples and on the other hand they will empower us to carry out this faith into our society. From the earliest days St John's has always seen itself as a church that lives for others."

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The celebration events are all designed both to share the Christian faith with the general public in Hong Kong and to build up a harmonious and prosperous city. In March the cathedral hosted a public lecture series on faith led by theologian NT Wright. This was followed by a carnival event for all ages with prayers for the city and performances by St John's Cathedral Choir and the Cathedral's Children's Choir. The

choirs sang a new 170th anniversary hymn composed by cathedral organist Peter Yue.

In June the cathedral will invite members and friends for a "Blessing Hong Kong" service to pray for the Church and all the people of Hong Kong, and to pray that the city will be blessed with peace, justice and prosperity.

The Presiding Bishop of the US-based Episcopal Church, Michael Curry, is to be the preacher at the final celebration in November when the cathedral will hold a Thanksgiving Service and Gala Dinner. The Archbishop and Primate of

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the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, Dr Paul Kwong, will preside at the service.

“Today the Hong Kong Sheng Hui (in literal translation Hong Kong Catholic Church) carries out God’s work through 50 parishes / mission churches, more than 130 schools and 400 social services agencies,” the Dean said. “Every day thousands of Hong Kongers are engaged with the Church experiencing the love of God through our presence.”

The cathedral’s rich history includes the day in 1941 when more than 100 people attended matins while shells fell around the city. That same afternoon Hong Kong surrendered to the Japanese. Most of the ex-patriot congregation were interned, but worship continued for Chinese brave enough to gather for worship, with services taken by Chinese clergy from local parishes. Eventually the Japanese commandeered the cathedral as a social club and Christian imagery, including windows and memorial tablets were removed. In 1956 a new East window was completed in dedication to those who had suffered and died during the Japanese occupation.

Writing to the congregation this year, the Dean said, “Our faith is not only manifested in the past, but how we experience God’s presence in our lives now. Our faith is something which compels us to make a difference in the world today. . . Let’s learn from pioneers like Vincent Stanton, who had the vision and courage to boldly witness Jesus and extend God’s kingdom.”

Details of the celebrations are available on St John’s Cathedral website: www.stjohnscathedral.org.hk.

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Today in Christian history

May 27, 1564: John Calvin, French Protestant Reformer, dies. He kept writing and ministering to the Christians in Geneva nearly up to his death, telling his worried friends, "What! Would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?".

May 26, 1521: The Edict of Worms formally condemns Martin Luther's teachings and he is put under the ban of the Holy Roman Emperor. Those who fear for his life then kidnap Luther and hide him in Frederick's Wartburg castle .

May 26, 1232: Pope Gregory IX sends the first Inquisition team to Aragon, Spain.

May 26, 1647: Massachusetts enacts a law forbidding any Jesuit or Roman Catholic priest from entering Puritan jurisdictions. Second-time offenders could face execution.

May 26, 1664: Increase Mather becomes minister of Boston's Second Church, a position he held until his death 59 years later. He became one of the leading clergymen in the colonies.

May 26, 1700: Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, founder of the Moravian church and a pioneer of ecumenism and mission work, is born in Dresden, Germany.

May 26, 1926: Church of the Foursquare Gospel founder Sister Aimee Semple McPherson disappears from a California beach. Her mother claimed Aimee must have drowned, telling supporters, "Sister Aimee has gone," and planning an elaborate funeral for her in Los Angeles. But,

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three days after her funeral on June 20, McPherson reappeared in Arizona, saying she had escaped from kidnappers. Rumors swirled that the disappearance was actually the result of a romantic tryst, allegations that McPherson denied, but her public image never fully recovered.

News briefs

+++ Honorary Doctorate in Australia for Irish Patrician Brother - Br. Aengus Kavanagh, Patrician Brothers, formerly of Tullow, now working in Australia has received an Honorary Doctorate for his contribution to education

+++ Retirement of Church House stalwart - The end of May bring the retirement from the staff in Church of Ireland House, Dublin, of Trevor Stacey. Mr Stacey joined the staff of the RCB straight from The King's Hospital and remained there throughout his entire career. He is remembered by former colleagues as a determined defender of the rights of the staff while as member of the Staff Association, while as a senior manager, as Head of Property and Trusts, his work ethic, often beyond the bounds of what the Church had any right to expect, became the stuff of legend.

+++ Lead thieves target Cairncastle church - Lead thieves have targeted St Patrick's Parish Church, Cairncastle, stealing lead flashing, and causing significant damage to further flashing, guttering and the lightening rod.

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+++ What a day Friday was for RICHARD YARR - In

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in addition to being made a Freeman of the City of London for services to music, Richard was also made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. - the presentation was introduced by

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violinist Tasmin Little. Two superb achievements. Many congratulations to a man who holds many positions including that of chair of the Charles Wood Festival in Armagh, BBC music producer, chairman of NIIOC1 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition.

+++ Annual St Columba Celebration - The Archdeacon of Raphoe, Ven. David Huss, will be the preacher at the annual St Columba Celebration Service, in Gartan Abbey, near the saint's birthplace, on Sunday 9th June at 3pm.

