

Church News Ireland

Media review

Mission Society and Church of Ireland Part Ways - The Living Church

Irish Church Missions (ICM), a conservative evangelical mission society that has worked within the Church of Ireland for 175 years, is becoming part of the GAFCON-sponsored Anglican Convocation Europe. The ICM claims it was forced out by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Rev. Michael Jackson. Mark Michael writes.

The society, founded in 1849 as “The Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics,” operates four mission congregations in the Dublin area. They are the first congregations to break away in recent memory from the Church of Ireland, which maintains a traditional stance on marriage and sexuality, amid some pressure for change.

“With a degree of sadness, after many years and countless attempts by me and ICM trustees to reach a point of reconciliation, the Archbishop of Dublin has forced the churches of ICM to seek an Anglican home outside of the Church of Ireland,” the Rev. David Martin announced on December 13. Martin is director of Irish Church Missions and pastor of Christ Church, North Dublin.

“ICM, and more importantly its churches, never once sought to leave the Church of Ireland. We were committed to playing our part, especially in the Diocese of Dublin. We remain mystified as to why the Archbishop of Dublin removed us. Our repeated attempts to get an answer and seek a restitution have failed.”

Martin said that conflict between the society and the diocese goes back four years, and that during this time the diocese refused to renew his license, and one of the mission congregations, Immanuel Church, had been “evicted.”

“We have been working prayerfully and slowly to discern where we might find an Anglican home, especially as the Diocese of Dublin seems itself to desire now to move further away from historic, orthodox Anglicanism. Needless to say, our decision has not been taken lightly. However, if our churches are to pursue a confessionally Anglican ministry we have been left with no other option.”

Three lay leaders from ICM congregations were ordained to the diaconate by the Rt. Rev. Andy Lines, Bishop of the Anglican Convocation Europe, on December 1, according to the convocation’s Facebook page.

Martin’s announcement said that the four congregations of the ICM planned to affiliate with the convocation in 2025, but the convocation’s website already lists three of its congregations as member churches. They join Anglican Convocation Europe churches in England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland, and Wales.

The disaffiliation comes after a long period of tension between the ICM and Church of Ireland leaders. It has taken a strong stance against homosexuality and ecumenism at a time when Irish Anglicans, especially in the South, where its ministry is focused, have emphasized compassionate pastoral care and respectful engagement with the Roman Catholic majority.

In 2009, ICM responded to a statement by Jackson's predecessor, Archbishop John Neill, with sharp criticism of liberalism within the Church of Ireland:

“According to its own foundational documents, the Church of Ireland is a Protestant church. Unfortunately, it's a Protestant church without a Protestant message. Ireland needs the Church of Ireland to find a new confidence in the life-giving message at the heart of Protestantism — the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Liberal Protestantism has nothing to offer Irish society and indeed is just as dangerous to Irish society as violent sectarian Protestantism — it has no message of hope.”

Lynn Glanville, communications officer for the Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough, declined to comment on the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of Martin's licenses, but told TLC, “The Church of Ireland recognizes the importance of church planting and reaching as many people as possible. Through the Pioneer Ministry initiative in the Church of Ireland we are seeking to bridge the gap between the church and contemporary culture, with the aim of reaching those outside the church in new ways and in different places.”

She added, “In response to Mr. Martin’s claims that ‘the Diocese of Dublin seems itself to desire now to move further away from historic, orthodox Anglicanism,’ this opinion is his own and is one which Archbishop Jackson does not share.”

ICM, which was founded by the Rev. Alexander Dallas, an evangelical Church of England priest and was long dependent on English financial support, has always been semi-autonomous. Launched during the devastating Irish Famine of 1845-52, it became notorious for allegations of “souperism,” making relief of the starving dependent on conversion to Protestantism.

Initially, its ministry was largely focused on supporting Gaelic-speaking evangelists in rural Western Ireland, who focused on refuting Roman Catholic claims. It operated numerous orphanages and “ragged schools,” especially in Dublin, and had strong ties for generations to the Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal association committed to maintaining Protestant power in Ireland and union with Britain.

