

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Strangford and Scrabo

News reports

Priest who has given up parochial house to Ukrainian family says the move is ‘faith in action’

Church properties, private buildings and council premises being converted for emergency shelter, the Irish Times reports.

A parish priest who has turned over his parochial house to a Ukrainian family fleeing the war says being a Christian is “not just praying for something, it is about doing it”.

Fr Brian Griffin, of Castletown parish in Co Laois, opened the doors of the village’s historic Bianconi House – an old coaching inn – to two women and their four children seeking refuge in Ireland after escaping Poltava, near Kharkiv and Dnipro.

Dozens of church properties, private buildings and local authority premises across Ireland are being converted for use as emergency accommodation for Ukrainian refugees.

In the Catholic diocese of Kerry alone, seven presbyteries or parish houses are being offered as accommodation. A large youth centre in the centre of Killarney is already hosting refugees, while the John Mitchels GAA Sports Complex in Tralee has been placed on standby.



Fr Griffin said it had been “absolutely amazing” how the community in Co Laois had rallied to help the new arrivals.

“The house was unfurnished until about two weeks ago, and local people just sent out

messages, and came together, and within two weeks it has been completely furnished, like a hotel, with beds and linen and everything.”

More at -

[\[https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/priest-who-has-given-up-parochial-house-to-ukrainian-family-says-the-move-is-faith-in-action-1.4849472\]](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/priest-who-has-given-up-parochial-house-to-ukrainian-family-says-the-move-is-faith-in-action-1.4849472)

Methodist condemnation of attack on Belfast Multi-cultural Association

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu and the Church’s Lay Leader, Ms Hazel Loney issued the following statement in response to the attack on the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association building on Belfast's Donegall Pass:

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The Methodist Church in Ireland is appalled at the news of the second attack on the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association. We stand with our sisters and brothers and commit ourselves, with all who are working for the common good, to build a society marked by mutual care, respect and friendship, where all can live in peace.

Rev. Dr. Sahr Yambasu - President
Ms. Hazel Loney - Lay Leader

Prayer Walk for continuing peace in Shankill area



Clergy and those who attended or took part in the Prayer Service in St Matthew's, Shankill, on April 8.

A year after scenes of rioting disrupted life in Belfast's Shankill Road, an interdenominational Prayer Walk for continuing peace has taken place.

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It followed a lunchtime service in St Matthew's Parish Church on April 8, attended by clergy and members of different churches across the local community.

The Prayer Service was organised by the Rev Tracey McRoberts, rector of St Matthew's, and Father Martin Magill, Parish Priest in St John's, Falls Road.

Tracey said: "Since last year, we have continued to work together, and we wanted to continue to pray into the situation and ask God that things will stay relatively trouble free in the run up to the elections."

Members of different churches, including St Matthew's, Shankill Church of God, Youthlink, St John's Parish and Clonard Monastery, led prayers during the short service, and clergy from the different denominations were in attendance.

A chill wind whipped up the Shankill Road as the group walked down the road, across the peaceline on Lanark Way, and up the Springvale Road to the Farset Hotel, where refreshments were provided.

As they walked, some of the ladies taking part recalled last year's rioting, which, while some way from their homes, left them choosing to stay indoors rather than get caught up in any trouble.

Stephen Reynolds, pastor of the Church of God, Shankill, said: "Looking back to the events of last year, it breaks your heart. It has been quiet this year so far, and our hope and prayer is that it stays calm."



Mona Harris, who lives a little further up the road from last year's trouble, was at the service and Prayer Walk with her brother David. "I wanted to join in with the church and it is good to get to know people from the other side of the community," she said. "We couldn't see the rioting last year, but we could hear it."

Catherine Shoukri and her sister Elizabeth Hughes were both at the service and Prayer Walk. "It is important for all the communities to get to know each other and to realise that everybody is the same," Catherine said.

Elizabeth said she had attended many peace rallies over several decades. "This is not new for me," she said. "It is like water dropping on a stone, eventually we make a difference. I do think things are better now."

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She added: “Peace is not just the absence of violence.

Presbyterian Easter dawn services

This Sunday, (17 April) many Presbyterians will come together at daybreak, across various outdoor locations, to celebrate and worship the risen Lord Jesus.

Ahead of Easter Sunday, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has compiled a list of upwards of 40 venues where services are taking place that have been organised by local congregations, or gatherings involving Presbyterian churches, and others in the local community.

