
Demand for exorcisms rising 'exponentially' in Ireland, priest warns



A leading exorcist says he is 'baffled' Church leaders are not taking action

Ireland urgently needs more exorcists to deal with rising cases of demonic possession and other evil phenomena, a priest has said.

Fr Pat Collins, a leading exorcist, said he was “baffled” Church leaders were not taking action as more people claim to be victims of demonic activity.

“It’s only in recent years that the demand has risen exponentially,” Fr Collins **told the Irish Catholic**. “What I’m finding out desperately, is people who in their own minds believe – rightly or wrongly – that they’re afflicted by an evil spirit.”

“I think in many cases they wrongly think it, but when they turn to the Church, the Church doesn’t know what to do with them and they refer them on either to a psychologist or to somebody that they’ve heard of that is interested in this form of ministry, and they do fall between the cracks and often are not helped.”

Fr Collins said that Church leaders are “out of touch with reality” if they think there is no demand for exorcists. He wondered if modern-day clergy still believe in evil spirits, adding: “I suspect they don’t.”

In an open letter to the Irish hierarchy, he also said there was growing apostasy within the Church. “As this has happened, there has been

increasing evidence of the malicious activity of the evil one,” he wrote.

“I can’t judge from my own subjective experience because people see on the internet that I’m supposed to be an exorcist so I get an inordinate number of calls from people, and emails, all I can say is I have that reputation, but it’s only in recent years that the demand has risen exponentially.”

According to Church guidelines, each diocese should have at least one trained exorcist who can distinguish signs of genuine demonic possession from mental illness.

A spokeswoman for the Catholic Communications Office at Maynooth said: “Exorcisms are very rare and this office has not been made aware of any cases of ‘exorcism’ in Ireland in recent years.”

Presbyterian Church welcomes fresh NI political talks

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has welcomed the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland’s announcement this week of a fresh round of talks aimed at restoring devolution.

In a letter to Karen Bradley sent earlier this week, welcoming her recent appointment as Secretary of State, Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely and Rev. Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, had written of the 'deep sense of frustration' felt by many people at the lack of political movement towards the establishment of an Executive.

The letter also highlighted the impact across the community of not having a functioning Executive, saying "it is our prayer that you and other political representatives will be able to find a way forward."

In their letter they said:

We are sure you are well aware that your appointment comes at a time when many people across the community feel a deep sense of frustration at the lack of political movement towards the establishment of an effective, functioning Executive.

A year on from its collapse, the impact continues to be felt beyond the corridors of power, in our schools and hospitals, among many charities and community and voluntary organisations, and in the lives of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society. In light of the

events of recent days, we think particularly of the many victims and survivors, and the fact that we still have no agreed way forward on dealing with the legacy of our troubled past.

There is no denying that difficult and challenging times lie ahead in your new role. It is our prayer that you and other political representatives will be able to find a way forward. At the same time, I hope that we all will be able to encourage generosity of spirit, goodwill, respect and empathy for one another; basic human values that have been sorely absent in recent times, and without which co-operation for the common good of all is much harder to build.

As a Church we want to see the establishment of good government as soon as possible and as Christians we are called to pray for those in authority over us. So please be assured of our prayers and the prayers of many throughout the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

You can read the [full text of the letter here](#).

Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity underway

The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, heralding a period of prayer and reflection on the

theme 'that all may be free' is being observed throughout Ireland.

It is fair to say that observance of the week - actually eight days, the octave of St Peter and St Paul - has become more low-key, but it still has an important role as a reminder of the Christian call to be a peace-maker.

The Rt Rev John McDowell, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher and chair of the denomination's Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue, acknowledged that though "its popularity may have fallen off a little in recent years", the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has "the enormous advantage of being recognised as a time of prayer and reflection throughout the Christian West and beyond".

"In my own diocese, I have found that the involvement of schools and young people can add a new vigour and perspective to our events while still making use of the material and ideas made available by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland," he said.

"The week helps us to re-focus on our vocation to be reconcilers and peace-makers within the Church and in the world."

Bishop McDowell explained that this year's resources had been modelled on material from the Church in the Caribbean, with the theme of "victory over oppression, 'that all may be free'" from Exodus 15.

"This should help us to remember that ecumenical activity has a purpose beyond itself, in this case proclaiming the great gospel values of liberation and justice," he said.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity dates back to 1908 when an American Episcopalian Franciscan, Fr Paul Watson, started gatherings to pray for unity.

