
Former Presbyterian Moderators strongly opposed to 12-week proposal on abortion



Rev Dr Trevor Morrow co-wrote a letter to all TDs and Senators.

Two former moderators of the Presbyterian Church in [Ireland](#) have written to all TDs and Senators to express grave concern at recommendations that unrestricted abortion be

allowed in Ireland up to 12 weeks and for health reasons thereafter.

In their letter, Rev Dr [Trevor Morrow](#) and Rev Dr Norman Hamilton said: “Our Church holds a strongly pro-life position, while recognising that there can be very exceptional circumstances when the termination of pregnancy may be necessary”.

They continued: “However, we are very gravely concerned about the (Oireachtas) Committee’s recommendations to introduce abortion with no restriction as to reason until the 12th week of gestation, and beyond 12 weeks on health grounds.

“Even if the recommendation of abortion on request is excluded, the health proposals on their own will create similar provisions to those in Britain, which have, in practice, brought about abortion on request (we note that one in five pregnancies ends in abortion in GB and that of the 190,406 abortions in [England](#) and Wales in 2016, 97% took place on health grounds).”

The recommendations “also effectively undermine any assurances that Ireland will not introduce abortion for disability, as the experience of other countries demonstrates that unborn children with Down’s syndrome or other

conditions are aborted under health grounds,” they said.

“The scientific evidence and logical conclusion that new human life exists from conception clearly implies that every society genuinely committed to fundamental human rights, especially the right to life, should take the moral and physical status of the unborn very seriously indeed,” they said.

It was “clear that Irish society has come to value unborn human life in a way that it is not valued in other societies, demonstrating how the law plays an important role in shaping culture. In recent decades, practices of abortion have been introduced and legalised in the West which represent a tragic reversal of the process by which we have learned to value and protect those who Jesus described as the ‘least’ among us.

The letter continued: “We strongly urge you to work for an Ireland that follows a different, more truly progressive path, and is a place where the weak and vulnerable, including children in the womb, are cherished and protected”.

Acknowledging “the deep human pain and tragedies with which we are concerned when addressing this issue,” they said “many women

and their families will find the ongoing discussions very difficult due to the loss of a child or for other reasons, and it is important that all of us in public leadership, while seeking a robust and informed debate, are mindful of these realities.”

They believed “that the vast majority of citizens in Ireland regard every human life as having dignity, value and worth, and this includes both the mother and the unborn child.

“In affirming life, wellbeing and human dignity, it is important that we work together to ensure that the best possible care is provided to women, their children and families in times of crisis, including practical, emotional and spiritual support.

“We welcome the reference in the Committee’s report to perinatal hospice care – something which our Church has been calling for, to provide support to parents in cases of life-limiting illness while respecting the life of the unborn child.”

Statement at -

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/January-2018/Eighth-Amendment-Concerns-expressed.aspx>

Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, launches 850th anniversary programme



On Tuesday 30th January 2018 the Bishop of Limerick, the Rt Revd Dr Kenneth Kearon, will launch its 850th anniversary programme. Saint Mary's, which was gifted to the Church by Donal Mor O'Brien, the last King of Thomond, has been a site of Christian worship since 1168 and it is one of the oldest buildings in Limerick City.



The year's festivities will celebrate and promote the Cathedral's roles in city life including – community, civic, cultural, educational, ecumenical, musical, sporting and tourism. Highlights of the year include a visit from the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and a special service of thanksgiving. Each month the Cathedral will highlight a figure associated with Saint Mary's and there will also be a tangible dimension to the celebrations as each month will focus on a charity or cause based in or around Limerick.

Speaking of the year, the Dean, the Very Revd Niall J. Sloane, says: 'Saint Mary's holds a very special place in the city of Limerick and its

citizens. It has been a royal palace – no doubt, a place of story–telling, feasting and celebrations. Over the succeeding centuries it has witnessed unique events, welcomed countless people through its doors and marked key moments in the lives of Limerick people. Today, as it continues to be a place of pilgrimage and prayer, it has a unique role to play within all aspects of city and diocesan life. The central theme of our celebrations in 2018 will be opening our doors to all and forging links with Limerick and beyond so that we may echo the Christian message of faith, love and witness. I invite you to join us as we celebrate this historic occasion and give thanks for Saint Mary’s Cathedral.’

Fauré’s Requiem – The Big Sing at St. Fin Barre’s Cathedral, Cork

As part of the Cork International Choral Festival’s aim to get everyone singing from the same hymn sheet (literally), the Festival is teaming up with St. Fin Barre’s Cathedral for a very special day-long Big Sing on Saturday 10th February, 2018, rehearsing and performing some of our history’s most magnificent choral works led by Director of Music and choral specialist Peter Stobart.



After such a magnificent coming-together of voices in the inaugural presentation last year, the organisers have chosen *Fauré's Requiem* for the 2018 edition, a wonderful masterpiece that many of us know and love.

