



The choir of Merton College, which sung the first ever Evensong at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Monday past.

First ever Anglican Choral Evensong at St Peter's Basilica, Rome

Anglican Choral Evensong was sung in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican for the first time

on Monday afternoon. The choir of Merton College, Oxford made history.

The service was presided over by the Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, director of the Anglican Centre in Rome. Archbishop Arthur Roche, the Vatican Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, preached.

According to the [Anglican Centre's website](#), the service was held in honour of St Gregory the Great, the Pope who sent St Augustine to England to evangelise the Anglo Saxons.

St Gregory's crozier-head was sent to Canterbury as a gesture of support during the Primates' Meeting in January 2016.

Pope Francis gave the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby a wooden crozier modelled on it during their meeting in October, before Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby worshipped at Vespers together at the Basilica of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome.

The service on Monday afternoon ended with a procession to the tomb of St Gregory where prayers were said for the whole Christian church.

According to the **Catholic Herald**, Archbishop Roche said in his homily: 'I think Gregory was a very courageous man in his own time and I think that speaks to us here still today, that despite the difficulties, to be outgoing, just as Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby have been saying, to proclaim the Gospel with joy.'

Last month, Pope Francis became the first pontiff to visit an Anglican church in Rome. Francis and an Anglican bishop prayed side by side at All Saints Church in the city's centre.

The developments come in the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 theses to the Cathedral door in Wittenburg, sparking the Protestant reformation.

It is also 50 years since the Anglican Centre was set up in Rome to improve ecclesiastical relations

The decision to hold Evensong at the Vatican 'reflects the deepening bonds of affection and trust between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church,' a statement from the Anglican Centre read last month.

Archbishop Eamon Martin pays tribute to Bishop Eamonn Casey

Following the death this week of Bishop Eamonn Casey, Bishop Emeritus of Galway and Kilmacduagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, issued the following statement:

“It is with great sadness that I learned today of the death of Bishop Eamonn Casey. I wish to sincerely acknowledge the contribution of Bishop Casey to the work of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference over twenty-three years during his time as Bishop of Kerry and as Bishop of Galway.

“Bishop Casey was a long-serving member of the standing committee of the Bishops’ Conference and, in 1973, was one of the founder members of its overseas development agency Trócaire. Bishop Casey’s inspirational leadership of Trócaire pioneered a very significant pastoral outreach from this country towards the most vulnerable people in the developing world, while at the same time he energetically raised awareness of overseas development issues at home in Ireland. Bishop Casey led Trócaire as its chairman until his resignation in 1992. Bishop Casey also contributed to the planning of the

successful 1979 apostolic pilgrimage to Ireland of Pope Saint John Paul II. Both as priest and bishop, Bishop Casey's ministry on behalf of Irish emigrants is well known and was of immense significance in particular to the Irish in Britain."

"At this sad time for Bishop Casey's family, and for the dioceses of Kerry and Galway, I invite the faithful to pray for the repose of Bishop Casey's soul. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam".

Funeral arrangements for the Most Reverend Eamonn Casey RIP, Bishop Emeritus of Galway and Kilmacduagh - Reception of Remains: Wednesday 15 March at 7.00pm at the Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and Saint Nicholas, Galway. Funeral Mass: Thursday 16 March at 2.00pm at the Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and Saint Nicholas, Galway followed by interment in the Cathedral crypt.

Presbyterian Church focus on cold calling and scams targeted at older people

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) Council for Social Witness welcomed Eddie

Lynch, the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, to its latest meeting today, as it discussed '*Who's Calling?*' his recent research report into the levels of cold calling and scams targeted at older people.

Describing the report as both 'timely and highly concerning', Council convener, Rev. Dr. Trevor McCormick, welcomed Mr. Lynch to the meeting, who detailed the report's findings and emphasised the need to be vigilant.

"As a Church we currently provide residential care and supported housing to some 280 older people across 12 locations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland," Dr. McCormick explained.

"With congregations in regular contact with older people through Senior Member Groups and Luncheon Clubs, the report is both timely and highly concerning, so it was important for us to hear first-hand from the Commissioner the dangers involved and what precautions can be put in place," he said.

Dr. McCormick noted the Council's Older People Services Committee's concerns that more than 1,000 people in Northern Ireland had been identified as being on a so-called 'suckers list'.



At the Council for Social Witness (left to right) Rev. John Seawright, Older People Services Committee convener, Council convener, Rev. Dr. Trevor McCormick, Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland and Lindsay Conway Council secretary.

These are victims who have already been scammed and had their details ‘sold on’ to other scammers, saying that “we have a duty to raise awareness of this issue.”

