



Image of the day - Controversy over consecration of woman bishop

Reports

Provide 100 per cent redress for mica and pyrite affected families - Government told by Church leaders



Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland bishops, and a leading Presbyterian clergyman, have called on the Irish Government to offer full and immediate redress to the thousands of people whose homes have been affected by the mica/pyrite crisis.

Numerous family homes have been seriously damaged because defective building blocks were used in their construction. The church leaders said:



“Housing and homelessness are recognised as key political and social justice issues of our time. In this context, immediate action is needed to alleviate the mica/pyrite crisis which is affecting the health, well-being and safety of homeowners and their families. As church leaders, we are gravely concerned at the families’ plight. While many of our impacted citizens live on the periphery of our island, it is disturbing that their basic need for good housing also seems peripheral to the agenda of our political leaders. A number of us have had the opportunity to visit some of the affected homes and heard from campaigners. Our foremost concern now is getting support for these families.

“There appears to be a disparity in the way people in our region are being treated compared to those elsewhere. Homeowners in Leinster were awarded 100% redress for the pyrite problems there. The citizens of Donegal, Mayo,

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Sligo, Tipperary, Clare and Limerick deserve no less. This is a matter of fairness, justice and compassion.

“There may come a time for assigning responsibility for what has happened. One thing is certain, though: the homeowners are not to blame.

“The cost of repairing the damage is beyond the means of most families. The mica/pyrite scandal is now a test of our compassion as a society and of the State’s resolve to help its most vulnerable. We must move quickly to end the anguish and uncertainty for all those affected by mica or pyrite in homes that they have bought or built.

“The affected homeowners need three guarantees of support:

- 100% redress from the government for homeowners;
- a 40-year, state-backed scheme, guaranteeing full redress in the event of future problems; and,
- the remedy of 100% redress made available to all those affected.

“We realise there will be significant costs involved, but the State has found resources in the past to rescue the banking sector and, more recently, to deal with the pandemic. The mica and pyrite families need our sympathy, our prayers and our help. They have our full support, as church leaders, in their pursuit of their three demands.”

From:

Church of Ireland bishops - Rt Rev Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry; Rt Rev Dr Ferran Glenfield,

churchnewsireland@gmail.org



Bishop of Elphin; Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland
Bishop of Derry and Raphoe

Roman Catholic bishops - Bishop John Fleming, Bishop of Killala; Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry; Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin; Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, Bishop of Raphoe; Bishop Paul Dempsey, Bishop of Achonry

Presbyterian Church - Rev Keith Hibbert, Moderator of Derry & Donegal Presbytery

UN special envoy role should include defence of religious expression – TD

A UN role aimed at promoting freedom of expression given to former Minister for Children Katherine

Zappone, which she stepped down from after public outcry, should encompass efforts to defend freedom of religion according to Charlie Flanagan TD.

Speaking to The Irish Catholic, Mr Flanagan, who is a former Minister for Foreign Affairs and is currently chairman of the all-party foreign affairs committee, said Ireland “should be doing more work defending and maintaining freedom of religious expression”.

Ms Zappone was offered the special envoy for the freedom of expression job by Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, which has led to some accusations of cronyism. The role was to have a particular focus on LGBTI issues.

On the matter of Katherine Zappone, Mr Flanagan said, “I firmly believe that that job specification will be retained in the department of foreign affairs and that they will now, after a period of reflection, maybe change the process, that they will proceed with an appointment.

“I think they should because I think there’s need for it, particularly in the United Nations particularly having regard to Ireland’s influence in the United Nations. The Irish people are proud of what we do in the United Nations with our peacekeepers on the one hand, our development aid on the other hand and now opportunities along the lines of assisting in the maintenance and defence of freedom of expression to include religious expression.”

Campaigners disappointed at 'divisive' BMA vote on euthanasia

Following Tuesday's extremely close vote, 49% - 48% that sees the British Medical Association adopt a neutral stance on assisted suicide and euthanasia, campaigners have expressed deep disappointed

Dr Gordon Macdonald, Chief Executive of Care Not Killing commented: "We are naturally disappointed at the divisive nature of this vote as it exposes the divide between doctors who care for patients at their end of life whether in hospitals or hospices, who oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia and those medics who work in unrelated discipline such as child and adolescent psychiatry and occupational health.

