

Church News Ireland

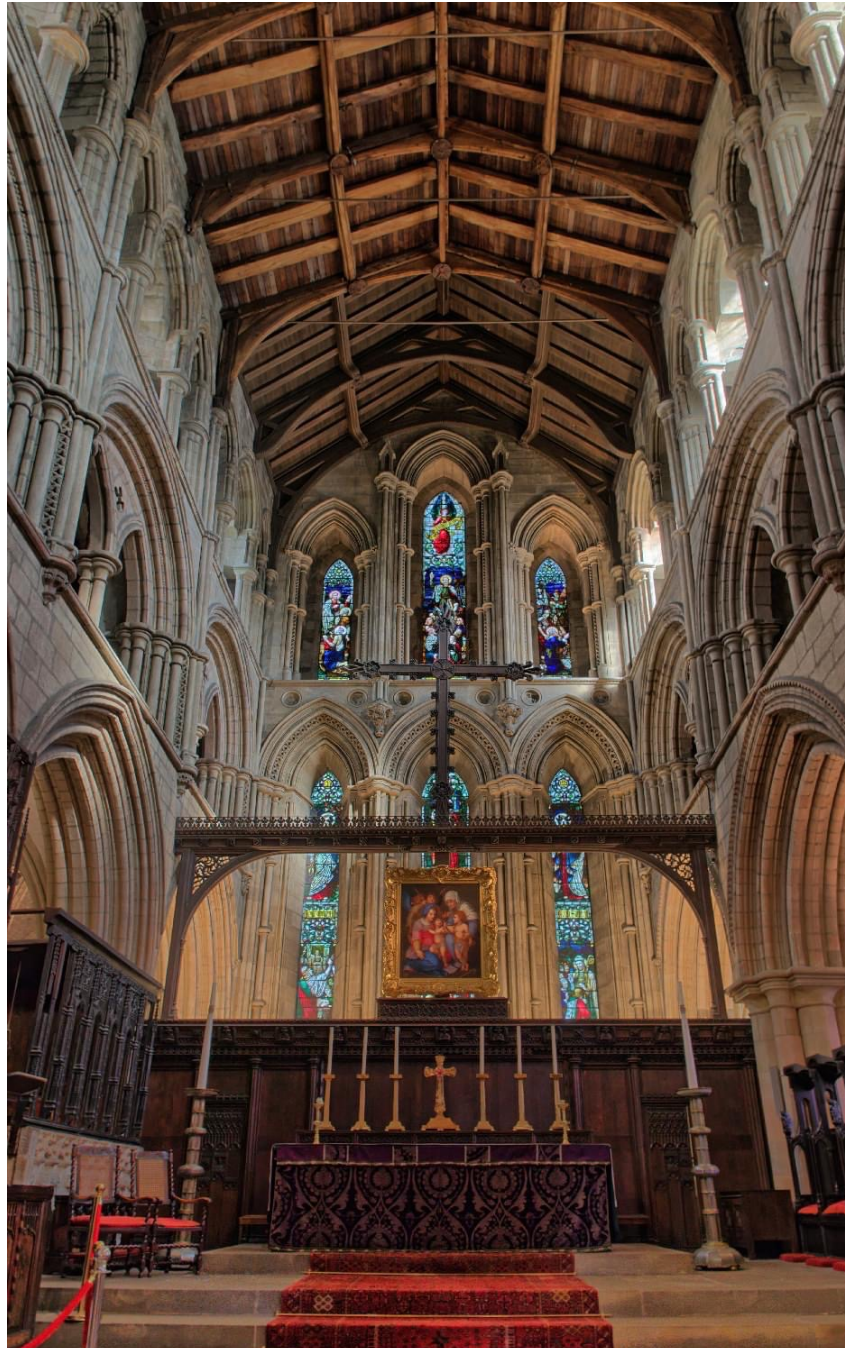


Image of the day – The Cross in Holy Week – Rood Cross

April 6, 2023

Image of the day

The Cross in Holy Week - Rood Cross

A rood or rood cross, sometimes known as a triumphal cross, is a cross or crucifix, especially the large crucifix set above the entrance to the chancel of a medieval church. Alternatively, it is a large sculpture or painting of the crucifixion of Jesus.

