



Image of the day

The Hillsborough Fort Guard honour Prince Philip

Over third of a million raised for Moderator's Covid appeal

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, has thanked

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Presbyterian congregations across the island for their ‘prayerful and sacrificial generosity of spirit in some of the hardest of times’ for raising over a third of a million pounds to provide support to people in fragile, vulnerable countries, suffering due to the ongoing effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Launched in December last year, the Moderator’s Special Christmas Appeal, which replaced the annual World Development Appeal for 2020, has to date raised £337,147 (€388,393). That money has now be distributed between PCI’s relief and development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund, who are already engaged on the ground in longer term sustainable development work amongst those most affected by Covid-19. The final third has also gone to churches with which PCI partners directly to support relief efforts in seven countries on three continents - South Sudan, Malawi, Indonesia, Nepal, Lebanon, Syria and Romania.

Thanking congregations for their overwhelming generosity, Dr Bruce said, “When we launched the Appeal before Christmas, I said that the pandemic had had a major impact on our island home in so many different ways, and this included our congregations and our members. Its effect on the economies of the more fragile, low-income nations of the world, however, would be multiplied.”

Dr Bruce continued, “In the face of not being able to meet for long periods of time, and the unprecedented demands that the pandemic has placed on ordinary people who have lost loved ones, their jobs and livelihoods, the Irish Presbyterian family has shown a prayerful and sacrificial



generosity of spirit. Along with others, in raising this significant sum of money they have demonstrated a deep compassion and practical concern for those in need beyond our shores, which is in and of itself, a powerful witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In terms of the allocation of appeal funding to PCI’s partner churches and organisations, in Malawi, for example, the funding will be directed to the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian’s Livingstonia Synod in its support for its three hospitals in Ekwendeni, Embangweni and Livingstonia. In Lebanon, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria & Lebanon’s Compassionate Protestant Society, will use funding to support two Covid-19 projects. One focuses on food security, providing food boxes for 1000 of the poorest families of all faiths and none, while the other project

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focusses on providing hygiene kits for 1000 families in Syrian refugee camps.

Over 3,000 miles to the east, The United Mission to Nepal (UMN), PCI's partner in the Himalayan nation, the Appeal will support UMN's hospitals in Tansen and Okhaldhunga. In the early stages of the pandemic, non-Covid patients were fearful of attending hospitals and this had a severe impact on income required to pay day-to-day running costs. PCI funding has not only contributed to offsetting these day-to-day costs, but to equipping the hospitals to care more effectively for the growing numbers of Covid-related patients, including the purchase of PPE.

Dr Bruce concluded by saying, "I look forward to receiving reports of how the Appeal will be used by our relief and development partners to help and support some of the most vulnerable people on the planet. The pandemic is truly global, and has placed unprecedented demands on nations and peoples across the world, and I give thanks for the faithful response by Presbyterians across Ireland to the Appeal.

"We hope there is light at the end of the tunnel, and it comes in the form of the various vaccination programmes that are being rolled out across the country. I will receive my second jab in May. It is vitally important, however, that while we are able to benefit from the various vaccines at home, there should be equal access to safe and effective vaccines around the world.

"Support given to those nations who neither have the infrastructure, or the financial provision to establish a

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vaccination programme will be vital. Vaccine nationalism is simply unchristian, and flies in the face of sharing God's heart for the world and His command for us to love our neighbour as ourselves," he said.

Responding to the news that the Appeal had topped a third of a million pounds, Rev Dr Liz Hughes, Convener of PCI's Council for Global Mission said, "At the time I believed that the Appeal would give us the opportunity to stand in solidarity with our global neighbours who, with the onslaught of Covid-19, found themselves in fragile and precarious conditions. I hoped and prayed that it would be a blessing to many. This news today is indeed an answer to prayer."

Diocese trains 47 new Parish Readers

47 people from 32 parishes across the diocese of Down and Dromore have just completed the Parish Readers' Course.

The 6-week course is designed to help candidates understand key factors in leading worship, navigating the Prayer Book and leading intercessions.

