



## **Jacob Rees-Mogg ‘saddened’ by Irish abortion result**

Jacob Rees-Mogg MP has said he was “saddened” by the result of the Irish abortion referendum, becoming one of the few British politicians to express regret at the outcome.

“I believe that life starts at the point of conception,” he told LBC radio, adding that “life inside the womb is worth protecting.”

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He also warned the government against interfering in Northern Ireland's abortion laws, saying it was "dangerous" to ignore the UK's constitutional settlement.

"I'm aware that the [Northern Irish] Assembly isn't currently sitting, but this is one of the reasons for encouraging the Northern Ireland politicians to bring their Assembly back together – so they can settle these issues that are their responsibility," he said.

"What if this was Scotland?" he added. "What would be the result in Scotland if some English politicians decided they would overturn the policy of the SNP?"

He also criticised Labour's Shadow Attorney General Baroness Chakrabarti for calling on Prime Minister Theresa May for show her "feminist credentials" by imposing abortion on Northern Ireland.

"Baroness Chakrabarti is ignoring the devolution settlement. How the constitution works is important, it's how democracy is defended and operates," he said.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister said the Northern Irish Assembly should settle abortion law, and that the government was working to get the assembly re-established.

## **Abortion result in Republic will not affect Northern Ireland, says DUP MP**

Pro-choice campaigners in Northern Ireland are calling for a similar change to that just voted for across the border .

The DUP leader, Arlene Foster said the referendum: "has no impact upon the law in Northern Ireland."

Jim Shannon, the DUP MP for Strangford, agreed with his leader's position. When asked if the mood had altered in Northern Ireland since the Republic of Ireland voted to legalise abortion, he told Premier News: "If you listen to the media, you would say there has been but in reality, no, there hasn't.



"I think it's put an extra focus on it but it hasn't changed the opinions of those in Northern Ireland who hold fast to what we have."

He added: "We don't ignore the fact that the referendum has taken place in Republic of Ireland and we don't ignore the fact that there has been a fairly strong vote in favour of change but we in Northern Ireland have our own minds to make up."

"We're not beholden to the Republic of I for their referendum, nor are we beholden to the rest of the United Kingdom for opinions which are different from ours as well."

Shannon explained that he thinks abortion law should only be changed by politicians in their parliament who represent the Northern Irish people directly.

He described what the Republic has chosen as 'abortion on demand' and stated clearly that he did not want to make it any easier: "Today we have 100,000 people today who live because we have legislation in place that prevents abortion on demand."

## **Science and faith theme of C of I journal**

The new edition of SEARCH: A Church of Ireland Journal will focus on 'Science and Faith: Partners or Rivals?'. This theme will be covered in the following articles:

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• ‘Aspects of Science and Faith’ by Keith Ward, formerly Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University;

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- ‘Creation: an invitation to share God’s love’ by Cathriona Russell, Dungannon and Beresford Assistant Professor in Theology at Trinity College, Dublin;
- ‘Science and Religion: towards a fresh engagement’ by Michael Fuller, Teaching Fellow at New College, University of Edinburgh;
- ‘Nature at Work: an Islamic perspective’ by M Basil Altaie, Professor of Physics and Cosmology at Yarmouk University, Jordan;
- ‘Science, religion and healing cancer’ by Gillian Straine, Director of the Guild of Health and St Raphael, an ecumenical charity working in healing ministry;
- ‘Christian apologetics and the challenge of science’ by the Revd Dr William Olhausen, rector of Killiney, Ballybrack; and
- ‘Living words for the Lab and the Church’ by the Revd Mark Gallagher, curate at Bangor Abbey.

The edition will also feature a reflection on Prof H F Woodhouse by Prof John Bartlett, a Liturgica page by Dean Tom Gordon, and a collection of book reviews.

It will be available in the week commencing Monday, 4th June.

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## Westminster Abbey to open previously hidden gallery regarded as 'best view in Europe'



**A previously hidden space on top of Westminster Abbey in London which was once used for storage has been turned into a new gallery with a spectacular view on the nave.**

The space, which was intended for chapels that never

materialised, has been closed to the public ever since it was built 700 years ago.

After a £23million refit it will be unveiled to the public for the first time on June 11 and become the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries.

The space was once hailed by Sir John Betjeman as offering the 'best view in Europe'.

Visitors will come to the gallery, which was previously inaccessible to the public, through a new tower housing a staircase and lift just outside Poets' Corner, between the abbey's 13th century Chapter

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House and 16th century Lady Chapel.

