



Prayers for the sick may breach GDPR, Church fears

The Church of England has told its parishes not to publish prayer requests for the sick without their permission following the introduction of new EU data laws, the Daily Telegraph reports.



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The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force on May 25, has caused chaos as small firms, charities and religious organisations struggle to interpret the rules.

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The Church of England's guidance tells parishes that consent should be obtained if "names and reasons for the prayer request are recorded and published on the church website or in a parish newsletter".

But the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said organisations should not see the rules as a "barrier" and churches would be free to use information relating to someone who was part of a congregation.

Organisations that break GDPR rules can be fined up to 4 per cent of their turnover by privacy watchdogs.

Schools have also reported concerns that they can no longer hold or pass on medical information about pupils.

Declan Kelly, the lead adviser for the Church of England on GDPR, said permission would be needed "if the information were to be published on a website, leaflet or social media".

The diocese of London clarified its GDPR guidance on Thursday after some priests were left under the impression that they could not pray for people without their consent. "There is no obstacle, under the GDPR, to spoken prayers in church," a spokesman said.

"In sensitive situations in which somebody is highly likely to be unhappy about having their name and/or other information shared, we do warmly advise seeking their agreement, and refraining from sharing their information in print where consent can't be obtained."

In a situation where one individual wants to light a candle for another and leave a note with their details, the new guidance says, the church must "try to ensure that consent is obtained, particularly in our multi-cultural society where people may object to being prayed for".

A spokesman for the ICO said: "If, as an organisation, you have an existing relationship with someone, for instance that person is part of your church congregation or volunteers for your sports team, you would not need their consent to use basic personal information. Consent is not the only basis for using and sharing people's personal data."

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Andrew Charlesworth, of the University of Bristol law school, said the Church was “erring on the side of caution”.

“We’re dealing with quite a complex piece of legislation, it’s quite a sensitive area.

“If your mum or your nan is seriously ill, you may not take the publication of that very well,” he said.

Mr Charlesworth said that consumers should not expect emails from organisations to “stop immediately” as they struggled to get to grips with the new rules. He added that schools should have no concerns about sharing medical information where necessary to keep children safe, but should keep parents informed about the data they held and why.

The Daily Telegraph was also contacted by Age Concern Forest of Dean, a small charity providing meals on wheels services to elderly and vulnerable people, which believed following a phone call with the ICO’s GDPR helpline that it needed to send a two-page letter to each client outlining the provisions of the Data Protection Act and asking permission to continue to hold their data.

As many of the charity’s clients have dementia or other disabilities, this would have posed a major threat to its services.

Following intervention by the newspaper, the ICO telephoned the Age Concern branch to tell them that they did not need to gain people’s consent to continue providing them with meals on wheels.

Methodist Church comment on Referendum result

The President, Rev. Dr. Laurence Graham, and the Lay Leader, Dr. Fergus O’Ferrall, of the Methodist Church in Ireland have released the following comment after the declaration of the Referendum result:

1. The democratic result which repeals the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution now places on the Oireachtas the responsibility of providing an opportunity for careful and sensitive legislation for

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safe, legal and rare terminations of pregnancy. The Methodist Church in Ireland looks forward to contributing to the consideration of such legislation in the Oireachtas. We have always opposed what is called "Abortion on demand" but have always recognised that exceptional cases (such as rape, incest, and fatal foetal abnormalities) may give rise to terminations and we would wish to see these provided for in the new legislation.

2. The bringing of all women into contact with their GP and health services when they perceive that they have a 'crisis pregnancy' is a most important advance because it provides an opportunity to inform women of the supports available to them to keep their babies and to ensure that comprehensive services are provided to them. This is key and will require huge investment by Government in women and children health and social services so that women and their partners will trust that having the baby will not impose intolerable burdens on them but will be a positive outcome. The objective must be to reduce the rate of abortions as far as humanly possible but where they are chosen or unavoidable that they are safe, legal and rare.

