



Church of Scotland moves closer to letting ministers perform gay marriages

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has moved a step closer to allowing ministers to perform gay marriages.

The Kirk's governing body backed calls for a study into how same-sex ceremonies in church could be allowed.

The proposal was outlined in a report by the Theological Forum of the Church of Scotland.

It also called for the Church to apologise for its "history of discrimination" of gay people.

Convener of the forum, the Very Rev Ian Torrance said: "We say that after reflection we can see no sufficient theological reason for the Church now not to authorise specific ministers to officiate at same-sex weddings, if doing so does not prejudice the position of those who decline to do so for reasons of conscience."

He continued: "I hope, I pray, we are moving to a different stage in this long argument.

I hope, I pray, we are moving to a different stage in this long argument - Ian Torrance

"We can begin perhaps by saying gently to those with whom we have disagreed, I am sorry.

"That notion of an apology is directly linked to taking this into a non-binary stage and trying to think these pieces differently with a different perception."

The report was debated for around three hours, with the General Assembly agreeing to instruct



Convener of the forum, the Very Rev Iain Torrance

the Legal Questions Committee to "undertake a study of the matters which would require to be addressed in any new legislation permitting ministers and deacons to officiate at same-sex marriage ceremonies, with a view to presenting a report to the 2018 General Assembly."

The governing body also agreed to "invite the Church to take stock of its history of discrimination at different levels and in different ways against gay people and to apologise individually and corporately and seek to do better".

The development follows the appointment of the first openly gay minister Rev Scott Rennie in 2009, and last year's decision to allow ministers to be in same-sex marriages.

Contrasting views were expressed during the debate, which included a contribution from Mr Rennie.

He said: "I want people who see things differently to be protected - I don't want to be in a Church where everyone has to agree with me.

"I thank the forum for recognising the Christian vocation of LGBT people in this Church."

Rev Steven Reid spoke against the proposals, which he said were a "difficult issue" for the Church.

"I question the balance of the report," he said.

Rev Lezley Stewart said the report had provided a middle ground.

"It's not about throwing people on one side or the other under the traffic," she said.

Some press coverage of this:

Guardian Harriet Sherwood [Church of Scotland in step towards conducting same-sex marriages](#)

[BBC Kirk's General Assembly moves towards allowing gay marriage](#)

[The Herald Kirk backs same sex marriage in church, and formal apology to LGBT people and a leader column: Kirk takes step in the right direction](#)

[The Scotsman Kirk agrees to apologise for failing to recognise gay people and Leader comment: Kirk is right to apologise](#)

[Christian Today Church of Scotland apologises for discrimination against gay people, moves toward accepting gay marriage](#)

Local and international talent at Belfast Cathedral Music Festival

The 2017 Belfast Cathedral Music Festival will bring a feast of talent both local and international to St Anne's Cathedral.

There will be something for everyone at this year's event, which runs from June 12-18, and includes performances from NI Opera, the Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra, New Irish Arts and various choirs.



Steeton Male Voice Choir from Yorkshire will perform along with the Clare Chorale from Co Antrim.

Among them are a high school choir from Cincinnati, USA, and the renowned Steeton Male Voice Choir from Yorkshire.

This major festival continues to grow since it was launched in 2014. It gets underway on Monday June 12 with a concert by singers from NI Opera's Young Artists Programme. They will be performing solo arias, duets and trios.

The following evening, tenor Conor Breen, a member of the choir of St Anne's Cathedral will give a solo recital.

On Wednesday June 14 the Elder High School Glee Club from Cincinnati, Ohio, stages a



Tenor Conor Breen, a member of the choir of St Anne's Cathedral

Friday June 16 lunchtime concert. The Glee Club has 100 members aged from 14-18. This all male chorus has had numerous concert tours both in Europe and the United States. sees The Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra – no stranger to St Anne's, this orchestra proves a huge hit every year on Belfast Culture Night. Its repertoire will span old time jazz standards to chart topping hits and is sure to be a night of shoe tapping greatness!

Formed in 1993, the orchestra's many accolades include the Bass Arts Award 1998, BBC Radio 2 National Big Band Competition 2002, National Festival of Music for Youth Jazz Open Section 2004 and an award by the City of Derry Jazz Festival for contribution to the development of jazz in Ireland. The orchestra has recently returned from a very successful European Tour of Britany.

The highlight of the Festival comes on Saturday June 17 when the Cathedral welcomes the New Irish Arts Choir and Orchestra, well- known for its large events in the Waterfront Hall each Christmas and for regular appearances on BBC and RTÉ radio and television.

“Music and St Anne’s suit one another, whether the single voice or instrument or the large ensemble. We have examples of both on offer in this week from musicians from near and far. Do come. It’s going to be good!”- Dean John Mann

This will be a unique and intimate concert featuring a smaller group of players and singers performing with the audience seated around the performers – a truly immersive experience of eclectic choral and contemporary Christian music in beautiful surroundings.



