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**CNI**  
CHURCH  
NEWS  
IRELAND



## Image of the day - York Minster

## Hope at Easter - special new hymn and resources from the Presbyterian Church

As Christians around the world and across the island approach and celebrate Easter, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has produced a range of resources that focuses on the Church's theme, 'Hope at Easter'. From blogs to podcasts, a special Tides devotional to focused prayer over the Easter weekend, and a Moderator's online Easter service, a short film of a special recording of a new hymn has also been produced. Written by a member of staff, it features video contributions from members of PCI from home and abroad.

[[] <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/hopeateaster.aspx> ]

The theme for the Moderator's first term in office has been 'Home'. In Dr Bruce's live streamed installation as Moderator last June, he introduced his theme, based on the story of Ruth. At the time he said that home "is where we have been called to live and serve for the Kingdom of God and the common good. Within that home we have another, for we are the family of God, and our home is his church. Within that home we have yet another, for we have dual citizenship on earth and also in heaven which too, is our home."

Having been nominated for an historic second term as Moderator, Dr Bruce is developing his new theme for his incoming year. It involves displacing one letter, simply turning 'Home' into 'Hope'. Dr Bruce explained, "Easter is a good point to start. Death gives way to resurrection and new life. This positive way of looking to the future gives us an

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optimistic outlook. Even when uncomfortable and difficult things happen to us, we can approach these with hope in our hearts, rather than despair. God has not finished with us and is working his purposes out for good.

# Hope at Easter

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All the resources that have been produced for Easter can be found at the 'Hope for Easter' hub here - [ ] <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/hopeateaster.aspx> ]

**Included are :**

**A special series of Hope at Easter Blogs**, where a doctor reflects on his calling to general practice during the Covid-19 pandemic, while ministers reflect on the place of silence in Scripture and in our present moment, and on the lessons our shared suffering, as we view them in the light of Scripture and the Suffering Servant. In another, one of PCI's RAF chaplains unpacks his thoughts of hope at Easter and how they play out in his life and setting for service. From Kenya, a PCI global mission worker in shares some pictures of what hope-filled lives look like amid the realities of life in Christ in that African nation

**A webinar from the start of March can also be viewed. It explored connections between the Easter events** and how to apply them imaginatively and with impact in our present circumstances, so as to minister to one another and share the good news more widely. It also features stories, practical ideas and news about some Easter initiatives from PCI.

**In a podcast three leaders in the life of PCI reflect on the moment we are now in and how we can move forward.** They talk about how PCI might helpfully go about re-engaging, resetting and rebuilding again within our congregations. They also share about PCI's 'Hope for Easter' campaign



A special service has also been recorded by the Moderator for Easter 2021.

In his Easter Message, Dr David Bruce recounts a conversation with a sceptical friend about what Easter means. His friend questioned if the resurrection of Jesus, that first Easter, actually happen at all, or was it a kind of metaphor?

Dr Bruce writes that “The record shows that Jesus did the apparently impossible”. He explains that the New Testament makes a shattering claim that Jesus was physically raised from the dead, a miracle witnessed and accounted for by not only his disciples, but hundreds of other people. While Good Friday marked the moment of Jesus’ supposed ‘failure’ as a would-be Messiah, Easter Sunday changed

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everything, as “Jesus, now alive, became a beacon of hope for sinful people everywhere,” he said.

## **Dublin task force - Archbishop urges lay involvement in ‘radical renewal’ of Dublin archdiocese**

**Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell is planning a “radical renewal” of the archdiocese that will involve greater input from lay people in the church’s response to the needs of the community following the Covid-19 crisis, Ellen O’Riordan writes in the Irish Times.**

In a homily on Holy Thursday, Archbishop Dermot Farrell announced he had established a task force to devise a strategy for a “church for the Dublin of tomorrow”.

The church community in Dublin faces “challenges which require immediate action, not least to prepare a recovery from the severe impact of the pandemic”, he said.

