

## Most Catholics now back abortion - poll



**Jacob Rees Mogg caused outrage by saying he was opposed to abortion even in cases of rape or incest.**

Most British Catholics now back abortion, according to a new census which shows a dramatic shift in Christians' social views.

For the first time a majority of Catholics – who typically hold to conservative views on issues of life and death – agreed 'the law should allow an

abortion if the woman decides . . . she does not wish to have a child'.

It comes after Jacob Rees-Mogg, tipped to be a contender for leader of the Conservative Party, explained his staunch opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion by saying he followed the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The **2016 British Social Attitudes survey** showed an increase in support for abortion among Catholics rise from 39 per cent when the question was last asked in 2012 in 61 per cent last year. The level of approval is only slightly lower than among those with no religion – 70 per cent of who back abortion according to the same survey.

The sudden rise comes after British Catholics views on abortion had remained relatively steady over the previous 30 years with the same poll in 1985 finding 33 per cent said a woman has a right to have an abortion.

In 1985 the proportion of those with no religion who backed abortion was 57 per cent after a significant shift in both the law and public perception following the 1967 Abortion Act that made termination permissible in certain circumstances.

The survey also found a majority of Anglicans saying gay relationships were 'not wrong at all' for the first time. The same study found a 50-50 split in 2015 with support among those of no religion at 76 per cent.

Meanwhile support for gay couples among Catholics continues to rise with 62 per cent backing same-sex relationships after crossing the 50 per cent marker in 2013.

However the official position of the Catholic Church remains resolutely opposed to both abortion and gay marriage and the Church of England has promised a more welcoming attitude to gay people but has offered no change to its stance against same-sex weddings.

Roger Harding, head of public attitudes at the National Centre for Social Research which carries out the British Social Attitudes study, said: 'We know from the British Social Attitudes survey that religious people are becoming more socially liberal on issues like same sex relationships and abortion. With falling numbers some faith leaders might wonder whether they should be doing more to take their congregation's lead on adapting to how society is changing.'

## **Bishop's concerns over coming centenaries in Ireland**

The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Dr Paul Colton, admitted that many in the Church of Ireland community in Cork "anticipate the coming centenary commemorations of the War of Independence and the Civil War fearfully and with a certain dread". Dr Colton was speaking at a service which celebrated the installation of bells in a West Cork parish, celebrating Sam Maguire of the GAA.

Bishop Colton said, Many fear that the centennial ceremonies will re-open old sectarian wounds - particularly given that the descendants of many of those involved in the events of 1919-22 are still living in the same general area.

To underline the seriousness with which the Church of Ireland community takes the upcoming centenaries, Dr Colton delivered his warning in a special sermon in Dunmanway in west Cork - an area which became notorious for a controversial massacre of Protestants at the height of the Civil War.

A total of 17 Protestants, ranging in age from 16 to 82 years old, were killed by the IRA in an orgy of violence across west Cork in retaliation for the

killing of IRA commander Michael O'Neill outside Dunmanway in April 1922.

The killings only ended when IRA commanders threatened to shoot any volunteer who carried out such attacks without specific orders.

Dr Colton, in a sermon at St Mary's Church, urged everyone to handle the upcoming ceremonies "extremely sensitively".

"The coming centenary years call for careful thought and even more careful and sensitive commemoration," he stated.

"Among some in our Church of Ireland community, the commemorations are anticipated fearfully and with a certain dread."

Dr Colton said it is vital that, for any understanding of the era, the human stories need to be fully told.

"We know war is cruel, divisive and ugly," he commented.

"We know that Cork was a most violent place in those years. "In every war there are sides; there are enemies, divisions, spies, informers, atrocities and injustices.

"In every situation of conflict, people take sides. Division is part and parcel of the human predicament.

"War scars landscapes and humanity itself. It scars memories."

Earlier this year Dr Colton became the first Church of Ireland bishop from Cork to meet with the Pontiff in Rome.