The New Irish Arts Choir and Orchestra will be a highlight of the Belfast Cathedral Music Festival.

The closing event of the Festival on Sunday June 18 will be a night to remember as two of the best choirs from each side of the Irish Sea come together. Steeton Male Voice Choir which marks its 110th anniversary in 2018, is one of the oldest and most respected male voice choirs in Yorkshire. This thriving choir will perform alongside local group the Clare Chorale from Co Antrim.

This popular mixed voice choir has singers from all professions who base themselves in Ballyclare. Its conductor is local Mezzo-Soprano, Sheelagh Greer and accompanist is Darren Day,

also a full-time musician. The choir was recently selected to take part in the BBC Songs of Praise.

Looking forward to this year's Music Festival, the Dean of St Anne's Cathedral, the Very Rev John Mann said music and the Cathedral go hand in hand.

"Anticipating another Music Festival produces a certain frisson of excitement as we once again expect to be entertained and enriched," Dean Mann said.

Full details can be found at www.belfastcathedral.org.

Threat painted on NI church

A threatening message has been found painted on the side of a church in Irvinestown, Northern Ireland.

The words painted in bright yellow mostly capital letters reads: "Our familys (sic) suffered now it your turn.

"We told u we would get out someday."The Derryvullan North Parish Church received a

report of the graffiti on Thursday morning according to the Fermanagh Herald.

Rev Alan Irwin condemned the church being used for “some sort of a personal vendetta”.

He told the publication: “We can’t understand why the church was singled out and targeted in this way.

“It is very upsetting and distressing for the parishioners who don’t want this sort of attention and will want to have the graffiti removed as soon as possible.”

Police are appealing to anyone with information about the incident to contact them at Enniskillen on 101

New fun children’s Monks’ Tours of Christ Church, Dublin

New fun children’s Monks’ Tours of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, will be held every Saturday morning at 12 o’clock from 3 June until 27 September 2017 inclusive.



The tour is set in 1267 and you will be led around the cathedral by a guide who is your prior. You'll have the chance to dress up in a monk's robe and learn all about how monks lived at Christ Church; what they ate, what they wore and what they did every day.

This tour is primarily aimed at 7-10 year olds, though age limits are flexible. Tours will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Cost: €5 including entrance to the cathedral for participating children. Free with cathedral entrance fee for accompanying adults.

National Holy Wells Day

On Sunday 18 June people all over Ireland are encouraged to visit a Holy Well to pray for the protection and fair distribution of water on our planet.

The organisers state -

“Then they are asked to see what they can do to protect water for future generations.

“As a people we have a long and rich tradition of praying at Holy Wells, of which

there are some 3,000 around the countryside.

“This present appeal crosses all boundaries, regions and religions: its aim is to create a national network of appreciation and care for water.

“Clean water is a great gift.

“By drinking polluted water millions of people are becoming sick; without water living things are withering and dying; droughts are creating barren deserts.

“The time to save Planet Earth is now.

“National Holy Wells Day is an initiative of Loving Sister Earth and Columba Community, Derry and will be an annual event.

“Visit the website,
www.lovingsisterearth.com

“If you can't make it to a well, turn on the tap for a moment, give thanks for the water and reflect on what you can do to protect it.”

Novena Prayer in preparation for National Holy Wells Day

The Columba Community has been inspired by the lives of the Celtic saints of 5th – 12th centuries. As a result they have developed, in honour of these, a Celtic Peace Garden shaped like a map of Ireland.

Fr Neal Carlin describes it - “It is like a step back to the future for the increasing numbers who visit and pray there.

“These saints of old saw little or no distinction between the natural and supernatural, between the divine and human.

“There was no such thing as the mundane as all is sacred. All is holy. God is in all things. May we honour and imitate these men and women today.

“It is against this background and their own experience as a Basic Christian Community who have developed four apostolic centres that they offer you, the reader, some ideas for a Novena Prayer to begin on our patron saint Columba's feast day 9th June, and to finish on the eve of 18th June.

“It is hoped that many will pray at their local holy wells across the island of Ireland on Sunday 18th June.

“The hope is that this Sunday will be a beginning for many who feel called to develop small Basic Christian Communities to help renew both faith and the face of the earth.

[National Holy Wells Day - Sunday 18th June 2017](#)

Website details:

www.columbacomunity.com

www.lovingsisterearth.com

Today in Christian History, May 27

May 27, 1564: John Calvin, French Protestant Reformer, dies. He kept writing and ministering to the Christians in Geneva nearly up to his death, telling his worried friends, "What! Would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?"

Today in Christian History, May 28

May 28, 1533: English reformer Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, declares King Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn valid, having earlier approved the king's divorce of Catherine of Aragon

May 28, 1841: Edwin Moody dies, leaving his wife to raise 4-year-old Dwight Lyman and eight other children. D.L. Moody went on to become the leading American evangelist of his generation.

May 28, 1954: President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs a bill adding the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance.

