



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

A follow-up article on the Ballymoney protest

The following article is by Mr Luke Barker and is a follow-up to the report of his protest in Ballymoney on Friday 7th February and which was circulated earlier.

This follow-up has been made necessary by the false reports that have maliciously been spread around.

Surely it says ill of those whose cause must be defended by falsehoods. This vividly reminds me of the reaction to Free Presbyterian protests against ecumenical Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism and Methodism back in the '60s and '70s!

It makes sad reading to hear of members of Presbytery sneering at Mr Barker and his placard!

Sadder still is the fact that his experiences in Ballymoney mirrored at least to some degree what was encountered years ago when the battle was brought to the doors of the ecumenical apostasy.

I am encouraged to hear of those ministers and elders who openly congratulated Mr Barker. This bodes well for the future.

The division in the Free Presbyterian ranks stems from the folly of Dr Paisley in 2007 when he turned his back on the central stand of the Free Presbyterian Church since its inception - separation from sin and apostasy - and entered into a dreadful political union with Sinn Fein/IRA.

The elders named by Mr Barker are only, sadly, following on in Dr Paisley's footsteps.

If we are ever to know the blessing of God as was enjoyed in the glory years in the '60s and '70s then there must be a total repudiation of the compromise that has entered our ranks and which those who should know better have been meekly ready to accommodate!

Ivan Foster.

19th February 2020.

Protest outside the Presbytery meeting in Ballymoney Free Presbyterian Church, 7th February 2020.

By Luke Barker: Member of the FPC. Missionary Course graduate of the FPC Whitefield College of the Bible (graduated 2014).

On the 7th February 2020 I mounted a one man protest at the Free Presbyterian denomination Presbytery Meeting at Ballymoney FPC. I had been meaning to make a protest back in May/June 2019 after the disturbing revelations of the first ever openly 'gay' DUP candidate was 'rubber stamped' for election by members of the FPC Presbytery.

(<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/dup-free-presbyterian-tension-as-party-s-gay-candidate-choice-moves-it-further-from-church-roots-1-8908790>)

(<http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2019/05/20/news/schism-between-dup-and-free-presbyterian-church-over-gay-councillor-signals-politics-secular-direction-of-travel-1623228/>).



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The article in the Irish Times, reported: "However, critics within the Free Presbyterian Church believe the response is inadequate as it fails to address the role played by church members on the DUP executive, including Lord Maurice Morrow, East Derry MP Gregory Campbell and West Tyrone MLA Thomas Buchanan, in rubber-stamping Ms Bennington's selection."

However, after the shocking revelations that Alex Maskey Sinn Fein MLA (a prominent hardcore Irish Republican and former IRA Commander) was given the 'yes' vote and subsequently elected as the new Northern Ireland Assembly House Speaker by a number FPC Elders and church members, I felt it my Protestant and Christian duty to mount a peaceful protest at the next FPC Presbytery Meeting. The aim was to highlight my concerns, call out the individuals involved, and exhort the hierarchy of our denomination to take action at what was clearly a betrayal and severe departure from the FPC's traditional Protestant and separatist stance.

For the protest I had prepared a flyer for all those in attendance with all of the information about the whole Maskey affair, as well as a double sided banner which read,

Side 1: "DUP FPC An Unholy Alliance "Touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor 6:17)",

and Side 2: "Alex Maskey Sinn Féin / IRA hardcore Irish Republican Voted in as NI Assembly house speaker by members of your presbytery"

As I arrived at Ballymoney FPC that evening I could see the car park beginning to fill with arriving Ministers and Elders and so quickly grabbed 60 of the flyers and went into the church car park. I began distributing the flyers to as many as possible outside the church building, but after about five minutes I was simultaneously confronted by Rev. John Greer (Ballymena FPC) and Rev. David Park (Ballymoney FPC). They informed me I should not be on church grounds and that I "had not been invited" to attend the meeting. They also pointed out that my protest was in their view the wrong procedure for dealing with any grievance against fellow church members. In response I then asked them for their view on their own fellow FPC elders giving the 'yes' vote to a hardcore Irish Republican and unrepentant IRA terrorist, (Links: (8/6/02)

Unrepentant

When asked on BBC radio Alex Maskey would not condemn the 1993 Shankill bombings (10 killed including 2 children):

(<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/a-scrapper-in-more-ways-than-one-who-talks-the-talk-of-inclusiveness-1.1059989>)

(6/2/18) He also referred to NI as a "putrid little statelet"

His twitter comment was: "Unfortunately it took more than the CRA to secure rights in the putrid little statelet NI."

(The 'more' refers to the rights achieved by the use of Terrorism in NI.)

Revs Greer and Park gave no response to my question. I told them that by focusing on procedure they were sidestepping the real issue at hand which was that of FPC Protestants voting into power the wrong side, thus undermining the Protestant cause - a cause our denomination is supposed to champion!

Made to feel about an inch tall after locking horns so quickly with two of the FPC's most prominent ministers, I said I would continue my protest at the main church entrance. I was somewhat taken aback at how Rev. Greer refused to address the Maskey issue, as previously he had been quite openly critical of the moral compromise of the DUP (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-politics-48205618>).