The audience in May with Pope Francis was facilitated by Bishop John Buckley, the Bishop of Cork and Ross. Bishop Colton described the meeting as an "immense honour".

He was also the first Church of Ireland bishop to openly support same-sex marriage. He started his ordained ministry as a curate in Lisburn in the 1980s.

Dr Colton's address is available at -

<https://churchofirelandcork.com/2017/09/09/bishop-paul-coltons-address-at-the-official-opening-of-the-sam-maguire-community-bells/>

## **Bishop greets pets in Mountmellick**

St Paul's Church in Mountmellick saw some rather unusual visitors at a special service today

(Sunday, 10 September). The occasion was a 'Blessing of Animals' service. It was led by Bishop Pat Storey, who is visiting the Mountmellick Group this week, and the rector, Revd Tim Irvine.

Pets can be a very important and valued part of our lives. The service was an opportunity to acknowledge this and to give thanks to God for animals. Dogs, cats, hamsters, tortoises and even a chicken were brought along for what was a very happy event and a memorable service. Even Rudi, the bishop's dog, was part of the well filled church.

There were some 'interesting' moments as animals were brought up to the front of the church – with dogs and cats not always necessarily seeing eye to eye!

Mountmellick Group of Parishes is situated between the Slieve Bloom Mountains and Emo Park Domain. As well as Mountmellick the group of parishes takes in the villages of Emo, Rosenallis and Clonaslee. There are 3 churches in the Group.

You can find out more about Mountmellick Group of parishes by visiting [www.mountmellickgroupofparishes.ie/](http://www.mountmellickgroupofparishes.ie/)

## Five priests ordained in Derry C of I



Sunday was an extraordinary day for the C of I Diocese of Derry and Raphoe as five priests were ordained by Bishop Ken Good. They were the Rev Liz Fitzgerald, the Rev Nigel Cairns, the Rev Rhys Jones, the Rev Jonathan McFarland and the Rev Robert Wray. All five will serve in the diocese.

More than five hundred people – including relatives and friends of the ordinands – crammed into Glendermott Parish Church for a service which lasted almost two hours. It was, Bishop Good said, an historic day for Derry and Raphoe. He said no one in the church could recall an



occasion when so many priests were ordained for the diocese in a single service.

The collection at the ordination service usually goes to the Diocesan Ministry Fund but the Bishop said it had been decided that Sunday's offering would go, instead, to help victims of the recent flooding in Glendermott Parish. The local communities of Drumahoe and Tullyally were among the areas worst affected by last month's severe floods in the North West. Bishop Good hoped the gesture would be a recognition of their desire to bless and care for families who had suffered because of the flooding and to show them compassion.

In his Sermon for the ordinations, the Dean of Raphoe, Very Rev Arthur Barrett, recalled a service few weeks ago, in Saint Columb's Cathedral, when a small number of clergy gathered to share the Eucharist and mark significant anniversaries of their ordinations. At that gathering, the Preacher said, the Dean of Derry – in a significant reflection – said that theirs was a house divided and wondered how often during their respective times in ministry they had asked themselves the question, “Why me? Why me, Lord? Why have you called me to this house?”

A large number of clergy from throughout the diocese and beyond attended today's service, many participating in the laying on of hands. The first reading was by Rev Nigel Cairns' daughter Megan; Albert Smallwoods, MBE, read the Epistle, and the Rector of Clooney, the Rev David McBeth, read the Gospel. The organist was Derek Collins, Robert Goodman played the trumpet and the choir of St Columb's Cathedral performed throughout the service.

Afterwards the congregation crossed Church Brae to Glendermott Parish Hall for refreshments. Bishop Good thanked the local Rector, the Rev Robert Boyd, for organising the large and complex Ordination Service so successfully.

