



Irish Christian leaders mum on abortion referendum in New Year's message

Christian church leaders in Ireland noticeably made no mention of the upcoming abortion referendum when they issued their joint message for the New Year and instead focused on the issue of poverty and welfare changes, Christian Daily reports.

In their traditional joint message for New Year, the Irish church leaders highlighted the issue of homelessness and said it was one of the most prominent signs of a "broken system that is leaving too many people without adequate support." However, the statement failed to mention abortion even though a referendum on the issue is set to be held next summer, [The Irish Times](#) detailed.

Christian churches are reportedly expected to campaign fiercely for their stance on abortion as the referendum approaches. However, the religious leaders still have not clarified if they will be for or against the proposal to repeal the Eighth Amendment.

In Northern Ireland, the New Year message focused on how families with more than two children were most likely to be affected by the welfare changes and cuts to charities and benefits. The Christian leaders called on politicians on both sides of the Border to work for the common good.

Last month, a committee under the Irish Parliamentary recommended that the constitution's eighth amendment be abolished to allow changes in the abortion law. The said

amendment grants equal right to life to both the pregnant woman and her unborn child, [BBC News](#) explained.

Aside from that, the group also recommended putting in place a new law governing time limits for abortions. As of now, the Republic of Ireland implements a near total ban on it.

The termination of pregnancy was only allowed in 2013 and only under specific conditions, which include a possibility of suicide and a risk to the woman's life because of medical complications. Ireland's abortion law does not include rape, incest, and fetal abnormality in the allowed conditions for termination of pregnancy.

Presbyterian Youth assembly to re-imagine the church

The Youth Assembly aims to bring together young people and young adults from across the denomination to discuss, debate and discover the role of young people and the church.

After the huge success of last year, the PCI Youth Assembly is once again taking place on



Saturday, 10th February 2018 in Assembly Buildings from 2-9pm.

The title of this year's gathering is "RE-IMAGINE: Presbyterianism for today's generation" and each congregation is invited to send up to five delegates to attend.

The Youth Assembly aims to bring together young people and young adults from across the denomination to discuss, debate and discover the role of young people and the church. We want to better hear the voice of the next generation within our church and share it with the General Assembly.

The day will be divided into three sections: The Debate: 2-6pm; The Meal: 6-7pm; The Event: 7-9pm

Delegates should be aged between 15-25 and are normally communicant members of their congregation. They should also be willing to participate in discussion groups.

Registration and cost: To register please send a completed booking form to the Council for Congregational Life and Witness (CCLW) office by Monday, 22nd January 2018. [Click here](#) to download the booking form.

Cost is £8 / €8 per delegate which it is encouraged that congregations will cover on the delegate's behalf. If you have any other enquiries please email: lgibson@pcinet.org in the CCLW office.

Down & Connor Living Youth Summer Pilgrimage 2018 – Taizé & Paris

Are you 17-25? Why not join us on our Pilgrimage to Taizé and Paris: 29th July – 8th August 2018. £799 – includes flights, transfers,



accommodation, half board, t-shirts and half zip. Lots of fundraising ideas and opportunities available. £100 deposit required. Closing Date: Thursday 16th November 2017 for completed application form and deposit. For more information email: info@livingyouthni.org

Application form available below;

[Living Youth Registration Form – Taizé Paris 2018](#)

Archbishop Martin of Armagh pledges help for abuse sufferers

The Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, has pledged that the Catholic Church will play its part in raising awareness about domestic violence and abuse and in supporting anyone affected to access information confidentially.

In a special New Year homily to be delivered to mark the World Day of Peace, Archbishop Martin, also re-iterated Pope Francis's call to show compassion to refugees.

Archbishop Martin said: "Organisations like Women's Aid alert us to the fact that at least 14% of all crime reported to the police last year was related to domestic violence with one call every 18 minutes.

"The high levels of depression, addictions and anxiety in our country, and the frightening reality of domestic violence is not often spoken about openly, but it is an indication of the huge need that exists for inner peace and family reconciliation.

"Just before Christmas, the Catholic and Church of Ireland Cathedral parishes here in Armagh

came together for training in the Safe Church Initiative.

"We have pledged to play our part in raising awareness about domestic violence and abuse and in supporting anyone affected to confidentially access information. We hope to draw more attention to this initiative as we continue our preparations for the World Meeting of Families next August."