Chewing over whether or not to continue the protest, I made it to the church gate but before being able to continue handing out my flyers, two FPC elders made their way from the church directly towards me. Expecting a confrontation and another reprimand I was instead vigorously shaken by the hand by both men,



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and offered only encouragements for what I was doing. I was told to "keep up the good work", to which I expressed my sincere thanks, and rejoiced for how much of an encouragement the two brethren had been.

With that boost to morale, I determined to see the protest through right to the end and stayed at the church gate handing out flyers to all those who stopped in their vehicles to take them as they arrived. In total 57 flyers were handed out, sometimes one flyer going into a car of 1, 2, 3, 4 or more Elders/ministers.

Another Elder from the church approached me as I was doing this, wanting to make sure I was "not on church property", to which I informed him I was standing on the public footpath which ran along the front of the church.

Later that evening when the Presbytery meeting was over I then mounted the second part of my protest at the church gate, holding my double sided banner.

Side 1 of the banner ("DUP FPC An Unholy Alliance "Touch not the unclean thing" 2 Cor 6:17"),

I pointed in towards those leaving, and then if any vehicle drivers stopped to talk I rotated the banner around to side two ('Alex Maskey Sinn Féin / IRA hardcore Irish Republican Voted in as NI Assembly house speaker by members of your presbytery') to challenge them about the FPC's tolerance of men in their ranks who have denied their Protestant loyalties by voting into a position of power a Sinn Fein MLA set entirely on the absorption of Northern Ireland into a secular/Roman Catholic Irish Republic.

What greatly surprised me was the number of vehicles that stopped to talk and the number of positive reactions there were to what I was doing. Some ministers and elders I talked to gave the impression they were sitting on the fence regarding the whole DUP FPC alliance, but when challenged about the specific issue of their own fellow elders supporting Alex Maskey, I could see them beginning to grasp the gravity of such a toleration of error. One elder who stopped to talk with me, said he had read the "whole thing" and concluded, "I have to say, I agree with you."

Another elder commented, "keep up the good work, keep doing what you are doing", whilst another minister I spoke to as he was leaving said the whole involvement of the FPC with the DUP was "abhorrent"!

Obviously my protest also provoked some very negative reactions from many, with one minister telling me to "catch yourself on", whilst another elder commented that, "perhaps you should have been handing out gospel tracts" instead of making a protest. Others sneered and stared at me as they drove off, but none who objected stopped to offer any reasoned response to show my concerns were unfounded.

I recognised one of the cars leaving the meeting as Rev. Lindsay Wilson the same minister who had me ousted from Castlederg FPC.

(<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/anti-dup-free-presbyterian-sermon-halted-after-mla-objected-preacher-971876>) for critical comments regarding the DUP in a sermon I preached about national spiritual revival (<https://soundcloud.com/user-970473419/deliverance-of-northern-ireland-luke-barker-15-07-2018>).

As he was passing comment to me I managed to challenge him with, "Sinn Fein IRA voted in by one of your elders!". (The elder I referred to being Tommy Buchanan DUP MLA).

The second part of my protest lasted until the very last vehicle left the church around 12:40am, with no sign of Tommy Buchanan or Mervyn Storey wanting to engage in conversation, or any further comment from Rev. John Greer or Rev. David Park.

Since the protest, there has been somewhat of a backlash so far. I was booked to take two Youth Fellowship meetings at Lurgan FPC on the subjects of Bible Versions and Music, but I received a phone call from the Minister saying the church session had unanimously decided to block me from taking the meetings in the light of the protest.



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On the positive side, more messages of support have come from other FPC Ministers, Elders and church members since the event. Again, as with my 'banned sermon' no reasoned response has materialised from anyone. At Church the following Sunday (9th Feb) it was very much business as usual, with one comment being "Well done for being so brave".

After all was said and done, I have no regrets about making the protest, and I still stand by all I said on the written flyer, the double sided banner, and all the conversations had with those on the night.

The whole incident has been quite an insight into how the hierarchy of the FPC feels about the denomination's continued flirtation with a corrupt and immoral political organisation such as the DUP, a political party that has now utterly divorced itself from the Word of God and its traditional hard-line Unionist stance. It baffles me how anyone can claim to be a Bible Believing Christian and at the same time be a strong supporter of the DUP - the two are utterly at odds with each other! I know that years ago, back in the early days, the FPC and DUP ran parallel with each other; the DUP being seen as the political arm of the FPC denomination. But times have changed, and the DUP has liberalised on so many issues, and has continued a downgrade away from its traditional, Bible based, principles. I hope my protest is used of God to wake up more Free Presbyterians, and indeed other Protestants across the land to the historic change that has sadly taken place in the DUP. As far the FPC is concerned, this toleration and accommodation of error by ALL within the church leadership must be halted as soon as possible, or the same downgrade seen within the DUP will increasingly manifest itself as the FPC becomes contaminated by the same infectious compromise.

I am very confident the support that Mr Storey and Mr Buchanan (and the other named FPC members) have shown for Sinn Fein is not something that is shared by the vast majority of Free Presbyterians. I want to reassure those concerned that the FPC does not support unrepentant terrorists, Sinn Fein, or the breakup of the United Kingdom and the absorption of Northern Ireland into a secular/Roman Catholic Irish State.

If Mr Storey and Mr Buchanan do indeed stand against these things, then they should publicly state as such and explain why on earth they supported and voted for the election of Alex Maskey in the first place.