"As the BMA's own survey found doctors at the coal face, who deliver care to the elderly and terminally ill, who work in Palliative Care, Geriatric Medicine and General Practice continue to oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia, because they know it is not needed and the subtle pressure it could put on patients to end their lives prematurely.

"The doctors' group should have used this conference to find out why their members who are least likely to treat those with terminal and chronic conditions, such as medical students still training in universities are most likely to support assisted suicide and euthanasia. Is this simply a generational shift or a lack of understanding of the range of treatments available to palliative doctors?"



Dr Macdonald continued: "Was any consideration given to the concerns of those doctors who work with disabled people and elderly about the discriminatory message that singling out terminally ill and disabled people would send, the worrying link between legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia and increases in the suicide rate which we see in Oregon and the Netherlands or the erosion of so-called safeguards?"

"We only have to look at Canada, which legalised so called 'physician assisted dying' in 2015, to see what can happen. This law which was originally limited to those with a foreseeable death, came into force in the summer of 2016.

"In September 2019, the Quebec Superior Court struck down the requirement that a natural death must be 'reasonably foreseeable'. This followed the case of Alan Nichols, a former school caretaker who was physically healthy, but struggled with depression. His life was ended by lethal injection in July. In the same year we saw the chilling case of Roger Foley, who was repeatedly offered the drugs to kill himself, while being denied the social care to live a dignified life, due to the cost.



Greencastle, Co. Donegal

"At the same time, deaths from lethal injection continue to rise. In 2020 7,595 had their lives ended this way, including 1412 who cited loneliness as a reason for opting to be killed, no doubt this was compounded by COIVID.

"The rapid extension of Canadian law to those with chronic disease, mental health problems and disability shows the fallacy of trusting in proposed legal safeguards and how only safe system is the one we currently have - a complete prohibition on state sanctioned killing."

Dr Macdonald concluded: "The BMA now finds itself out of step with medical organisations such as the World Medical Association (WMA) which has recently reiterated its opposition to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide saying, 'No physician should be forced to participate in euthanasia or assisted suicide, nor should any physician be obliged to make referral decisions to this end...!'

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"Our current laws protect vulnerable people and do not need changing, instead we need to refocus our attention on how to ensure we provide the very best palliative care to those who need it."

Link - Care Not Killing - www.carenotkilling.org.uk/

Kenyan Anglican province defies moratorium to ordain woman bishop



The Rev. Rose Okeno, centre, was enthroned as bishop of the Butere Diocese in western Kenya on Sept. 12, 2021.

The cleric's enthronement has defied a 2018 moratorium of GAFCON

Amid celebrations in a predominantly Anglican region in western Kenya, the Rev. Rose Okeno was enthroned as bishop of the Butere Diocese on Sunday (Sept. 12).

Okeno, 54, was consecrated in a ceremony presided over by Archbishop Jackson Ole Sapit, the primate of the Anglican Church of Kenya, making her the first woman to be a full Anglican bishop in the East African country, where the consecration of women as bishops is still controversial.

“By the grace of God, I accept to be your bishop,” the long-serving cleric said in her charge after the consecration. “Our election as the fourth bishop of the diocese is a strong confirmation that indeed God is doing a new thing in the history of the church.”

As bishop, Okeno will serve a rural population where the majority of the faithful are small-scale farmers and traders. She was elected on July 20 by a majority of a 23-member college of delegates, beating two male contenders.

The new bishop has promised to remain faithful to the truth, guiding people to celebrate virtue and shun vice. She also vowed to serve the disenfranchised and marginalized in her diocese.

“We will seek to remain faithful to the truth, denounce all evil that subverts justice and the welfare of those we serve,” said Okeno, while promising to advocate for the rights of girls and children and the empowerment of women and other disadvantaged people.

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“We shall call out those who use positions of influence, even within the church, to harm the weak.”

Ole Sapit praised Okeno’s courage for putting herself forward as a contender for bishop of Butere and winning. Like in many areas of Kenya, she will lead a patriarchal community where most top leadership positions — even in the church — are held by men.

“I congratulate her for rising above cultural norms and ... making history as the first ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya) woman bishop,” said the primate.

Her consecration drew celebration among religious and social leaders, with some saying such women of courage were needed in Kenya and worldwide at the moment.

