



Image of the day - Rathlin puffins

The RSPB warden on Rathlin spied four colourful beaks yesterday morning amongst the hundreds of guillemots and razorbills jostling on the cliffs. Puffins come to land to nest and spend the rest of the year out at sea - their return is one of our favourite spring highlights.

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MU's All Ireland President June begins walking challenge to fundraise for MU's 'Mums in May' fund



June Butler (right), who is a parishioner of Saintfield Parish, is pictured with Saintfield Branch Leader, Marion Edwards as they set out on the first leg of the challenge on 24 March.

June Butler, MU's All Ireland President, has begun a walking challenge to raise funds for the charity's 'Mums in May' fund.

'21 in 21' will see June complete three 7km walks in each diocese in Ireland before the end of 2021. That's a total of 252 kilometres or almost 160 miles.

“With current restrictions I've had to begin the walks close to my home in Northern Ireland, but I am hopeful that I'll be able to travel to the Republic of Ireland by the summer. I'll be accompanied by one other MU member (until restrictions relax) and we'll have a short time of prayer at (or even in!) a church at the beginning and/or end of each walk.

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“I began planning this back in 2019, long before anyone had heard of Covid-19, or the concept of “staycation” was prevalent, but seeing more of Ireland on foot will certainly be my holiday in 2021!”

Give and take part

Mums in May is an All-Ireland Fund which was established in 2012 in celebration of 125 years of MU in Ireland. The fund supports new and ongoing MU projects throughout Ireland as well as specific important overseas projects. It is replenished every third year so that MU can continue this important work. 2021 is the year.

The challenge has been issued to all MU Ireland members but the ‘21 in 21’ can be 21 yards, 21 laps, 21 furlongs, 21 kilometres, 21 miles or 21 something else...knit, sew, bake...the possibilities are endless!

Belfast's Titanic Quarter



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You can sponsor June and the other MU members who take part through their 'Just Giving' page here -
[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MumsinMay21]

Follow June's progress on the All-Ireland MU website here -
[[<http://www.mothersunion.ie/index.html>]

Republic 'needs to understand NI better'

The head of a Co Wicklow-based centre for peace and reconciliation, which has played a key role in building bridges between communities in Northern Ireland, has called for the establishment of a state-of-the-art centre for conflict resolution, Lauren Harte writes in the Belfast Telegraph.

Barbara Walshe, chair of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, said raising awareness of the complexity of Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland over the next five years will be crucial if a border poll takes place. In an interview with the New York-based Irish Central website, Ms Walshe said: "It's unfair and short-sighted to ignore the concerns of the unionist community.

"It's more important than ever that the Republic of Ireland really engages with this and understands the complexity of Northern Ireland."

She added: "There are nearly one million people who identify as British and that identity will have to be accommodated.



Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation

“If a border poll returns a 51-49 result, we have seen across the water what a close referendum like that has caused over the past four years.”

Ms Walshe said Glencree has stood as a symbol of hope in the quest for an end to violent conflict.

Over the past five decades, the former English military barracks in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains has been helping both communities in Northern Ireland move towards peace and reconciliation.

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In 1974, Una O'Higgins O'Malley, the daughter of Ireland's first Minister for Justice Kevin O'Higgins, sought to build a reconciliation centre for people living through the Troubles. Her father had been assassinated in 1927 when she was just five months old and she spent much of her life attempting to reconcile violence as a result.

O'Higgins O'Malley sought to bring people from both communities in Northern Ireland to the centre where they could discuss their differences in a private and safe space. "It was a safe space. It was expert facilitation," Ms Walshe told IrishCentral.

"It was a kind of speaking and listening, even when people felt very strongly about things.

"It was a place for people to hear and to listen at a time when nobody wanted to listen to anybody," she added.

"There's no judgment. People who wanted to come, regardless of their background, could engage in peace and create the conditions for peace if they wished."

After the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, Glencree's role shifted toward the legacy of the conflict. The centre has since hosted more than 50 confidential discussions between politicians and community and civic leaders on both sides of the border, seeking to iron out contentious issues in the historic peace agreement.

It has also hosted discussions between representatives from the UK and Ireland and has continued working with victims

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of the Troubles, allowing people to discuss the lasting impacts of the violent conflict.

“What we saw in Glencree after the Troubles was the legacy of the Troubles. You had the end of the conflict. You had the peace agreement,” Ms Walshe said.