3 MCI will respond in detail expanding on these points in a Statement in due course.

C of I bishop - Constitution not the place to deal with complex and sensitive issue

Bishop Michael Burrowes of Cashel and Ossory, in a response to the referendum result said, "It has always been my view that the Constitution is not the place to deal with the complex and sensitive issue of abortion, and it is now clear that I share that view with a substantial majority of the electorate. While the decisive result of the referendum is a source of relief to very many, both women and men, I also recognise the integrity and conviction of those within the diocese and beyond whose views were different from my own. This weekend is a time to reflect, to be gentle with each other, and to renew our prayers for all our legislators, that they may proceed from here with integrity and wisdom."

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He continued, "We have certainly reached a decisive moment in the shaping of our society, and it is a moment which challenges us afresh in our understanding of Christian citizenship. I personally feel a genuine satisfaction at this time to be a citizen of a Republic which faces uncomfortable truths about itself, and which allows women in particular to tell their stories with candour and clarity.

"There will be those who will see the referendum result somehow as a rebuke to the voice of faith in our society. I react very differently ... I do not sense that as citizens that we are taking leave of our moral compass, or ceasing to recognise the complex balancing of factors that lies at the heart of ethical decision making. For me, furthermore, there is an exhilarating challenge in presenting the faith in a fresh way to a changing nation. We are now placed in a society which asks hard questions, dislikes hypocrisy and will offer attentive respect only to those who earn it through the integrity, depth and courage of their contributions to public discourse."

Bishop Burrowes concluded, "Above all, therefore, this is a time to be positive about Christian citizenship, and as disciples of Christ to reconsider what one of our ancient prayers is requiring of us when it asks that we will be 'helped to respond to the call of our country'."

Archbishop to thank 'courageous' people over referendum

Archbishop Eamon Martin, the leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland, has said he will give thanks in prayer to the "courageous" people who took part in the No campaign in the referendum.

In a tweet following yesterday's referendum result, which showed a two-to-one Yes vote to repeal the Eighth Amendment, Dr Martin said he will pay tribute to "missionaries for life" who "made such a huge effort to remind us that in pregnancy we are dealing with two lives - both in need of love, respect and protection."

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On Sunday the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin (right) told massgoers that many observers will see the results of the referendum as an indication that the Irish Church is widely regarded with indifference and as having a marginal role in the formation of culture here.



In notes for a homily delivered at Maynooth, Dr Martin said the Church is seen by many as somehow lacking in compassion despite being called to bring to society a Jesus who is full of mercy and compassion.

At the mass, Archbishop Martin (below) ordained four deacons at the national seminary in Maynooth, to which he stopped sending Dublin's trainee priests three years ago because of what he described as a "poisonous" atmosphere involving seminarians accessing gay dating apps and anonymous accusatory letters.



He told the deacons they will be called to witness to the gospel in a culture which finds it less and less relevant and which tends to define its own understanding of the word of God.

Dr Martin said that following Friday's referendum the Irish Church must renew its commitment to support life but that it is called to be

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pro-life not just in words, statements and manifestoes but in deeds that reflect Jesus' loving care for human life at any stage.

He said this includes helping women grappling with very difficult decisions to choose life.

He said being pro-life means being alongside those whose lives are threatened by violence, and who cannot live life to the full because of economic deprivation, homelessness and marginalisation.

"Pro-life means radically rediscovering in all our lives a special love for the poor that is the mark of the followers of Jesus," Dr Martin said, adding that reshaping the Church of tomorrow must be marked by a radical rediscovery of its roots.

He said that for future priests, this rediscovery begins in formation and that seminaries must be harmonious, prayerful, generous and caring places and warn that divisiveness and narcissism are never the signs of the Holy Spirit.

Fintona school choir wows Britain's Got Talent

One of the highlights of any Britain's Got Talent series is when a choir arrives to raise the roof.

There's nothing better for a 'hairs standing on back of neck' moment than when the combined voices bring smiles to judges and viewers alike.

There hasn't been a huge selection of choirs in this series of the ITV talent show but quantity has been displaced with quality, as St Lawrence's Choir shows on Saturday (May 26).

