



Church should reflect on gay marriage, says May

The Prime Minister says the Church of England should "reflect" of its decision not to allow blessings in church for same-sex marriages.

Theresa May also reiterated her belief that it was ultimately up to the church to decide its own position on the matter, during an interview



marking half a century since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales.

Speaking with LBC, she said: "The Church of England has itself come a distance in terms of looking at these issues. And obviously they will want to reflect as attitudes more generally change, as society changes."

The leader also suggested that her late father, Anglican vicar Rev Hubert Brasier, might have

approved of Church of England clergy blessing gay marriages. Mrs May has previously spoken openly about her own Christian faith.

She went on to say: "He very much valued the importance of relationships, of people affirming those relationships and of seeing stability in relationships and people able to be together with people that they love."

Mrs May held a reception at Downing Street on Wednesday evening to mark 50 years since the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

Her radio interview comments came on the day after House of Commons speaker John Bercow addressed a gay newspaper event in Parliament, where he said marriage equality will only exist with same-sex couples can marry in churches.

The speaker of the House of Commons has reignited the gay marriage debate by suggesting marriage will only really be equal when same sex unions can take place in church buildings.

John Bercow has been addressing a reception for gay newspaper Pink News in parliament.

He said: "We are marking 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality.



"There's always a balance to be struck - we don't want to behave as though it's all over, that everything has been done. Nothing remains - because that isn't true.

"I still feel that we can only really have equal marriage when you can b***** well get married in a church if you want to do so."

When the law changed in 2013, churches were offered a protection that they wouldn't be forced to host gay marriages in their building.

Churches wishing to opt-in, can apply to be except from the protection.

Only a small number have chosen to host the ceremonies including the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Reformed Church.

A first as Glasgow cathedral offers gay weddings

A Scottish cathedral has become the first Anglican cathedral in the country to offer weddings for homosexual couples, after a historic ruling.

St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow is now taking bookings after the Scottish Episcopal Church's governing body, the General Synod, decided last month to let clergy conduct ceremonies for same-sex couples.

Provost of the Cathedral, the Very Rev Kelvin Holdsworth said: "It is hugely exciting to open up wedding services to all couples who want to get married.

"People at St Mary's were part of the campaign to allow gay and lesbian couples to get married in Scotland so it is not surprising that we would want to be able to offer such weddings in the cathedral itself."

It is expected same-sex couples will travel to Scotland from other areas of the United Kingdom in order to get married in a church.

The Very Rev Holdsworth went on to say: "We already have one booking from a couple coming up from England who can't get married in their local Church of England parish.

"We are glad to be able to welcome them and expect there will be many others who will follow them".

The General Synod's decision in June - which comes into force on Thursday - puts the Scottish Episcopal Church at odds with some other Anglican churches, which believe marriage should only be between one man and one woman.

Trustees at the landmark unanimously voted in favour of allowing same-sex weddings at the landmark, and they got the go-ahead from the Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway.

Get your bike ready for the churches' Tour de Foyle

Church Leaders in Londonderry have launched this year's Tour de Foyle 10–80 which will be held on Saturday 26th August 2017



The Leaders of the Churches in the City invite people to get on their bikes or put on their walking/running shoes and participate in this years Tour de Foyle 10–80 Charity Event, which will take place on Saturday 26th August, setting off from the Foyle Arena.

The event is being planned by the Churches Trust and the North West Methodist Mission and is supported by the four Church leaders in Derry~Londonderry. Now in its fourth year, it has attracted participation from far and wide and organisers are hoping this year's event will be even bigger and better.

Organisers are inviting visitors to the city to sign up and see what the scenic area of Lough Foyle has to offer in terms of its beauty, villages, flora

and fauna. The experience whether on foot or by bike provides a unique perspective of the Foyle for visitors and locals alike.

10K 'Walk with us' Charity Walk

Church leaders will lead this element of the event and invite everyone to join them in what will be a leisurely and scenic walk.

