



Four in ten Church of England clergy now support same-sex marriage

Disability Awareness Sunday 2014: Changing Perceptions, Making Changes

The third Sunday in November – which this year falls on Sunday 16th November – is designated as Disability Awareness Sunday and the Church of Ireland's Working Group on Disability feels it is an appropriate moment to highlight some useful statistics relating to disability across the island of Ireland. These remind us both of various different types of disability that might be present in congregations and that not all disabilities are immediately obvious.

The Working Group not only aims to make people think beyond disability and towards access for all but also seeks to make people aware of key issues involved in ensuring that churches are as accessible and welcoming as possible both physically and in their culture. Churches and church-based organisations can do much to meet people's worshipping, pastoral and social needs on an inclusive basis and indeed over recent years church buildings across the island have undergone various changes for the better, from modifications to make them wheelchair accessible to providing handrails on entrance steps, for example. Further improvements could include providing disabled parking spaces or installing a loop system where there isn't one. Churches and halls should also consider if they have effective evacuation plans for people with a disability. On other fronts, ensuring that large print / braille materials for the sight impaired are available is important and can be further enhanced by incorporating sign translation.

Disability Awareness Sunday is a chance for parishes and select vestries to re-evaluate how they can improve access and to come up with proactive plans to make tangible changes for the better in their own contexts.

It is important to remember that disability affects very many people and should not be thought of as 'someone else's concern'. In the Republic of Ireland, the figures over the past decade are similar but can – taking account

of the aging population – be usefully broken down into age categories for those aged 45–64 and 65+. For those in the 45–64 group, disability relating to mobility accounts for 14%, personal care 8%, sight 1.8%, hearing 5% and communication 1.3%; while in the 65+ group, the figures rise to: mobility 41%, personal care 20%, sight 10.6%, hearing 17.9% and communication 3.3%.

Jesus said, ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ (John 10:10). If we take these words as His followers seriously it is incumbent upon us to be as open and inclusive as possible so that all people, regardless of ability or disability, can access this ‘full life’ that Jesus offers. So, do try to think of Disability Awareness Sunday as an opportunity for your congregation to celebrate the presence and gifts of people with disabilities of whatever kind in your midst and to imagine both new and innovative ministries to engage people with disabilities and also to meet people’s needs practically.

Further useful resources can be found at the National Disability Authority of Ireland toolkit at www.accessibility.ie

Diocesan Vocations Directors meet in Maynooth for annual conference

“Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are firmly on the agenda of the Irish Catholic Church and any opportunity for a group like this to come together to discuss and to plan for vocations strategies is to be welcomed” – Bishop Donal McKeown

“Vocations Directors are not paper pushers filling in and checking forms but are exercising an important ecclesial ministry and it is important that as vocations directors we recognise this” – Father Stephen Langridge

Diocesan Vocations Directors from around Ireland gathered for their annual conference in Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth on Sunday 26 and Monday 27 October on the theme *“I will make you fishers of men”*.

The conference was opened by Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry and Chairman of the Bishops’ Conference Council for Vocations. In his opening address Bishop McKeown said: “Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are firmly on the agenda of the Irish Catholic Church and any opportunity for a group like this to come together to discuss and to plan for vocations strategies is to be welcomed. I am heartened not only by the number of dioceses represented at this year’s conference but by the genuine enthusiasm being shown by vocations directors for their ministry and work. Gatherings like this afford us time to focus on important questions – like how

we promote vocations in a missionary Church and for a missionary Church and how we share insights on what is working in local parishes and dioceses when it comes to the promotion of priesthood and religious life. I am sure that vocations directors will be further encouraged and inspired in their work as they return to their dioceses.”

