



**Image of the day -**

**Rochester Cathedral**



## **Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Sexual Abuse**

**The annual Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Sexual Abuse will take place on Friday 19 February 2021, the first Friday of Lent. The Day of Prayer is an initiative by Pope Francis and was first marked in Irish dioceses and parishes in 2017.**

### **Candle of Atonement**

The bishops of Ireland have blessed and dedicated Candles of Atonement for use in cathedrals and parishes throughout

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the country on the Day of Prayer and thereafter during the celebration of Mass and other liturgies.

Introducing the Candles of Atonement in 2019, Archbishop Eamon Martin said, “In lighting these candles we will bring to mind our brothers and sisters, and their families, who have been left with a lifelong suffering as a result of abuse, whose trust was so deeply betrayed and whose faith has been so cruelly tested within the sanctity of the Church by perpetrators of abuse.

“I have been privileged to meet with victims and survivors of abuse and members of their families in the four provinces of Ireland. Many have spoken to me about the importance of prayer for survivors, and for the need for the Church to be open to justice, to atone and never forget them. I have been humbled by their courage and overwhelmed by their generosity of spirit.

“I encourage dioceses and parishes to undertake this prayer initiative and to light the ‘Candle of Atonement’ in Cathedrals and churches across Ireland again this year. It would mean a lot to survivors if the ‘Candle of Atonement’ was a permanent feature in our Cathedrals and parish churches. People visiting the church for quiet prayer might light the ‘Candle of Atonement’, pray the prayer, and bring to mind someone they know who has been directly impacted or affected by abuse. I am convinced that prayer and outreach to survivors of abuse is a modern-day corporal and spiritual work of mercy.”

Archbishop Eamon continued, “The simple prayer ritual for the dedication and lighting of the ‘Candle of Atonement’ in

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Cathedrals and parish churches is based on the very moving Penitential Rite composed and prayed by Pope Francis at the final Mass of the World Meeting of Families 2018 in Phoenix Park when he implored the Lord's mercy for the crimes of abuse and asked for forgiveness.

“The ‘Candle of Atonement’ and accompanying prayer are offered as a reminder to all of the need for us to atone, to ask forgiveness as a Church for the suffering caused by abuse. My hope is that these candles will be lit in Cathedrals and parishes across the country as a reminder of the need for atonement and that they will symbolise repentance, light in the darkness and hope.”

## **UK must help ensure democracy is restored in Myanmar**

**The Church of Scotland has urged the UK Government to use diplomacy to try and ensure that democracy is restored in Myanmar.**

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, said people were “shocked” by the military coup that overthrew the elected government and placed leaders including State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, under house arrest.

The Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (PCI), have both worked in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM) for many years.



## **Myanmar-protest**

*Thousands of people across Myanmar have taken to the streets in protest.*

Dr Fair and Rt Rev Dr David Bruce, Moderator of PCI, have written to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab MP and urged him to intervene to ensure that the result of the November election in the south-east Asia country is “fully respected”.

Ms Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) party won by a landslide but the military is back in charge of the country and has declared a year-long state of emergency.

## **Presbyterian Church in Myanmar**

Formerly known as Burma, Myanmar gained independence from Britain in 1948.

Church leaders say the historical and cultural bonds between the two countries are strong therefore the UK



Government should take a leading role in building an international diplomatic response.

## Myanmar-bride protests

The letter to the Foreign Secretary states: "Our shock at the news of the military coup on the first of February was all the sharper because of our concern for our friends in PCM and the implications of the takeover by General Min Aung Hlaing.

"Myanmar suffered 49 years of brutal military rule that ended as recently as 2011.

"In the past decade people have enjoyed increasing freedoms, some political progress and increased, if imperfect, economic growth.

"The fate of the Rohingya people shows that not all in Myanmar are treated equally."

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets against the coup over the last five days, despite a recent ban on large gatherings and a night curfew.

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Police have tried to disperse protesters using water cannons, rubber bullets and there are media reports today that a woman was allegedly shot in the head with a live round in the country's capital, Nay Pyi Taw.



### **Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator**

The letter goes on: “We fully endorse a statement released by PCM in condemning oppression and calling for the release from house arrest of the State Counsellor, President and other elected leaders without exception.

We join with PCM in urging the authorities not to cause any harm anyone in the Civil Disobedience Movement who are pursuing non-violent means of protest.