They are a group of 48 schoolchildren aged between 8 and 11 years-old, from Northern Ireland. The choir sings *Pure Imagination* from the film *Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* and it is an instant winner.

It may come as no surprise then to find out that they won Northern Ireland's School Choir of the Year in 2017.

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St Lawrence's Primary School, Fintona were named the top junior choir in a competition that was produced in association with the Ulster Youth Choir, supported by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and is part of the BBC Music NI project.

The live finals were broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster and the judges chose the group ahead of sixty choirs that had battled it out.

St Lawrence's Choir now feature across a range of BBC Radio Ulster's programming and events and look like they will be heading for national attention after their stunning performance on BGT.

News briefs

+++ DOWN TO ST ALBANS - The Reverend Simon Richardson, rector of Glencraig, has been appointed as Vicar of the Church of The Transfiguration in Kempston, Bedfordshire - the diocese of St Albans. He will be licensed there on September 19th

+++ CURATE FOR DUNBOYNE - Bishop Pat Storey has accepted the nomination from the Rev. Eugene Griffin, that the Rev Alison Irvine be Curate Assistant in Dunboyne and Rathmolyon Group of Parishes. Alison is coming to the end of her year as a Deacon-intern in Tullamore, with Revd Isaac Delamere. She will take up her new post in September. Alison has had a previous career in the Trade Union movement, including some years working in Scotland. She is a native of Lisbellaw in County Fermanagh.

+++ RETIREMENT IN MEATH & KILDARE - Revd Eileen Armstrong has retired as a Non-Stipendiary Minister (NSM). She ministered in Navan for over twenty years. The rector of Navan Union, Canon John Clarke said: "We are most grateful to Eileen for her many years of faithful service, which were greatly valued and appreciated. We thank Eileen for her assistance and loyal support and wish her every blessing in her well deserved retirement." Revd Eileen was presented with a special floral plant, a hand-crafted wooden pen and a gift cheque at the close of the Family Service on Trinity Sunday, 27th May, at St. Mary's Church, Navan. The photo was taken while Revd Eileen Armstrong was cutting her Retirement

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Cake during refreshments afterwards in the adjoining Parish Room. There will be a further Kentstown and Slane reception held at Newgrange Farm to mark Eileen's retirement after the 10.00am Service on Sunday 10th June.

+++ CHURCH ARMY FAITH PICTURES - If you've been praying for people during [@thykingdom_come](#), equip yourself to share your faith easily & naturally by doing our free Faith Pictures course. Watch the intro here: <http://faithpictures.org>

+++VERGER WANTED AT CHRISTCHURCH CATHEDRAL - Christ Church Cathedral is seeking to appoint a suitably experienced candidate to join ITS Verger team. The Vergers' responsibility is to care for the cathedral's upkeep, maintenance and security and to welcome all who enter it. Vergers will be involved in preparing for and assisting in aspects of daily worship as well as contributing to the smoother operation of the cathedral as a heritage and cultural attraction welcoming thousands of pilgrims and visitors every year. Please click [here](#) to download full details of the role. If you are interested in applying for this position please send your CV and cover letter to michelle.carton@christchurch.ie or alternatively send it to: Michelle Carton, Christ Church Cathedral, Christ Church Place, Dublin 8.

+++MAJOR ANNIVERSARY AT CROSSHAVEN - The Bishop of Cork presided and preached at a service to mark the 150th anniversary of Holy Trinity church, Crosshaven on Sunday past. I

+++ MINISTRY OF HEALING GIFT DAY - St Catherine's church, Tullamore, was the venue for the Church's Ministry of Healing annual Thanksgiving Service & Gift Day on Sunday. Canon Daniel Nuzum, Chaplain of Cork City Hospitals, was the preacher.

+++ CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER RETREATS - The annual retreats of the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer will take place next month. There will be a weekend retreat from 15 to 17 June and a midweek retreat from 18 to 20 June. Both retreats will be held in Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, near Newry, and the witness will be Catherine Older. Details may be had from Ms Nuala Dudley at nualadudley@eircom.net

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