



Same sex marriage motion passed in Northern Ireland for the first time

A motion supporting same-sex marriage has been passed for the first time in Northern Ireland's assembly by 53 votes to 51. It is the fifth vote in the Northern Irish assembly in just three years but the first time the motion has passed.

However it is unlikely the motion will be passed into law as the ruling Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) have tabled a parliamentary veto known as a petition of concern which will prevent the motion leading to a change in the law. This means the result is symbolic only.

The complex rules of Belfast's power-sharing government mean that unionist and nationalist parties can prevent a bill becoming law if it fails to command cross-community support. As a result, Northern Ireland will remain the only part of the UK not to legalise same-sex marriage.

However CARE, a Christian public policy charity have expressed their regret at the motion.

"Although the result is largely symbolic this is still a very sad day for supporters of traditional marriage in Northern Ireland," said CARE's CEO Nola Leach.

"The sustained pressure of repeated attempts to change the law in Northern Ireland clearly told in the outcome of this debate.

"The biblical teaching is clear that marriage is a life-long commitment between one man and one woman.

"Just because the rest of the United Kingdom has introduced same-sex marriage does not automatically mean Northern Ireland should follow suit.

"With elections looming next May, more effort must be put in to affirm the mutual benefits of biblical marriage within the wider society."

Of the 41 Nationalist parliamentarians that voted, all 41 voted in favour of the motion to "call on the Executive to table legislation to allow for same sex marriage."

However of the 55 Unionists that voted, only four voted in favour.

The four previous attempts to legalise same-sex marriage have lost by narrow margins.

In a letter to the northern politicians, the Catholic Bishops stated, "In the context of the forthcoming Assembly debate, we wish to express our particular concern that the motion

presented provides no detail whatsoever of the scale or scope of the legislation being proposed.

It is also completely silent on the vital issue of respect for individual religious conscience and protections for Churches and other religious groups. Those who vote in favour of this motion have no way of knowing what the full consequences of such a vote will be. What will be the impact for services provided by Churches and other faith groups that offer vital support to marriages and families in all kinds of distress and thereby contribute to the well-being of children and society? The failure of legislators to provide any form of protection for Catholic Church-related adoption agencies that have had to close in recent years is a stark warning to all who value the wide range of social and pastoral services that Churches provide. The motion being debated in the Assembly fails completely to protect the future of these services and their right to operate within the religious ethos from which they were founded and continue to provide a valued service to communities.

“We ask you especially as a legislator to keep the rights and welfare of children to the forefront of your considerations when voting on the forthcoming motion. Religious and non-religious

people alike have long acknowledged and know from their experience that the family, based on the marriage of a woman and a man, is the best and ideal place for children. The proposed motion before the Assembly effectively says to parents, children and society that the State should not, and will not, promote any normative or ideal family environment for raising children. It therefore implies that the biological bond and natural ties between a child and its mother and father have no intrinsic value for the child or for society. As Pope Francis stated recently, “we must reaffirm the right of children to grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child’s development and emotional maturity” (16 April 2014). We also reiterate the objective truth, affirmed by the recent Synod on the Family, that “there is no foundation whatsoever to... establish an even remotely analogous correspondence between homosexual unions and God’s plan for marriage and the family“ (Synod 2015, *Relatio Finalis*, n.76).”

Moderator goes West

Each year the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland makes a week-long tour of

three of the Church's 19 Presbyteries – local bodies across Ireland that are made up of a minister and an elder from each congregation in a particular area – preaching in local churches, encouraging congregations and seeing the work that they are doing in the communities where God has placed them.

Accompanied by his wife Anne, the tour began on Sunday last when Dr. McNie preached at the Services in Sixmilecross, Clogherney and Cavanaleck. During the week he will also install a new Minister at Second Castlederg and Urney, take part in the mid-week Bible study in Lisbellaw, attend a Presbytery meeting in Dromore, meet the elders of Glenhoy and the members of Enniskillen Presbyterian Church. He will also preach again this Sunday in First Omagh Presbyterian Church and at Ardstraw in the evening.

While the Moderator's visit is primarily pastoral, Dr. McNie will also visit a number of schools and colleges, including Aughnacloy Academy, Gibson Primary School in Omagh and Arvalee Special School. He will also visit farmers and local businesses across the Presbytery and see the work in progress at a number of new church halls



that are being built. He will visit the Police Service at Enniskillen PSNI station as well.

During his tour, the Moderator will visit Harold McCauley House in Omagh, where he will lead the communion service for residents. Run by the Presbyterian Church, the nursing home provides care and support primarily for elderly people within a Christian environment.