The task force, under the title “Building Hope”, will assess the needs of the people of the Archdiocese of Dublin, which comprises 197 parishes served by 350 active priests. Based on this analysis, the unit, composed of clergy, religious and laypeople, will prepare a “pastoral strategy” that supports faith communities to undertake a “radical renewal” that looks to the future with creativity and hope, Archbishop Farrell went on. The task force should stimulate reflection and creative thinking across the whole community to guide a conversation into the future, he said.



Archbishop Dermot Farrell said clergy sometimes ‘overlook’ that the laity are called to share in the mission and ministry of the church.

In a statement that echoed much of his commentary since he took up his post in February, the archbishop said clergy sometimes “overlook” that the laity are called to share in the mission and ministry of the church. The ordained ministry “does not exhaust or monopolise this ministry” and the church “must draw on many people and listen to many voices”, he said.

“Such an approach requires both humility and courage to recognise that one cannot do everything on one’s own,” he said.

A new “synodal practice” will see every church member, starting with the young, incorporated more into the life and responsibilities of the church.



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“Clergy must try to walk together with women and men with ever greater enthusiasm and without thinking that we already have the best answer or all the answers,” he added.

There is an “urgency” to this project, the archbishop added, and he has asked the task force to complete its work by the end of the summer. The work will provide a “basis for moving forward together with hope”, he added.

The archbishop said he was also establishing an expert panel to examine the economic, social, and pastoral situation in Dublin, as well as the trends that will “shape our situation over the next 25 years”.

Courtesy The Irish Times 01.04.2021

## **The prayer garden at 162**

**There is a high area at the rear of the Church’s Ministry of Healing building at 162 Upper Knockbreda Road, which was a dump for many skips of material when we first arrived.**

There were a number of 40-50 foot trees which the CHM community felled, and the area was a dense jungle. After many months of work the area was cleared and prepared for planting.

The neighbours told CMH developers wanted to build flats on the site, where CHM’s intention was to provide an area of rest and peace when nature could be witnessed and space given for prayer and counselling.

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The garden is now quite mature, but more planting is to be done as cuttings and new plants are nourished at Echo Sound. “We have an excess which we will swop for donations! Just ask Frances, our horticulturalist, for advice and guidance.

“The prayer garden is open 24/7 and has a number of intimate, separate and private areas for prayer and reflection. This is tranquil and beautiful space in God’s creation, separate from the fast moving world, where you can experience God’s peace. If the main building is open when you visit, we are available to provide ministry and guidance”, said the Reverend Pat Mollan.

## **Bonhoeffer on grace**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German pastor, theologian, martyr, spy was asked in 1943 how it was possible for the Church to sit back and let Hitler seize absolute power. His firm answer: "It was the teaching of cheap grace."

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"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Do we live in a time and culture that not only teaches cheap grace but praises it?



## Saintfield Parish rise to the 40:40 Lent Challenge

**At the beginning of Lent, Saintfield Parish set itself a 40:40 challenge – to put one item of food or toiletries per day in a box, for 40 days.**

This was to support The Larder Foodbank on Mersey Street with whom we partner.

“All the food gathered meant that we needed two cars to transport it down and we have still enough food to fill another car on Thursday. Over £100 was given as well.

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“We are so amazed by the sacrificial generosity of so many and all those who achieved the 40:40 goal. God released the hearts of people to respond so freely” said the Rector, the Reverend Chris Pollock.

## **Americans visiting places of worship at lowest level**

**Despite their currency declaring “in God we trust”, fewer than half of Americans now consider themselves members of a church, synagogue or mosque.**

A survey has found that in 2020, 47 per cent said they belonged to a place of worship. When Gallup first asked the question in 1937, church membership was at 73 per cent. In 1999, it was still 70 per cent. Now, thousands of churches are closing each year across the US.

One factor appears to be age. Some 66 per cent of adults born before 1946 belong to a church, compared with 58 per cent of baby boomers, 50 per cent of those in Generation X and 36 per cent of millennials.