[<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rood>]

People and places



Kildare celebrates Palm Sunday



Kildare celebrates Palm Sunday



**An evening with Nathanael & Elizabeth Spicak & family.
Sunday 16th April @ 7.00pm
in the Lawther (including Light Refreshments)
Come along and hear an update on their
work in Koprivnica, Croatia.**

April 6, 2023

Rector of Ballymore & Clare instituted



Last week the Revd Colin Darling was instituted as Rector of the Parishes of Ballymore & Clare (Tandragee).



April 6, 2023



The Rector's father, Rt Rev EF Darling, former Bishop of Limerick, took part in the service.



The Service of Institution took place in Ballymore Parish Hall on March 28 due to the ongoing renovation work to the Parish Church.



Girls' Brigade display returns at St Paul's, Lisburn

St Paul's, Lisburn, Girls' Brigade hosted their first display since 2019 at the weekend, and what a colourful spectacle it was as it marked its post-pandemic return!

The display was held on two nights – Friday March 31 and Saturday April 1 – to ensure everyone had a chance to enjoy the talent on display.

Congratulations to all the leaders and the young people involved. A huge amount of work had gone into preparing for the display, and it clearly paid off! Photograph by Norman

April 6, 2023

Briggs. For more pictures, visit the St Paul's Lisburn, Facebook page.

Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise

Fr Paul Connell has been appointed as Bishop Elect of the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise by Pope Francis.

Upcoming Easter services and events



RTE televised Ecumenical service today for Maundy/Holy Thursday

Today there is an ecumenical televised Maundy/Holy Thursday service on RTE, at 4:40pm Ireland time, and viewable globally.

April 6, 2023



Former Irish President, Mary McAleese with the music group.

Centred around the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the service features many inspirational figures (victims, survivors, ministers and presidents) who continue to work for peace on this island.

We were truly honoured to be included in this meaningful event, and in the presence of leaders and individuals who have worked through their own difficult life experiences and have chosen to walk the path of peacebuilding, both personally and in their communities.

<https://www.rte.ie/player/onnow>

The broadcast airs at 4.40pm on Thursday 6th April (and an hour later on RTÉ 1+1) and also on RTÉ Radio 1 Extra / Longwave 252 at 7pm that evening

April 6, 2023

Former Moderator speaker at Belfast three-hour service on Good Friday

Belfast Cathedral invites people from all traditions to join the Very Rev Dr David Bruce, past Moderator of the

Presbyterian Church in Ireland, as he considers the Seven Final Sayings of Jesus spoken from the cross, during a three-hour service on Good Friday from 12 noon to 3pm.



Dr Bruce was Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland from June 2020-June 2022 and is a former Director of Scripture Union.


Looking ahead to the three-hour Good Friday Service, Dr Bruce said: “There is a darkness about this day – and for some, a sense of reservation about dwelling upon its violent tragedy. Why do we call it ‘Good’ when it seems because of the events it commemorates, to be anything but?”

“In Danish, it’s called Long Friday, and in some traditions in Germany it’s called Sorrowful Friday. Some say that Good

April 6, 2023

Friday is a corruption of God's Friday – that it was God's day for grace.”

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, said he understood this was the first time a past Moderator of the Presbyterian Church had led the three-hour service.



Flute Recital

MUSIC BY PIAZZOLLA, MUCZYNSKI,
IAN CLARKE, MIKE MOWER, DEBUSSY,
MARIN MARAIS, KATHERINE HOOVER
AND VALERIE COLEMAN

1.00pm, Friday 14th April
St Mark's Church, Portadown

SUGGESTED DONATION £5

● ● ●

Danielle Rogan
www.daniellerogan.com

Dr Bruce recalled how, as an 18-year-old, he asked why in his tradition, from the third to the sixth hour of Good Friday when he most wanted to be in church, the place was closed. “I didn’t know in those days of the existence

April 6, 2023

of this tradition, but had I done, I am sure it would have done me good to attend, reflect and remember these painful events,” he said.

“Perhaps it would have helped me to understand the cross, its cost, its pain and its purpose rather better.”

