

Church caused untold harm to gay community, says Northern Ireland cleric



A leading Anglican cleric from Northern Ireland has claimed that the wider Christian church has played a part in marginalising members of the LGBT community.

Church of Ireland Canon Timothy Kinahan, Rector of Helen's Bay, stated in a letter to The Times that "many of us have come to the conclusion that, over the centuries, the Church

has been complicit in causing untold harm to people whose sexuality was outside what was then considered the mainstream".

He added: "Harm to people harms the Body of Christ and also harms the whole body of society. It makes our faith harmful, which is inexcusable. Tradition isn't always right."

Speaking last night, Canon Kinahan added: "I feel strongly that the church in general, including the Church of Ireland, has marginalised people and in many ways has uncritically reflected the social norms of the day.

"My reading of the Gospel is that in today's society with the scientific understanding of sexual orientation, we can no longer regard homosexuality as an aberration, or a sickness or a sin.

"I also feel that there is an important principle whereby we should ask ourselves how we would like to be treated if we were gay.

"Jesus treated people as equal in the eyes of God and the law.

"I recognise that other Christians will disagree with this interpretation, and that part of the

Christian journey is to learn to disagree yet to walk together in faith."

Canon Ian Ellis, the former editor of the Church of Ireland Gazette, said: "The Church, while holding to the traditional doctrine that sexual relations are between one man and one woman, should be able to recognise that there are genuinely-held but different views.

"There is a divergence in attitudes, but people in the Church should never seek to hurt or harm one another or anyone else.

"Where two people of the same sex have entered into a civil marriage or partnership, they should be assured of a welcome in the worshipping life of the church and should not be barred from receiving Holy Communion. The official teaching of the Church of Ireland is that marriage is between one man and one woman." Report by Alf McCreary in the Belfast Telegraph

St Patrick's Cathedral to Host First Inner City Christmas Tree Festival

St Patrick's Cathedral is synonymous with the celebration of Christmas, with its rich music in the historic setting of the much loved building.



This year the cathedral will bring its celebrations to a new level and bring the magic of Christmas to even more people with a Christmas Tree Festival which will run throughout December and until the end of the first week in January.

It is the first festival of its kind in the inner city and the innovative and imaginative event will see local businesses, organisations and groups contribute a decorated Christmas tree or wreath.

Through sponsorship provided by generous donations the cathedral will engage with people of the community and enhance the social fabric of the church while at the same time raising funds to replace the roof of St Patrick's

Cathedral to ensure the building is available to be enjoyed for generations to come.

The Christmas Tree Festival will be launched on Friday December 1 at a ticketed event.

Christmas Festival Family Nights will be held on the evenings of December 20 to 22 after Evensong with the Cathedral open to the public from 18.15 – 21.00 free of charge on these nights. The trees and wreaths will be displayed throughout the building. There will be a Christmas Gift shop open during this period.

Keep up to date with the festival at www.stpatrickscathedral.ie

Communion will celebrate life of CS Lewis in his home parish

St Mark's Dundela will host a special parish communion and celebration of the life and witness of C.S. Lewis on Sunday 19 November at 10.30 am.

St Mark's was the church where young Clive Staples Lewis was baptized by his grandfather and first Rector of the parish, Reverend Thomas Hamilton.

Reverend Helene T. Steed, Rector of St. Mark's Dundela, will conduct the service.

All are welcome to come and worship. No tickets necessary.

This event is part of the CS Lewis Festival 2017 organised by East Side Arts.

Walking in a Winter Wonderland at Christ Church Bray

Christ Church, Bray, is currently preparing to be transformed into a Winter Wonderland. Over 50 Christmas trees decorated by local schools, community groups and businesses will fill the church. Focusing on the hymns and carols of Advent and Christmas the festival will reflect the surrounding community. Walking in a Winter Wonderland takes place in the church from Thursday November 30 to Thursday December 7 from 10am to 9pm daily (please note extended dates).

Over the years the parish has used their 154 year old church building to tell the stories of Narnia and Remembrance. They are using this experience to create scenes and settings that will inspire wonder and delight. Some of the trees are very thought provoking and even



challenging. Others are celebratory and inspiring. All are a continuation of the tradition of storytelling. Join the parish on a journey through a Winter Wonderland to the very heart of the joy of the Incarnation.