Contemporary issues raised in the Caribbean Church material include abuses of human rights and the challenge of welcoming the stranger into our midst.

Human trafficking, slavery, addictions to pornography and drugs, the effect of debt on nations and individuals and strains on family life are also considered.

Unity week services

Unity week services will take place in St Anne's Church of Ireland Cathedral in **Belfast** on

Tuesday January 23 at 7pm and the Church of Ireland St Patrick's Cathedral in **Armagh** on Wednesday January 24 at 7.30pm. Fr Kieran McDermott, Administrator of St Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin and Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation and Ecumenism in the Archdiocese of Dublin, will be the preacher.

Donaghmore ecumenical service - The spirit of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been enthusiastically embraced in the Donaghmore area of Co Tyrone. Two years ago, to help celebrate the refurbishment of St Patrick's church, the Catholic parish of Donaghmore hosted an Inter-Church Worship service, at which former Presbyterian moderator Dr John Dunlop was the speaker.

Last year, the Inter-Church service was hosted by the Church of Ireland in Castlecaulfield, and this year it returns to St Patrick's. North Belfast Presbyterian minister the Rev Dr Lesley Carroll - originally from the neighbouring area of Newmills - will be the speaker, with the Ecumenical Prayer Service due to start at 7.30pm on Tuesday January 23. All are welcome and there will be refreshments after the service.

Prayer for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: *God our Father, We ask you to send your Holy Spirit ever more deeply into our hearts and minds that we may think thoughts of peace, speak words that build up and do the truth always in love, the truth that sets us free, the truth that gives us hope, Amen*

Break down enmity of sectarian divisions urges Lay Leader of the Methodist Church

Dr Fergus O’Ferrall, the Lay Leader of the Methodist Church in Ireland, has urged Christians from all denominations to ‘encounter those who differ from them’ and ‘break down enmity’.

Speaking at the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Darling Street Methodist church, Enniskillen, the Lay Leader reminded the congregation that ‘praying for the unity of the Church involves a recognition not only of the brokenness of Christian relationships but also of how injustice in the world at large rends asunder Christian communities and impedes our participation in God’s mission’.



Looking to Ireland and how the 20th anniversary of the Belfast Agreement was to be celebrated in April 2018, Dr O'Ferrall challenged the congregation to consider how they were joining with what God wished to do in their country and his world.

'In all we attempt we should never underestimate the power of prayer to lift us out of our broken past into a new and shared future,' he said. 'Where do we pray together that God's hand will lead us in 2018 in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland?'

‘Surely it will be to a place where nothing obscures human dignity, where we are agents of justice in the world, where we love our neighbour and welcome the stranger; where we have a new spirit and a new heart so that we become servants of God’s peace, where we are one family in Christ, where we bring healing to the wounds and divisions that keep us apart, where we are freed from the selfishness, arrogance and fear that hinders the full visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.

‘Each denomination in the now divided Church of Jesus Christ has a clear and urgent responsibility to examine whether or how aspects of their theologies, traditions or practices contribute to sectarian divisions. It is these very sectarian divisions which, we must confess, in greater part underpin the divided identities and loyalties within the population of Northern Ireland. We must encounter those who differ from us – to break down the enmity. That is our challenge.’

In concluding his address, the Methodist Lay Leader said that the aspiration and prayer in this Week for Christian Unity must be one where ‘we are led by the right hand of God into a new and shared future and where together as the Church

of Jesus Christ we witness to his great salvation to and for all people’.

Need to build quality governance in NI, 4Corners prayer breakfast told

Yesterday morning, about 100 people from Belfast and beyond gathered in the Spectrum Centre on the Shankill for a prayer breakfast in advance of next month’s 4 Corners Festival (1-11 February).

The theme of this year’s festival is ‘Now. Here. This.’ You can find the full programme [here](#). It’s appropriate that the prayers were situated within the annual worldwide Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January), traditionally celebrated during the octave of St Peter and St Paul.

The gathering was addressed by Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the convenor of the church’s Council for Public Affairs.

Hamilton’s remarks focused on the current political impasse, and the public role that the churches can play in contributing to civic reconciliation.



Hamilton welcomed next week's talks about restoring the devolved institutions. He spoke of not simply restoring the institutions for their own sake, but of the need for building quality institutions that could deliver good governance.

Citing [recent addresses by Bishop Noel Treanor and Prof John Brewer](#), Hamilton urged the churches to model good civic relationships. He said we should 'stand shoulder to shoulder with one another' to articulate a 'new narrative for the future, which spells out the importance of forgiveness, generosity, compassion, and thoughtfulness.'