The earliest of the services begins at 6am, with others following at 6.15, 6.30, and 7am. Depending on the weather, each service will vary in length and involve praise, prayer, scripture reading and a short address. Some even offer a tasty breakfast afterwards.

Presbyterian Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce said, “When we come together on Easter Sunday, to declare this singular truth: ‘Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!’ we affirm that Jesus is risen bodily, physically actually, historically and truly. He is risen in a way that defies the laws of biology, chemistry and physics and because of what happened that day, nearly 2000 years ago, the world is not the same and never can be again.

“As I wrote in my Easter Message, ‘Easter explains that God pushes back the frontiers of evil and death. Good Friday’s story of death gave way to Easter Sunday’s story of

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new life. We live, and then die – but Christ died, and then lived.

“This reversal of the natural order which Christians celebrate with their call and response: “Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!” describes much more than just a remarkable moment in history. We see a glimpse of the world working in a wholly different way...’ In fact we see the dawning of audacious hope.”

Dr Bruce continued, “Whether we are warmed by the sun’s dawning rays atop a hill, in a forest park, beside the lapping waters of the sea, or sitting comfortably in our pew this Sunday, let us celebrate the Good News that Christ is risen.”

For information on the dawn services, visit www.presbyterianireland.org/easterdawn.

Study shows church buildings just as important as before the pandemic despite online shift

Research has shown that the need for church buildings remains just as prevalent following the pandemic as it did before the coronavirus began.

A study from The National Churches Trust, as part of a debate about the future of UK places of worship, found that 80 per cent of people asked believed that the building played a crucial role.

The consultation polled 1,250 people from across the UK.

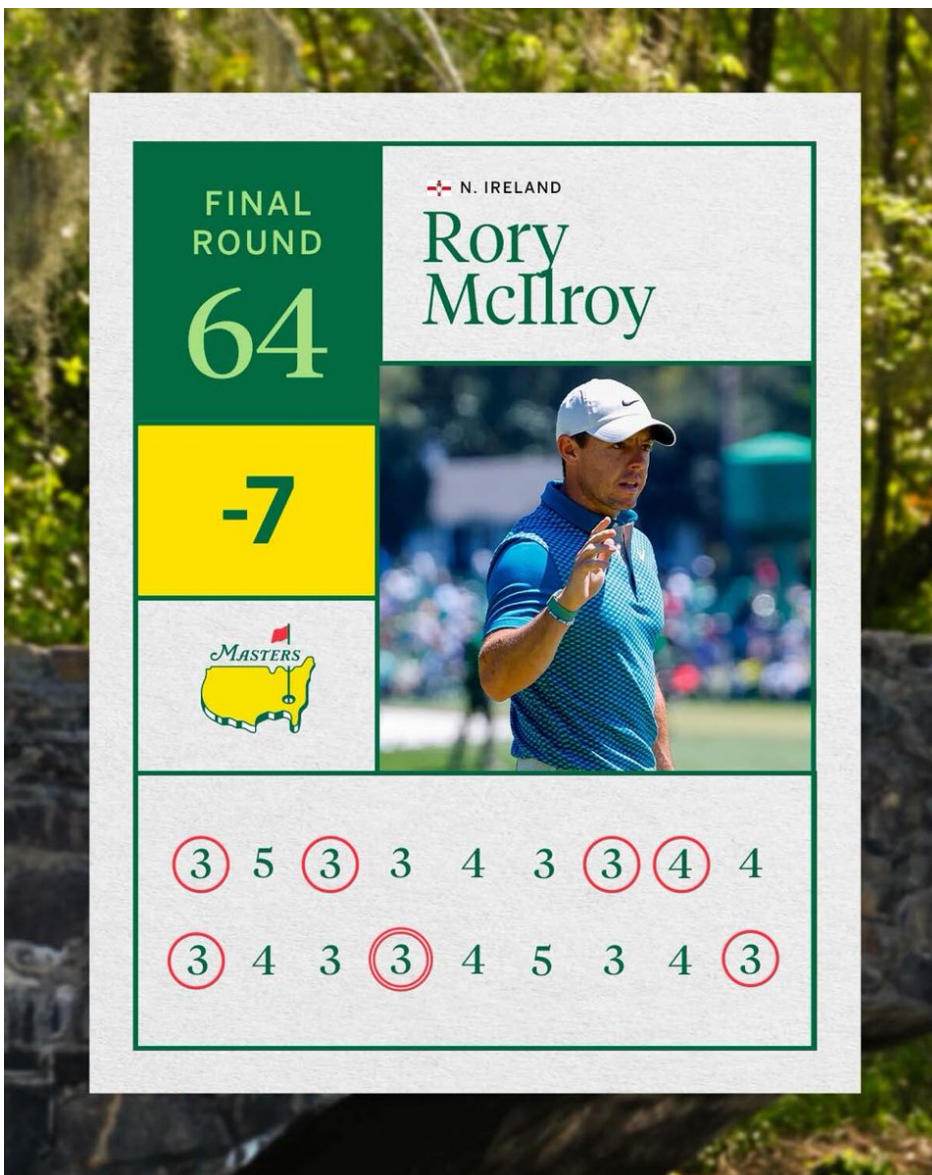
Of the reasons given, the need for in-person meeting and community was the most common.