A Parish Reader can be a great help to rectors in assisting them with church services. The diocese has expressed gratitude to the Revd Adrian Dorrian for delivering the course and providing feedback on each candidate's intercessions assignments.

Of the 47 people that completed the course, 17 of them are also working on their qualification to become Diocesan

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Readers and this will enable them to become licensed to preach and lead services across the diocese.

New window honouring hymn-writer Cecil Frances Alexander



Parishioners and friends of St Bestius' Church in Killeter arrived on the afternoon of Sunday 18th April to get their first proper glimpse of the church's new stained glass window which celebrates their parish's links with the famous hymn-writer, Cecil Frances Alexander.

The inside of the new window had been kept under wraps prior to the 'big reveal' at the special Giving Day, which

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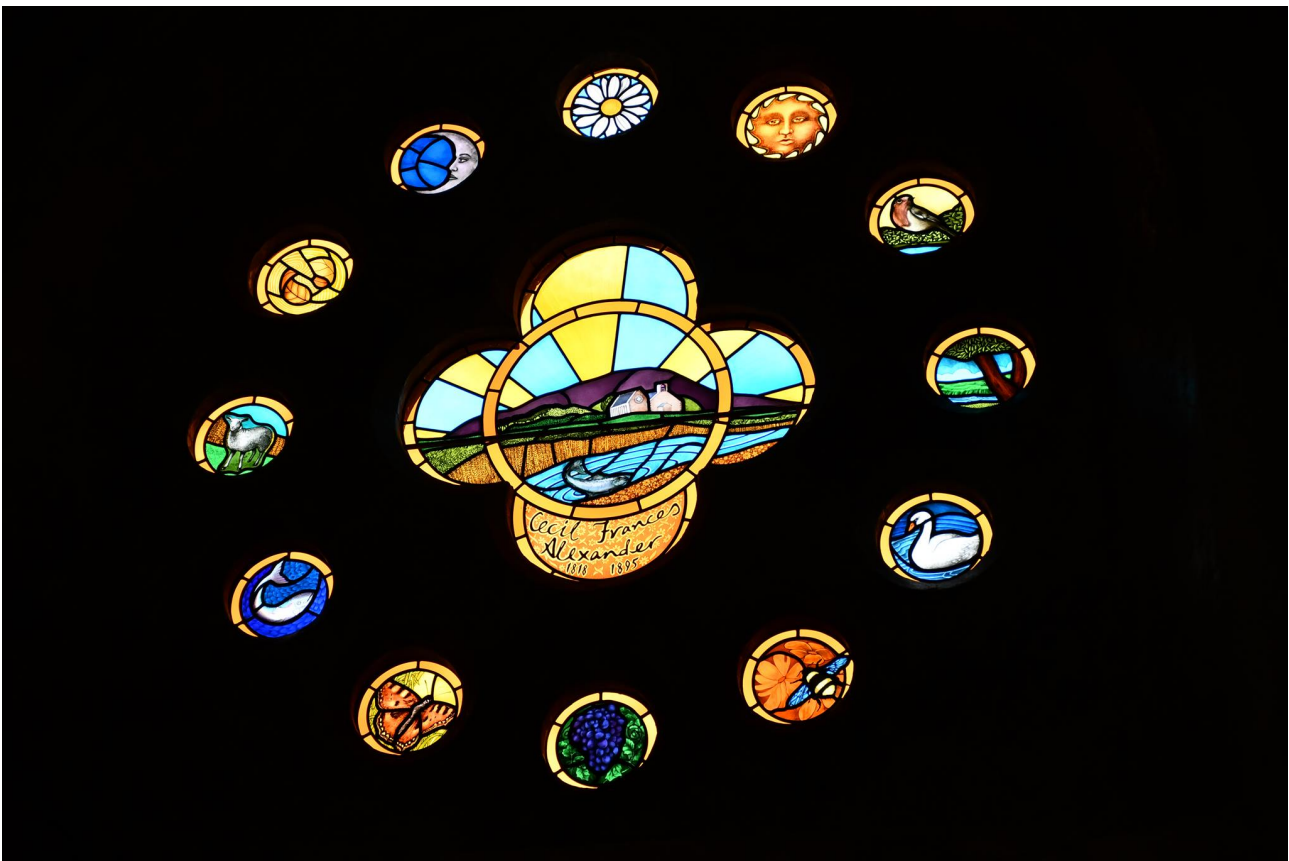
marked the completion of phase one of the Parish of Derg and Termonamongan's 'Bright and Beautiful Campaign'.