Participants will begin at Foyle Arena, make their way through St Columb's Park toward the riverfront, along the peace bridge and along the waterfront and into Bay Park (where there will be a water station), up onto and along the Foyle Bridge, along the Greenway and back into St Columb's park and finishing back at Foyle Arena where some well-earned and delicious refreshments will be served.

10k Charity Run

For those of you who prefer to run, why not follow this same route and use this as a training base for the Half Marathon?

80K Charity Cycle

Cyclists will undertake a scenic lap of Lough Foyle. Leaving the Foyle arena, participants will cycle to Magilligan and after a brief 'pit stop' will

then board the Ferry across to Greencastle. The route will then proceed back to the City crossing the Peace Bridge into St Columb's park and finishing back at the Foyle Arena. We welcome back previous participants and hope that visitors to the City will take the opportunity to experience this area of outstanding natural beauty on two wheels.

The Tour de Foyle 10–80 is all about taking part; it is a fun event and not a race. It is open to everyone, from the novice to the experts in walking, running or Cycling. It is simply to bring people together from all the communities across our City and beyond, to raise much needed funding for the Homeless and those in need right here in the City.

By taking part in the events you will be helping people in your own community who are experiencing difficult times in their lives and are working with the help of the Churches Trust and the North West Methodist Mission to get things back on track.

So please help us continue to help put people's lives back on track by getting on your bike or putting on your walking/running shoes on Saturday 26th August 2017 and taking part in one of our events.

Registration is now open so check the website:

www.tourdefoyle.co.uk

or the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/tourdefoyle

For those unable to participate, they can still show their support and make a donation by

visiting <https://mydonate.bt.com/events/tourdefoyle1080donations>

Duke of Kent visits Down Cathedral

The Duke of Kent has visited Down Cathedral as part of a two-day visit to County Down. He was accompanied by The Lord Lieutenant, Mr David Lindsay.

The Duke's arrival marked the second royal visit to the cathedral, following that of HRH The Earl of Wessex in September 2014.

Mrs Sally King, Deputy Lord Lieutenant and a parishioner of Kilmore and Inch, greeted His Royal Highness and he was welcomed to the cathedral by the Dean of Down, The Very Revd Henry Hull.

Also presented to the Duke were the High Sheriff of Down, Mr Hal Catherwood and his wife Natasha; Cllr Roisin Mulgrew, Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council; Mrs



Dorinnia Carville, Director of Corporate Services, Newry Mourne and Down District Council; the Rt Revd Harold Miller, Bishop of Down and Dromore, and Mrs Geraldine Hull.

In the narthex, the Duke also met some of the Cathedral Chapter and staff, members of the congregation and local clergy.

Dean Hull gave a brief history of the cathedral which has an important place in the life of the diocese and also welcomes many tourists. Its location has been a centre of Christian worship since the 8th Century and includes the site of St Patrick's grave.

The visitors also enjoyed the building's marvellous acoustics with a short recital from

organ scholar, Matthew Greenaway, who played 'Paeon' by Philip Moore.

Bishop Miller welcomed the Duke and noted that he holds the title Baron of Downpatrick and shares the name Patrick with our patron saint. The bishop then read a portion from St Patrick's Confession and led two short prayers.

He invited the Duke to lay a wreath on the granite stone in the adjacent churchyard which marks St Patrick's burial place.

Speaking after the visit Dean Hull said: "It was a real pleasure to welcome HRH the Duke of Kent to Down Cathedral today. The Duke once held the title Lord Downpatrick which has now been passed to his grandson, who also visited the Cathedral some months ago.

"The Duke was particularly interested in the ecumenical dimension to the Cathedral's ministry and I had the pleasure of introducing him to clergy representing all the churches in Downpatrick, as well as the Benedictine monks from Holy Cross Monastery Rostrevor with whom we have a close relationship."