He added that during the day, ‘we we will discover that amidst the awfulness of it, and indeed the mystery of its meaning – Friday’s dark good-ness can only truly be understood in the light of resurrection day, which is just around the corner.’”

In the three hours from noon until 3pm, Dr Bruce will recall Jesus’ final hours on the cross of Calvary and will unpack what these seven sayings mean for him, and what they have to say to our contemporary world. From 1-2pm, members of Belfast Cathedral’s Past Choristers’ Association will lead the singing.

Dean Forde said: “We hope that many people will take this opportunity to hear a meaningful preacher and thinker sharing with us all his personal consideration of the crucifixion of Jesus.”

Methodist Reflections for Holy Week

Join the Revd Graham Thompson, President of the Conference and Anthony Boateng, Vice-President of the Conference, in a short video reflection released each day at 9am, from Palm Sunday (2 April) to Easter Day (9 April). Watch a video at

April 6, 2023

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X81oROVCvkg>]

Find out more about these daily HolyWeek reflections on the website at

<http://methodist.org.uk/HolyWeek2023>.

News reports

Church leaders deliver message to Downing Street opposing Illegal Migration Bill

A statement signed by more than 1,450 church leaders opposing the government’s Illegal Migration Bill has been handed to 10 Downing Street, saying that the government’s proposals are “incompatible with our Christian conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God”.

In the statement, church leaders say they are “appalled” by the proposals in the government’s Illegal Migration Bill to “detain, punish and reject thousands of people seeking safety”, and that they will “foster discrimination and distrust” and cause “immeasurable harm”.

Church leaders are calling on the government to withdraw the legislation, and to honour the UK’s “moral and international obligations” by establishing “safe and accessible routes to enable the UK to play its part in welcoming people in need of safety”. The leaders argue that when two out of three people crossing the channel in small

April 6, 2023

boats have their claim for asylum accepted, rendering them unable to have their claim heard or access a safe route essentially puts a ban on claiming asylum in the UK for many people.

The statement was handed in to 10 Downing Street by representatives from The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Britain, the United Reformed Church, Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It was initially released in March by senior leaders from The Methodist Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain and United Reformed Church, and has since gathered support from

more than 1,450 church leaders in communities across the UK. said:

“If ever there was a contemporary example of ignoring our neighbour and walking by on the other side, this is it. On a moral level, these proposals lack compassion and respect for people’s dignity. On a practical level, they fail to see that punishing people who cross the channel in small boats without offering alternative safe routes will only cause pain and increase the backlog of people who are stuck in unfit accommodation here in the UK. Even whilst some MPs are pushing for further tightening of this cruel approach, we know that we can and must do better than this. Today we call on the government to lead the way to change by creating and implementing new safe routes by which people can come to the UK to seek sanctuary.”

The Revd Steve Tinning, Public Issues Enabler for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said:

“Holy Week is not just a week for spiritual reflection; it is a call to political action. On Palm Sunday, Jesus was welcomed with open arms and then betrayed when the price of being part of His movement of justice appeared too costly. On Good Friday, Jesus was laid bare on the cross while the world was exposed for its hostility and violence. On Easter Day death was defeated and the hope of life was declared. This Holy Week over 1450 Christian leaders are saying that the Illegal Migration Bill represents nothing of our Christian values of compassion, hospitality and mercy. It threatens the detention of innocent children, it offers no obligation to provide safe routes for those fleeing war and persecution, and it criminalises and punishes innocent victims. We implore the government to stop stoking fear and cease their jeers of rejection and hostility. Instead, we ask and pray that our nation might set a table and sacrificially make space for the other.”

The Revd Tessa Henry Robinson, Moderator-Elect for the United Reformed Church, said:

“In the face of the UK Government's proposed illegal migration bill, it is essential to remember that our nation's greatness lies not in turning our backs on those in need, but in embracing our shared humanity and committing to care for all. Across the world's religions, we find a shared belief in the sacred duty of caring for our neighbours, visitors, strangers, and those seeking help across borders. By upholding these values of compassion and empathy, we can create a society that truly stands out as a beacon of hope for all.”

