



**Image of the day**  
**Washington National Cathedral**



## **Young Anglicans urged to register for global environmental event**

The Anglican Communion’s permanent representative to the United Nations, Jack Palmer-White, is calling on young Anglicans to participate in Youth 4 Climate: Driving Ambition, a global environmental event taking place ahead of this year’s COP26 climate change meeting. The youth event will take place in Milan, Italy, between Sept. 28 and Oct. 2.

“Too often, international meetings of global leaders deprive young people of a voice on issues that will impact their generation,” Palmer-White said. “The inclusion of Youth 4 Climate: Driving Ambition as a key event ahead of COP26 is therefore a really welcome opportunity for young voices to



respond to the climate crisis and shape the global response.”

Amplifying young voices in the Communion is a key priority for the Anglican Communion’s Working Group for COP26. Palmer-White noted that “young Anglicans all around the Communion are at the forefront of local and national efforts to tackle climate change and other environmental emergencies. They are speaking prophetically and responding practically.”

Organisers of the event are inviting applicants to demonstrate understanding of the main challenges relating to climate change. They are also looking for examples of how innovation can accelerate progress for climate action. Applications should also have experience in youth climate work. They are looking for climate activists who are

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addressing these issues in their own communities, and who has ideas of how to do more globally.

Applicants must be between the ages of 15 and 29. Selected delegates would be expected to attend the meeting either in person, or virtually, depending on Covid-19 restrictions. Organisers are particularly inviting applications from south east Asia, and small island developing states.

The Italian government, who are co-hosts of this year's COP26 alongside the UK, will pay for travel and accommodation expenses. The main COP26 meeting will be held in Glasgow, Scotland, in November. COP, or Conference of the Parties, is an annual meeting of nations who are signed up to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**Applications must be made by 1 March at**

[ [un.submittable.com/submit/162028/youth4climate-driving-ambition](https://un.submittable.com/submit/162028/youth4climate-driving-ambition) ]

## **Catholic bishops plan synod to discuss reform and address crisis of faith in Ireland**

The Catholic bishops are planning a major synod which will bring all sections of the Irish Church together to look at the crisis of faith, address the need for reform and renewal, and respond to the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, Sarah MacDonald writes in the Irish Independent.

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Bishop Paul Dempsey of Achonry and Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross announced the move at an online address 'The Synod on Synods' by Jesuit theologian Fr Gerry O'Hanlon, hosted by the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP).

Dr Dempsey, who is one of the newest and youngest members of the Irish hierarchy, revealed that he is part of a subcommittee of six bishops within the Irish Bishops Conference which is "actually working towards a synod in the near future".

The group has already met with and received advice from Cardinal Mario Grech, a top Vatican prelate who is Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops.

Dr Dempsey told the members of the ACP and other Catholic reform groups who took part in the webinar that as synod will not be an end in itself but plans to set out "a way of being Church" in Ireland.

Many Irish Catholics hope that a synod will reinvigorate the Irish Church and give its declining number of lay faithful a voice in any programme for renewal and change to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century.

The Irish synod is expected to be announced by the bishops after their next meeting, according to Dr Gavin.

"Hopefully after the next bishops' conference, we [will] begin that process of conversation, engagement and dialogue."

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He appealed to people to respond to the bishops' openness because he felt that a synod was "the way forward".

However, Bishop Dempsey said: "We just don't want it to end in a synod; it has to be something that continues in the life of the Irish Church."

In an indication that the synod will be inclusive rather than exclusive, he added: "We are really conscious that this can't just be an in-house synod – that it has to reach out to the various groups within our Church, and indeed, our country at this time."

"So please, God, we will walk together, and we will struggle maybe together to see where we might go as an Irish Church at this time."

In his address, Fr Gerry O'Hanlon spoke about the Synod of Bishops which Pope Francis has called for October 2022 in Rome and which has the theme, 'For a synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission'.

Synodality, according to Fr O'Hanlon, is a key strategy of Pope Francis in making the Church ready to meet the challenges of contemporary times. The term is often used to describe the process of collaboration and discernment which brings together bishops, priests, religious and the laity.

According to Fr O'Hanlon, Pope Francis wants to develop a decentralised church giving more responsibility back to local churches and the laity.