“It is times like these when we need such strong women, women who are ready to serve,” Charity Ngilu, an Anglican who is the governor of Kitui County, was quoted in the press as saying.

Still, the cleric’s enthronement has defied a 2018 moratorium of the Global Anglican Future Conference, known as GAFCON, on ordination of women. While meeting in Entebbe, Uganda, the GAFCON archbishops resolved to halt the consecration of women into the episcopate until such a time when a consensus is reached. In the meantime, the conservative movement was to uphold the historic practice of consecrating men only.

But Kenya and Uganda, according to reports, had pushed for the consecration of women bishops. Although the two

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provinces had not consecrated any since then, Kenya produced two quick ordinations this year.

On Jan. 20, the Anglican Church of Kenya ordained the Rev. Emily Onyango, a 59-year-old scholar and researcher, as an assistant bishop of Bondo, a diocese on the edge of Lake Victoria. Months later, Okeno was elected.

While the church in Kenya may appear to be defying the moratorium, some Anglican clerics say it depends on the diocesan synods.

“The GAFCON moratorium is still in force, but it’s not binding. We are in a loose fellowship where, when one diocese takes an action, the other does not have to do the same. Even with this, we still claim to be together. It is unity in diversity,” said retired Anglican Bishop Julius Kalu of Mombasa.

In Africa, Anglican women bishops remain rare. Okeno is probably the fifth, after Onyango — also a Kenyan. In 2016, the Rev. Elizabeth Awut Ngor was consecrated as an assistant bishop in the South Sudan diocese of Rumbek. The South African diocese of False Bay elected the Rev. Margaret Vertue bishop in October 2012 and consecrated her as bishop in 2013.

In 2012, Ellinah Ntombi Wamukoya was ordained as bishop of Swaziland Diocese in southern Africa. Wamukoya died from COVID-19 in January this year.

Perspective

PS...How do we debate and differ well on ideas for a New Ireland? by Jeremy Eves

The old joke goes that an Irishman asked for directions by a stranger started his reply by saying “If I was you, I wouldn’t start from here!” But here and now is our starting place. Looking back over the recent PS reflections on ‘Northern Ireland at 100 years’, I am struck by how ‘Protestant and Unionist’ and ‘Nationalist and Roman Catholic’ still remain largely synonymous.

I believe that the gospel is most faithfully expressed within a framework of reformed theology, but I regret deeply that, for much of the past 100 years, the message has been overshadowed by an ‘anti-Irish’ rhetoric. Hating the sin but loving the sinner doesn’t ring true where public exhibitions of protestant culture centre on the political defeat of the ‘sinner’.

The church is commanded to be a grace filled expression of the body of Christ, united, welcoming and loving, but is it possible to discuss the political future of Ireland without splitting the body? Will voting preference remain an article of faith?

What does it mean to be Irish? I wish I knew! I was born in Ireland (Northern) but hold both British and Irish passports. My family can trace its roots to the South East of the island for more than ten generations. Only the last four generations have resided in the north. But I was educated

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partly in England and then Scotland before returning to live all my working life in my home country. However, my education and my work made me instinctively Anglophile, Unionist and British. I do not feel Irish, by which I mean I do not understand Gaelic games. I find traditional fiddle music repetitive, even boring, after five minutes and I cannot pronounce even a single town name in the Irish Language. At least I do now support Irish Rugby, although it's not a Gaelic game.

However, as Wallace Thompson suggested, I too am open to a discussion as to the future of Ireland. We have to move away from NO being a political strategy. Society is dynamic. The best way to control, or at least influence, its destiny is to be a change agent not a change blocker. There is a growing clamour of voices for a New Ireland, not least from Sinn Fein. But no one has defined a New Ireland, because there is only very limited debate around what it means or what it will mean to be New Irish. The SDLP New Ireland Commission and the Taoiseach's Shared Island attempt both originate from the nationalist community, so it will be challenging for popular unionism to perceive those findings as more than an attempt to lessen unionist identity or control over their own destiny and act as change blockers in the traditional way. A unionist commission on the unification of Ireland might be a contradiction in terms, but it would allow persuadable unionists to be proactive in setting out the terms on which they might be persuaded! Given the political optics, I suspect this may need to be an ad hoc group, the dangers of self-appointment notwithstanding.