Also in attendance at the conference were Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin, Monsignor Hugh Connolly, President of Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Father Willie Purcell, National Coordinator for Diocesan Vocations, Sister Phyllis Moynihan from Vocations Ireland and members of the Bishops’ Council for Vocations.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Father Stephen Langridge a priest of the Diocese of Southwark (UK) and Chairman of the England and Wales Vocations Directors Conference. Father Langridge also runs the UK’s first dedicated residential centre for nurturing a culture of discipleship and vocations promotion. Since he began this work in 2005 the number of seminarians in Southwark diocese has more than doubled with 20 men currently accepted by the diocese as students for the priesthood. Father Langridge spoke to the vocations directors on topics such as promoting vocations to priesthood in parishes and dioceses, the importance of a good formation programme for vocations directors as well as an induction programme for new vocations directors. There was discussion on the issues of selection and assessment of candidates for priesthood. Father Langridge said: “Vocations Directors are not paper pushers filling in and checking forms but are exercising an important ecclesial ministry and it is important that as vocations directors we recognise this”. He went on to say that the best people to promote vocations in parishes are priests themselves but that sometimes there is a lack of confidence. He said that as a Church we need to help priests to recover their confidence in themselves and in their priestly ministry.”

The Diocesan Vocations Directors welcomed the recent statement by the Irish Bishops’ Conference following their October General Meeting in which the bishops agreed to allocate special time to the issue of vocations at their next meeting in December.

There was time for discussion and sharing of information and experiences in dioceses around the country. A new monthly vocations newsletter for vocations directors and for parishes was launched as part of the conference.

Commenting at the conclusion of the conference Father Willie Purcell National Coordinator for Diocesan Vocations said: “We have been given much food for thought by Father Langridge and the other participants – a reminder about the important ministry we have as vocations directors. My hope is that these past two days that we have spent listening, sharing and in many ways being reaffirmed in our ministry as vocations directors will give us new focus and energy as we return to our parishes and dioceses.”

Madagascar Run Raises Funds For Belfast Counselling Project



Marathon man Ken Tate, Sexton at St George’s Parish Church, Belfast, Diocese of Connor, has just completed a 140km race in Madagascar to raise funds for the Joseph Project.

The race, run in six stages over seven days, was a familiar challenge for superfit Ken, who has already completed many ultra marathons and adventure races, including the Everest Marathon!

Ken was raising funds for an organisation close to his heart. The Joseph Project is a unique counselling service – an innovative development of pastoral care at St George’s. The parish draws on the insights of the very best of modern psychotherapy to reach out to those in difficulty.

The project takes referrals from courts, probation service, health service and social services agencies, as well as from individuals. One of its branches is Men to Men, founded as a small company, which gives the project charity and legal status. Ken was involved in running Men to Men for a number of years. The Joseph Project has up to 50 clients each week, all taking weekly therapy which can last months or even years. The project offers ongoing training for students wishing to be counsellors, and all counsellors are members of the British Association of Psychotherapy and Counselling.

The Joseph Project was founded by the Revd Dr Hayden Foster and the late Canon Dick McDonald, a renowned counsellor. The Joseph Room was consecrated by the Rt Revd Alan Harper, then Bishop of Connor, for counselling and for clergy to undertake pastoral care.

Ken said: “The Joseph Project raises the parish profile with clients and institutions that would otherwise be most unlikely to hear of our declared mission to be ‘an open door in the heart of the city.’”

Ken was in Madagascar from 18–28 September. To train for the challenge, he was running six days a week, covering up to 75 miles a week as the race approached. He supplemented his training with cross training, cycling and weights.

Belfast born and bred, Ken has been Sexton in St George’s since 2000. “I worked with Men to Men for a number of years,” he said. “There are a lot of counselling services out there for women, but in the past there was not much for men who had emotional difficulties, such as divorce, mental health or addiction problems.

“When I was invited to take part in the Madagascar race I thought it would be a nice idea to raise a bit of funding for the Joseph Project through sponsorship.”

Ken took up running in his forties, and did his first marathon, in Belfast, on his 50th birthday. Since then, he has participated in a number of marathons in Belfast and other cities, and his adventure races and ultra marathons have taken him to many international locations including 100km races in Mongolia and Mali, a 140km run in the Sahara, the Everest Marathon, and most recently Madagascar.

“I don’t favour the city marathons so much as they take a greater toll on me than the mountains,” Ken said. “Running along a beautiful mountain trail is a lot easier on your hips and back than running on pavements and tarmac.”