Welcoming the opportunity to speak about the report, Mr. Lynch said, “I have been concerned for some time that the targeting of older people

for scams has been on the rise and my research has found that many older people are constantly receiving unwanted telephone calls to their home.

“The levels of unsolicited calls and junk mail received goes far beyond the nuisance factor; they cause fear, annoyance and anger to the older people targeted. Eighty per cent of older people have received unsolicited calls to their home, with thirty-eight per cent also receiving calls to their home where no one speaks at least once a week. Ninety-One per cent of older people also receive between 1-30 pieces of junk mail every week.

“I am encouraging older people to become scam aware and consider ‘Who’s Calling?’ Older people are usually very courteous but they should not be afraid to hang up on unknown callers and put junk mail straight in the bin,” he said.

The Commissioner’s office is part of a Scamwise NI partnership with other organisations including the Police Service and Trading Standards. Scamwise NI have identified four ways to stay ahead of a scam by using the ‘Scam Test’ to identify possible scams:

Seems too good to be true
Contacted out of the blue
Asked for personal details
Money requested

Dr. McCormick said, “It is really important for everyone, family, friends and neighbours to draw attention to those who are vulnerable, especially those who are living alone, or simply more trusting of others, to be aware of the dangers of cold callers and potential scams. Like the report itself, today’s briefing was very useful.”

If you feel you are a victim of scamming, or know someone who may be a victim you can contact the following organisations:

Police Service of Northern Ireland:	Tel.
101	
Commissioner for Older People	Tel.
02890 890 892	
Northern Ireland Trading Standards Service	Tel.
0300 1236 262	

The Council for Social Witness is one of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s seven councils. The Council seeks to deliver an effective Social Witness service on behalf of

the Church and to the wider community in partnership with appropriate organisations.

With an operational budget of £10 million (€11.47 million), the Council provides services for a diverse range of users across 17 locations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, employing 450 staff, utilising the support of 200 volunteers, providing 373 bed spaces.

On behalf of PCI, the Council's responsibilities include:

- Residential Care for older people (6 locations)
- Supported Housing for older people (2 locations)
- Nursing Care for older people (1 location)
- Day Care for people with a learning disability (1 location)
- Residential Respite Care for people with either a physical or learning disability, sensory impairment and for older people (2 locations)

- Supported Living for adults with a learning disability and those with a physical disability (2 locations)
- Working with people with addictions (2 locations)
- Working with offenders (1 location)

All PCI homes welcome residents from all denominations and seek to provide care in a specifically Christian ethos and environment. Residents have the choice of attending regular worship services and fellowship times held within each home and a conscious effort is made to ensure that residents are offered spiritual support and encouragement when requested.

For more information see [Council for Social Witness](#)

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland was established in 2011 and is a non-departmental public body. Both the Commissioner and the office are sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and deputy

First Minister but are operationally independent.

The Commissioner's principal aim is to safeguard and promote the interests of older people, which is defined by legislation as including those aged 60 and over, and in exceptional circumstances, those aged 50 or over. The Commissioner has promotional, advisory, educational and general investigatory duties and powers.

For more information see the [Commissioner's website](#).

Scottish Episcopal dioceses vote overwhelmingly to allow provision for equal marriage

The Scottish Episcopal Church has been holding its diocesan synods, and voting on proposals that would allow for some clergy to perform marriages for same-sex couples. The proposals would change Canon 31 of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and will face a final vote at the General Synod, to be held this July.

Changing Attitude Scotland, a network of members of the Scottish Episcopal Church and others, has released the following statement :

Changing Attitude Scotland warmly welcomes the results of voting at the Diocesan Synods of the Scottish Episcopal Church that has taken place across Scotland in March 2017.

Proposals to make changes to Canon 31 of the Scottish Episcopal Church's canons have now been discussed by all the diocesan synods. A very clear majority of the synods voted in favour of change – 6 dioceses voted in favour, whilst one (Aberdeen and Orkney) voted against change.

The changes that are proposed would allow some clergy to be nominated to be able to conduct marriages for same-sex couples. If the changes are approved they would also remove the ban on clergy and lay readers entering into same-sex marriages themselves.

The changes proposed in the Scottish Episcopal Church are deliberately aimed at respecting the conscience of all in the church by not forcing anyone to affirm a doctrinal statement about marriage which they disagree with. Changing Attitude Scotland believes that this method of

dealing with issues surrounding marriage is a model which other churches in the Anglican Communion might well explore in the future. We believe that there is room in the church for everyone to be able to exercise their conscience on this question – respecting those who do not wish to celebrate the marriages of same-sex couples and respecting those who do.