They state - We're asking singers from all backgrounds to come along for the rehearsal and learn the piece which will be then performed that same evening.

All singers are welcome but reading music would be a great asset. Prior familiarity with the piece would be an added bonus.

You can download the score [here](#).

If you would not like to sing, but come to listen to the performance, please see [here](#).

See - <http://www.corkchoral.ie/faures-requiem-the-big-sing-at-st-fin-barres-cathedral/>

Death of former leader of loyal institution who met Cardinal

A leading member of the loyal orders who took part in an [historic first meeting with the head of the Catholic Church](#) in Ireland has died.

William Logan, who led the Royal Black Institution, met Archbishop Sean Brady in Armagh in June 2006 along with members of the Orange Order.

He described the primate as "a man of very great integrity".

Mr Logan, 86, was sovereign grand master of the institution from 1998 to 2008.



William Logan when Grand Master of Black Institution met with Archbishop Sean Brady in Armagh. A member of the Church of Ireland, William was a regular worshipper at Belfast Cathedral.

He died on Thursday following a short illness.

The organisation's current leader, Millar Farr, said Mr Logan was "a typical shipyard man, forthright in his views but always approachable, respectful and amicable towards others".

"His Christian ethos and selflessness were central to his role as peacemaker," Mr Farr added.

Mr Logan's service to education and especially in respect of Belfast Model School was recognised by the award of MBE. He is survived by his wife and sons.

'Evil' former monk jailed for indecent assaults on boys

An 89-year-old "evil" former monk who preyed on three young boys, was yesterday (Thursday) jailed for eight and a half years and put on the Sex Offenders' Register for life after agreeing to serve a further two years on probation, the News Letter reports.

Judge Desmond Marrinan told Vincent Lewis, formally Bro Ambrose of Our Lady of Bethlehem Monastery in Portglenone, who turns 90 next month, that unlike the many good clergy within the church he had been "an evil monk". The Antrim Crown Court judge branded his catalogue of abuse as "horrific... terrible... and dispicable", telling Lewis the "cruelty meted out was almost unbelievable".

Judge Marrinan also told Lewis had he been a younger man he would have been jailed for longer for his 57 crimes of indecent assaults, gross indecency and buggery committed against



the boys, including two brothers on differing dates, up to 1983.

The former monk, turned printer, who later married and moved to Annagher Road in Coalisland, County Tyrone, who told police he was “not really” attracted to young boys”, abused one youngster while a monk in the County Antrim priory he joined at 16, and then sexually abused the two brothers after leaving holy orders when he was 50.

Judge Marrinan said initially Lewis had for his own “utterly selfish and sociopathic way” treated his first unfortunate victim, “as a play thing to

slike his perverted sexual desires and showed him no mercy or consideration”.

This behaviour, added Judge Marrinan, caused his victims, “to lose the precious right to innocence and in the case of two of them, has caused them life long damage and pain which cannot be repaired”.

Judge Marrinan said it was yet another “grim reminder of the incalculable damage that a paedophile like the defencant can do”. He also said that in one case the printer of memorial and ‘Mass Cards’, who in 2014 featured in the BBC series ‘True North’, in a show about set dancing, had even used a photographic “dark room for his dark purposes”.

Last week prosecution QC David McDowell said that as Bro Ambrose, Lewis met his first young victim, then aged ten, who did ‘odd jobs’ around the Abbey. This abuse, beginning in 1973, ended in 1978, shortly before he left the monastery, was the more serious.

Mr McDowell said it began with indecent assaults which quickly escalated to buggery. The abuse took place both within the Abbey, including a guest house for those on retreat, and also around the priory’s extensive grounds. He

also revealed the paedophile monk even lied to the youngster telling him his parents knew because he was, “bad, but I am here to look after you” before abusing him, and that what he was doing to him “was right”.

On occasions he plied his victim with alcohol, and when handing over his ‘wage packet’ for the odd jobs he did around the Abbey, Lewis would tell him, “there’s a wee bit extra in there”. The abuse ended when he was 15.

Mr McDowell said Lewis’ second victim was a young teenager whom he once tried to abuse on the shores of Lough Neagh after a swim, while the third was his younger brother, indecently assaulted and abused over a four year period from the age of nine.

Defence QC James Gallagher, said Lewis, married for 40 years, said all of his offending behaviour “finished in its entirety 35 year ago and there has been no other occurrence”. He added, that unlike other similar cases, Lewis’ offending had decreased in seriousness. “Not only did it cease, but offending decreased in severity,” said Mr Gallagher, and that his offending first occurred 45 years ago, and that his first victim got a “remedy of sorts” when paid a

“very considerable compensation in respect of these offences”.

Study finds 'little support' for purely Catholic religious instruction among trainee primary teachers

Around 90% of trainee primary teachers say they are Roman Catholics, compared to just 78% of the general population, the Irish Examiner reports.