The breakfast concluded with a prayer by Dr Gladys Ganiel, which drew on the themes raised

in Hamilton's address, as well as Rev David Campton's poem about the theme of this year's festival.

Pope Francis clashes with abuse survivors over bishop

Pope Francis has defended a Chilean bishop accused of covering up sex abuse, saying allegations against him are "calumny".

Abuse survivors accuse Bishop Juan Barros of Osorno of staying quiet after allegedly witnessing Fr Fernando Karadima abusing minors. Fr Karadima was later convicted, and sentenced by the Vatican to a life of penance and prayer.

Juan Barros's appointment as bishop drew large protests, however Pope Francis has repeatedly stood by him, saying there is no evidence against him.

Asked by reporters on his the last day of his visit to Chile whether he still stood by the bishop, Pope Francis responded: "The day they bring me proof against Bishop Barros, then I will speak. There is not a single piece of evidence against him, it is all calumny. Is that clear?"



Pope Francis arrives at the site at Lobitos Beach, near the northern Chilean city of Iquique . The Pope said allegations against Bishop Barros were 'calumny'.

Bishop Barros thanked the Pope for his comments, saying he had “only words of gratitude”.

“What he has said is very clear,” the bishop added. “I will continue in my ministry in service of the Church.”

The comments have angered abuse survivors, however, who described the Pope’s words as “offensive”. Juan Carlos Cruz, one the bishop’s most vocal accusers, said: “As if I could have

taken a selfie or a photo while Karadima abused me and others and Juan Barros stood by watching it all.

“These people are truly crazy, and the pontiff talks about atonement to the victims. Nothing has changed, and his plea for forgiveness is empty.”

The appointment of Bishop Barros has deeply divided the diocese of Osorno. Juan Carlos Claret, a spokesman for a group of lay Catholics in the diocese, asked: Isn't the pastoral problem that we're living (in Osorno) enough to get rid of him?"

According to AP, Patricio Navia, a political scientist at Diego Portales University in Santiago, said Chileans appreciated that Pope Francis had gone much further than local bishops in acknowledging the sexual abuse scandal.

“Then right before leaving, Francis turns around and says: ‘By the way, I don’t think Barros is guilty. Show me some proof,!’” Navia said.

The comment will likely erase any goodwill the Pope had won over the issue, he added.

Valuing people with Down's Syndrome on Church of England's General Synod agenda

The Church of England has released the agenda for what leaders will discuss at a meeting of its governing body, General Synod, in February.

Among the topics to be discussed are valuing people with Down's Syndrome, recognising Methodist Presbyters as ordained clergy in the Church of England, safeguarding, preparing for the inquiry into historic sexual abuse and relations with the wider Anglican community.

A motion affirming the dignity and humanity of people with Down's syndrome will be discussed, just as a new form of pre-natal screening comes into practice in the NHS, able to identify when a pregnant woman may give birth to a baby with Down's Syndrome.

The screening means doctors will be able to tell a mother if there is a "high risk" her baby will be affected by the condition, knowledge which the Church welcomes, if it makes the mother more informed.

However, leaders want parents to be aware that the lives of people living with Down's Syndrome has considerably improved in recent decades and cited the Christian comedian Sally Phillips' documentary 'A World Without Down's Syndrome?' where she highlighted ignorance surrounding the condition.

The Church of England said mothers who ask for this screening must be given results in a neutral fashion, such as not saying: "I'm sorry, I've got bad news for you" or leading them on a path towards termination, without providing full information about life with a child with Down's Syndrome.

Also to be discussed at the General Synod, will be the use of digital evangelism in the Church's Easter and Christmas campaigns on social media - and how to build on that progress - as well as discussing food waste.

Review proposes law change to improve governance of English Cathedrals

A major review of the governance of the 42 cathedrals in England has recommended a



Lichfield Cathedral in Staffordshire: the Dean of Lichfield, Adrian Dorber, has welcomed the report of the Church of England's Cathedrals Working Group, saying: "Our cathedrals have been here for hundreds of years, vibrant seats of mission, of learning, of heritage and of love, let's ensure they are here for hundreds more."

change in the law to improve their governance. The review was commissioned by the Church of England's Archbishops' Council following a recommendation by the Bishop of Peterborough, Donald Allister, after an official visitation to his cathedral after it got into financial difficulties in

2016. Following the visitation, Bishop Donald issued a charge to the cathedral, saying that the visitation “wasn’t about attributing blame” but “to help the Cathedral get things onto a better footing for the future.”