Archbishop Martin spoke also about 'the horrific acts of terror', such as the murder of 45 Coptic Christians in Egypt on Palm Sunday, which are being carried out by in the name of religion.

"It is shocking to learn that there have been further attacks during the Christmas season, most recently on Friday last when nine people were killed during an attack on a Christian Church in Cairo," he said.

"I am mindful also today of migrants and refugees who are languishing in camps or wandering in hope for a better life for their families. Pope Francis invites us, in a spirit of compassion, to 'embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands."

C of E to invest £24 million in new churches and evangelism

The Church of England has announced grants of £24.4 million in the latest tranche of its Renewal and Reform programme funding. The money is being provided by the C of E's Strategic Investment Board, which was created as part of a change in the way national funding from the Church Commissioners is provided to diocese and parishes. Previously, the Commissioners provided support to dioceses on the basis of a national formula. But after a review looking into "Resourcing the Future" of the Church, the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops agreed instead that all of the national funding should be distributed for investment in the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church.

The Diocese of London, which [plans to open 100 new churches](#) in Britain's capital, will receive the biggest grant, valued at £4.8 million, to revitalise churches and develop "Church Growth Learning Communities". It will also receive an additional £3.89 million to help it train curates to be deployed across the country to support the national Church.

In 2015, the then-Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, was given the go-ahead to revive the See of Islington as a suffragan bishopric with responsibility for church planting in the capital and elsewhere in the C of E, at the invitation of the relevant diocesan bishop.

“I love the intention of the national church to support church growth and new ministry across England,” the Bishop of Islington, Ric Thorpe, said. “We are excited to receive this strategic development grant that will help us to support churches across the traditions and in every kind of parish to grow and flourish in London and beyond.”

The grants to the Diocese of London “will enable churches of every tradition to join learning communities that help them grow in depth, impact and number,” the Diocese said. “It will also help churches to train curates who will pay dividends back to the diocese by revitalising existing churches and promoting further mission.

“As a diocese with 4.2 million people, this grant will help the Church in London to reach communities across the capital. It will also have a national focus, reflecting the Bishop of Islington’s

wider role in supporting church plants across England where invited by diocesan bishops. It will enable the training of curates who will be deployed in strategic locations outside London, supporting demand in other dioceses for trained church leaders.”

Responding to the grant, the Acting Bishop of London, Pete Broadbent, the Bishop of Willesden, commented: “Planting and learning communities complement the inherited parish and chaplaincy model. The Church of the future needs vision, depth and new resourcing. I’m delighted that the National Church is investing in London in this way.”

The second-largest grant of £4.23 million will be spent helping the Diocese of Winchester to “engage with the ‘missing generations’ of young people across Hampshire and East Dorset.” The diocese, which is investing £4 million of its own funds on the scheme, The diocese said that its scheme, dubbed Winchester Mission Action, “will bring the Christian message to people who have not previously interacted with the Church of England. Through new projects designed to reach people in every location within the community, the Diocese of Winchester intends to

re-establish the Church as a partner with other organisations in tackling challenges in society.

“The projects which the new funding will facilitate include reinvigorating the Christian presence in large urban centres and smaller villages, establishing new Christian communities in places where there are new housing developments and reaching out to students in further and higher education.”

The Bishop of Winchester, Tim Dakin, said: “Society is changing rapidly, and traditional institutions are adapting. Winchester Diocese is committed to the sustainable growth of the Church for the common good. We have taken time to identify the challenges which face the people of Hampshire and East Dorset, whether they be in our rural villages or urban centres, seeing those challenges as opportunities for Mission Action. We are a growing Christian community with an increasing emphasis on young people. Shaped by the life and work of Jesus we aim to be an active participant in helping to renew our society and address the concerns of our cities, towns and villages.” The Diocese of Blackburn will receive £1.54 million to help fund “an ambitious project aimed

at opening new churches in deprived urban estates". The grant will be focused on "training new leaders, both lay and ordained, with a view to providing a model for other dioceses, while also strengthening mission in the areas where the work is located," the C of E said.

The grant will support the appointments of a lead evangelist and pioneer evangelist at Grange Park Church Army Centre of Mission in Blackpool, to develop work already started by the clergy and congregation on the estate. It will also fund 20 young adults to take part in the Blackpool Ministry Experience over the next six years, living on the Mereside estate in Blackpool and working with local residents, as well as in nearby deprived urban parishes in Blackpool.