He said his toughest challenge has been the Everest Marathon which he took part in in 2007. “We trekked to Everest Base Camp over the course of 20 days so we could acclimatize to the altitude, then we ran back down in eight hours.”

The total descent was a full marathon distance, 42.2km, and there had been a blizzard at base camp the night before the run back down began. “It is really very dangerous up there as recent events would show,” Ken said,

referring to the recent tragedy in the Himalayas when more than 40 trekkers died in an avalanche.

“Conditions can be difficult, but we had our own medical team which was very important. During the day conditions could be quite pleasant but at night the temperature dropped. One night it was minus 18 and we were sleeping under canvas.”

He faced different conditions in Mongolia, where the Sunrise to Sunset ultra marathon took place during the country’s brief summer and covered 100km in one day. “It was a good one,” Ken commented!

The adventure race in Mali, west Africa, was run over six stages on varying terrain, while the Sahara run was another staged event. “We had to run in deep sand on a couple of stages, while other parts were quite mountainous,” Ken explained.

The Madagascar run was organised by a French athlete Ken first met during the Everest Marathon. It was won by Christophe Le Saux, who Ken describes as a world class athlete. “He would have taken the race very seriously, whereas most of the rest of us were the support act,” Ken said modestly. The run took in the second highest peak in Madagascar and Ken was the only English speaking competitor, both of which presented him with a challenge!

Ken is still collecting sponsorship for completing the Madagascar adventure race. All funds will go towards the Joseph Project. Anyone who would like to make a donation is asked to contact Douglas McIldoon on 028 9023 1275 or the Rev Hayden Foster on 028 9024 7027.

<http://ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=news&newsid=5391>

Kill o’ the Grange Church Family Celebrates Milestone Parish Anniversary

One hundred and fifty years of worship and witness in the parish church of Kill o’ the Grange was celebrated yesterday (Sunday October 27) with a special service. Archbishop Michael Jackson preached at the service which was the latest event in the year of festivities organised by the parish.

The church building was consecrated on Tuesday July 26 1864 and Psalm 24, which was used at the dedication of the church was the opening Psalm at yesterday’s service.

The service was led by the Rector, the Revd Arthur Young who welcomed the congregation. He noted that when the church was first built it was surrounded by fields. Now it is surrounded by buildings. He said the parishioners of Kill wanted to be known



Aideen La Combre, the Revd Arthur Young, Canon Billy Gibbons, Archbishop Michael Jackson and George La Combre.

as people who loved God. Also in attendance was Canon Billy Gibbons who was Rector for 23 years.

In his sermon Archbishop Jackson gave a history of the church and referred to Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness's words introducing the commemorative booklet produced to mark the 150th anniversary, *One generation shall praise your works to another*. In it she says: 'This is a year of celebration, as we thank God for the 150 years of our church and parish of Kill o' the Grange. Let us look forward to another 150 years of fruitful and faithful service both to our parish and to the wider community.'

He spoke about hospitality, hope and holiness. He concluded with a challenge to the parish. "As you move into the next one hundred and fifty years and as you take that wonderful description from Catherine McGuinness's words: faithful and fruitful service, I would ask you to think a little about the inter-relation of hospitality, hope and holiness and to take to heart further words of Isaiah in the same chapter (Isaiah 6.8,9): I heard the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? I said: Here am I! Send me ..." he said. (The Archbishop's sermon is reproduced in full below.)

During the service, Mary Williams outlined the history of the parish and gave details of former rectors. Longstanding parishioners Fred, Heather and Sheila shared their experiences of parish life and their church family. Afterwards, in

the parish hall a celebratory cake was cut by Rosemary Knight, Catherine McGuinness and the Archbishop.

Four in ten Church of England clergy now support same-sex marriage, a poll has found

The [research](#), conducted this summer by YouGov for the the Westminster Faith Debates, polled 1500 members of the clergy.

It found that despite the Church's official opposition to equal marriage, support is steadily growing among the ranks – with 39 percent agreeing that same-sex marriage is right.