From eight foot high natural fir trees to trees sculpted and created from tyres, recycled materials, books and maybe even socks the Christmas tree festival set a festive mood and create a wonderful magical setting to begin the Christmas Season. Families and those young and old will be enthralled at the different designs as they pause and meander amongst the twinkling lights of the trees.

As each tree will reflect a well known or maybe not so well known Christmas hymn or song, the festival will be open with a 'Sing a Song of Christmas' Come & C Songs of Praise service on Thursday November 30 at 8pm. The Parish Choirs and Archdeacon Gordon Linney will lead a wonderful evening of music for the opening night. Entrance to Walking in a Winter Wonderland is free as is the Come & C Songs of Praise but donations are invited towards costs. On Sunday December 3 the parish's now famous Classics by Candlelight returns starting at 7pm. Tickets for the Classics concert are €10 and are available from Parish Office, Fleurtique and The Travel Boutique. A cafe and craft shop open daily throughout the festival.

New rector for Maguiresbridge

Canon Mark Watson, who is currently serving as Rector of the Grouped parishes of Trory and Killadeas, has been appointed Rector of Maguiresbridge and Derrybrusk Group of Parishes also in Clogher Diocese.

The Service of Institution will take place in Christ Church, Maguiresbridge on Wednesday, 31st January 2018 at 8pm.

Canon Watson, a native of Omagh, served as a Curate in the Grouped Parishes of Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin in the Diocese of Connor between 1995–1998 and served as Rector of Brackaville, Donaghendry and Ballyclog(Coalisland) in Armagh Diocese between 1998–2001.

He was appointed Rector of Killesher (Florencecourt) in Diocese of Kilmore in 2001 and has been Rector of Trory and Killadeas in Clogher Diocese since 2006.

Canon Watson, who is Prebendary of Devenish, and his wife, Rona have two sons, Samuel and Peter.

Biking rector coming to Kilanne

The Reverend Ian Morison Cruickshank has been appointed rector of Killanne Union of Parishes (Cashel, Ferns & Ossory) and parishioners there are looking forward to his institution on December 15th in Killanne Church at 7.30 p.m.

“I’m originally from Aberdeen in North East Scotland and was educated there,” he says.

“I went on to work in psychiatric nursing, oil rigs, supporting the N.E. fishing fleet, residential care



The Reverend Ian Cruickshank

for adults with learning difficulties (while also being) an itinerant evangelist.”

Education for ministry was in Belfast Bible College and the Church of Ireland Theological College, Dublin.

“Since ordination in the Church of Ireland our travels as a family have taken us to Bray in County Wicklow, Kilcooley, County Tipperary, Ballygawley, County Tyrone and Sydenham in East Belfast.”

Apart from his family some of his other loves include football, motorbikes, keeping up to date with life, being with people, his dogs and lastly, sunshine.

C of I chaplain graduates from Maynooth

On Saturday 11th November, the Revd Dr Daniel Nuzum, chaplain and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Supervisor at Cork University Hospital was conferred with the degree of Master in Theology from the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth. Daniel was awarded this degree following post-doctoral research into Catholic Church teaching from the Second Vatican Council and the contribution of this teaching to the shaping of ethical practice of pastoral ministry in healthcare.

Daniel's thesis sets out a framework of ethical practice for the role of pastoral ministry in a modern healthcare context.

Daniel said: 'This research articulates the importance of pastoral care in an increasingly complex healthcare system where healthcare chaplains can make a valued contribution. I am grateful to St Luke's Home Charity and the



Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross who co-fund my post, to the CEO and colleagues at Cork University Hospital, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (Ireland) Ltd, to the Faculty of Theology at St Patrick's College, and to the Revd Dr Pádraig Corkery who supervised my research.

Daniel serves as healthcare chaplain and CPE Supervisor at Cork University Hospital, Cork University Maternity Hospital. Daniel is also an adjunct lecturer at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and an active member of the Pregnancy Loss Research Group at University College Cork.'

SVP launches Christmas Appeal

“Irish society cannot and must not accept that living in, or on the verge of, poverty is normal - SVP

Despite improvement in some sections of the economy, the number of people who call St Vincent de Paul for help remains very high. The charity expects to receive an estimated 125,000 calls again this year.