## **Bishop's Route 66 sermon marathon begins**

The Bishop of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory, Rt Rev Dr Michael Burrows, begins his 'Route 66' sermon marathon on Wednesday in aid of Mothers' Union and Feed the Minds Women's Literacy projects. He will present short reflections related to the theme of the empowerment of women through literacy based on each book of the Bible outside 10 churches and schools in the diocese

each day of the 'Route'. 'Route 66' ends on 29 September.

## September's Presbyterian Herald reviewed

This month's cover story, 'All in the same boat', describes a very special church outing that saw members of Galway Presbyterian Church travel to the island of Inishbofin. Rev. Helen Freeburn describes why they went on this trip and how many of those on the boat had also made great journeys to come to Galway.

'Changing lives with a smile' is the My Story... for September from Neville Pogue, a member of Benburb Presbyterian Church. He describes how going on a mission trip to Romania for the first time 10 years ago has been a life-changing experience – and the first of many mission trips to the region.

This September, five students will enter Union Theological College to begin study for the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In 'Exploring God's call' Rebecca McConnell chats to Rev. David Allen, Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development of the College, about his role and the plans for a special open day at the College in December.

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In 'Emerging leaders' Sarah Harding reports on Emerge, a new project designed to train emerging leaders in PCI. The project looks at topics such as the theory of leadership, including different leadership styles; the concept of leading change; and relational awareness in leadership.

Tom Finnegan, PCI's Training Development Officer and Emerge course co-leader, said, "It's an opportunity for people to think about leadership and how they grow in it – we give them a lot of things to think about and to continue to develop."

This month's Talking Point by Norman Hamilton is entitled 'Engagement is essential', where he considers the challenges of Brexit and suggests that, as Christians, it is imperative that we engage with the process.

Mission Connect for September offers mission news from a deaconess in Lisburn, an Irish mission worker based in Kilkenny and global mission workers serving in Portugal and Nepal. We also hear from one minister serving in Monaghan Presbytery and another minister serving in Co. Dublin. A daily prayer diary, covering various aspects of the work of the Church, is also provided as a guide to our prayers for the month.

Are you 'Socially awkward?' This is the question asked by Sara-Louise Martin, a social media expert. During the General Assembly this June, the SPUD youth delegates highlighted the issue of social media and encouraged churches to engage with it positively as a missional tool. So

with this in mind, Sara-Louise suggests some of her top tips to get started.

Many of us will have a Scripture Union memory, from attending SU at school, or reading Bible Study notes produced by Scripture Union, to going on an SU camp in the summer. In ‘150 years of Scripture Union’, Karen Jardine examines the legacy of the organisation so far as it celebrates this significant anniversary.

In ‘What is a Christian film?’ Neil Sedgewick explores what faith lessons can be learned at the cinema. Aside from specifically faith-based filmmaking, Neil asks if so-called secular films can still do something spiritual even within these constraints.

“I want to suggest that by applying a lens of faith to what we watch we can observe things with a different intentionality and potentially, through our conversations on these films, do a better missional work in the world,” said Neil.

In this issue of the *Herald* Christine Craig, Emerge course facilitator member of Kilbride Presbyterian Church, provides her ‘life lessons’. While Dawn McAvoy, an administrator and researcher for the Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland, shares her thoughts in ‘As I see it...’.

Also to be enjoyed are the ever-popular letters and Life in PCI pages, as well as the news and reviews pages. Not forgetting reflections by Betsy Cameron and Arthur Clarke.

Don't miss out on the September *Herald*; to [download](#) this edition or to [subscribe](#), visit the *Presbyterian Herald* section of the website.

Single copies may be purchased at the reception desk in Assembly Buildings, Fisherwick Place, Belfast.

## Two Church trees in top six of Tree of the Year

Six trees have been shortlisted by the Woodland Trust and members of the public can vote for their favourite from the 2017 final shortlist.

The winning tree will receive a care award of up to £1,000.

The trust wants "better protection" for ancient trees and woodland, according to its director, Patrick Cregg.

