

Letter sent by Eoin to the Editor of the New York Times on 15 April 2020

Subject: *When prejudice can kill*

Dear Editor,

The writer Brendan Behan once said that the first thing on the agenda of an Irish committee was the split. It seems that the first thing on the agenda of an evangelical health provider, such as Samaritan's Purse, which has set up a 68-bed hospital in Central Park, is what workers and volunteers to turn away because they are unwilling to say they oppose same-sex marriage. This is pretty awful at the best of times but is particularly odious and dangerous at a time when New York City is the epicenter of a global pandemic and experiencing an unprecedented demand for health workers.

Each morning my husband, a nurse in the New York Presbyterian Hospital, sets off for work full of anxiety for his patients and worried that he might also bring home Covid-19 to me. He and his colleagues have been cheered by the huge sense of solidarity in this city, evidenced each evening by thousands of people applauding health workers from their apartments. That he, and the services of thousands and thousands of New York health workers would not be welcomed by Samaritan's Purse strikes a very discordant note in this climate of solidarity. If ever there was an illustration of how prejudice can risk lives, this is it. What is Samaritan's Purse going to tell their patients affected by the virus? Sorry, we are short-staffed because not enough of New York's medical workers oppose same-sex marriage? It is time for evangelicals to be reasonable and, if they run a health service, to put their patients first.

Yours faithfully,
Eoin Collins