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Free Presbyterian ministers denounce attendance at Mass

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TWO senior Free Presbyterian ministers have accused Peter Robinson and Tom Elliott of “idolatry” for attending the funeral mass of Constable Ronan Kerr.

There has been widespread praise for the DUP and UUP leaders over their decision to attend the slain PSNI officer’s funeral two weeks ago. Mr Elliott was following in the footsteps of Lord Trimble, who attended the Catholic funeral of Omagh bomb victims in 1998.

But despite DUP and Free Presbyterian Church founder Lord Bannside’s past vocal opposition to attendance at mass, it has been indicative of the DUP’s move to the centre ground that most DUP members have been supportive or remained silent about their leader’s attendance at the funeral.

However, Lurgan Free Presbyterian minister, the Rev David Creane, said if the two unionist leaders were “true Christians” they would come to regret what they had done. Rev Creane was outspoken in his criticism of both party leaders when addressing his congregation from the pulpit at the Banbridge Road church last week. And, when contacted by the Lurgan Mail about the comments he had made, Rev Creane said: “The sight of Protestant church leaders, politicians and Orangemen standing shoulder to shoulder with IRA/Sinn Fein at the requiem mass in Beragh last week was deeply saddening.

“Evangelical Protestants should not attend the Roman Catholic mass under any circumstances.” He added: “Love for, and loyalty to, our blessed Saviour must take priority. If Peter Robinson and Tom Elliott are true Christians they will come to regret what they have done.”

Ballymena Free Presbyterian minister, the Rev John Greer, delivered an hour-long sermon on Sunday night opposing the mass. TUV leader Jim Allister attends the church — one of the largest in the denomination — but is not a member. Rev Greer denounced Mr Robinson, Ulster Unionist leader Tom Elliott and the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev Norman Hamilton.

“They were present for an act of idolatry and therefore they were guilty...of being involved in that act of idolatry,” he claimed, adding that they had “committed great and terrible sin” and said it had been a “sad spectacle” which he found distressing. He accused the leaders of having “followed the lead of an anti-Protestant, liberal and ecumenical press”.

He added: “The issue that has come to light in recent days is not political; rather it is Biblical, it is spiritual because it raises the question of why it is wrong for someone taking the place of being a Protestant, and especially a professing evangelical Christian, to attend the mass.”

The minister also denounced “young Free Presbyterians” for speaking in defence of Mr Robinson and Mr Elliott on the social networking website Facebook.



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“I have been told that young Free Presbyterians are to-ing and fro-ing on their Facebook pages trying to defend what happened two or three weeks ago and this is a tragedy,” said Rev Greer.