Three West Belfast Catholic secondary schools to amalgamate in 2018

Three West Belfast secondary schools are to amalgamate to form a new co-educational post-primary school with effect from next year. Department of Education has approved the proposals for Christian Brothers' School (CBS), Corpus Christi College and St Rose's Dominican to form a new Catholic 11-19 school.

Announcing the news in a letter to parents and staff, Bronagh Farrimond, Principal of CBS Glen Road, said: "I wish to inform you that the Department of Education has approved the proposals in regard to the Area Plan for Post-primary schools in West Belfast.

"This means a new Catholic 11-19 co-educational post-primary school will be established (amalgamation of Christian Brothers' School, Corpus Christi College and St Rose's Dominican College), with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter."

Under the new proposals St Louise's College will also become co-educational with effect from September 1, 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Ms Farrimond added: "CCMS and Trustees will continue to work very closely with all four schools on the implementation of these proposals and will commence work with the Department of Education in regards to securing the appropriate investment for the new arrangements.

"Please be assured that the implementation of the proposals will be smooth and successful for the children in our care."

Former Daily Telegraph editor: Pope Francis's papacy has an 'intellectual deficiency'

A high-profile English convert to Catholicism has raised concerns about an "intellectual deficiency" in Pope Francis's papacy, saying that the Pontiff may be causing "confusion" in the Church, The Catholic Herald reports.

Charles Moore, a journalist, author and former editor of the Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph and the Spectator, told an Italian magazine: “My



anxiety about Pope Francis is that he may not be as intellectually powerful as Pope Benedict XVI and Pope St John Paul II.”

“For me his encyclical *Laudato Si*’ is not well argued,” Moore said. “It is rather loosely put together.

“One thing I value about Catholic teaching is a strong theological and intellectual thread through the argument, allowing you to determine whether you agree with it or not,” he said.

“I think this intellectual deficiency in his papacy may also be causing some organisational deficiencies and a slight sense of confusion.”

Moore, the author of the official biography of Margaret Thatcher, made his comments in an interview for the July-August edition of the Messenger of St Anthony, an Italian magazine published by the Franciscans in Padua.

In 2015, Moore objected in his Daily Telegraph column to Laudato Si’, saying that the encyclical was overly pessimistic about the global order: “Any Christian is naturally shocked by the disparity between the advantages God gives us and the mess we make of them; but it should be acknowledged that modern industrial society does many things better than any previous form of social organisation.”

In the recent interview, however, Moore said that he thought the College of Cardinals made the right choice in electing Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as Pope in 2013.

“He is good at restating obvious things that people forget,” said Mr Moore. “For instance, it was a very good thing to have a Year of Mercy, to think about mercy, because it reminds us

about how we stand to Jesus and how we stand in relation to one another.”

Moore’s criticism comes at a time when deep divisions are opening up within the Church over other aspects of Francis’s papacy – and most notably his approach to divorced and remarried Catholics.

Four cardinals last year sent Pope Francis a dubia to request a clarification over whether the conclusions of *Amoris Laetitia*, his 2016 Apostolic Exhortation on the family, was aligned with Catholic teaching because of the way the issue of divorce and remarriage was left open to interpretation.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI chose the funeral last week of Cardinal Joachim Meisner, one of the cardinals who signed the dubia, to warn Catholics of a crisis in the Church.

Using the metaphor of the Church as the “barque of Peter”, Benedict said “the boat has taken on so much water as to be on the verge of capsizing”.

Mr Moore was one of the most high-profile Anglicans to convert to the Catholic faith when he joined the Church in the early 1990s following

the decision to admit women for ordination in the Church of England.

He told the Messenger of St Anthony that “what really upset me about the Anglican decision was that it was anti-ecumenical”.

“It indicated to me that the Anglican Church was more sectarian than it realised,” Mr Moore continued.

“It thought it was doing the modern thing, but it disregarded the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. I thought this was a bad way of doing things.

“Finally, this issue focused my mind on what I recognise as the authentic Church, and I recognise this authentic Church as the Roman Catholic one.”

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