However, churches continue to close at an alarming rate – usually because of falling congregation numbers and a lack of available finances.

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust said: “Our consultation shows that people really value church buildings. That’s because they are the ultimate all-purpose building, available for everyone to use. Churches are places for worship and reflection, vitally needed

community centres, and are packed with history and heritage.”

“I’d like to thank everybody who took part in our ‘The Future of the UK’s Church Buildings’ consultation. We will use the findings and the ideas generated to continue to discuss with



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Government and our partners in the church and heritage sectors how best to keep as many churches as possible open and being used to benefit local communities.”

“With over 900 churches on Historic England’s ‘Heritage at Risk Register’, and with many more in poor condition in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, more funding for the repair and maintenance of church buildings is urgently needed. The Church of England alone estimates that it will need to find £1 billion to pay for the upkeep of its churches over the next five years.”

“The future of the UK’s churches is in our hands. We need to ensure that they are valued and saved for everyday use, now and in the future, before it’s too late.”

Christian charity is urging the Government to reform income tax rules as cost of living rises

A Christian charity is calling on the government to reform income tax rules as families face the cost of the living crisis.

A new report by Christian Charity CARE argues that existing rules on income tax and national insurance, can be reformed to bring relief to the most vulnerable families in years to come.

UK households are now witnessing the biggest increase in energy costs in living memory.

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Bills for a typical house are rising by nearly £700 a year, or 54 percent.

The study, by social policy charity CARE and tax policy experts Tax & the Family, argues that the current approach to taxation is inherently unfair.

It states: "The UK tax system does not treat families fairly.

"The amount of tax that they pay bears little relationship to how well off they are.

"Many families in poverty pay income tax.

"Some in the bottom half of the income distribution even pay higher rate tax and are liable for the HICBC.

"This problem, which has been ignored by successive Chancellors, is a serious one, and needs to be tackled.

"Latest data from the ONS indicates that there are 27.8 million households in the UK.¹⁶

"Nearly 8 million of these households are families with dependent children: 5.26 million couples with one or two children, 0.94 million couples with three or more, and 1.67 million single parent families.

"Families with a single income (one-earner couple families and single parent families) are the most disadvantaged by the income tax system.

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“Our figures also suggest that families with two equal incomes may have higher tax liabilities than households without dependents.

“This unfairness is due to the fact that UK income tax is based on the individual and has little regard for family responsibilities.”

Bishops in Sri Lanka urge government to ‘wake from its slumber’ over economic unrest

The bishops of the Church of Ceylon, the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka, have warned of a potential “human catastrophe” in the Indian Ocean nation, where public unrest over an unprecedented economic crisis has spilled over into violence in recent days.

The Rt. Rev. Keerthisiri Fernando, the presiding bishop of the Church of Ceylon, and the bishop of Colombo, the Rt. Rev. Dushantha Rodrigo, have called on the government to “listen to the cries of the people” and take urgent action to address the escalating crisis.

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic collapse since it became independent from the United Kingdom in 1948. The nation is witnessing massive inflation, while basic goods like food and fuel are in short supply. Across the country, people are suffering lengthy power cuts.

Read the entire story here.