The gallery is the first major addition to the abbey church since 1745. It is part of a £22.9 million, privately funded development project for the two million visitors and worshippers who go to the abbey each year.



It has been arranged to tell the story of Westminster Abbey in four themes: Building Westminster Abbey, Worship and Daily Life, Westminster Abbey and the Monarchy and The Abbey and National Memory.

## **Church of England fends off sexuality debate as bishops work on new teaching document**

The Church of England is holding off any proposed changes to its stance on gay marriage, allowing bishops to work on a major review of their teaching on sexuality.

Any proposed motions calling for a shift will be ignored and not scheduled for debate at the Church's ruling general synod for the foreseeable future, Christian Today reports. The move will give



**The Church of England's General Synod is its ruling body and sets its laws.**

bishops time to write a new teaching document on sexuality, which is not expected until 2020.

Instead of formal debates or legislation, synod discussions on sexuality will take place behind closed doors in group settings, avoiding publicity around a head-to-head debate. At the upcoming synod meeting in July, an afternoon will be set aside for private seminars and workshops, around half of which will cover sexuality.

The move will disappoint campaigners who hoped that a service of blessing for same-sex couples might be an imminent change that could offer a compromise between those pushing the Church to accept gay marriage and those wanting to maintain the status quo.

The national synod, which meets twice a year and is made up of bishops, clergy and ordinary churchgoers elected from around the country, rejected a report by bishops last year that upheld the CofE's traditionalist stance that marriage is between a man a

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woman. The unexpected snub led the archbishops of Canterbury and York to promise a 'radical new Christian inclusion' and a new teaching document based on 'a proper 21st century understanding of being human and of being sexual'.

Led by the bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, a group was formed to write the document, which is the Church's first major review of its stance on sexuality since 1991.

But any changes will not be considered for debate before the document is well underway, Christian Today understands.

This means that a motion passed by the diocese of Hereford calling for a service of prayer and dedication for gay couples and a separate private member's motion making the same appeal are likely to both be ignored.

Last week campaigners labelled the failure to schedule a debate on sexuality at the upcoming synod in July an 'appalling' decision. 'It shows a total failure of leadership in my opinion, and a desire to "overly manage" Synod,' Jayne Ozanne, a leading LGBT campaigner on synod, said.

'There is not one mention of the word sexuality, [despite all the calls](#) there have been for debates.'

## **Timetable slips for Methodist statement on same-sex marriage**

The Methodist Church in England and Wales will not consider a statement aimed at potentially redefining marriage to include same-sex couples at its forthcoming conference after a working group was hit by unexpected delays.

The Methodist Conference is the highest decision-making body of the Church. A resolution at the 2016 conference directed that a 'statement of the judgment of the Conference shall be prepared',





**Rev Ken Howcroft explained the delay to the report.**

with a view to a two-year consultation period among churches before a definitive statement was agreed in 2020.

However, an [interim report](#) to the 2018 conference says the timetable has slipped because the group's chair changed, there was 'significant ill-health' among its members, and there was 'significant disruption' because of the relocation of four of its eight members.

In a [video posted](#) by the Methodist Church, task group chair Rev Kenneth Howcroft said another factor in the delay was the complexity of the issue, which was 'not just about same-sex marriage'. 'If it was only that issue it might have been easier to bring something,' he said. 'But what we were asked to do was bring something that talked about marriage in general and relationships in general, including the marriage and relationships of heterosexual people.'

Among the issues at stake were cohabitation and sexual intimacy, and the relationship between marriage as understood under the law of the land compared with the Church's understanding of Christian marriage.

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The task group also had to consider the implications of deciding not to provide a liturgy for same-sex marriage, when the Methodist Church had already decided not to take any action regarding ministers or members legally entering into such marriages, a situation Howcroft described as 'living with a slightly unhappy compromise'.

He also referred to the question of a 'conscience clause' if the Church did decide to allow same-sex marriages, for Methodists unhappy with this, and its implications for 'connexionalism' – the principle that decisions made by the Conference are binding on all Methodists. 'It is an immensely complicated thing,' Howcroft said.

However, he said a draft statement could be brought to the conference in 2019, with a one-year consultation period instead of the original two-year period meaning a decision could still be made in 2020.