“Because austerity and poverty no longer figure in news headlines it is easy to forget that there are still thousands of people who continue to live in hardship and with limited income,” said SVP National President Kieran Stafford at the launch of the Society’s Annual Appeal by RTE’s Ryan Tubridy on 15th November 2017.



“As members of St Vincent de Paul we strive to understand people’s experience of poverty, whatever the cause from the viewpoint of what we can do to help rather than ponder on how they came to be in a position where they seek help from strangers,” he added. He gave the example of a mother who received her electricity and TV licence bill in one day’s post and the tax for her car and mortgage was also due. Her young son also started walking and she felt ashamed that all she could think of was how she couldn’t afford to buy him shoes. The SVP states that this mother is not alone, and she, like the many people who seek help, see SVP as their last resort.

“Irish society cannot and must not accept that living in, or on the verge of, poverty is normal, whether that manifests itself in going without food, resorting to moneylenders, struggling to pay school and other education costs, rough sleeping, living in emergency accommodation or living in rented accommodation which is cold, damp, dilapidated or overcrowded,” said Kieran Stafford.

In the run-up to Christmas the SVP Annual Appeal message this year is “Christmas is not the same for everyone.” The Society is seeking donations to help families and individuals in need in communities across Ireland. It is also highlighting that donations help people not just over Christmas but also throughout the year at times when families find themselves in financial difficulties.

Sometimes a donation to the SVP at this time of the year can be enough to ensure that individuals and families don't slip into long-term poverty, according to Kieran Stafford. He added that while the immediate concern is to help families avoid a difficult Christmas, the longer term focus is on helping families to break the cycle of poverty.

The SVP had an income of €79.3 million according to its Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2016. Income from donations was €16.3 million. Funding from the government came to €12.2 Million, from church collections was €10.2 million, from legacies €5.1million, and from charity shops €26.0 million.

The SVP spends more than €33 million in direct payments each year. These funds helped people to pay for food, fuel, clothes, school books and other education costs and to pay outstanding bills and even rent. Up to €4 million alone goes to families to cover the cost of education.

Zimbabwean church leaders call for national dialogue

An ecumenical group of Christian leaders in Zimbabwe have said that the country is “between a crisis and a kairos” (opportunity) and have called for a national dialogue. The Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations, chaired by the Anglican Bishop of Central Zimbabwe, Ishmael Mukuwanda, brings together the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. In a statement released to ACNS this evening



Maj Gen Sibusiso Moyo addresses Zimbabwe on state television to say that President Robert Mugabe is "safe and well, and his security is guaranteed."

(Wednesday), the group says that many Zimbabweans are "confused and anxious about what has transpired and continues to unfold in our nation."

Last night, armoured vehicles belonging to the Zimbabwean Army took up position at key locations in the nation's capital, including outside the parliament, state broadcaster and 93-year-old President Robert Mugabe's house. Gunfire and explosions were heard but there

are no reports of any casualties. This morning, Maj Gen Sibusiso Moyo appeared on state television reading a statement in which he said that President Mugabe and his family were safe and being kept secure. He denied that there has been a coup and said that the army were targeting criminals.

Later, a Tweet from the ruling Zanu-PF party's official account said: "There was no coup, only a bloodless transition which saw corrupt and crooked persons being arrested and an elderly man who had been taken advantage of by his wife being detained. The few bangs that were heard were from crooks who were resisting arrest, but they are now detained."

South Africa's President, Jacob Zuma, has said that he has spoken by telephone to Robert Mugabe, who told him that he was "fine" and under house arrest.

In their statement, the Christian leaders say that "while the changes have been rapid in the last few days, the real deterioration has been visible for everyone to see for a long time, especially during the political rallies of the ruling party, coupled with the deteriorating socio-economic situation."

They say that as recently as 30 October, when the Catholic Bishops Conference and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches signed a Memorandum of Association, “it was highlighted that the abrasive and exclusionary politics, characterised by increased use of ethnic identities that was now dominating the public discourse, would further fragment and threaten the already weak cohesion of our society.”

As they look at the situation in Zimbabwe, they are reminded of the warning of Jesus in Luke 19, when he wept over Jerusalem. “He saw the catastrophe of its destruction and the massacre of the people that was imminent, ‘because they had not recognised their opportunity (kairos) when God offered them.’”