[\[https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2022/04/bishops-in-sri-lanka-urge-government-to-wake-from-its-slumber-over-economic-unrest.aspx\]](https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2022/04/bishops-in-sri-lanka-urge-government-to-wake-from-its-slumber-over-economic-unrest.aspx)

Easter Peace - joint message from Archbishops of Armagh

The following joint Easter message has been issued by Archbishop John McDowell and Archbishop Eamon Martin:

The joyful carol that we know as the ‘Carol of the Bells’ has its origins in a Ukrainian folk song which in ancient times was sung, not at Christmas, but at this time of the year to mark the fresh beginnings of spring. It tells the tale of a swallow flying into a home after the winter to promise the family a new season of joy, happiness and plenty.

It’s difficult to contemplate such a hopeful scene for the people of Ukraine this Easter as the world continues to witness the horror of death, destruction and displacement being visited on their country these past few months. Peace and prosperity seem a distant dream. It must be much easier for them to meditate on the pain of Good Friday, or on the emptiness of Holy Saturday, than on the joy and happiness of Easter morning.

And yet when the Lord appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, his opening words were ‘Peace be with you’. His words meant much more than the traditional ‘Shalom’ greeting, for in speaking Easter peace, he also showed his friends the wounds of violence in his hands and in his side –

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the marks of the crucifixion. He therefore identifies himself to them as both the Crucified, and the Risen Saviour, one acquainted with suffering; his peace is offered through the blood of the cross.

On the third day after the crucifixion the disciples remained locked away, in fear and terror, shell-shocked by the trauma of seeing their hero – their Prince of Peace – tortured, mocked and horrifically nailed to a wooden cross. But on resurrection day, the Risen Lord seeks them out, entering in behind the locked doors and walls of their fear and isolation. He had promised that he would not leave them as orphans and that he would gift them a peace that the world cannot give. Now, following his rejection, suffering, death and resurrection, he returns to reassure their troubled hearts that death and evil will not have the last word. He offers them words of deep peace and comfort: ‘Peace be with you’. ‘Do not be afraid’.

How much the world needs to hear and embrace this message of an Easter peace which does not deny the reality of suffering and death. From Ukraine to Tigray, from Syria to South Sudan, the cross of Good Friday continues to cast its shadow in the suffering of millions caught up in the violence and aggression of war. Mercifully, also, the work of peacemakers and the enormous outpouring of love, welcome and humanitarian aid bears witness to the hope and promise of Easter peace that can never be extinguished by war or hatred. One day families will be reunited, homes rebuilt, livelihoods restored; the deafening noise of bombardment will give way once more to the sounds of bells ringing, and birds singing.

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Last month, on Saint Patrick's Day, we pointed out how war is a defeat for humanity; it represents the failure of politics, diplomacy and dialogue. We also remarked that what is happening today in Europe should help us learn lessons for our own peace process, about the importance of never taking our progress in peace for granted, never giving up on dialogue and the building of bridges and mutual understanding across historical divides. The tragedy of what we are witnessing in Ukraine during these days impels us again this Easter to be peacemakers and never to tire in working for a genuine human fraternity as the only way to resolve differences and conflicts.

Easter peace.

Pope Francis begins Holy Week with call for Easter truce in Ukraine

Pope Francis has called for an East truce in Ukraine.

He said on Palm Sunday 2022 that nothing is impossible for God, who has the power to end the war in Ukraine, even if it looks like the end is not near. He also urged the laying down of weapons for a permanent "Easter truce."

At the end of Mass in St Peter's Square, the Pope said: "Nothing is impossible for God. He can even bring an end to a war whose end is not in sight, a war that daily places before our eyes heinous massacres and atrocious cruelty committed against defenceless civilians. Let us pray about this."

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Francis' comments about war were made at the end of Mass, right before he led an estimated 65,000 people in praying the Angelus.

“In a moment, we will turn to the Blessed Mother with the Angelus Prayer. It was the Angel of the Lord himself who said to Mary in the Annunciation: ‘Nothing is impossible for God,’” the pope said.

Pope Francis reminded pilgrims that Easter is coming soon. “We are preparing to celebrate the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over sin and death — over sin and death — not over someone and against someone else.”

“Let the weapons be put down,” he urged. “Let the Easter truce begin.”

“But not to provide more weapons and pick up the combat again — no — a truce that will lead to peace, through real negotiation that is even disposed to some sacrifice for the good of the people. In fact, what victory is there in planting a flag on a pile of rubble?” he said.