The colourful, stained glass window depicts different aspects of Mrs Alexander's most famous hymn, 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', and was described by the Rector, the Rev Peter Ferguson, as "a thing of beauty". "It's something our entire community can be proud of," Mr Ferguson said. "I believe that for anybody doing a visit or a daytrip to Killeter, this window will be a 'must-see' part of any visit to our area."

The parish implemented measures in church – such as a one-way system, taped off sections, social distancing, and hand sanitiser – to ensure that visitors remained safe during the Giving Day, and church wardens were present to ensure that COVID restrictions were adhered to.

The Killeter Parish's 'Bright and Beautiful Campaign' aims to restore St Bestius' Church to its former glory – albeit with a few improvements. "We've now completed phase one of the project," the Rector said, "which involved essential work to the exterior of the gable wall, where there was severe water ingress. That area has been completely and lovingly repointed, the stonework has been blasted and brought back, it's been lead-lined. And then a major and signature aspect of this whole project is our newly-commissioned and installed stained glass window."

Mrs Alexander and her husband, Bishop William Alexander, were "beloved characters" in the Killeter community, the Rector said. The project was launched in 2018, on the 200th anniversary of Cecil Frances Alexander's birth.



“As a community,” Mr Ferguson said, “we’ve grown together, and we’ve also grown in our knowledge, our understanding, our appreciation, our respect, our celebration of the Alexanders and what they brought – not just to the Church of Ireland community here but to everybody in the community and further afield – through her beloved hymns and poems. So, this project will see St Bestius’ Parish Church completely restored and some innovative and exciting community ideas as well.”

The next phase of the project will see a newly designed, multi-purpose, fully-glazed room provided, with a new coffee and tea dock, baby-changing facilities, and a new fully-accessible toilet. The room will be available to community groups during the week and will be adapted, as required, for worship on Sundays and on other occasions. “It is fully part of the church,” Rev Ferguson said, “the

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sound system will be fed into the new room, and extra seating can be moved in as and when required.”

If anyone wishes to support the ‘Bright and Beautiful Campaign’, cheques can be made payable to Termonamongan Parish Church B&B Fund and should be sent to Rev Peter Ferguson, 13 Strabane Road, Castlederg, Co Tyrone BT81 7HZ.

Further tributes to Rev John Anderson

The Irish News included the following in its report - Health minister Robin Swann paid tribute on social media, posting: "One of the Lord's true gentlemen and a great loss, to family, friends and community."

Before ordination, he studied at Queen’s University Belfast prior to Trinity College, Dublin, and the Church of Ireland Theological College.

Rev Willie Nixon from Drumbeg Parish, who was a fellow student, added: "This is sad and shocking news. John was a quiet and decent man. I knew him as a third year during my first year at Trinity. He was a gentle man of deep faith and genuine Christian conviction. Prayers are being said for Eleanor and the children."

Fr Martin Magill, a parish priest from St John on the Falls road in west Belfast, also posted: "This is so sad. May he indeed rest in God's peace".

Christian bookshop owner Richard Ryan also knew him: "So deeply saddened by this news. John was such a gentle soul

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and I'll remember him with much fondness. Thoughts and prayers with Eleanor and their children."

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Archbishop's book on prayer is focus for BBC Radio 4 Daily Services

The ten chapters of the Archbishop of York's book, 'Prayer – where to start and how to keep going' is forming the structure of BBC Radio 4's Daily Services for two weeks starting yesterday, Monday 19 April. The Archbishop led the daily service yesterday and will round up the series on Friday 30 April.