51 percent believe it is wrong, however, while 10 percent are still undecided on the issue.

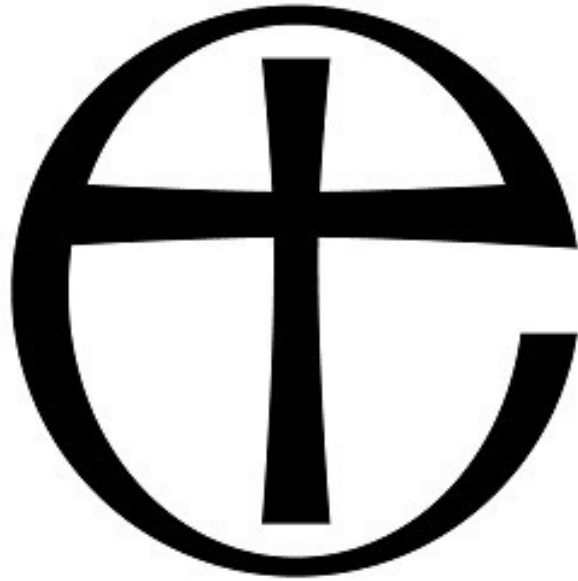
In addition, 34 percent of clergy agreed that the Church had a negative impact on society because it discriminates against women and gay people, while 35 percent admitted the Church was “stuffy and out of touch”.

Incredibly, the poll also found that 1 in 50 members of the clergy don't actually believe in God, with 2 percent admitting they think 'God' is just a human construct.

Professor Linda Woodhead of Westminster Faith Debates told [Christian Today](#): “In both politics and ethics they are idealistic, and very concerned with protecting the weak and the poor. But these attitudes now set them apart from most of the general population and lay Anglicans.

“It's also interesting to see how different most of the more evangelical clergy are from the rest in many of their attitudes.

“The Church's official view that Anglicans should learn to disagree well seems to be undermined by the two-thirds of evangelical clergy who don't think that a goal worth pursuing.”



Four in ten clergy believe same-sex marriage is right

<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/10/26/four-in-ten-church-of-england-clergy-now-support-same-sex-marriage/>

One in 50 Anglican clergy don't believe in God: Scottish Episcopalians are 'most sceptical'

Christian Today - One in 50 Anglican clergy in the UK believes God is merely a human construct, according to a new survey published this month.



Ruth Gledhill

Just eight in ten believe there is a personal God and a further three in 100 believe there is some spirit or life force, *writes Ruth Gledhill.*

And in spite of two millennia of Church doctrine based on determining the mind of God through the Scriptures, nearly one in ten believes: "No-one can know what God is like."

The YouGov survey of more than 1,500 Anglican clergy commissioned by the [Westminster Faith Debates](#) for the current series on the future of the Church of England shows growing acceptance for other faiths, with more than four in ten believing that while Christianity is the "best path" to God, other religions may offer paths as well.

Although the results must be considered bearing in mind the small samples in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, clergy in the Scottish Episcopal Church were the most sceptical about God, with just over seven in ten believing in one.

One possibly surprising feature to emerge from the survey is where clergy turn to for guidance.

Fewer than one in ten, just seven per cent, rely on family and friends as they live their life and make decisions. Despite their oaths of obedience to their bishops and archbishops, no clergy at all rely on Church leaders when making decisions. Neither do they rely on science or great literature. More than four in ten instead rely on God, a third rely on their own conscience, reason and intuition and four per cent rely on the Church, past and present.

More at -

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/one.in.50.clergy.dont.believe.in.god/42082.htm>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/survey-finds-2-of-anglican-priests-are-not-believers-9821899.html>

Report that the Church of England is examining the personnel files of clergy dating back to the 1950s as part of a continuing investigation into historical allegations of child abuse, the Archbishop of Canterbury said this week at a Westminster lobby lunch. He said it was part of a renewed effort by the Church to make sure no allegations have been overlooked. Also includes ref to last week's Waddington review.

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/27/justin-welby-1950s-personnel-files-clergy-child-abuse-investigation-confessional-confidentiality>