“But today, there is a war. Why does one want to win like this, according to the way of the world?” Francis continued. “This is only the way to lose. Why not allow Him to win? Christ bore his cross to free us from the dominion of evil. He died so that life, love, peace might reign.”

“Nothing is impossible for God. We entrust this to Him through the intercession of the Virgin Mary.”

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After the prayer and the final blessing of Mass, Pope Francis greeted the crowds as he took a spin around St. Peter's Square in the popemobile.

Palm Sunday 2022 Mass was Francis' first public liturgy in St Peter's Square in over two years, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his homily, he said "Christ is crucified yet another time" in the folly of war.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

It's time to listen to Bonhoeffer's prophetic message

As the humanitarian crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine worsens, and evidence mounts of the widespread abuse of human rights and multiple breaches of international law, a charity dedicated to promoting the contemporary relevance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) is calling for the churches to learn the lessons of the 1930s. Project Bonhoeffer supports all efforts by Christians to stand up against this war of aggression, and to speak out against those who attempt to justify it in the name of Christianity.

In the 1930s Bonhoeffer, together with other members of the German churches, put forward a strong critique of those church leaders who supported the Nazis' aggressive nationalist ideology. Anti-Nazi Protestant leaders put



together the 'Barmen Declaration', which has become a touchstone for Christian resistance to state co-options of church authority. Bonhoeffer drew attention to the error of 'an alien ideology concealed in a Church seal.' Today, in response to the call from Patriarch Kirill for God to bless 'Holy Rus' and so put a stamp of approval on the actions of the Russian military, Orthodox theologians have revisited the Barmen Declaration to produce a powerful critique of Kirill and the Russian hierarchy.

A spokesperson for Project Bonhoeffer said: "The Barmen declaration clearly rebuffed the notion put forward by 'German Christians' that the Church and its message should be become the cultural property of the nation. In contrast to the notion that the war is blessed by God, the declaration emphasised that the word of God is and must be separate from the word of a civil power. We stand in solidarity with Orthodox theologians and clergy, particularly those within Russia, who are speaking out against this inexcusable war and the complicity of Kirill. We call on Orthodox and other

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Faith Communities to bear witness to the message of Bonhoeffer for our times - that wars of aggression and the Christian message are incompatible".

Project Bonhoeffer seeks to raise awareness of the prophetic witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in dark times.

For more information see: www.projectbonhoeffer.org.uk/

IRISH THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY
ONLINE GUEST LECTURE
AT
ST PATRICK'S PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY,
MAYNOOTH

**THEOLOGICAL
FOUNDATIONS OF
POPE FRANCIS'
INTEGRAL ECOLOGY**

10th MAY 2022
6:00PM

Celia Deane-Drummond
Director of the Laudato Si' Research Institute and Senior Research
Fellow in theology at Campion Hall, University of Oxford

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IRISH THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY
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Theological foundations of Pope Francis' integral Ecology

The Irish Theological Quarterly and St Patrick's Pontifical University are hosting an online lecture with Celia Deane-Drummond

Celia Deane-Drummond is currently Director of the Laudato Si'

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Research Institute and Senior Research Fellow in theology at Campion Hall, University of Oxford. She is also honorary visiting Professor in Theology and Science at the University of Durham, UK. Her work at the interface of theology, ethics and the biological and human sciences stems from her prior academic experience in plant physiology as well as theology. Recent publications include: *Technofutures, Nature and the Sacred*, ed. with Sigurd Bergmann and Bronislaw Szerszynski (2015), *Religion in the Anthropocene*, edited with Sigurd Bergmann and Markus Vogt (2017), *Theology and Ecology Across the Disciplines: On Care for Our Common Home*, edited with Rebecca Artinian Kaiser (2018), *The Evolution of Wisdom Volume I: Theological Ethics Through a Multispecies Lens* (2019) and *Shadow Sophia: The Evolution of Wisdom Volume II* (2021).

This event is online via Zoom. The zoom link will be forwarded closer to the date. Tickets, Tue 10 May 2022 at 18:00 | Eventbrite

[\[https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/theological-foundations-of-pope-francis-integral-ecology-tickets-304862551097\]](https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/theological-foundations-of-pope-francis-integral-ecology-tickets-304862551097)

Church News Ireland

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