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Pope Francis and the Future of the Family in Ireland

A special conference on “Pope Francis and the Future of the Family in Ireland “was held on Saturday in Dublin.

Sponsored by the newspaper [The Irish Catholic](#), the speakers included the Primate of All-Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin, and Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown.

The conversation looked at the Synod process on the Family. Archbishop Martin attended the 2015 Synod, and told the participants what the bishops brought back from Rome.

Archbishop Martin said, “Despite a concentration in the early days of the Synod on the pastoral challenges to family, there was also a great sense of admiration and gratitude for the many families who do their best in very complex situations to persevere, to grow in love, and to generously witness to commitment, forgiveness and lifelong faithfulness,” he said.

“The overwhelming sense among the bishops at the Synod was a desire to be with all families, and especially with those whose homes are visited by tragedy or violence, and those who, for whatever reason, have experienced breakdown in their relationships, and some who feel excluded from the Church,” Archbishop Martin continued.

“The Synod was clear that we need to be mindful of those who have begun new relationships and unions, and find sincere,

merciful, and truthful ways of welcoming and including them in the life and worshipping community of the Church," he said.

"What do we do in these situations, The Synod asked. Do we sit outside and judge?"

Archbishop Martin asked. "Or do we accompany all our people, presenting the truth and joy of the Gospel in a loving charitable way. So the Synod proposed pastoral discernment and accompaniment in difficult situations."

How Presbyterians have lost ground over gender equality

This week the Presbyterian Church nominated three male candidates for next Tuesday's election as Moderator.

Alf McCreary writes in The Belfast Telegraph - That is hardly world-shattering, but it certainly should be important for the Presbyterian Church, which has more than 230,000 members in 545 congregations throughout Ireland.

The Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev Trevor Gribben, rightly points out that "democracy is one of the strengths and hallmarks of Presbyterianism", and the Church is perfectly entitled to name the Revs Robert Bell



Missing a trick: the Presbyterian General Assembly will elect a new Moderator from three male ministers

of Ballyclare, Tony Davidson from Armagh and Frank Sellar from Broomfield as candidates for the Moderatorship.

I wish them all well.

However, many people inside and outside the Church will be wondering why no woman has ever been elected Moderator, as the first female minister - the Rev Dr Ruth Patterson - was ordained 40 years ago this year.

In 1976 the Presbyterians were ahead of the other main denominations in ordaining the first female cleric in Ireland, but since then they have slipped badly behind.

The Methodists elected a woman president two years ago, and, while we will wait a long, long time for a female Archbishop of Armagh, the Church of Ireland recently made ecclesiastical history by appointing the first woman Anglican bishop in the British Isles.

Some Presbyterians claim that there is no grassroots demand for a female Moderator. That is not my experience from talking to many Church members, at all levels, so why is there still no prospect of a woman leader?

Part of the reason is that very few pew members understand, or perhaps even care, about the way in which a Moderator is elected.

The decisions are taken by 19 Presbyteries throughout Ireland, and the elders and clergy involved are predominantly male.

In the Church at large there are only 21 women out of a total of 345 ministers, even 40 years after Ruth Patterson was first ordained.

More at -

February 1

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/alf-mccreary/how-presbyterians-have-lost-ground-over-gender-equality-34407868.html>

Bishop of Central Tanganyika visits Finaghy Methodist Church for World Leprosy Day



The Rt Rev Dickson Chilongani, the Bishop of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika in Tanzania, is pictured after the morning service in Finaghy Methodist church, Belfast, with the Rev Colin Gracie (minister), Edith Shaw (church treasurer)

and National Director of The Leprosy Mission (TLM) NI, Joanne Briggs (extreme left).

The photograph was taken after the annual church service to mark World Leprosy Day at which Bishop Dickson preached on Christ's healing of the man with leprosy (Mark 1: 40-45) and Mrs Shaw spoke to the children. Mrs Briggs and Bishop Chilongani's diocesan business advisor, Brian Atkins, brought encouraging reports of the difference that the work of TLM is making to the lives of those who still suffer the potentially devastating effects of what is now a curable disease.

'Over 200,000 new cases of leprosy are detected each year,' Mrs Briggs said. 'Seventy-five children are diagnosed with leprosy each day. In fact, every two minutes someone in the world finds out that they have leprosy.... The Leprosy Mission works all over the world to cure, care for and restore those affected by this cruel disease. We work to change people's perceptions of leprosy and integrate people who have been cast out of their homes back into their communities.'

Members of Finaghy Methodist have a strong link with both the work of the Leprosy Mission and the Methodist Church in Tanzania.

Mrs Briggs joined Bishop Dickson in thanking them for their support which is enabling people's lives to be changed. 'Leprosy is being defeated and lives are being transformed,' she said.

Insight of Ireland's first female botanist in C of I Archives

A short memoir of the life of Ellen Hutchins (1785-1815) who became Ireland's first female botanist, which is in the custody of the Representative Church Body Library, has been digitized and made available online as the Library's online February Archive of the Month presentation.