They continue: “We see the current situation not just as a crisis in which we are helpless. We see the current arrangement as an opportunity for the birth of a new nation. Our God created everything out of chaos and we believe something new could emerge out of our situation. But first we must properly define our problem. Proper naming of the problem will give us a clear sense of where we must go as a nation.”

They say that the economic problems and social challenges facing Zimbabwe are merely

symptoms of “a deeper disease”, which they define as a “loss of trust in the legitimacy of our national processes and institutions.

“There is a strong sense that our hard-earned constitution is not being taken seriously. There is not enough confidence whether the separation of the three arms of the state, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, are functioning in proper relationships of checks and balances. There is deep concern that there appears to be no clear distinction between the ruling party and the government. There is concern that the priorities of the poor have become relegated to charity of those who have access to national resources without proper commitment to addressing the root-causes of these problems. There is a general feeling that the wheels of democracy have become stuck in the mud of personalised politics where the generality of the citizenry plays an insignificant role. It is this lack of democratic renewal and the resulting stagnation, sterility and fatigue that has culminated in the current situation.”

The Church leaders do not lay the blame for the state of Zimbabwe solely at the ruling party and the government, and they say: “it is also the result of the connivance of the different arms of the state and complicity of the church and civil



The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, famously cut his clerical collar into pieces during a 2007 live BBC television interview in protest at President Robert Mugabe's leadership

society. All of us at some point failed to play our roles adequately.

“The church has lost its prophetic urge driven by personality cults and superstitious approaches to socio-economic and political challenges. Civil society over time has become focused on survival and competition and lost the bigger picture of the total emancipation of the population. . . In a way, all Zimbabweans

must take some level of blame for our current situation.”

In their statement, the Church leaders make five calls, beginning with a call to prayer for the nation, and for “a moment of prayer for repentance, deep reflection and discernment.”

They also call for calm and peace, urging people not to spread misinformation, particularly on social media, which they say this leads to “despondency and fear”. Instead they call on people to “not sensationalise the situation” but to “be modest in our engagement.”

Their third call is for the respect of human dignity, and is addressed to the Zimbabwean Defence Forces. “We want to make it clear to them that it is their responsibility to ensure that human dignity and rights are respected.” They call for a transitional government of national unity “that will oversee the smooth transition to a free and fair election.”

And they conclude by calling the nation “to a table of dialogue”. They say: “there is no way we can go back to the political arrangements we had some days ago. We are in a new situation. But our shared future will only be realised [with] dialogue.”

“This dialogue cannot only happen within the ruling party. What we need is a National Envisioning Process (NEP) that will capture the aspirations of all the sectors of society. The church alongside other stakeholders in the private sector, academia, and other spheres can establish this NEP as an inclusive space to enable Zimbabweans from all walks of life to contribute towards a democratic transition to the Zimbabwe We Want.”

The Church, they say, is “made up of those who have been reconciled to God and hence is called to be a sign of this reconciliation by calling the nation to reconciliation.

“Zimbabweans can find each other again as they did in the 1960s and 1970s when they joined hands against the colonial forces; Zimbabweans can find each other again like they did when they signed the unity accord and stopped the self-destruction in Matabeleland and Midlands; Zimbabweans can find each other again like they did when they produced the current national constitution; Zimbabweans can find each other like they did when they shared power during the government of national unity.

“There is no chasm that is too big not to be crossed through the power of reconciliation.

Without reconciliation and openness to a process of shared national envisioning, we are all doomed.

“We can either take the current situation as a mere crisis to be resolved by a winner-takes-all mentality or we use this as an opportunity for us to find one another to build something that is permanently healing for our nation. The first option spells disaster for us and future generations. The second option allows us to embrace our situation as a Kairos, an opportunity given to us by God to dream together that another Zimbabwe is possible!”

In England, the Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu, [who famously cut up his dog collar on a live television interview](#) in 2007 as a symbol of the way Robert Mugabe was cutting away at the identity of Zimbabweans, said on Twitter that he was “as always praying for the people of Zimbabwe.” He was praying particularly now that its government and the Zimbabwean Defence Force would keep peace, the rule of law and security for all, he said.

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