## News briefs

**+++WORLD WAR 1 PILGRIMAGE** - The two Archbishops of Armagh, Archbishop Richard Clarke (Church of Ireland) and Archbishop Eamon Martin (Catholic Church), are leading a cross-community delegation of young people from across the island of Ireland on a pilgrimage to the battle sites of the Somme. Yesterday



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Wednesday 30th May they left from Dublin for Brussels, and travelled to Kortrijk, Belgium, and explored the town which was heavily bombed in 1917. Today they will visit cemeteries and memorials linked to the 36th Ulster Division and 16th Irish Division, including Thiepval Wood, Guillemont and the Ulster Tower. Then they will travel to Ypres for the Menin Gate Last Post ceremony including a wreath-laying ceremony at 8.00pm. Archbishop Richard Clarke and Archbishop Eamon Martin say they'll have much to learn from their joint trip, and from each other in the group. "It is our vision that the pilgrimage will be a witness to hope and that the visits to these important and symbolic sites in the centenary year of the end of the First World War will enable us to forge even greater friendships and work yet harder for peace together in the future."

**+++MIDWIVES 100 EVENSONG** - A special service of Choral Evensong celebrating 100 years of the Midwives Act 1918-2018 in Ireland. A warm welcome is extended to everyone, particularly midwives and former midwives. Belfast Cathedral, June 8 at 5.30pm

**+++CLOGHER INSTITUTION** - The Revd Olivia Downey was instituted as Rector of the Grouped Parishes of Clogher Cathedral, Errigal Portclare, Augher and Newtownsaville by the Bishop of Clogher, Right Revd John McDowell in St. Macartan's Cathedral, Clogher on Thursday, 24th May. Revd Olive, as she is known in the parishes, has served as assistant curate in the group of parishes for the past number of years, sharing that role with St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen. Revd Olivia grew up in Aghadrumsee Parish in Clogher Diocese and trained to become a senior cardiology nurse in England before returning to Northern Ireland to work at Belfast City Hospital. She subsequently trained for ministry in the Church of Ireland, attending the Theological Institute, Dublin. She has served as Deacon and Curate Assistant in Clogher Diocese.

**+++PARISH TRACTOR ROAD RUN** - Drumbanagher Parish Church's Annual Tractor Road Run and BBQ will take place this Saturday, 2nd June.

Modern and vintage tractors are welcome. The entry fee is £10 per tractor (includes BBQ) and the road run will depart at

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12 noon from Drumbanagher Parish Church, 2 Church Hill, Tandragee Road, Newry, BT35 6LW. A BBQ will take place on return and families are welcome. The entry fee will be split in aid of Daisy Lodge, Newcastle, the Cancer Fund for Children and the hall building fund. Please contact John Agnew (07756 287 091) or Darren Sterritt (07792 383 168) for more information.

**+++FLOWER FESTIVAL AT THE DOBBIN, PORTADOWN -** St Saviour's Parish Church, Dobbin – at Vicarage Road, Portadown – will celebrate its 160th anniversary with a Flower Festival between Friday, 8th June, and Sunday, 10th June. Friday, 8th June 2pm–8pm. Saturday, 9th June 10.30am–8pm. Sunday, 10th June 2pm–8pm. On Sunday, the festival will feature flutist Drew Rowan playing in the church (2–3pm), Poyntzpass Silver Band playing in the rectory grounds (3–4pm) and a Closing Service of Songs of Praise (at 7pm).

**+++ 150<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY WOODSCHAPEL FLOWER FESTIVAL -** A Flower Festival, arranged by artistic director Mr James Burnside, will be presented by St John's Church, Woodschapel, to mark the end of its 150th anniversary celebrations. Friday, 8th June: 2pm–9pm. Saturday, 9th June: 10am–8pm Sunday, 10th June: 2pm–6pm. Followed by a closing Praise Service on Sunday at 6pm. Morning coffee, lunch and evening tea are available. Booking is essential for coach parties and groups. Please contact Elizabeth McClure on 028 7946 8977 or 07335 856 857 for more information. Email: [esmclure@btopenworld.com](mailto:esmclure@btopenworld.com)

**+++THE KILBRONEY CENTRE -** Diocese of Down & Dromore has four star rated accommodation for groups and is now one of the premier centres for youth groups in Northern Ireland. Accommodation includes meeting rooms, lounges, classrooms and a games room. It is surrounded by 11 acres of enclosed grounds at the foot of the Mourne Mountains. For more information on the Centre please visit [www.kilbroneycentre.com](http://www.kilbroneycentre.com).