"This competition is just one way of putting our precious trees in the limelight, giving them the attention they deserve.



**The Armada tree at Cairncastle Parish Church is believed to have grown from a chestnut seed in the pocket of a drowned Spanish sailor when he was buried**

"By reminding people of their value, we hope they will continue to thrive for future generations."

The Weeping Ash has been standing proud on Bangor's Main Street for the best part of 200 years.

Planted outside the Bangor First Presbyterian Church in 1840, the tree was nearly removed to make way for a war memorial in the 1920s. That was before the church's congregation got wind of the plans and ensured the tree's survival.



According to local legend, the next entry has its roots in the story of a sailor in the Spanish Armada who was shipwrecked on the south Antrim coast in the late 1500s. He was found washed up on the beach below Carncastle and buried in the churchyard.

After some time, a sapling emerged from the unmarked grave. It is believed that the tree now twisted and gnarled, grew from one of the chestnut seeds that the sailor had in his pocket when he was buried.

Duly named The Armada Tree, the ancient chestnut stands in the grounds of St Patrick's Church of Ireland in Carncastle, Co Antrim. The tree has been analysed and found to date back to the 16th century, adding credence to the local legend.

## **Pope Francis left with black eye after Popemobile accident**

Pope Francis suffered a black eye after hitting his head on the so-called Popemobile when his vehicle stopped suddenly.

The pontiff was met by hundreds of well-wishers in Cartagena, Colombia, on the last day of his visit to the south American country.



## **Pope Francis left bloodied and with a black eye after Popemobile accident**

He lost his balance when his motorcade came to an abrupt halt, bruising his left eye and cutting his left eyebrow which dripped blood onto his white cassock.

The cut was swiftly treated with ice and bandaged up.

After the morning's dramas, the 80-year-old prayed at the tomb of St. Peter Claver, the 17th century missionary who ministered to hundreds of thousands of African slaves who were brought to be sold through Cartagena's port during Spanish colonial times.

Francis, known for his own simple and austere style, said Claver was "austere and charitable to the point of heroism."

Claver, the self-described "slave of the slaves forever," has been revered by Jesuits, popes and human rights campaigners for centuries for having insisted on recognising the inherent dignity of slaves, treating them as children of God when others considered them mere merchandise to be bought and sold.

Francis said the legacy of the Spanish priest should serve as a model for the Catholic Church today to "promote the dignity of all our brothers and sisters, particularly the poor and the excluded of society, those who are abandoned, immigrants and those who suffer violence and human trafficking".

And he cited Claver's courageous and controversial example in urging Colombians to take a brave first step to reconcile with one another after a half-century of armed conflict.

"Colombia, your brothers and sisters need you. Go out to meet them. Bring them the embrace of peace, free of all violence.

"Be slaves of peace forever," he said in an appeal at the end of Mass in Cartagena's port.

It was a final appeal to Colombians to overcome divisions that linger after the government reached a peace deal with leftist rebels hoping to end Latin America's longest-running armed rebellion last year.

Francis travelled to Colombia to help solidify the deal and encourage Colombians to reconcile.

For the second day in a row, Francis also made an off-the-cuff denunciation of drug dealers and traffickers, condemning them as unscrupulous merchants of death who "cut short so many hopes and destroy so many families".

"You can't play with the lives of our brothers or manipulate their dignity," he said.

Francis had refrained until Sunday from speaking out about the political and humanitarian crisis next door in Venezuela.

But in remarks added into his Sunday prayer, Francis called for an end to political violence in the country and protection for the poor who have been most hurt by the crisis.

While the appeal was welcomed, many in the crowd were more taken by Francis' mishap on the popemobile and his bruised and bloody eye.

"This holy blood is staying in Colombia," said Ricardo Morales, a lawyer who lined up outside St. Peter Claver's church for a glimpse of the pope. "He made a great effort to be here and from now on it's our obligation to make a similar effort to thank him for everything he has done."

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