Tara Isabella Burton, author of *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*, says young people are more likely to mix and match elements of different religions and put their “own spin on it” rather than take in “something that is prescribed”. The internet has also changed the religious experience for young people, she said.

## **Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars**

### **The message of Maundy Thursday by Archbishop Michael Jackson**

Archbishop Michael Jackson looks at the message of Maundy Thursday. He says that the message of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday is that service and suffering give voice to glory long before success and celebration could ever do so. He adds that the act of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples was an act of sacrifice.

Maundy Thursday is traditionally the day when those in ministry renew their vows of calling and response to God. The Archbishop says that the ways of ministering have changed radically in 2020 and 2021. He also pays tribute to those not called to formal ministry for the service and sacrifice they have exercised over the past year.

<https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2021/04/01/watch-maundy-thursday-reflection-by>

### **New hymn, 'Your faithfulness endures - Hope at Easter Hymn**

A special recording of a new hymn, 'Your faithfulness endures' written by PCI's public affair's officer, Karen Jardine with Jonathan Rea, creative director of New Irish Arts. The film features dozens of short clips of people displaying a message of hope from wherever they are.

[[] <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/hopeateaster.aspx> ]

## **Easter Sunday BBC One NI**

On Easter Sunday morning, BBC One Northern Ireland at 11.25, the Moderator, the Church of Ireland and Catholic Archbishops of Armagh, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, along with the President of the Irish Council of Churches, offer personal messages of hope for Easter, with hymns and specially recorded music performances in 'A Service of Hope at Easter'. The programme will be presented from the Waterfront Hall in Belfast by Audrey Carville.

## **Archbishop of Canterbury will lead Easter Sunday online worship from Canterbury Cathedral**

As churches and cathedrals around the country prepare to celebrate Easter, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will for the first time give his Easter sermon across BBC television, local and national radio and the Church of England digital platforms.

A service will premiere on the Church of England website, Facebook and YouTube channels at 9 a.m., while **viewers of BBC One** will be able to tune in to a live Eucharist from Canterbury at **10 a.m.**

The Archbishop's Easter sermon proclaims the resurrection as the turning point of history. In raising Jesus to new life, he will say, God makes a "lie" of death.

## **Getty Family Hymn Sing**

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This event is made even more special by marking the one-year anniversary of our Family Hymn Sing events and we are bringing some of our favourite guests from Northern Ireland to celebrate with us. Over the last year, we could never have imagined the outpouring of love and solidarity we have seen with millions of people around the world singing along with us, and for this episode we will be visiting a significant location in Northern Ireland to sing some of our favorite hymns!

Follow the links below to get caught up!

[[] <https://www.gettymusic.com/hymnsing> ]

## Media review

### Call for abortion protest 'exclusion zones' in Northern Ireland

BBC NI

Exclusion zones should be introduced outside sexual health clinics and pregnancy counselling centres in NI to protect staff and women accessing services, a report has said.

Protests and demonstrations would not be allowed within the zones. The recommendation has been made by the NI Abortion and Contraception Taskgroup.

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56578466> ]

### Covid: Europe's vaccine rollout 'unacceptably slow' - WHO

BBC Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) has criticised the rollout of coronavirus vaccines in Europe as being "unacceptably slow". It also says the situation in the region

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is more worrying than it has been for several months. Vaccination campaigns in much of Europe have been hit by delays and the number of infections is rising.

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56600660> ]

## **Return to worship must come before 'non-essential' business - Archbishop Farrell**

RTE.ie

It means that due to the pandemic, Christians in Ireland will celebrate ... He also used his homily to announce a taskforce on a Church for the Dublin of ...

[[] <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2021/0331/1207342-churches-return/> ]

## **Pope Francis writes to Presbyterian cleric thanking him for 'thoughtful' words**

Belfast Telegraph

... in the Irish News newspaper. It comes after Dr Norman Hamilton wrote about the Pope's latest encyclical, or important church teaching document, ...