“We pray, as our PCM brothers and sisters in Christ say in their statement, ‘that love, peace, tranquillity, human rights and dignity may rule their government; that there would be

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no oppression and that federal democracy would be implemented successfully.”



## New rectory for Drumbo

**Drumbo Parish in Down diocese has just taken possession of a new rectory.**

Pictured above, the rector Revd Mervyn Jamison and his wife, Rosie, being handed the (sanitised) house keys by Manson the site foreman.





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Mervyn said, “A big big thank you to ME Crowe, especially the project manager John McGowan, the Architect Clyde Markwell and of course the Select Vestry and Building Committee for all their hard work.”

When restrictions allow, the Bishop will be invited to dedicate the building to the glory of God.

## Gift of plants to brighten up Community Garden



**Local businessman Bill Love has donated a selection of plans to Glencairn Community Garden.**

Some cheery news to brighten up a chilly winter day – Glencairn Community Garden has received a wonderful

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selection of new plants thanks to a kind donation by local businessman Bill Love.

Covid-19 restrictions mean that group work at the Garden, adjacent to Glencairn Parish Church in north Belfast, has been curtailed. But Stephen Whitten from Connect Base, Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission, is continuing to maintain the garden in anticipation of brighter days and the easing of restrictions which will open it to the community once again.

Stephen, who is looking forward to digging the plants into their new home, expressed a big thank you to Bill, owner of Stupid Priced Plants NI.

## **Catholic Chaplaincy QUB Mosaic Cafe opens**

The Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University has announced the launch of Mosaic Cafe, a new start-up by the Harris family.

They are serving barista coffee, freshly prepared food and cakes, with lots of vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options. Super quality and amazing value. Drop-by and treat yourself!

Mosaic Cafe @ the Catholic Chaplaincy QUB open Monday-Thursday 8am - 3pm

## **Bishop Tim Thornton to retire as Bishop at Lambeth**

The Rt Revd Tim Thornton is to retire as Bishop at Lambeth after four years in the role.

Bishop Tim has been Bishop at Lambeth since 2017. Previously he was Bishop of Truro, and Bishop of Sherborne before that.

As Bishop at Lambeth, Bishop Tim has supported the Archbishop of Canterbury's work in the House of Bishops, General Synod and the Archbishops' Council. He has chaired the Development and Appointments Group overseeing the leadership programmes and development work with senior clergy. He has also chaired the review of the Clergy Discipline Measure and provided advice on areas including safeguarding and church renewal.

Acting on the Archbishop's behalf, Bishop Tim carried out episcopal duties within Her Majesty's Armed Forces, and had pastoral oversight of Anglican chaplains and the Anglican church within the Forces. He also served as Bishop for the Falkland Islands.

Bishop Tim has also been closely involved in preparations for the Lambeth Conference, which has been postponed until 2022 because of the pandemic. He will continue to be involved as a Trustee of the Lambeth Conference Company. At Archbishop Justin's request, he will work on other matters relating to the process leading up to the Conference and in the years after it.



Bishop Tim said: “It has been a tremendous privilege working with Archbishop Justin and the marvellous colleagues in Lambeth and the other aspects of my work and life over the last four years. It has not been dull and I have been challenged and excited by all that I have done. During this year I will have been ordained for 41 years and a Bishop for 20 years. Sian and I have both chosen to retire and we look forward to taking on some new opportunities together in a variety of areas.

“I am very pleased to be able to continue to be involved with the process around the Lambeth Conference. I am especially grateful to those who have worked closely with me for all their hard work and all that we have managed to achieve. There is much more work to do as the Church of England faces up to the realities of the current situation. I

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will keep all concerned in my prayers and look forward to hearing more about all the plans and following from slightly further away the moves towards ensuring under Justin's wise leadership the growing and flourishing of the Church of England."

Archbishop Justin said: "From the chaplaincies of the Armed Forces, to congregations of the Falkland Islands, to the chamber of the General Synod, Bishop Tim has been a blessing to so many during his time as Bishop at Lambeth. I give thanks for his wisdom, insight, compassion, generosity and humour. I will miss him enormously, and I will be praying for him and Sian as they prepare for the next stage of their journeys as faithful followers of Jesus Christ."

Bishop Tim will leave Lambeth at the end of September.

## **Presbyterian Moderator: The heroes of the pandemic remind us that the Bible is full of heroism**

This pandemic has gripped us for long enough, and we can't shake it off.

