THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



p of Westminster warn today of the risk to vulnerable people should

Shane Rounce

In a joint letter to peers, Archbishop Justin Welby, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who is President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, and The Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, speak of their ‘profound disquiet’ over the Assisted Dying Bill, ahead of its second reading in the House of Lords on Friday.

The Private Member's Bill, tabled by Baroness Meacher, proposes legalising assisted suicide for terminally ill people with under six months to live.

The three faith leaders highlight the risks and dangers entailed in the provisions of the Bill and the ‘real-life’ practical inadequacies of its proposed safeguards.

The common good is not served by policies or actions that would place very many vulnerable people in more vulnerable positions, they warn.

They appeal for people of all faiths and none to join with them through the ‘common bond of humanity’ in caring for the most vulnerable in society.

In contrast to the Bill, the faith leaders call for measures to make high-quality palliative care available to all at the end of their lives.

The aim of a compassionate society should be ‘assisted living’ rather than an acceptance of assisted suicide, they note.

“By the faiths we profess, we hold every human life to be a precious gift of the Creator, to be upheld and protected.

“All people of faith, and those of none, can share our concern that the common good is not served by policies or actions that would place very many vulnerable people in more vulnerable positions.

“We appeal to people of whatever faith or belief to join us through our common bond of humanity in caring for the most vulnerable people within our society.

“In contrast to the proposals in this Bill, we continue to call for measures to make high-quality palliative care available to all at the end of their lives.

“We believe that the aim of a compassionate society should be assisted living rather than an acceptance of assisted suicide.”

- **The full text of the letter is below:**

“As leaders of faith communities, we wish to express our profound disquiet at the provisions of the ‘Assisted Dying’ Bill currently in the House of Lords.

"We acknowledge that Baroness Meacher is seeking the alleviation of suffering. This motivation we share wholeheartedly, but we disagree on the means advanced to address this very real concern.

"In particular, we are conscious of the risks and dangers entailed in the provisions of the Bill and the ‘real-life’ practical inadequacies of the proposed safeguards.

"By the faiths we profess, we hold every human life to be a precious gift of the Creator, to be upheld and protected.

"All people of faith, and those of none, can share our concern that the common good is not served by policies or actions that would place very many vulnerable people in more vulnerable positions.

"We appeal to people of whatever faith or belief to join us through our common bond of humanity in caring for the most vulnerable people within our society.

"In contrast to the proposals in this Bill, we continue to call for measures to make high-quality palliative care available to all at the end of their lives.

"We believe that the aim of a compassionate society should be assisted living rather than an acceptance of assisted suicide.”

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