“Then suddenly, people started to talk about what had happened to them 20 or 30 years ago. It became evident from people coming to Glencree that it might have been 30 years ago, but for them, it was 30 minutes ago.”

BT 06.04.2021

Church of England anger as Archbishop of York looks to recruit £90k chief of staff

New role of ‘critical friend’ branded madness at a time when rural parishes face budget cuts and closures

The Archbishop of York is hiring a £90,000-a-year chief of staff in a move criticised by clergy as a “slap in the face” at a time of financial crisis for the Church of England.

The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell has been criticised as overseeing the “madness of a management-shaped church” amid allegations of a dismantling of the parish church structure.

The job advert says the new chief of staff role, which will be based at Bishopthorpe Palace, just outside York, comes with a “competitive salary in the region of £90,000” and involves

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the amplification of mission priorities and liaising with Lambeth Palace, the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The advert states: “You will be the Archbishop’s chief companion, support and critical friend for developing and refining this vision, aligning his work with the dioceses and central structures of the Church of England, ensuring his time is used effectively and strategically, and making it happen.”

The advert has prompted a backlash amid criticism that £90,000 conflicts with the Archbishop of York previously saying that the Church needs to be “simpler” and “humbler”. The salary could pay for around seven house-for-duty clergy plus expenses.

“What need for another brigadier when you’ve sacked all the infantry?” one layperson said. Another added: “It’s a sign of the madness of the management-shaped church.”

The chief of staff description has triggered mockery that “the Archbishop [can] pretend he’s in the West Wing”.

The criticism comes after The Daily Telegraph reported in October that multiple clergy and laypeople had voiced fears over the “collapse” of the Church in rural communities.

A leaked Church document then suggested that the pandemic could result in the loss of the parish church model in a bid to remain “financially sustainable”. Clergy were warned of cuts, sparking fears that rural churches will not survive.

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Responding to the £90,000-a-year chief of staff role, Will Pearson-Gee, Rector of Buckingham parish church, said he was “dismayed”.

“We should be spending that money on clergy posts. Surely the Archbishop could get a ‘critical friend’ for a lot less than that. It’s sending out the wrong sort of messages at a time of huge financial pressure. We only survived because of the Government’s furlough scheme.”

[Fair Head, Ballycastle, Co. Antrim](#)



Neil McKittrick, a retired judge who served at Peterborough Cathedral, said the salary is “amazingly generous” when “many parishes are seriously short of money. If the Church has a future, it should stimulate successful parishes by putting more time and money into them.”

It is understood that the £90,000-a-year post will be paid for out of existing agreed budgets from the Church Commissioners, which are not linked to diocesan budgets or parishes.

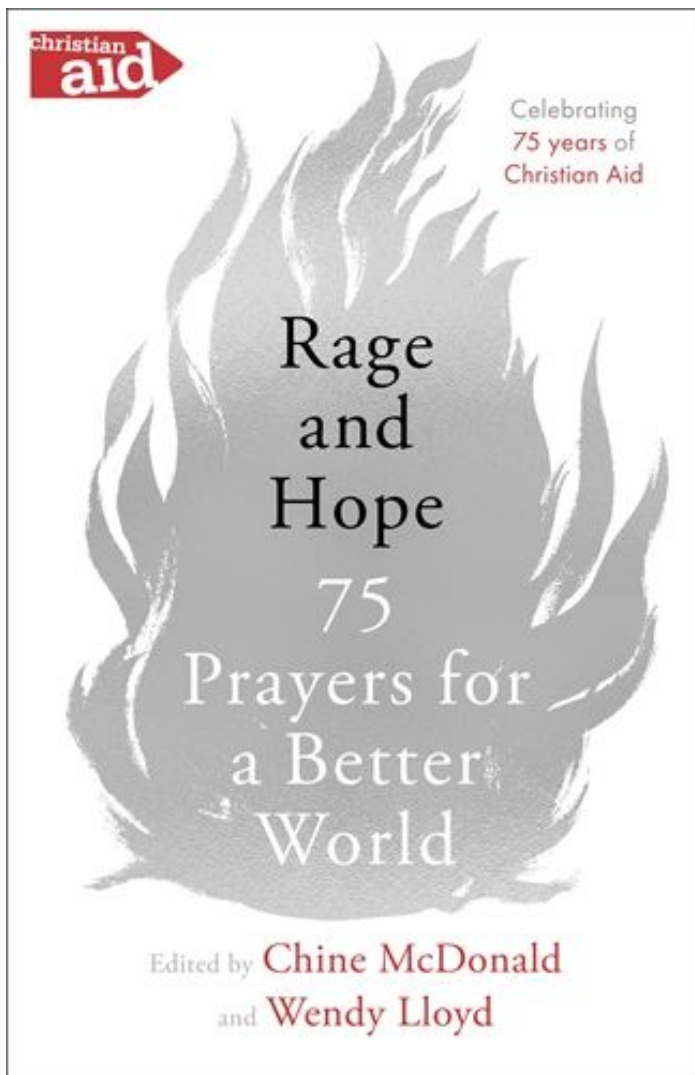
A spokesman from the Office of the Archbishop of York said: “Remuneration has been benchmarked against similar senior roles within the charitable sector and agreed centrally.”