"I believe passionately that if we are serious about the renewal of the Church we must commit ourselves afresh to proclaiming Good News to the poor," the Bishop of Blackburn, Philip North, said. "This project will share the Good News with people living on our urban estates by planting a number of new congregations.

"However, it will also ensure that church life is sustainable over the long term in these areas by

forming quality lay and ordained leaders both from and for our estates. Our aim is to call and form local leaders who can be good news for their communities.”

Bishop Philip said that he was “delighted” with the award.

Other grants announced by the Church of England as part of this £24 million round, include £3.09 million for church planting and to strengthen mission across the City of Leeds in the Diocese of Leeds; £1.88 million to develop mission in St Helens, Warrington and Widnes in the Diocese of Liverpool; £1.84 million to develop mission and ministry to children, young people and families in the Diocese of Sheffield; £1.61 million for nine new pioneer posts to be created as catalysts for pioneering activity across Somerset in the Diocese of Bath and Wells; and £1.45 million to resource evangelism with younger generations, social action and church planting in the city of Bristol in the Diocese of Bristol.

The Church of England is inviting further applications from its dioceses for future strategic investment funding.

Media review of faith in the news

Ombudsman critical of “Baptism barrier” move

The Ombudsman for Children says Government plans to partially lift the “Baptism barrier” will end up discriminating against children seeking access to minority faith schools.

Minister for Education [Richard Bruton](#) has announced plans to prohibit Catholic primary schools from giving enrolment priority to baptised children in cases where they are oversubscribed.

However, minority faiths, such as the [Church of Ireland](#), may continue to prioritise members of their religion in order to protect their ethos in cases where they are oversubscribed, under the proposals.

Reacting to the planned measures, the Ombudsman for Children’s Office warned that allowing minority faiths to use religion as a condition of entry means some children will end up being treated differently.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/ombudsman-critical-of-baptism-barrier-move-1.3344278>

Catholic groups warn of legal action over “Baptism barrier” removal

Catholic groups have told the Government that plans to remove the “Baptism barrier” for entry to school will create major constitutional problems and open the State to a series of legal challenges from parents and religious bodies.

Minister for Education [Richard Bruton](#) announced plans last year which will prohibit Catholic Catholic primary schools from giving enrolment priority to baptised children in cases where they are over-subscribed.

However, minority faiths, such as the [Church of Ireland](#), may continue to prioritise members of their religion in order to protect their ethos in cases where they are over-subscribed.

Submissions released to The Irish Times under the Freedom of Information Act reveal the depth of opposition from Catholic bishops, trustee

bodies for thousands of Catholic schools, along with management bodies and missionary groups.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/catholic-groups-warn-of-legal-action-over-baptism-barrier-removal-1.3343230>

Memorial for Manorhamilton VC

“Charles was born in 1st January 1825 and was christened in the **Church of Ireland** Parish Church in Manorhamilton the following month. A younger brother William ... tip of hand; trade cutler.’ He was given £2.os.9d (less than €5) marching money to get back to Ireland and a pension of 8 pence a day.

<https://www.leitrimobserver.ie/news/home/289777/memorial-for-local-victoria-cross-recipient.html>

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10 year project restored Great East Window at York Minster

Reports that the 600-year-old Great East Window at York Minster has finally been restored after a conservation project that removed more than 300 glass panels over 10 years.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-42551807>

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/899613/york-minster-stained-glass-window-largest-in-UK>

Christian Aid'd new Chief Executive

Reports that Christian Aid has appointed Amanda Khozi Mukwashi as its new chief executive. She joins the charity in April, succeeding Loretta Minghella, who left last year to become First Church Estates Commissioner.

<http://www.charitytimes.com/ct/Christian-Aid-appoints-new-chief-executive.php%20.php>

<https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/amanda-khozi-mukwashi-appointed-chief-executive-christian-aid/management/article/1453607>

Honour for founder of Christianity in the North East centre at Bishop Auckland

Report that Jonathan Ruffer, who bought Auckland Castle in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, in 2012 and is turning the castle into a centre re-telling the history of Christianity in the North East, is to be made an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by Durham University.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-42551580>

New exhibition of Historic Welsh Bible

Report that the 1620 Llanwnda Bible reappeared in public this week as an exhibit at the University of Wales' Trinity St David Lampeter campus in Ceredigion.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-42548146>

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