By Rev David Bruce

Like a long dark path, it appears to have no end. But there are signs, glimmers of increasing hope, even with the appalling nightly litany of statistics recording those who have passed away.

A new dawn is surely coming. Vaccines which have been developed by genius minds in labs across the world give us



hope, and appear to be effective, even with the variants of the virus now emerging.

Healthcare heroes, who labour day and night on the frontline have held back the tide in our care homes and hospitals.

They all deserve medals.

What days we are living through! But there are other heroes too.

Some, like Captain Sir Tom Moore, who died recently aged 100, achieved national renown, not just for the money he raised, but for his simple tenacity. The Queen didn't call him 'an inspiration' for nothing. But there are other heroes,

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unsung and battling behind the scenes who are just keeping on keeping on.

I know a young couple who run a hostel in Scotland. They haven't had any back-packers to stay for months, so their business is closed.

Even with some welcome help from the government, they can't realistically expect to pay their bills with no income. So what are they to do? They press on, wait for better days, and plan for improvements to their building.

It's heroic.

I know of a young mother with seven children. She is, what you might call, 'New Irish'. She started out in a deeply troubled part of the world, and arrived on these shores as a refugee with her family.

She manages on her own. English is not her first, or even her second language, but she is home-schooling her kids through the pandemic — in English!

I am completely in awe of her committed determination to keep going.

It is heroic.

Along with the vaccine-designers, the frontline NHS workers, the cleaners and cooks, the care workers and carers at home, we are surrounded by heroes.

Teachers, who've had to find a new ways of teaching.

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Journalists who have had to find new ways of reporting.

Ministers and pastors who have had to find new ways of doing church.

These people, and more like, them are remarkable.

I was again confronted by examples of powerful heroism as I read the recent Report on Mother and Baby Homes.

Mothers and their grown up children bravely told their shocking stories, hidden for so long.

The Bible is full of heroes, the well-known and the unsung.

Hagar, for example, was a household servant who was used as a surrogate mother to provide a much-wanted son, and was subsequently banished into the desert by the family she served.

There she had an encounter with God, and for the first time, felt truly seen and valued as a person in her own right. People had let her down, but God had not. In fact she calls God “the One who sees me”.

As we continue to deal with this pandemic, big and small heroic acts are being revealed across Northern Ireland — vaccinators, home-schoolers, business people, health workers, newcomers, the ones who have found courage to tell their stories;

Here is one thing we can all hold on to. You are seen. You are known.



You are loved — what's more, there is hope for everyone.

• Rt Rev Dr David Bruce is Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

## Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for protesters in Russia. After opposition politician Alexei Navalny was arrested last week, widespread pro-democracy protest has broken out nationally, with many peaceful protesters arrested. We pray for the preservation of the right to protest.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

Pray that the right person will be appointed to lead Church Army in the next chapter. Pray for wisdom for the Board members as they meet to decide who will be appointed.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.



Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

Today we pray for Mozambique. A cholera outbreak combined with a growing humanitarian crisis after fighting in a northern province displaced more than 500,000 people last year has led to the UN calling for help in the region.

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and

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persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all  
things,  
now and for ever.

Almighty God,  
give us reverence for all creation  
and respect for every person,  
that we may mirror your likeness  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **Speaking to the Soul**

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never

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abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 NLT

I wonder how strong or weak you think you are. It can be hard to admit our weaknesses and vulnerabilities but here Paul does so in the most open way. He laid bare the way in which he had been knocked about in ministry. He had faced pressures from every direction and was happy to admit how weak he felt. But through it all he had not been defeated and he was clear that the reason for that was the power of God. He was just a fragile clay jar. All credit for his survival in ministry must go to God.

When things go wrong it is easy to conclude that we are in the wrong place. We work with the mistaken assumption that if we are in the place where God wants us to be everything should be going smoothly. The fact is that God has lots of tough work that needs to be done and, as Paul discovered, when we are obedient to God we may be pushed to our absolute limits.

The importance in all of this is to know ourselves and to know God. We need to recognise that we are always somewhat fragile, and that God is able to strengthen us whatever the circumstances. Paul's candid testimony should encourage us to be absolutely honest about what we are going through in the knowledge that God can cope. It is only as we acknowledge our personal limits that we are able to discover the limitless love and power of God.

QUESTION

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When have you been pushed to your limits, and what did you learn about God?

## PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that you are not only perfectly strong but also perfectly loving, Amen.