The study by NUI Galway found that although Catholics are over-represented in the profession, they were in favour of teaching children about all faiths.

The study by NUI Galway surveyed applicants and trainees to primary teaching courses across the country.

It found that while 90% are Catholic, one third say they rarely or never attend Mass or practice religion.

Just over half considered themselves religious, a quarter said they weren't religious, while 1.4% said they were convinced atheists.



Researchers say that the prospect of entering a course and profession dominated by one religion may deter people from choosing a career in teaching.

However, they did note that despite the high number of Catholics, there was very little support for purely Catholic religious instruction, with all respondents in favour of teaching children about all faiths.

Researchers say that it indicates that teachers are complying with teaching religion rather than expressly endorsing or rejecting it.

Some core findings from the study:

- Roman Catholics are significantly over-represented while those stating that they

have no religion are under-represented in primary Initial Teacher Education groups compared to the overall population. 90% of respondents who entered primary teacher education programmes across Ireland identified as Roman Catholic compared to 78% of the general population in the last Census;

- One third (32-35%) of Initial Teacher Education applicants rarely or never attend religious services and/or practice their religion;
- 58% of the study's respondents considered themselves 'a religious person', 24.5% 'not a religious person', 1.4% 'a convinced atheist' and 15.9% indicated that they 'didn't know';
- Catholic religious instruction received little support, even from Catholic ITE applicants, with those from other or no religious backgrounds generally expressing moderate levels of disagreement. In contrast, all respondents (from Catholic, other religious, and non-religious backgrounds) were strongly in favour of teaching children about all faiths, world views and religions;

- Analysis of the data indicated a widespread tendency of complying with rather than endorsing or rejecting the teaching of religion among ITE applicants.

New guide helps Catholic women get quicker marriage annulments

The National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) has published updated advice aimed at helping women get through an annulment faster.

The revised 4th Edition of 'A Guide to the Annulment Process' is supported by the Marriage and Family Life Office at the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

It was first published in 1998 with the goal of de-mystifying the annulment process, "making it easier to understand, and hopefully less stressful".

The 4th Edition now takes into account a document issued by Pope Francis in 2015 which gives a more streamlined and readily accessible way of proceeding with an annulment.



According to NBCW, the pope's emphasis on mercy in the document, "The Gentle Judge, our Lord Jesus, the Shepherd of Souls", is central to the new procedures which help reduce the time taken to process a case, and assist diocesan bishops to use their judicial power for the good of those in their care.

In his foreword, the Rt Rev Peter Doyle, Chair of the Bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life, described the 4th edition as "a resource to assist all those in our communities whose marriages have failed, and those accompanying them; and restore to them, with the mercy of God, hope and confidence on the journey of faith in the light of the Gospel."

The National Board of Catholic Women is a forum in which Catholic women of England and

Wales come together to share their views and concerns at local and national level.

NBCW president Maureen Meatcher said she hopes the booklet will help women in the healing process after a marriage ends.

"The National Board of Catholic Women actively seeks to enable the spiritual growth and development of all Catholic women," she said.

"Applying for an annulment may have procedural and emotional difficulties for some, but it is a time of learning and understanding about themselves."

The guide can be downloaded for free on the group's website.

WCC says future of Jerusalem must be a shared one

World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit addressed the status of Jerusalem at the international "World Conference in Support of Jerusalem" on 17-18 January in Cairo, Egypt, organized by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh al-Tayyib, under the auspices of President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.



In his address, Tveit stressed in particular how “The future of Jerusalem must be a shared one. It cannot be the exclusive possession of one faith over against the others, or of one people over against the other. Jerusalem is, and must continue to be, a city of three religions and two peoples.”

“Jerusalem is regarded as a holy city and loved, genuinely and deeply loved, by all three Abrahamic faiths – Jews, Christians and Muslims,” Tveit said. “That love and profound attachment must be respected and affirmed in any solution that might be envisaged, if it is to be viable.”

“In the New Testament, we read of how Jesus Christ wept over this city with love and longing. *“If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!”* Tveit reflected quoting Luke 19:42, and continued “Following Jesus’ word and example means to speak truth, to seek justice, and to be peacemakers in the world’s conflicts and controversies.”

But, said Tveit, “Alongside this we must recognize the extraordinarily complex layering of Jerusalem’s history and culture. History shows that the involvement in this region of these three religions has not brought just peace for all. That, unfortunately, is still true today.”

“As believers in one almighty God, we should explore together what it means to express the love of God in this conflict in which the three monotheistic religions and their communities are involved and affected. There will be no peace in Jerusalem unless all three religions are respected and involved in the solution,” Tveit added.

“Let us together be contributors to a just peace, not to a perpetual conflict”.

The conference gathers prominent national, regional and international representatives such

as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church Tawadros II, Arab Parliament chief Meshaal bin Fahm al-Salmi and President of the Kuwait National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanim and Ambassador Ahmed About Gheit, secretary general of the Arab League.

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