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Rage and Hope - 75 prayers for a better world

Rage and Hope is a collection of defiant prayers for justice and a better world to commemorate and celebrate 75 years of Christian Aid.

This is a prayer book like no other. Full of defiance and determination, it is an invitation to join Christian Aid and followers of Jesus around the world in a united chorus of Rage and Hope.



Bringing together voices from different contexts and cultures around the world, this is a collection of prayers of lament for the injustices of the world, and prayers of hope for the world we want to see. Featuring contributions from Rowan Williams, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, Rhidian Brook, Robert Beckford, John Bell, Rachel Treweek, Walter Brueggemann and many more, *Rage and Hope* offers defiant, inspiring Christian prayers for a better world.

The world is broken, full of injustice and inequality, but despite everything, we hope.

Rage and Hope is a prayer book to enable us as the people of God cry out in lament. With prayers for the poor, the sick, broken and the oppressed, you will find words for raging at the darkness and struggles in the world. And with prayers for healing and renewal, you will find words to kindle hope as we look towards a kingdom in which all things will be made new.

[Authors/Editors](#)

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Chine McDonald is Head of Community Fundraising & Public Engagement at Christian Aid. She is a regular contributor to BBC Religion & Ethics programmes, including Thought for the Day on Radio 4's Today programme, the Daily Service, Pause for Thought and Prayer for the Day. Chine is the author of Am I Beautiful? and God Is Not a White Man?, publishing in May 2021. She also sits on a number of charity boards, including Greenbelt Festival, the Church & Media Network and Christians Against Poverty.

Wendy Lloyd is Faith Communications and Just Scripture Coordinator for Christian Aid. She has extensive experience collating, curating and creating Christian prayers, worship and theological content. Wendy is the author of Loving One Another, Becoming Human Together, Siblings of Shalom, theological reflections on peace building. She also writes for a number of Church publications including Pray Now and Fresh from the Word.

Paperback ISBN: 9780281086238 £9.99

eBook ISBN: 9780281086245 £7.99

[[] <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/rage-and-hope>]

Media review

More than 420,000 Irish passports issued in Britain since Brexit vote, official figures show

The Independent

The number of Irish passports issued in Britain surged following the Brexit vote, official figures suggest.

Data shared by Ireland's foreign affairs minister Simon Coveney – which he said showed “the number of passports

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issued to applicants resident in Great Britain” – suggested that figure exceeded 422,000 between 2016 and 2020. Some 46,400 and 63,500 Irish passports were issued to residents of Britain respectively in 2015 and 2016, the year the UK voted to leave the European Union. This rose to more than 120,000 in 2019 alone.

[<https://apple.news/AHCzRO4Q6RGifQJ2Ta7Irgg>]

Presbyterian Mutual Society: Savers face new financial blow

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56361369>]

Annilese Miskimmon: National Opera leading lady 'proud' of NI roots

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56614443>]

Father Ted star Ardal O'Hanlon reveals favourite scene from the iconic Irish sitcom

Irish Post

Everyone has a favourite moment from Father Ted. First broadcast back in 1995, the sitcom rem...

[[] https://www.irishpost.com/news/father-ted-star-ardal-ohanlon-reveals-favourite-scene-from-the-iconic-irish-sitcom-208448?utm_]

'We're so glad to be back' vs. 'Doesn't the Irish Government understand that churches are essential ...

Sluggie O'Toole

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The Irish News makes it clear that many Christians are thankful for the chance to gather, just in time for Easter. But at the same time, Christian worship ...