The book covers questions such as: What is prayer and how do I start? How should I pray? How do I pray when prayer seems impossible? Each day will focus on one question to encourage everyone to think about prayer and how this might be brought into everyday life.

The Archbishop said, "We talk a lot about prayer, about the benefits. But we rarely hear how to pray. Getting started is the most difficult thing. Praying is not easy, but joining with the voices of others strengthens my voice and my faith. I've discovered that weaving prayer into the existing rhythms of life is sometimes easier than trying to carve out special times in special places. I hope that the Daily Services on Radio 4 will be an encouragement to everyone to give prayer a go, to come into the presence of God and hear him

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tell us of his unending love, and to travel deeper into relationship with him.”

The themes of the book will be explored by those who sign up to the Church of England’s campaign that will run alongside the radio series, taken from the Archbishop’s book and delivered to tens of thousands of subscribers from Monday.

Daily emails, audio and social media graphics will be shared to guide followers through the themes.

Sign up to receive the reflections from the Archbishop at cofe.io/Prayer.

The Daily Services are broadcast on BBC Radio 4 LW each weekday at 9.45am. You can also listen again on BBC Sounds.

‘[Prayer – where to start and how to keep going](#)’ was published by Church House Publishing in 2020 and is available to buy in bookshops and online.

Prayer resources are available on the Church of England website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/learning-pray> and

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers>

Media review

NI Protocol: Northern Ireland handles more import paperwork than whole of France

Belfast News Letter

That is according to Robert Huey, Northern Ireland's chief vet, speaking at Stormont's agriculture committee last week. He was summoned before MLAs to be quizzed about the volume of red tape firms now face thanks to the NI Protocol. At the meeting on Thursday he unveiled some bombshell figures, which have not been heavily reported, but which give the scale of the bureaucratic headaches caused by the so-called Irish Sea Border.

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/ni-protocol-northern-ireland-handles-more-import-paperwork-than-whole-of-france-3204237>]

Northern Ireland: Did anyone warn about Brexit border checks?

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/56763859>]

Covid-19: Catholic archbishop criticises 'provocative' law on services

The Irish Times

The Catholic Church is taking legal advice following the publication of a new Covid-19 statutory instrument that Archbishop Eamon Martin has called "draconian". He was responding to a new measure making it a criminal offence to attend certain types of indoor events or gatherings. The regulations are focused on indoor gatherings of all types, including religious services other than weddings or funerals.

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[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/covid-19-catholic-archbishop-criticises-provocative-law-on-services-1.4540664>]

Bishops seek meeting with Minister over 'draconian' ban

RTE

The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland is seeking a meeting with the Minister for Health over a "draconian" move to outlaw public mass and other religious services.

[[] <https://www.rte.ie/news/coronavirus/2021/0418/1210583-mass-coronavirus/>]

Irish president Higgins calls for end to segregated education in NI after riots

Belfast Telegraph

President Higgins said educating pupils based on the their religious ... the post-Brexit Northern Ireland Protocol, brought in to prevent a border on the ...

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/irish-president-higgins-calls-for-end-to-segregated-education-in-ni-after-riots-40325411.html>]

Big Moments From Prince Philip's Funeral

The New York Times

The Grenadier Guards, a centuries-old regiment of the British Army, which the ... Mr. Elphick said he was emotional at the news of Philip's death, but knew that no ... wife, Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, also joined him in the church.

[[] <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/04/17/world/prince-philip-funeral>]

Radical proposals to Church of England call for bishops to declare extra income

The Guardian

Church of England bishops should be forced to declare extra earnings and ... The C of E's 42 diocesan bishops are paid just over £46,000 a year, ... One way to address these issues to allow the public and the press to find out how ...