The Britannia Band will once again provide music, this year, with refreshments laid on by the parishioners of St Columba's, Gartan, who this year are celebrating the 200th anniversary of their current church building.

The Rector of Conwal with Gartan, Rev David Houlton, has extended an invitation to all to come along to what is usually a very joyful occasion (as you can see from the photos from last year's service).

The weather is normally very pleasant for this special occasion but - in the event of poor weather - the Service and refreshments will be transferred to the current church building - in Church Hill, Gartan.

+++ Methodist President's week - Sunday 26th May:
Donaghadee
Monday 27th: Day Off - Tuesday 28th: Pastoral -
Wednesday 29th: NIHCA AGM - Edgehill Board of
Governors - Visit Thiepval barracks Lisburn - Thursday
30th: Finance Committee - Friday 31st: Home/ Office

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+++ In concert at Hillsborough - HM Lord Lieutenant of Belfast Mrs Fionnuala Jay O'Boyle CBE, pictured with the Performers at the concert given at Hillsborough Castle for HRH The Prince of Wales and his guests.

+++ Hair today, gone at the end of June Fundraiser - The Reverend Máirt Hanley of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, is quite well known for his long hair but he is getting this chopped off at the end of June. The hair itself will go to a cancer wigs charity but he is hoping to raise some money for the Community of Brendan the Navigator

+++ Belfast Community Gospel Choir - will be performing at Belfast Cathedral on Sunday 16th June! Get your tickets to this incredible, energetic evening of music here - <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/belfastcathedral/belfast-community-gospel-choir/e-ydxepo>

+++ pciga19 - It's only two weeks until YOUTH NIGHT 2019! Get your tickets now from the PCI website - £5 Youth Night only or £7 Youth Night & Unplugged. Guest speaker is

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Phil Houston. Be there, Saturday 8 June, 7.30pm <http://bit.ly/2HxTehY>

+++ Your prayers are requested for - Elaine Getty – community outreach worker in Strand Presbyterian Church (Rev Danny Rankin). Praise God for answered prayer, that Strand's purpose-built, community-oriented building is buzzing with people from the community almost every day. Pray that the Holy Spirit will soften hearts to seek God, and will equip each of us to share "the reason for the hope we have" with courage and discernment. Thank God for the faithful work of all the volunteers in Strand in teaching, serving and building relationships throughout the year. Pray for rest and refreshment for everyone over the summer.

+++ Food for thought - “Ultimately, prayer is about being silent before God and allowing God to speak to you, so that you discern the will, and the way, and the word of God for you.” Inderjit Bhogal

News Links May 27

Catholic Church reaffirms dignity of life on Ireland abortion referendum anniversary

Premier

The Catholic **Church in Ireland** has reaffirmed its belief in the dignity and right to ... In a world of fake **news** there's never been a greater need for quality ...

Catholic church reaffirms dignity of life

BreakingNews.ie

The Catholic **church** has reaffirmed the fundamental dignity of life on the ... of the referendum which led to the legalisation of abortion in **Ireland**.

Cannabis could be the next major debate in the new liberal Ireland

The Corkman

Things have changed a lot since then. In the intervening years we have legalised same sex marriage and abortion and the influence of the **church** has ...

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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[Arsonists torch catholic **church** during mass in Northern Ireland in targeted attack](#)

Daily Star

Churchgoers had to be evacuated from the Holy Family **Church** in Londonderry last night after an adjoining outbuilding was engulfed in flames.

[Police seeking two suspects as Derry **church** building destroyed in arson attack](#)

thejournal.ie

POLICE IN NORTHERN **Ireland** are investigating after a Catholic **church** in Derry was deliberately set on fire last night. The PSNI have said that two ...

[DUP blasts arson attack on Derry Catholic **church** as 'terrible act of vandalism and desecration'](#) - Belfast Telegraph

[Fleabag's hot priest: Andrew Scott on sex, Catholicism and LGBT actors](#)

Irish Times

After leaving **Ireland** in his early 20s, he took root in London, gathering ... You've spoken about the damage done to you by the **church** as a child.

[Audiences left feeling positive and uplifted at Gorey Festival of **Choirs**](#)

Gorey Guardian

Audiences left feeling positive and uplifted at Gorey Festival of **Choirs** ... to come and visit next year's festival, from all over **Ireland**,' said Paul Brown.

[The **Church of England's** transgender guidance should be withdrawn, clergy say](#)

Premier

The **Church of England** has been urged to withdraw its recent guidance on ... "The gospel invitation to repent and believe the good **news** of Jesus is ...

[Call for more diversity within **Church** leadership answered](#)

Premier

A call for the **Church of England's** leadership to reflect the communities it serves ... In a world of fake **news** there's never been a greater need for quality ...

[Libby Lane: First female bishop starts new role as Bishop of Derby](#)

BBC News

England's first-ever female bishop is set to be officially appointed as the Bishop of ... She became the **Church of England's** first female bishop in 2015.

[Public consultation to be held in York on next Archbishop](#)

York Press

A spokesman said the Archbishop was the second most senior figure in the **Church of England** and led the Diocese of York, which had 600 **Church of** ...

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