April 6, 2023

Representatives from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and Churches Together in England, also attended the hand-in at Downing Street, representing church leaders from a range of denominations in the UK who signed the statement.

Richard Reddie, Director for Justice and Inclusion for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and Coordinator for the Churches' Refugee Network said:

“It is deeply troubling that the Government continues to weaponise immigration and asylum matters for what appears to be political purposes. We need an immigration and asylum system that treats people with dignity; is integrity-driven, and most of all, fit for purpose. This Bill, among many other things, fails to comply with the obligations found in the UN Refugee Convention, to which we are signatories. I call on the Government to focus more on why people travel than how they travel, and ensure that those who are fleeing danger are treated with hospitality and not hostility.’

The Revd Ben Aldous, Principle Officer for Mission and Evangelism for Churches Together in England, said:

“So many churches around the UK are already welcoming refugees and asylum seekers in their communities, through language lessons, community cafes and so much more. We want to see an asylum system that recognises the value that all people can bring to our communities when they are given the chance to integrate and flourish. We urge the government to work with communities to find better solutions for everyone.”

April 6, 2023

The Illegal Migration Bill passed Committee Stage in the House of Commons on 28 March, and will return for a vote by MPs after the Easter recess.

Over-65s rejecting religion faster than any other group

People aged 65 and over are losing their religion faster than other age groups, analysis of census data shows.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a report yesterday examining the profile of the older population living in England and Wales, and comparing changes between 2011 and 2021.

Researchers found that while the population aged 65 and over is predominantly Christian, the proportion with no religious affiliation has doubled in a decade. This group – who identified as having “no religion” – also increased faster than any other group, jumping from 8.5 per cent of the population in 2011 to 17.5 per cent in 2021 – a 107 per cent increase.

They increased at twice the rate of adults under-65. Between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of all adults identifying as non-religious increased from 27.8 per cent to 41 per cent – a change of 46 per cent.

The latest figures come as data published in November revealed that Christians now account for less than half of

April 6, 2023

population of England and Wales for the first time in census history.

The Archbishop of York, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, responded to the figures at the time, saying it was “not a great surprise” there is a declining number of Christians in the UK, but it was important to remember that Christianity is “the largest movement on Earth”.

However, Humanists UK said the census “should be a wake-up call which prompts fresh reconsiderations of the role of religion in society”.

The census results also showed that 46.2 per cent of the population (27.5 million people) described themselves as “Christian” in 2021, marking a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3 per cent (33.3 million people) in 2011.

Despite this decrease, “Christian” remained the most common response to the question about religion. “No religion” was the second-most common response, increasing to 37.2 per cent (22.2 million) from 25.2 per cent (14.1 million) across the 10-year period.

Furthermore, every major religion increased over the 10-year period, except for Christianity.

The ONS figures also show that between 2011 and 2021, the number of Buddhists aged 65 and over increased from 0.2 per cent to 0.3 per cent, the number of Hindus rose from 0.7 to 1.1 per cent, Muslims increased from 1.2 to 1.7 per cent of England and Wales and the number of Sikhs also rose from 1.2 to 1.7 per cent.

Poem for today

In Spite of War by Angela Morgan (1920)

In spite of war, in spite of death,
In spite of all man's sufferings,
Something within me laughs and sings
And I must praise with all my breath.
In spite of war, in spite of hate
Lilacs are blooming at my gate,
Tulips are tripping down the path
In spite of war, in spite of wrath.
"Courage!" the morning-glory saith;
"Rejoice!" the daisy murmureth,
And just to live is so divine
When pansies lift their eyes to mine.
The clouds are romping with the sea,
And flashing waves call back to me
That naught is real but what is fair,
That everywhere and everywhere
A glory liveth through despair.
Though guns may roar and cannon boom,
Roses are born and gardens bloom;
My spirit still may light its flame
At that same torch whence poppies came.
Where morning's altar whitely burns
Lilies may lift their silver urns
In spite of war, in spite of shame.
And in my ear a whispering breath,
"Wake from the nightmare! Look and see

April 6, 2023

That life is naught but ecstasy
In spite of war, in spite of death!"

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com