[[] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/17/radical-proposals-to-church-of-england-call-for-bishops-to-declare-extra-income>]

Media focus - Ulster's lost boys turn violent - Jenny McCartney

Lockdown and Brexit have drawn a new generation into an old conflict

It's flying through the air again. Masonry, metal rods, petrol bombs, the detritus of rage, the kind that the poet Ciaran Carson once dubbed "Belfast confetti". The riots in loyalist areas of Northern Ireland started with the Easter Weekend and have carried on ever since, injuring 55 police officers. Scores of young Protestants, some only 13 and masked for all the wrong reasons, have been flinging missiles at police vans, petrol-bombing and hijacking a city bus, and fighting with Catholic youths through a smashed gap in the West Belfast "peace wall".

What's it all about? As ever when Northern Ireland catches fire, the match does not fully explain the kindling, although the two are closely related. The match, in this case, was the decision by the Public Prosecution Service not to charge

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any Sinn Féin politicians with breaking Covid restrictions during the funeral last June of Bobby Storey, a former IRA intelligence director.

Sinn Féin has never been a party to play down a funeral, apart from those the IRA brought about, and Storey's was a notable event. Michelle O'Neill, the Sinn Féin Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, headed the procession along with Mary Lou Macdonald, the party leader, and Gerry Adams, the former party leader. More than 2,000 people lined the route and followed the cortege, and a snap showed O'Neill with a fellow-mourner's arm around her, displaying a cavalier disregard for social distancing.

After a public and political outcry, an independent investigation by the Cumbria Constabulary drew up a file relating to 24 Sinn Féin representatives. But the public prosecutor recently refused to take it further, on the basis that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had been substantially involved in agreeing the Storey funeral arrangements in the first place. The perception among Unionists, and some Nationalists, was that Sinn Féin politicians were blithely operating outside the rules, and that the PSNI leadership was helping them do it. Arlene Foster, the DUP leader and first minister, called for the resignation of Simon Byrne, the PSNI chief constable. So did every other Unionist party. He has thus far refused to resign. Against this extraordinary backdrop of authority in chaos, ordinary police officers are now going up nightly against crowds of youths wielding Molotov cocktails.

The scenes on the streets are depressing ones, reminiscent of the dark days of the Troubles. The young rioters

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themselves are, of course, directly responsible for their violent actions. But behind them, particularly in South East Antrim, one can sense the steering hand of older loyalist paramilitaries. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that the Loyalist Communities Council — an “umbrella group” for the UDA, UVF and Red Hand Commando — announced its withdrawal of support in early March for the 1998 Good Friday agreement. The reason was its anger at the post-Brexit Northern Ireland Protocol, which creates a sea border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom by keeping the former a part of the EU’s single market for goods.

Both loyalists and the wider Unionist population feel strongly that the Protocol fundamentally undermines Northern Ireland’s position in the UK, an analysis which most outside observers would surely find hard to counter. The question now is what anyone is going to do about it. Although the LCC was careful to say that opposition to the Protocol should remain “peaceful and democratic” the declaration sounded — and was fully intended to sound — an ominous note. And this Good Friday, in terms of peace, was a bad one.

I have reported on riots in Northern Ireland, and the unfortunate truth is that for the youths involved they are often wildly exciting occasions. The tacit permission conferred by “political anger” allows young people out on the streets, drinking lager and setting fire to things in a kind of carnival of rage: whoops and laughter are inevitably mixed in with the guttural yells.

There will be serious and sometimes irreparable costs, of course: injury to police officers and rioters themselves,

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damage to vehicles and property and the possibility of acquiring criminal records. Last week a loyalist rioter set his own clothes on fire. It was at a republican riot in Derry that the young journalist Lyra McKee was shot and killed in 2019. Such considerations might certainly weigh heavily with the more responsible local parents. But they will make little impression on a teenager clutching a petrol bomb, springy with adrenalin and pent-up frustration, particularly after a year in which Covid restrictions have rendered daily life more constricted and colourless than normal.

