

News Extra

Church leaders appeal to politicians to go the extra mile



Left to Right: Rt. Rev. Bishop John McDowell, President of the Irish Council of Churches, Archbishop Richard Clarke, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and Rev. Dr. Laurence Graham, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

As this week's talks deadline draws near, Ireland's Church Leaders have written to the leaders of the five main political parties involved in the current Northern Ireland talks

process to strongly encourage them “to go the extra mile” to reach an accommodation that works “for the common good of all in our society.”

The letter, which has also been copied to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, highlights the fact that without an agreed budget, or Executive ministers in place to make crucial decisions both the most vulnerable people, and the small voluntary and community groups that serve them are at risk.

Sent by the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, President of the Irish Council of Churches and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the letter also makes the point that “little co-ordinated local input into the Brexit discussions” has taken place “and even less detailed preparation for what lies ahead for Northern Ireland and the island as a whole” can happen without a functioning Executive in place.

Recognising their responsibility to pray for all those in political authority, the Church Leaders point out the responsibility of the political parties towards the people of Northern Ireland, writing

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that their prayer and hope is that the politicians “will take the action necessary to end the uncertainty that is weighing heavily on our society.

“This week we strongly encourage all the political leaders involved in the talks to go the extra mile to reach an accommodation, which establishes a sustainable administration that will work for the common good of all in our society.”

FULL TEXT OF THE LETTER

24th June 2017

It has been some 114 days since March’s election to the Northern Ireland Assembly. With the current 29th June talks deadline drawing near, as Church Leaders we wanted to encourage you, and Northern Ireland’s other political leaders engaged in the talks process, and reemphasise the pressing need for everyone to act together to end the current political impasse in the interests of all in our society.

While we acknowledge the complexities involved in reaching an agreement, we want to express our continued concern that without an agreed budget and with no Executive ministers in place,

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the most vulnerable are at greater risk, while crucial decisions on education, health and welfare are not being taken.

At the same time, I am sure you are aware that small voluntary and community groups - who play such a vital role at the heart of our villages, towns and cities - face mounting uncertainty and are finding it increasingly difficult to support those most in need. Furthermore, with no Executive there has been comparatively little co-ordinated local input into the Brexit discussions and even less detailed preparation for what lies ahead for Northern Ireland and the island as a whole.

As Christians we recognise our responsibility to pray for you and for all those in political authority and no doubt you recognise your responsibility towards the people of Northern Ireland at this time. Our prayer and hope is that you and the leaders of the other parties will take the action necessary to end the uncertainty that is weighing heavily on our society.

This week we strongly encourage all the political leaders involved in the talks to go the extra mile to reach an accommodation, which establishes a sustainable administration that will work for the common good of all in our society.

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May God richly bless you in this task

Yours in Christ

Archbishop Richard Clarke, Church of Ireland
Archbishop of Armagh

Rev. Dr. Laurence Graham, President of the
Methodist Church in Ireland

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic
Archbishop of Armagh

Bishop John McDowell, President of the Irish
Council of Churches

Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely, Moderator of the
Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Circulation Colum Eastwood MLA, Rt. Hon.
Arlene Foster MLA, Naomi Long MLA, Michelle
O'Neill MLA, Robin Swann MLA

Cc Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of
State for Northern Ireland
Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Trade

CNI