Speaking after the voting was concluded, Beth Routledge, convenor of Changing Attitude Scotland said, “We can now look forward to the final vote on these measures at General Synod in Edinburgh in June. It has been very moving to hear of so many speeches that have affirmed the wish for same-sex couples to be able to walk down the aisles in our churches. We are delighted at the positive votes cast that have supported this change to the Canon, and we hope that they point the way to this wish soon becoming the reality of the Church”

The final vote is expected to be taken in Edinburgh at General Synod which starts on – 8 June 2017

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Primus Chillingworth responds to request for second referendum on Scottish independence

The Most Rev David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church says:

“The decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union is an event with far-reaching consequences, many of which have not yet become visible. In those parts of the United Kingdom which have devolved administrations, particularly in Scotland, the Brexit debate had a slightly different feel. That difference was most clearly seen when the vote in Scotland was in favour of ‘remain’.

“The Scottish Government has announced that it intends to seek permission for a second Independence Referendum. Such a request is not unexpected. It reflects a continuing weakness in the relationship between the Scottish Government and the British Government. They have found it difficult to give creative consideration to the implications of this new situation together. That difficulty reflects a wider failure to make space for a debate about

how the developed nations will relate together in the future, but at this moment, refusal on the part of the British Government to allow a second referendum would inevitably give rise to further ill-feeling in relationships.

“Scotland is already a distinct national entity. It is rich in its history and culture. The Brexit debate has revealed that Scotland is also distinct in its values. The ‘independence question’ is an opportunity for a community to discuss and resolve whether its distinctiveness is such that it justifies separate constitutional arrangements and is therefore a question of national self-determination. Beyond that lie wider questions about Scotland’s relationships in the wider world and its future in challenging economic times.

“Faith communities in general have adopted a position of active neutrality in response to this issue. They should exercise care about adopting positions ‘for or against’ on constitutional issues. But faith communities also care deeply about the quality of the national conversation – about the need for all voices to be heard respectfully. It is also important that the debate attempts to do justice to the depth and the complexity of the issues and does not become over-focused on the single issue of constitutional status.

“People of faith will pray for our political leaders on all sides and will also pray for the future of Scotland and of all the nations of the British Isles.”

Church of Scotland responds to second referendum request

The Church of Scotland has responded to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s announcement she will ask for permission to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence between the autumn of 2018 and the spring of 2019.

The First Minister said she would ask the Scottish Parliament next week to request a Section 30 order from Westminster.

The order would be needed to allow a fresh legally-binding referendum on independence to be held.

Rev Dr Richard Frazer, Convener of the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland, said:

“Today, the First Minister has declared her intention to seek the authority for a referendum on Scottish Independence. And with a majority of MSPs in favour of independence it is likely that such a vote will be passed. The UK

Parliament will have the final say on whether to grant the right to hold an Independence Referendum. It would be wrong if it was withheld.

“In 2014, rather than taking a position on either side of the independence debate, the Church of Scotland consulted individuals and communities on what sort of Scotland they wanted to live in. It also hosted, and encouraged others to host, respectful conversations where people expressed their position passionately but with courtesy and a strong commitment to listen.

“Individual church members will always be entitled to their own views but the Church retains a position of active neutrality on the matter of Scottish Independence.

“In the 2016 EU Referendum, the Church of Scotland spoke out in favour of continued membership as being in the best interests of Scotland, the UK and Europe. This has been the Church of Scotland’s policy since 1996 and it remains the Church’s current position.

“As with the UK’s membership of the European Union, Scottish independence is an issue on which there are many strongly held positions. There are justifiable concerns that the debate

could be bitter, divisive and divert attention away from the hugely complex negotiations which are taking place as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

"Some will also point to the instability which referendums can cause and of their inability to address deeply complex matters with a simple 'Yes' or 'No' response. Others will point to the 2014 debate which encouraged a fresh generation of people to become active in political debate and re-engaged many others in the discussion.

"Whilst these risks are real, there is nothing inevitable about this debate being divisive and acrimonious. All those who take part in this debate about Scotland's future – and the UK's future as well – must be committed to holding a positive and informative debate.

"The Church of Scotland will contribute to this debate in creative and inclusive ways. It will also seek to call to account those who exaggerate their claims or who move from committed debate to inappropriate ways of treating one another.

"On all sides people hold their convictions with honesty and integrity and they must be treated as such. As we continue to grapple with these

complex, contested and important decisions it is important that we do so with as much grace as we can muster and in a way that recognises the humanity of all concerned.

"All those who take part in this debate about Scotland's future – and the UK's future as well – must be committed to holding a debate which informs and inspires and not one which derides and dismisses."

See also -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/snps-nicola-sturgeon-calls-for-second-scotland-independence-referendum-in-autumn-2018-35525626.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-39255256>