Speaking at the start of his tour, Dr. McNie said, “This is our second Presbytery Tour and comes hot on the heels of our tour of Ballymena Presbytery last month. Like all tours, we hope

that through our visit we can encourage and be encouraged ourselves as we meet our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We will be making Omagh our base for the week and are particularly looking forward to visiting and preaching at a number of congregations and the installation of a new minister in Second Castlederg and Urney.

“Seeing the work that many congregations are doing in their local community, like The Bridge Centre in Enniskillen, will also be a highlight. We are also looking forward to visiting police officers and staff based in the town. Back in Omagh, 70 years on from the ending of the Second World War, I will be honoured to be able to take part in the Remembrance Service this Sunday.”

The Presbytery of Omagh includes 40 churches and covers most of West Tyrone and all of County Fermanagh. Rev. Robert Herron OBE, Clerk of Presbytery and Minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Omagh said, “We are very much looking forward to welcoming Dr. McNie and Anne.

“Our Presbytery is one of the largest in the Church and made up of a number small rural congregations across a wide area, which makes

for its own challenges as most ministers have at least two churches.

Our last Moderator's Tour was six years ago, and like then Dr. McNie's visit will encourage us, while providing an insight into the work of the church in a very rural setting."

Kerygma Good News Choir in fine voice ahead of Saturday's concert

The Kerygma Good News Choir from Down and Dromore diocese is in excellent voice ahead of Saturday's concert in St Anne's Cathedral.

The choir will be joined by top class musicians and soloists in a carefully chosen selection of pieces including classical composers, hymns, Afro-American spirituals and contemporary songs. The audience will also have opportunity to join in the singing of several favourite hymns and worship songs.

Senior BBC News journalist, Will Leitch, will host the evening and he will be joined by former Methodist President, Revd Dr Heather Morris. Heather who will bring a couple of short



reflections during the evening in her own very thoughtful style.

Kerygma is directed by Lorna Palmer who studied voice and piano at the Royal College of Music, London, and has a special gift for inspiring singers of all ability and experience. The choir was formed for the Down and Dromore Year of Mission and earlier this year they sang for the Archbishop of Canterbury in Down Cathedral on St Patrick's Day. Members come from all Christian backgrounds and share a desire to express their Christian witness in song.

Lorna says: "The concert will be a joyful blend of performance and worship in the spirit of Songs of

Praise and with a real sense of celebration.
Come and help us raise the roof in St Anne's
Cathedral on 7 November!"

Concert proceeds will go to crisis funds working with refugees in the Middle East via Tearfund and Trocaire. Tickets cost £10. Seating unreserved. Doors open at 6.30 pm and the concert begins at 7.00 pm. Refreshments will be available during the interval. Tickets are available from choir members and online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/kerygmachoir. A limited number of concession tickets (£6) are available online.

Ein deutsches Requiem in Christ Church Cathedral

Christ Church Cathedral Choir Dublin with soprano Chloe Morgan, base Jeffrey Ledwidge will give a performance of *Ein deutsches Requiem* by Brahms on Thursday 5th November at 8pm. They will be accompanied by David Bremner and Vincent Lynch on piano and conducted by Ian Keatley. Tickets cost €18 or €16 concession and are available on the door or from christchurchcathedral.ie.

Dublin parish choral scholarship opportunities

The grouped parishes of Sandford and St Philip's (Milltown), Dublin 6, have launched a Choral Scholars project. This will offer music students of secondary school age the opportunity to develop their musicianship and aural skills through participating in liturgical singing at a high level.

Choral Scholars will attend weekly singing and music theory lessons, taking place in conjunction with choir rehearsals. They will sing a wide variety of liturgical music, with at least one singing opportunity each week - at services in the parishes on Friday or Sunday. There will be occasional concerts and special events. Auditions will be held during the week commencing 9th November. Further information from David O'Shea, Choir Director, doshea3@gmail.com

Pope hopeful he will be able to visit Central African Republic despite security worries

Pope Francis is hopeful he can still visit the Central African Republic this month despite what

he called a worrisome flare-up of violence in that conflict-torn country.

Details of his November 25-30 visit to Africa, which also includes travel in Uganda and Kenya, [were unveiled by the Vatican in October](#). But Francis's remarks on Sunday to the faithful in St Peter's Square raised the possibility that security risks could cause the Central African Republic leg of his trip to change or even be scrapped.

Francis said he wants to show the Church's closeness to that "afflicted and tormented nation" and to encourage "all Central Africans to be ever more witnesses to mercy and reconciliation."

Violence in Central Africa Republic forced its presidential and parliamentary elections to be postponed from October to December.