Regarded as the first female field botanist in Ireland, Ellen Hutchins was also a gifted botanical illustrator. Constrained by ill-health and family commitments, she nonetheless managed to identify and catalogue more than 1,000 plant species in a short period of botanising between 1805 and 1813. She contributed records and illustrations to the works of the leading botanists of the day, and discovered many species new to science. Many species were named in her honour, mostly in the non-flowering plants or cryptogams that she specialised in, including

mosses and liverworts, lichens and marine algae (seaweeds) as well as some flowering plants.

The memoir of her life was compiled by her niece Alicia Maria Hutchins (1832-1915) and completed in 1913. The nine-page typescript which is preserved in the RCB Library (accessioned as Ms 47) provides an account of Hutchins's short life and surroundings 'as gathered from letters and the conversation of the few that knew her'. Thirty years after its completion it was lodged in the library by Ellen's grand-niece and the author Alicia's niece, Lady Barbara Stephen (1872-1945). The memoir's provenance in this repository is explained by the fact that Lady Barbara was the sister-in-law of the Library's founding benefactress, Miss Rosamond Stephen (1868-1951). The RCB Library was founded in 1931 when the Church of Ireland accepted Rosamond's gift of the Irish Guild of Witness's library, which she had founded in Dublin in 1918 to promote the Irish dimension of the Church of Ireland.

As well as publishing the memoir for the first time, and exploring its provenance, the related online presentation includes examples of Ellen's work, and links to a more detailed research paper by Madeline Hutchins (the great-great-grandniece of Ellen Hutchins) and John Lucey (a

biologist and historian based in Kilkenny). This provides further detail about Ellen's background and the writing of the memoir.

Speaking at the RCB Library, Dr Susan Hood, who manages Archive of the Month, said: 'Collaboration with Madeline and John has brought to life the intriguing story of one of the library's more unusual sources. We are delighted that our online exhibition platform provides a space for their scholarly presentation in the field of botany.'

www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive

Credo: a new C of I network

A new network of clergy and laity, called **Credo**, has been launched in Belfast. The network's name is intended to indicate its roots in the Church's baptismal faith and in the witness, prayer and theology of the Fathers and Mothers of the Early Church. Credo's aim is not to rival or supplant other organizations but to contribute to the renewal of the Church of Ireland through ongoing reflection upon the formation and riches of the Anglican tradition. More information about Credo may be had at CredoCofl@gmail.com

More Anglicans now back gay marriage than oppose it, poll suggests

More Anglicans in England support gay and lesbian couples marrying than oppose it, a poll has suggested for the first time.

Of more than 1,500 Anglicans polled, 45% said same-sex marriage was right while 37% thought it was wrong.

The Yougov poll also indicates a large increase in support of same-sex marriage over the past three years.

The Church of England's official stance is that marriage can be only between a man and a woman.

Three years ago, a similar YouGov poll found 38% of Anglicans in support and 47% believing same-sex marriage to be wrong.

In the latest poll, support was highest among younger Anglicans, with at least half of those aged under 55 believing it was right and 72% of those aged 25-34 also in favour.

The lowest support rate was found in Anglican men aged over 55, with 24% backing same-sex marriage.

Support for same-sex marriage was higher among the general population, with 56% of the more than 6,000 British people surveyed backing it, compared with 27% of people who opposed it.

Jayne Ozanne, a gay evangelical Anglican and a member of General Synod - the Church of England's ruling body - commissioned the survey.

She said the figures showed the Church was "seriously out of step" with its members "and even more so with society at large".

"It is deeply worrying that the one group that appears less open to change than any other is Anglican men over the age of 55, who are the least likely to approve of same-sex marriage," she added.

"Unfortunately, this is exactly the profile of those in the senior positions of power and influence power within the Church."

A spokesman for the Church of England said it was holding "shared conversations" on the issue

and would continue to do so at General Synod this summer.

Earlier this month, the Archbishop of Canterbury apologised for "hurt and pain" caused by the worldwide Anglican Church to the LGBT community.

The Most Reverend Justin Welby made the comments as he defended the primates' meeting decision to restrict the The Episcopal Church of the USA for allowing same-sex marriage.

See also Guardian report -

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/29/church-of-england-members-back-same-sex-marriage-poll>

Presiding Bishop Curry looks to the ACC to respond to the Primates' ruling

The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, the Rt Revd Michael Curry, has emphasised the autonomy of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), in the wake of the Primates' decision to censure his Church.



"There were positives": Archbishop Michael Curry

Madeleine Davies, Church Times - At their meeting in Canterbury earlier this month, the Primates' required the US Episcopal Church to no longer represent them on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, not serve on the Primates or ACC standing committees, and not vote on matters of polity and doctrine at the ACC for a period of three years, as a consequence of its support for same-sex marriage.