For most of these rioters, too, violence or the threat of it will be far from abnormal to them, despite the official “peace” in post-1998 Northern Ireland. They have grown up in largely Protestant working-class areas, dominated by the presence of former or current loyalist paramilitaries, many released early from prison under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

Some of these ex-prisoners are now salaried “community workers”. Among their ranks, some are no doubt sincere about helping young people avoid the vicious sectarian brutality which warped and defined their own lives. Yet numerous others have energetically exploited the “peace” to celebrate sectarianism and expand criminal empires involving drugs and extortion. They entrench their fiefdoms by dispensing beatings and shootings, sometimes fatally, to any fellow-Protestant who crosses their path.

In the years since 1998, little has been done to restrain them. The unspoken official bargain with both loyalist and republican paramilitaries has been that — so long as such organisations hold off on explicitly sectarian murders — they

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will be broadly untroubled by the authorities. The efforts of the PSNI to hold such criminality accountable has often been hampered by the lack of a wider political will, and reluctance of witnesses to give evidence. The British government imagined, perhaps, that with time and the steady flow of government grants operating as some kind of opiate, the loyalist paramilitaries would eventually grow tractable. If so, it was a miscalculation.

Since 1998, Sinn Féin — many of whose prominent members were in the IRA — has attained ever more political clout, making striking electoral gains in the north and more recently in the south. But parties representing the loyalist paramilitaries have been hampered in their political ambitions by the fact that the bulk of the Protestant community simply declined to vote for them. This has created a disparity of influence of which the loyalists are both keenly aware and resentful. The paramilitary murals in loyalist areas have become more explicitly menacing, deliberately evoking the murderous height of the Troubles.

One grouping in particular, the South East Antrim brigade of the Ulster Defence Association — thought to be most heavily involved in the drugs trade — has recently upped the ante, making open death threats against journalists and politicians who have exposed or criticised it. It was further enraged by the recent arrest of four of its members by the PSNI on drugs charges. It is perhaps not a surprise that names of areas in which this brigade dominates — including Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus and Ballymena — all featured in recent reports of rioting.

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The young Protestant rioters we now see on the nightly news are the children of post-ceasefire Northern Ireland. They are in many ways its lost boys. In their streets — unlike more middle-class areas — the paramilitary threat never went away. A couple of years ago, I recall attending a community event for schoolchildren on the Protestant Shankill Road in West Belfast, in which a travelling theatre group put on a lively play meant to illustrate the dangers of getting sucked into the criminal orbit of the paramilitaries. Afterwards, there was a question-and-answer session that included a local policewoman. The teenage boys behind me — quick-witted, both cocky and vulnerable — had watched the play attentively, and later one of them spoke up to ask: “Are the cops scared of the paramilitaries?” The policewoman rather predictably assured him that they weren’t.

Afterwards, I asked him why he had posed the question. It emerged that his father had been shot in the legs by paramilitaries for alleged “anti-social” behaviour years earlier. When he himself had got into an argument with another boy at school, one whose father was “connected,” his family had been warned to leave their house immediately or face the consequences. A local “mediation” service had managed to get the threat lifted, but I imagine its potential return never felt very far away. The entire landscape of his childhood had been laced with menace, in which the rest of society appeared largely uninterested. As such youths grow up, the local hard-men can appear as their tormentors, role models or, paradoxically, both things at once.

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Working-class Protestant boys have the lowest educational achievement in Northern Ireland. The shipyards and mills that provided their ancestors with employment have melted away. A wealth of potential talent often lies untapped, as I am reminded every year when I see the annual Twelfth of July bonfires that so many toil long and hard to build, teetering miracles of engineering — bemusing to outsiders — which will do nothing more than blaze fiercely and briefly, emitting clouds of noxious smoke. Politically, there is a sense of embattled defensiveness, of belonging to a community inexorably on the slide away from a UK which is increasingly contemptuous of them, and towards a Republic of Ireland which is even more so.

The majority of Unionists — including many people in working-class communities — will regard the rioting with deep disapproval, and want it stopped. But that will not eradicate their abiding dislike of the Protocol, and the effect it is having on businesses, trade and their sense of Britishness. They have been cut adrift by Boris Johnson's vision of Brexit, in a way that even those Unionists who backed Brexit did not foresee, and which Johnson himself had explicitly promised would not happen. Perhaps they should have predicted what Johnson would actually do, and not listened to what he said, but then it has been a recurrent tendency of Unionists to place excessive faith in the word of a British prime minister.