Francis said there were "sorrowful incidents that in these days worsened the delicate situation in the Central African Republic, sparking strong worry in my soul." He didn't assign blame, but added, "I appeal to all sides involved so that an end will come to this cycle of violence."

His itinerary includes visiting a refugee camp in Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic.

Church marriages for same-sex couples imminent in Norway

Norway's twelve bishops unanimously voted to allow gay couples to marry in church, voting for the creation of a special liturgy on Friday.

"This is a very important day for the church," said the praeses of the Norwegian Bishops conference, Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien.

Norway legalised gender neutral marriage in 2008, but churches were left free to develop their own liturgy to enable gay weddings to take place in churches. Until this point there had been no agreement on the liturgy.

The proposal needs to be approved by the synod which meets in April 2016 and pastors will retain the right to refuse to marry gay couples.

Last year, the synod rejected a similar proposal, however it is expected to pass, as the last church elections led to majority of pro same-sex marriage delegates.

After this election, the bishops scheduled a meeting to readdress the issue and on Friday decided to open the door to gay weddings.

"There are different perceptions of marriage among same sex couples both in the Norwegian Church and among the bishops. But we are keen to find a decision that could have a unifying effect," Byfuglien told NTB newswire.

Erna Solberg, Norway's Prime Minister, has previously shown support for same-sex marriage in the church, and told NRK network last year: "Personally, I believe that gays should be allowed to marry in church. This is the way I, as a church member, want the church to go." Sturla Stålsett, a campaigner for same sex marriage in church in Norway, said "It is a historic breakthrough that a bishops' meeting unanimously recommends equal marriage in the church."

Singing for Syrians

Christian Aid and the Hands Up Foundation are encouraging people around the UK to come together and sing to help support the people of Syria in their desperate time of need.

The conflict in Syria has created one of the world's biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis since the Second World War. As the violence continues and winter descends, the needs of the millions of Syrians forced to flee their homes will only intensify.

Singing for Syrians is a new nationwide initiative encouraging individuals, churches and communities around the UK to host fundraising carol concerts to help those whose lives have been torn apart by the conflict.

Amounts raised will be used to help Christian Aid and the Hands Up Foundation meet the urgent and ongoing needs of those affected by the devastating conflict.

Working through partner organisations inside Syria, and in neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq, this support to date has included providing emergency food, water and sanitation programmes as well as education programmes, psychosocial support for women and children, and support for medical teams inside Syria. During the bitter winter months families will receive much needed blankets, warm clothing, food stoves and fuel for cooking.

The initiative has been organised by artist, George Butler, Trustee of the Hands Up Foundation, and Victoria Prentis, MP for North Oxfordshire, and is championed by Basil Eastwood, former Ambassador to Syria.

Organisers of Singing for Syrians concerts around the UK will be invited to a special carol concert in St Margaret's Church on the grounds of Westminster Abbey on 15th December. Tickets are available via Billetto with a suggested donation of £10. There will also be a private reception at Speaker's House.

Victoria Prentis MP said: "Before I was elected, I found that carol concerts were a great way to raise money while having a good sing. It therefore seemed obvious to me that concerts would be a good way to raise money for the most desperate people who remain in Syria. I am particularly concerned about the elderly and those with poor health, who are too weak to contemplate leaving the country.

"Hands Up and Christian Aid are doing some great work on the ground in Syria and the surrounding countries. Singing for Syrians provides a brilliant opportunity to raise funds for

these charities to help these people. Whether you pass around a bucket at planned carol concert, organise your own event from scratch, or come to the St Margaret's concert on 15 December, I really hope people will get behind this initiative."

A "How to" pack' full of ideas on organising your own concert can be obtained from the Christian Aid website at <http://bit.ly/1LDYB9Q> along with further details of the agency's work with victims of the conflict.

The pack and further information can also be obtained from George Butler at singingforsyrians@gmail.com or by telephoning 07789 713 115.

Media digest

BBC

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, attended a service in St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast on Sunday to celebrate 50 years of Northern Ireland's oldest reconciliation centre. Corrymeela was set up in 1965 to bring together people of different backgrounds and beliefs. Archbishop Justin described the formation of the Centre as an "extraordinary moment of God's providence".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-34694544>

Irish Independent

Priest among two people arrested as Vatican probe leaking of documents to media

<http://www.independent.ie/world-news/europe/priest-among-two-people-arrested-as-vatican-probe-leaking-of-documents-to-media-34162106.html>

Times/BBC/Guard/Ind

A campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues is launched today, backed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, former Olympians, military officers and senior business figures. More than two fifths of adult men under the age of 45 have considered taking their own lives, a YouGov poll has revealed. Two hundred celebrities, business leaders and trade unionists have signed a letter calling for equality between physical and mental health in advance of the government spending round.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/mental-health/article4602098.ece>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-34676799>