In 2001, the ICM dropped the reference to Roman Catholics from its name, but its work has remained focused in the Republic of Ireland, where Protestants are a tiny minority, only 4.2 percent of the population.

Being based in Dublin distanced the ICM from fellow conservative evangelicals within the Church of Ireland, whose presence is strongest in Northern Ireland, where the Church of Ireland’s numerical strength lies. GAFCON maintains a branch in Ireland, but all of its members until

now have been within the Church of Ireland, and nearly all the branch's events have been held in the North.

Irish Anglicans within the Republic of Ireland tend to be more progressive, and in 2023, three of the six dioceses that lie entirely within the republic, including the Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough, passed resolutions asking that the Church of Ireland's General Synod change its policy forbidding same-sex blessing. General Synod did not take up the requests when it met last May.

The Church of Ireland most recently reaffirmed its commitment to traditional Christian marriage in 2017, when its General Synod defeated resolutions to authorize public services for same-sex marriages by fairly wide margins, with only 42 percent of votes cast in favor of the change, and voting largely along regional lines.

The next year, the church's bishops issued a statement acknowledging their division on the matter and allowing clergy to offer prayers for same-sex couples, while reiterating the ban on same-sex marriages and formal liturgical blessings.

Martin's statement was careful to acknowledge the goodwill that continues between ICM and fellow evangelicals within the Church of Ireland, and to urge continued partnership:

“We are incredibly grateful to all those within the Church of Ireland, both lay and clerical, who have helped us over the past four years, and we continue to value your ongoing prayerful, financial and wise support. Be assured that we will continue to do all we can to start and strengthen healthy

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Anglican churches both inside and now outside the present structures of the Church of Ireland.”

[\[https://livingchurch.org/news/news-anglican-communion/mission-society-and-church-of-ireland-part-ways/\]](https://livingchurch.org/news/news-anglican-communion/mission-society-and-church-of-ireland-part-ways/)

Irish Church Missions apology to Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry - excerpts from Wickipaedia

The Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry examined the evidence for physical and sexual abuse of children at Manor House Home, Lisburn, Northern Ireland, run by Irish Church Missions, from 1953, finding many serious failings.

On 11 March 2022 ministers from the five main political parties in Northern Ireland and six abusing institutions made statements of apology in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The six institutions that apologised for carrying out abuse were De La Salle Brothers, represented by Br Francis Manning; the Sisters of Nazareth, represented by Sr Cornelia Walsh; the Sisters of St Louis represented by Sr Uainin Clarke; the Good Shepherd Sisters, represented by Sr Cait O'Leary; Barnardo's in Northern Ireland, represented by Michele Janes; and Irish Church Missions, represented by Rev Mark Jones.

Newry Cathedral priest to address planning committee over council's controversial headquarters

Irish News - Canon Francis Brown says Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's new £20m 'civic hub' will obstruct views Newry's landmark cathedral. John Manley, Politics Correspondent, writes.

A senior Catholic cleric in Newry is to take the unusual step of addressing a planning committee to voice his opposition to new council headquarters in the city.

Canon Francis Brown is among more than 2,500 objectors to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's plans for a £20m 'civic hub' at Abbey Way, close to city's landmark Cathedral of Saint Patrick and Saint Colman.

The priest argues that the council's controversial new headquarters will obstruct views of the 195-year-old Grade A listed building and significantly reduce the number of car parking spaces for parishioners.

His opposition to the project is supported by Newry's Anglican and Methodist church leaders.

Last month, The Irish News revealed that the local government spending watchdog had written to the head of Newry Mourne and Down District Council raising concerns around the plans.

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Local government auditor Colette Kane's letter to council chief executive Marie Ward related to potential increases in construction costs and the occupancy level of the proposed centre, along with its car parking arrangements.

She also stressed "the importance of ensuring that governance arrangements around decision-making are made clear".

More at -

[\[https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/newry-cathedral-priest-to-address-planning-committee-over-councils-controversial-headquarters-VF5LISYQDNFMLCI7JDSOACJICE/\]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/newry-cathedral-priest-to-address-planning-committee-over-councils-controversial-headquarters-VF5LISYQDNFMLCI7JDSOACJICE/)

Church News Ireland

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