[[] <https://sluggerotoole.com/2021/04/02/were-so-glad-to-be-back-vs-doesnt-the-irish-government-understand-that-churches-are-essential-services-north-south-diverge-on-church-reopenings/>]

Witness - Not giving up - Church Times leader for Easter Week

The commemoration of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is a deeply individual matter.

The same liturgy can affect two people in the same pew in completely different ways, touching one to the quick, leaving the other cold. This year — whether or not people make it to a pew — that variance is heightened. For many this year, Holy Week has stolen up unnoticed, without the prelude of Lenten observances. Who knew quite how important hymns were in telling the seasons? For others, there has been what amounts to a year-long Lent.

The pandemic has, indeed, provided plenty of material for the contemplation of sacrifice. Medics, teachers, supermarket staff, and any number of front-line workers have put themselves in harm's way to maintain essential supplies and services. Too many of them have paid with their lives or their health, poorly supplied with PPE, or simply prey to the virulence of Covid-19. The rest of the public have practised sacrifice, too: giving up travel, socialising, and contact with others. The Government's

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rhetoric has, understandably, dwelt on this aspect of giving stuff up, expressing sympathy and praise for a public that has been overwhelmingly compliant.

Sacrifice is much more than the negative experiences of relinquishment and loss, however. The Latin etymology is simple: a compound of sacri- from sacer, sacred, and facere, to make. Whereas typical usage emphasises the high value of what is being given up, the word is more concerned with the value of the act itself, and, in religious terms, to whom the sacrifice is made. Following this understanding, Christ sacrifices himself to the Father in an act that brings sacredness to the human enterprise. Plenty to contemplate there, but another language brings a different perspective. Igor Zinkov, an intern rabbi at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London, wrote last week about the Hebrew word for sacrifice: korban, meaning to come near, to approach, “to become closely involved in a relationship with another”. In this light, Christ’s sacrifice can be seen in a direct line from the animal sacrifices in the Temple. When these were not corrupt substitutions for closeness to God, they were affairs that, for the Jews, combined the seriousness of death with the joy of being in God’s presence.

Although Christ’s death was technically an extra-judicial killing, the Early Church, by drawing Christ’s actions at the Last Supper into its rituals, emphasised this notion of sacrifice. St John has Caiaphas pronounce: “It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” St Paul, whose thoughts on most of Christ’s teaching are unrecorded, has much to say about his purpose: bringing humanity closer to God through his life

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and death. It is the eucharist rather than the cross, however powerful a visual symbol, that conveys the fullness of God's action. For the story must be told to its end: through the resurrection to the ascension of our "great high priest". Not a giving up, but a taking up.



Pointers for prayer

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

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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.

Love divine,
in raising Christ to new life
you opened the path of salvation to all peoples.
Send us out, with the joy of Mary Magdalene,
to proclaim that we have seen the Lord,
so that all the world may celebrate with you
the banquet of your peace. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything

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that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him.

Luke 24:13-16 NLT

It's getting towards the end of Easter Day and the light is fading as these two people trudge back home. It has been a strange time for them. Their hero Jesus died in horrifying circumstances two days previously and they now realise it's time to go home. They have heard some women report that Jesus had risen from death, but they don't know what to make of it. Suddenly a stranger starts walking alongside them and they chat over what has been happening. They have no idea that it is Jesus. Even when the stranger accepts their invitation to come back to their home, they still don't realise that it's him.

This beautiful story will strike a chord with many of us. There have probably been many times when we have felt alone, but in fact Jesus was walking alongside us all the time. For some reason we didn't realise that he was there. Perhaps we were distracted, tired, confused or angry. Or perhaps life just too busy, and we couldn't spot Jesus amidst the busyness. For whatever reason we couldn't see him, and we continued with the conviction that he had left us.

Isaiah addressed a similar situation in chapter 40 of his prophecy. The people in Exile felt that God had abandoned them. But Isaiah puts them right. God was constantly with them. In fact, unlike them, God never went to sleep. He was always on the job giving strength to his people. "Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on

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wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40.31)

Whatever you are going through today you can be sure of this, whether you recognise him or not. Jesus is walking beside you.

QUESTION

Have you ever been surprised to discover that Jesus is walking with you?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that you never leave our side. Open my eyes to your presence with me today, Amen.