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/nov/02/public-figures-sign-letter-seeking-equality-mental-health>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/george-osborne-urged-by-mps-and-celebrities-to-end-discrimination-against-people-with-mental-health-a6717131.html>

BBC

Thousands of workers who get paid the voluntary Living Wage will get a pay rise today as the rate is increased by 40p an hour. The new rate, set by the Living Wage

Foundation rises to £8.25 per hour. More than 2,000 businesses, with almost 70,000 workers, are signed up to the scheme. Currently, the government's national minimum wage stands at £6.70 per hour but a new National Living Wage for over-25s of £7.20 will be introduced in April next year.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-34692382>

BBC

Interview with Gary Grant, founder of The Entertainer toy store chain, with reference to his Christian values and how they have informed and sustained the way he runs his business

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-34637437>

BBC/Mail/ITV

The funeral of PC Dave Phillips, who died when he was struck by a car in Merseyside, takes place at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral today. PC Philips, a father of two died on 5 October when was hit by a vehicle in Wallasey. More than 1,000 police officers from across the UK are expected to line the route as the funeral procession makes its way through the city. The mourners will be led by his widow Jen, and their young daughters.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-34681868>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3299737/>

[Funeral-place-hit-run-victim-Pc-Dave-Phillips.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3299737/Funeral-place-hit-run-victim-Pc-Dave-Phillips.html)

<http://www.itv.com/news/2015-11-02/hundreds-expected-to-attend-funeral-for-murdered-pc-david-phillips/>

Times

Christians who speak openly about their faith with friends and colleagues are three times more likely to put them off God than attract them, research carried out by the Church of England has found. The study, to be presented at this month's General Synod, found that 59 per cent of people "did not want to know more about Jesus Christ" after speaking to a practising Christian about their faith. The survey of more than 2,500 adults discovered 42 per cent "felt glad" they did not share their friends' faith after talking with them and 30 per cent felt "more negative" towards Jesus.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article4602163.ece>

Mail

Bishop Michael Curry has been installed as the first Black American to lead the US Episcopal Church. At his installation, Bishop Michael urged the Church to evangelise by crossing divides of race, education and wealth. He replaces Bishop Katherine Schori, who as the first women to lead the Episcopal Church, steps down after nine years in the role.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3299272/Episcopal-Church-installs-black-leader.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

Tel

A clergyman trying to prove that a skull could be that of William Shakespeare, has been denied the opportunity for it to undergo DNA testing by a Consistory Court. According to local legend, the skull found in the vault below St Leonard's church, Beoley, Worcestershire, was stolen from the playwright's tomb in Stratford as part of a wager set by the art historian Horace Walpole in the 1700s. The Revd Paul Irving had wanted to send the skull

for testing, but the application has been denied by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Worcester, who ruled there was nothing to link the skull to Shakespeare.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/11968936/Shakespeares-skull-rumours-DNA-testing-barred-by-Church.html>

Comment

Telegraph: Charles Moore comments on CofE Cathedrals and Abbey's charging for entrance and the survey which showed nearly two out of five people in this country do not know that Jesus was a real person who actually lived.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11969001/A-welcome-renewal-of-friendships-in-the-Gulf.html>

BBC

Almost six million UK workers are paid less than the living wage, a study suggests. The data showed a "worrying trend" of part-time, female and young workers being most likely to earn below the figure. The voluntary living wage is currently £7.85 an hour and £9.15 in London.

Professional services firm KPMG said its research showed that the proportion of workers earning less than the living wage had risen for three years in a row.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34691404>

Guard

Reports the government is facing a fresh confrontation with the House of Lords over its housing policy, which campaigners claim will deprive rural communities of affordable housing. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is demanding that country areas should be exempt from the latest right-to-buy plans. The Bishops

of St Albans and Manchester Alan Smith and David Walker are quoted.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/oct/31/government-lords-showdown-right-to-buy-threat-rural-areas>

Ind

A profile of Canon Andrew White, the "Vicar of Baghdad", under the headline "Leading the church in Iraq and being in the crosshairs of Isis".

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/canon-andrew-white-vicar-of-baghdad-on-leading-a-church-in-iraq-and-being-in-the-crosshairs-of-isis-a6716616.html>

BBC

Funding has been secured to restore tombs in a Grade I listed village church in Berkshire. St Mary's in Hampstead Norreys has been given £57,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve its nine 18th and 19th Century churchyard tombs. Plans include restoring and replacing stonework on the tombs, which, in some cases, are beginning to collapse.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-34687604>

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