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/pope-francis-writes-to-presbyterian-cleric-thanking-him-for-thoughtful-words-40263899.html> ]

## **Belfast has been named the host site of a global summit for young leaders in 2023.**

BBC NI

Belfast has been named the host site of a global summit for young leaders in 2023. More than 2,000 young people from 190 countries are expected to attend the One Young World summit. The city's bid won the right to host the event over eight other cities across the globe, including Dubai, Delhi and Sao Paulo.

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[ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56588437> ]

## **Opinion - The EU's moral authority is crumbling fast - Liam Halligan**

### **Brussels can't call itself a force for good when its members are prepared to deal with Putin on vaccines**

We have absolutely no need of Sputnik V.” So said European Commissioner Thierry Breton, head of the European Union’s vaccine task force, less than a fortnight ago. Now the EU’s top leaders are warming towards the Russian-made jab, in a propaganda coup for Vladimir Putin.

On Tuesday, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel joined with Putin to discuss “cooperation” over the use and manufacture of the Sputnik jab. Has the EU just sacrificed any remaining vestige of moral authority, in the face of vaccine desperation?

The UK now has falling Covid deaths, falling hospitalisations and a rapid vaccine rollout – with 45 per cent of our population inoculated, covering almost all those in vulnerable age groups. The EU is, meanwhile, enduring a destructive third wave, across a continent where little more than one in 10 have received jabs.

The EU’s joint vaccine procurement scheme was meant to demonstrate power and unity, exemplifying why the “European project” exists. But it has been a fiasco, resulting in unnecessary loss of life, with the vast majority of older

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and medically vulnerable citizens still unvaccinated. EU leaders have lashed out, blaming everyone but themselves, often acting irrationally. Now, amid much harsh rhetoric and finger-pointing, the bloc appears to be turning to Moscow for help – in a sharp reversal of previous statements and actions.

Russia is subject to EU sanctions for annexing Crimea, with some Kremlin officials also under international restrictions for the poisoning and jailing of opposition activist Alexei Navalny. Just weeks ago, Merkel branded his treatment “far from any rule of law standards”, demanding Navalny’s immediate release.

Back in November, when Hungarian leader Viktor Orban opted to use the Sputnik vaccine, he was criticised by Brussels. Other EU members, including Slovakia and the Czech Republic, have since done the same, not waiting for the EU regulator before buying and approving Sputnik.

While the Russian vaccine has yet to be licensed by the European Medicines Agency, the AstraZeneca jab has. Yet this “British vaccine” has been endlessly criticised by Macron and Merkel on utterly unsubstantiated safety grounds, even as Brussels-based Eurocrats aggressively accuse the UK of blocking EU access to the vaccine.

After repeated smears, the EU public no longer trusts the AstraZeneca jab. That’s left the likes of Germany and France sitting on millions of doses they are unable to administer.

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Brussels insists the bloc doesn't need Sputnik to hit its target of dosing 70 per cent of the adult population by autumn. Ahead of tough negotiations with Moscow, they would say that wouldn't they? And given how Merkel, Macron and others are now junking fundamental political and human rights concerns in a bid to speed up inoculation rates, they appear to need the Russian vaccine very much indeed.

For EU enthusiasts on this side of the Channel, this latest news amounts, perhaps, to a fourth stage of grief. First, they've had to admit post-Brexit Britain was right to opt out of the EU's ridiculously bureaucratic vaccine programme.

They've then watched the EU fail dismally, with many member states also now choosing self-procurement – not just in Eastern Europe, but Denmark and Austria too. Thirdly, Brussels has damaged its economic reputation, imposing export bans amid ongoing threats to requisition privately owned pharmaceutical factories, while trashing a perfectly safe vaccine, offered at cost price, by a world-class British company.