The Good Friday agreement provided for a border poll. Surely the lesson of Brexit must be that voting for an ill-

defined, emotionally hyped, future as a single binding choice is deeply unwise. Ideally there should be two referenda, the first to test the popular will to consider the re-unification of Ireland and de-facto to mandate the assembly to formulate, within two years, the basis and arrangements for becoming a single jurisdiction. Such proposals would be put to a second referendum. If rejected, then the status quo would prevail for another 20 years. This would prevent the promises made by either side in a single referendum campaign being ignored as followed the Brexit referendum in the UK. Sadly I recognise this is wishful thinking, as Sinn Fein, in particular would be most unlikely to give up the single referendum option included in the Good Friday agreement.

There is therefore a real and immediate need for wide public debate around a new constitution and framework for government for a new borderless, single jurisdiction Ireland. What would constitute the united Ireland on which the poll would be based? What will be the impact of migrant inflows? Are professional and trade associations up for this debate? Will we 'duck' for as long as we can because to even engage, especially on the unionist side is too toxic? The task becomes more difficult daily for otherwise open-minded unionists caught between being the collateral damage of Westminster's Brexit deal and the bureaucratic rigidity and animosity of the EU around the protocol.

Let's try to find some issues on which Christians, and indeed those of other worldviews, might agree. For example, the current dominant cultural zeitgeist of intolerance and bullying by so called tolerant post-moderns requires protection of free speech, and definition of some

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essential boundaries to it, to be a central feature of a new constitution. Here might be a unique opportunity to preserve the right to preach the gospel openly, to advertise worship services, to pray for others, to uphold the right to live out Christian faith in public and explain why we do so. Truth must never be decided simply by democratic vote or the loudest popular opinion. Mutual respect includes the right to challenge and differ.

I believe the challenge for us as New Irish Christians is to look way beyond our traditional ethnic, cultural and political exclusivities and create and embrace any opportunity to stand for faith and freedom. Maybe the New Ireland is an Ireland that strives to return to being a land of Saints and Scholars.

Jeremy Eves is a recently retired businessman. He is an elder in West Church Presbyterian Bangor.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

The Heritage of Anglican Theology, by J.I. Packer, Crossway, 384

The Heritage of Anglican Theology presents, in essence, the course of lectures on Anglican history and theology that Packer gave year-in and year-out during his time at Regent College. Working from transcripts of his lectures, working-in additional material, going through several processes of editing and revision, Packer delivers less of a “cutting-edge work of theological exploration or a comprehensive history”

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as Donald Lewis explains in the foreword (Rather it is “offered to help readers explore a tradition and history that might remain unfamiliar and confusing were it not for the unique perspective [...] of this senior Anglican theologian, churchman, and enthusiast”

What follows is a book that does just what the title suggests: Packer guides us through the history of the Anglican Communion with an emphasis on historical theology. If you are looking for an introduction to the history of Anglican Theology that is both substantive and readable, and which guides the reader carefully into the present state of things, this is it.

At the risk of being misunderstood, I maintain that Packer’s book is one of the fairest surveys of Anglican historical theology. Of course, like any author, Packer has his biases. But this is a very “just” overview. Packer does a lot of work in the first preliminary chapter to map-out the major discourses in Anglicanism, and to openly discuss where he understands himself to be working from.

<https://anglicancompass.com/the-heritage-of-anglican-theology-by-j-i-packer-review/>



Poem for today

Behind the Closed Eye by Francis Ledwidge

I walk the old frequented ways
That wind around the tangled braes,
I live again the sunny days
Ere I the city knew.

And scenes of old again are born,
The woodbine lassoing the thorn,
And drooping Ruth-like in the corn
The poppies weep the dew.

Above me in their hundred schools
The magpies bend their young to rules,
And like an apron full of jewels
The dewy cobweb swings.

And frisking in the stream below
The troutlets make the circles flow,
And the hungry crane doth watch them grow
As a smoker does his rings.

Above me smokes the little town,
With its whitewashed walls and roofs of brown
And its octagon spire toned smoothly down
As the holy minds within.

And wondrous impudently sweet,
Half of him passion, half conceit,

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The blackbird calls adown the street
Like the piper of Hamelin.

I hear him, and I feel the lure
Drawing me back to the homely moor,
I'll go and close the mountain's door
On the city's strife and din.



Pointers for prayer & Speaking to the Soul

Are in a separate post on CNI