The Primates' gathering, however, has no official executive status. The authority to enforce such steps rests with the ACC itself.

Bishop Curry was asked directly whether he would contest these “consequences” at the next meeting of the ACC in April. On Wednesday, he would say only: “The ACC is the only formal constitutional body of the Anglican Communion and it will decide what it will do. Our representatives from the Episcopal Church look forward to being there.”

Earlier this week, a prominent canon lawyer, Professor Norman Doe, state that the Primates’ ruling was not binding ([News, 19 January](#)). He described it as “completely unacceptable interference with the autonomy of each of these bodies as they transact their own business”.

The ACC is due to meet in Zambia in April. Two US members, the Bishop of Connecticut, the Rt Revd Ian Douglas, and the Revd Gay Clark Jennings, have confirmed that they will attend. Bishop Douglas is also a member of the ACC’s standing committee, and would therefore have to stand down if the ACC chooses to comply with the Primates’ wishes.

In the past, members of the ACC have criticised the Primates for overstepping their remit. In 2006, after the Primates asked the US Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada to voluntarily withdraw their representatives from

the ACC, the organisation's then chairman, the Rt Revd John Paterson, criticised the move as "at least slightly premature, if not coercive and somewhat punitive" ([News, 24 June, 2005](#)).

The members, he said, "want us to stay together, to live with difference, and not have difference forced upon them". At its meeting the following year, the ACC voted in favour of a modified plan to limit the involvement of the two Churches ([News, 2 November, 2006](#)).

In reflections published on Wednesday, the Archbishop of Brazil, the Most Revd Francisco de Assis da Silva, stressed that the decision of the Primates "needs to be scrutinised by the Anglican Consultative Council, as this is the only legislative body entitled to decide on membership issues within the Communion."

More at -

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/29-january/news/uk/curry-looks-to-the-acc-to-respond-to-the-primates-ruling>

[News links to reports on faith, politics and education](#)

Northern Ireland study suggests many poorer children starting school struggle with language

BBC

Many children from poorer backgrounds already struggle with language when they start primary school, a new study suggests.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35444576>

Bloody Sunday anniversary sparks call for Troubles amnesty by De Valera's grandson

Guardian

Éamon de Valera's grandson calls for end to criminal prosecutions of people on all sides of Northern Ireland conflict

http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/30/bloody-sunday-anniversary-sparks-call-for-troubles-amnesty?CMP=tw_t_gu

Lost tribe of Belfast

Belfast Telegraph

Alex Kane talks to Rabbi Stringer of the now 300 Jewish population of the city which once numbered 1,500

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/lost-tribe-of-belfast-34407866.html>

Nigel Dodds Calls For The Truth Over Shankill Bombing

Sluggor O'Toole

<http://sluggerotoole.com/2016/01/28/nigel-dodds-calls-for-the-truth-over-shankill-bombing/>

Cash concerns for England's Anglican cathedrals

BBC

Almost two-thirds of those in charge of England's Anglican cathedrals are concerned about their finances, a BBC study suggests.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35409883>

Transgender baptisms offered at Greater Manchester church

BBC

Transgender baptisms are to be offered for the first time in the UK, at a church in Greater Manchester.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-35441852>

Mail

Report on a letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury to Danny Jones, one of the jailed Hatton Garden robbers, who wrote asking for support in gaining more prison visits. The letter was then sent to a crime correspondent and will form part of a documentary on the case next week.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/639576/Justin-Welby-Hatton-Garden-Heist-being-famous-pretty-poor-reward>

BBC/BBC Radio 4 Sunday

Report on a BBC survey which shows almost two-thirds of CofE cathedrals are concerned about their finances. Article notes that last year, the Church of England gave £8.3m to the historic buildings but the cash does not cover all of their needs and many use their premises as a

venues for concerts, lectures and banquets. Article quotes the Dean of Southwark, Andrew Nunn and focuses on a new project at Blackburn Cathedral. (see blogs below)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35409883>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06z1zdk>

Mail

Reports and comment on news that the PM is considering sending his 10 year old son to an independent school. Articles all note that his daughter currently attends a state school, Greatcoat Hospital, a Church of England girls-only school in Westminster, while his son is currently at a CofE primary school.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3424803/MAIL-SUNDAY-COMMENT-PM-flunks-tough-test-state-schools-telling-moment-leader.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3424549/Camerons-enter-son-London-private-school-Eton-educated-PM-considers-prestigious-18-000-year-prep-10-year-old-Elwen-despite-sending-daughter-state-school-calling-fees-crazy.html>

Mail

Report on new book by Rev Jack Kellett, a retired Scottish priest who recalls details of a weekend he spent as the minister in residence at Balmoral in 1981.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3424467/Confessions-Queen-s-Vicar-Whispers-Diana-s-terrible-upbringing-Wild-young-Andrew-rampage-Margaret-s-distracting-decolletage-deliciously-indiscreet-portrait-duty-Royals-recalled-Balmoral-weekend-guest.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490