

A STATEMENT ON THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

As groups representing a significant number of both ordained and non-ordained members of the Church of Ireland we wish to express our sorrow at the announcement that a serving cleric of the Church of Ireland has entered into a Civil Partnership with another man. This raises specific questions and highlights issues that go beyond the particular circumstances of the individual concerned.

The specific questions: Did Dean Gordon inform his Diocesan Bishop of his intention to enter into a Civil Partnership? Is this a celibate relationship? While the latter question may seem intrusive it is a recognition that a Civil Partnership does not necessarily presume a relationship that involves sexual intimacy and is beyond the Biblical mandate for sexual activity. If Dean Gordon's relationship does include sexual expression then what are the implications for his pastoral and diocesan roles?

The wider issues are already being played out in other parts of the world. Divisiveness and legal battles within the Anglican churches in both the United States and Canada; individual ministers and congregations seceding from the Church of Scotland. In the Church of Ireland there has been something of a stand-off on these matters yet if the orthodox view of marriage and sexuality is allowed to be shattered by the actions of Dean Gordon and others then it is difficult to see how a respectful fellowship can be maintained.

Our desire is for a continuing and growing unity within the Church of Ireland and to see such unity expressed in a holiness and morality that is both personal and corporate. We acknowledge our common fallenness and acknowledge too that sexual sin is neither the only digression from God's design for humanity nor is homosexual activity the only way God's gift of sex is debased.

We fear Dean Gordon's action will cause pain and grief within our Church and damage relationships with other Christian traditions in Ireland with whom we work closely at local as well as regional level.

A fuller version of this statement will follow.

Jointly issued by the committees of the Church of Ireland Evangelical Fellowship, the Evangelical Fellowship of Irish Clergy, New Wine (Ireland) and Reform Ireland.

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Notes:

1. The Church of Ireland Evangelical Fellowship (www.cief.net)
2. The Evangelical Fellowship of Irish Clergy (www.efic.info)
3. New Wine Ireland (www.new-wineireland.co.uk)
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