In his charge, Bishop Donald said: “I urge the Archbishops’ Council, the Church Commissioners, and the House of Bishops, to look at whether the current [1999] Cathedrals Measure is adequate, and to consider revising it. The Peterborough situation has convinced me that the high degree of independence currently enjoyed by Cathedrals poses serious risks to the reputation of the whole Church, and thus to our effectiveness in mission. A closer working relationship of Cathedrals with their Bishop and Diocese would be of benefit to all, both practically and spiritually.”

Following the visitation and charge, and discussions by the Church Commissioners and House of Bishops, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Justin Welby and John Sentamu, established a Cathedrals Working Group to carry out a review. It was chaired by the Bishop of Stepney, Adrian Newman, a former Dean of Rochester. In a foreword to the draft report, published this week, he explains that his view of the role of cathedrals was changed when



The Cathedrals Working Group was established in response to an official episcopal visitation to Peterborough Cathedral which had got into financial difficulties.

he was appointed to Rochester: “As a parish priest for 20 years I had always been something of a sceptic about cathedrals,” he wrote. “So, it was one of God’s little jokes when I was asked to become a dean.

“I quickly discovered, of course, just how wrong I had been. These amazing places incorporate everything the Church of England aspires to be

in its best moments: congregations are growing and visitor numbers are remarkable; people on the edge of faith experience them as safe spaces to explore Christianity; they have become a focus for enquiry and activity in the public square, gathering places for communities at times of national crisis or celebration, and a crucial source of ‘bridging’ social capital at a time when darker forces threaten to fracture the social landscape.”

The Working Group has today published its 100-page draft report and opened a consultation on its proposals, which will remain open until 28 February. “After this all the responses will be collected and analysed,” the C of E said in a statement. “The Cathedrals Working Group will then meet to discuss what refinements and changes that might be made to the draft. The final version will then be submitted to the Archbishops’ Council in March, and once amended and approved by them will be published.”

The review recommends the retention of Chapter as the governing body of a cathedral, but with a clearer emphasis on its governance role. It says that the Dean should chair the chapter alongside an independent lay vice-chair nominated by the diocesan bishop. The rest of the membership –

which should be a minimum of eight members and a maximum of 12 – should be the residentiary canons and a group of non-executive members appointed by the Chapter itself, with the approval of the diocesan bishop. The report recommends that at least two-thirds of the non-executive members would be laity.

If the recommendations are approved, there would be a separate management function provided by a senior executive team who will oversee day- to-day cathedral operations. It also recommends that each cathedral should have a finance, audit and risk committee, with an appropriately qualified independent chair, which would, ideally, operate separately to the cathedral's finance committee.

The Working Group did not explore the ecclesiology of cathedrals, saying that this was outside their terms of reference. But they have recommended that the Church should “encourage and commission further work on the ecclesiology of cathedrals and their relation to bishop, cathedral, diocese and the National Church Institutions”.

It also recommends a dialogue with the Government about state funding for cathedrals.

“Cathedrals do not just belong to the Church, although it is the Church which runs them, bears most of the financial burden for them, staffs them and ensures their ministry of prayer, worship and mission,” the report says. “They do this for the wider public benefit. “Cathedrals do not just pray for and support the spiritual life of their communities. They are often also venues for public occasions, mark the various stages in the life of the community throughout the year and have an iconic local status, attracting tourism and businesses to the area.

“Given this importance in the secular sphere and civil society, we think it is time to re-visit the complex but important issue of whether there should be some kind of state funding for cathedrals. Their liabilities are very considerable, their running costs huge and yet the loss to the community were they to fail would be incalculable.”

Bishop Adrian Commented: “Cathedrals buck the trends of numerical decline, exert a growing influence in civil society, and demonstrate an effective way of engaging with contemporary culture. They are inspirational in their impact on our national life and on the lives of millions of worshippers and visitors each year.

“We hope that the recommendations in our report will encourage a much closer collaboration between cathedral and diocese, dean and bishop and point towards good practice in a cathedral’s wider relationships with the diocese and the national church. The mutuality of these relationships is vital.

[Click here](#) to download and read the draft report (pdf)

CNI

Help CNI grow...

... Please commend

**CNI daily news to your
friends**

www.churchnewsireland.org

CNI