In appealing for peace on Northern Ireland's streets, however, the British Government faces one great obstacle: the widespread perception in Belfast that violence — or the threat of it — works to secure political ends. That perception has flowed in part from the peace process, and not without

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reason. The SDLP politician Seamus Mallon once recalled asking Tony Blair why he spent so much more time in private talks with Sinn Féin, when the moderate SDLP was at that time the larger party. Blair replied, memorably: “The trouble with you fellows, Seamus, is that you have no guns.”

An oft-repeated phrase in the peace process was “parity of esteem”. As Unionists see it, that is rapidly eroding. What loyalist paramilitaries seem now to be seeking is “parity of menace”. When considering where a customs border might be placed in the event of a hard Brexit, it was repeatedly emphasised — most passionately by the then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar — that a land border was unconscionable, lest it run the risk of reigniting republican violence. This argument was taken very seriously by the US and EU, and no land customs border was forthcoming.

The opposite possibility, however — that a sea border might do the same to loyalist violence — scarcely seemed to figure on the international radar. Johnson’s Government showed a blithe disregard for the danger, although Theresa May had previously taken steps to avoid it. But by showing that Unionist concerns will be downgraded rather than run any risk of republican violence, the British Government and the EU have now created an awful incentive for loyalist paramilitaries to demonstrate an equivalent level of threat.

That incentive is not just implied, but actually written into Article 16 of the Protocol itself. There, it states that UK or the EU can unilaterally suspend aspects of the Protocol’s operation if it is causing “serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist”. That’s the political equivalent of a teacher telling a delinquent

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school pupil that they can only get out of a locked classroom by setting it alight. The loyalist paramilitaries — whether by instinct or conscious design — will now make it their business to create “serious societal difficulties” that are “liable to persist”. It’s a terrible script. And unless Britain and the EU can somehow rewrite it, fast, it’s going to make for a very long, hot summer.

[<https://unherd.com/2021/04/the-tragedy-of-ulsters-lost-boys/>]



Pointers for prayer

Almighty God,
who hast given thine only Son
to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin,
and also an ensample of godly life;
Give us grace that we may always
most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit,
and also daily endeavour ourselves

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to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

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O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours. As his disciples in this age, we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe in which we are privileged to live and our neighbours with whom we share it...
...Open our hearts to your power moving around us and between us and within us, until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy, in communities transformed by justice and compassion, and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God —truly righteous and holy.

Ephesians 4:22-24 NLT

Do you like change? If I'm honest I have a love hate relationship with change and I suspect we're all a bit like that. There is much about life that is comfortable and congenial and I would be happy if it stayed the way it is, but there are other things that I would be happy to change in an instant. In these verses Paul confronts us with the fact that, as Easter people, we need to get used to the fact that God is looking for revolutionary change in our lives. And he wants that because his desire is that our lives should be

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completely blessed, and not merely an improvement on what they used to be.

This process of change is so radical that it has to start in our thoughts. Only if God can renew our thinking will any real change take place in our actions. I know that this could sound ultimately scary. But when we realise that God is motivated by perfect love and that his intentions are that we should reach our true potential we can be completely confident as we place ourselves in his hands. God's amazing intention is that our new nature should be just like his. So we need have no apprehensions about the changes that God wants to see in our lives. They will all be for the best in every possible way.

Since God is holy and perfectly loving it might seem sensible if he were to impose his changes on us. But God is always unwilling to do that. The decision always lies with us. And that's why Paul uses the language of changing clothes. God looks to us to throw off the old suit of clothes. He wants us to make the deliberate decision that we want to change our way of life before he will give us a wonderful new suit of clothes to put on. In his love he lets us decide.

QUESTION

Are you willing to let God change your attitudes and thoughts?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you that you only ever ask me to change because of your perfect love for me. Amen