And now, the EU could do a deal with Moscow, breaking a united Western front. Yes, Sputnik may well be safe and effective. Health issues are the priority and the EU badly needs faster vaccination. But negotiating with Russia from its current, desperate position, while sitting on millions of AstraZeneca jobs, discredited in a deeply irresponsible post-Brexit propaganda exercise, is a tragic situation for the EU to have put itself in and bad for the West as a whole.

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The signatories of the 1957 Treaty of Rome sought to “lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe”. With the Continent ravaged by war twice over the previous half-century, this was clearly a noble intention. But consider how Brussels treated Greece during the 2011 eurozone crisis, how it imposed swingeing austerity programmes on nations like Portugal and Ireland to bail out German bankers. Consider how the Eurocrats have sought to reverse countless referendums over the years, including in the UK.

Consider how the EU is still – still – trying to destabilise the Good Friday Agreement, fanning the flames of sectarian violence by doggedly insisting on ridiculously invasive and legalistic physical border checks between Northern Ireland and the British mainland, where technological solutions would clearly suffice, in a last-ditch attempt to keep the UK within the EU’s legal orbit.

And consider how the EU has handled this pandemic, the greatest challenge to statecraft since the Second World War. What of EU morality now?

Courtesy the Daily Telegraph, 01.04.2021. Follow Liam Halligan on Twitter @LiamHalligan; read more at [telegraph.co.uk/opinion](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion)

## Pointers for prayer

Eternal God, in the sharing of a meal  
your son established a new covenant for all people, and in



the washing of feet  
he showed us the dignity of service.  
Grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit  
these signs of our life in faith  
may speak again to our hearts,  
feed our spirits, and refresh our bodies. Amen.

Lord God,  
You sent your Son into the world,  
And before his hour had come,  
He washed his disciples' feet.  
You had given all things into his hands.  
He had come from you, and was going to you,  
And what did he do?  
He knelt down on the floor,  
And washed his friends' feet.  
He was their teacher and their Lord,  
Yet he washed their feet.  
Lord God, help us learn from his example;  
Help us to do as he has done for us.  
The world will know we are his disciples  
If we love one another.

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Strengthen our hands and our wills for love  
And for service.

Keep before our eyes the image of your Son,  
Who, being God, became a Servant for our sake.

All glory be to him who lives and reigns with you and the  
Holy Spirit,

One God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on  
the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within  
the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit  
that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those  
who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for  
the honor of your Name. Amen.

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the  
earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those  
who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people  
everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the  
nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and  
hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. Amen.

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he  
suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood:  
Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in  
remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy  
mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now  
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for  
ever and ever. Amen.

## Speaking to the Soul

**Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him money.**

Luke 22:3-5 NLT

I don't know about you but I find these words almost too hard to read. Knowing how wise, good and loving Jesus was, how could anyone betray him? And Judas Iscariot wasn't just anyone. He had been one of Jesus' disciples for nearly three years. He, better than us, knew how amazing Jesus was. He had heard his teaching and, time and again, had seen him perform the most incredible miracles. How could he possibly conspire with those who wanted to kill Jesus?

Luke tells us that Satan entered into Judas. Judas allowed Satan to direct his actions. No one knows exactly what was going on in Judas' mind. Perhaps he was tempted by the money. Or he may have become disillusioned with Jesus because things weren't working out in the way that he had expected and wanted. We just don't know. What we do know is that he gave Satan's temptations house room. He allowed the evil one to direct his actions.

In Peter's first letter he described the way in which Satan prowls around like a roaring lion looking for victims to devour (1 Peter 5.8) Peter encouraged his readers to watch out and to take a firm stand against him. In this most holy of

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weeks we confront love in the most amazing way as we see Jesus' willingness to die on the cross for us. But we also face up to the horrifying reality of evil, and we need to listen carefully to Peter's words. Satan continues to prowl around and we need to be on the alert and stand firmly against him.

## QUESTION

In what way do you see Satan prowling around today?

## PRAYER

Loving Father, we thank you that you give us the strength to stand up against all of Satan's tricks. Amen.