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He said that under Francis' pontificate there was a "sense of doors opening" and that the Pope believed that "what affects all should be treated by all", in other words, that those areas which affect the laity should have an input from the laity.

He acknowledged that there had been considerable resistance from people on the left of the Church to Francis' approach as it was felt to be too slow, and from people on the right who see it as a Trojan horse. "It is going to bring change inevitably, and they're afraid of that or they don't like that."

Courtesy [Independent.ie](https://www.independent.ie). 26.02.2021

## **Baking buddies is back in Belfast's Lower Shankill**

**Baking Buddies, an exciting project for all the family developed at St Michael's and St Stephen's Parish Churches in Lower Shankill, Belfast, is back.**

The project began in the autumn of 2020, sharing four recipes for children to try their hand at, and was followed at Christmas with two more fun seasonal recipes. Now, Baking Buddies has returned with four brand new recipes for children to try out at home.

The Rev Canon Jim Carson, rector of St Michael's and St Stephen's, said: "Thanks to funding from Belfast City Council and the Black Santa appeal, we can run four more weeks of Baking Buddies for our after-school club and Sunday school children.



“We are also very grateful to our Neighbourhood Police Team who support us in delivering our Baking Buddies bags [Rosie the puppet advises chef Karen Webb on the consistency of her dough!](#)”

of goodies to our young families. There is great excitement when they arrive!”

The Baking Buddies demonstration videos are produced by Karen Webb, Lead Evangelist with the North Belfast Centre of Mission, and Jill Hamilton, Diocesan Children’s Worker, with help from puppets Jake and Rosie.

The videos are shared [on the St Michael’s Facebook page](#) with a new one each week for four weeks. This series began on February 16.

Families who register for Baking Buddies receive a pack each week with all the ingredients they need to make the



recipe. The interest in Baking Buddies is growing with around 20 families registered to take part.

Jim said: “The project is a great way

for the church to stay connected with the children and families in the local area who are normally involved in children’s clubs through the week and on Sundays. Baking Buddies has put a smile on everyone’s faces during a difficult time!”

## **Christian education experts in GB warn new sex and relationships curriculum must be delayed until parents properly consulted**

**A coalition of Christian educators and bodies has called on the government to delay its introduction of a new form of teaching around sex and relationships education (RSE).**

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A letter written by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, to the Secretary of State for Education, on behalf of the constituent bodies of the Christian Coalition For Education (CCFE), states that amidst the continued chaos and uncertainty of the pandemic, parents have not been properly consulted on the new curriculum, which is required by law.

In May 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that while the new regulations making RSE compulsory would still take effect from September 2020, schools would be able to delay introducing it to their pupils until Summer term 2021 due to the impact of Covid-19.

Steve Beegoo, Christian Concern's Head of Education and a former headteacher, told Premier that it is too much to expect schools to be able to properly consult with parents this term.

"The guidance is quite clear that it's a full consultation that's required of schools. And I just believe that schools just have not had the opportunity to do it. The government really wants those schools to do it. The schools themselves have not had the capacity to be able to do that fully and properly. And certainly since their second lockdown again. The point is that it was supposed to have come in September 2020. But the government very rightly recognised that the schools hadn't had the opportunity to properly consult in this way. And they said, 'Okay, we'll do it in the summer term.' Well, the summer term is nearly upon us. And we've just had the second lockdown and schools are reeling from all the processes that they've got to get involved in with reopening safely, testing children and become social services and medical services at the same time.

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"So to expect them to be able to take on the proper consultation for relationship sex education, ready for the summer term, is just too much to expect from them."

He added that there are a number of areas causing concern among parents:

"There's all sorts of aspects of it that the parents have become concerned about, particularly some of the transgender ideology, which seems to have been promoted in many schools. Some of the LGBT content and the age-appropriateness of that, that's been really concerning some parents. In some secondary schools, we've had some horror stories of children who've been engaging in remote learning programs where the RSE has been delivering, they've been encouraged to do research on pornography. And so you've got 11-year-old children researching these kinds of topics on the internet.

"I really encourage every parent, every church member to be praying for us as parents, as Christian communities to have wisdom in this area to know how to guide our children in what is an increasingly quickly changing environment around us. We need the wisdom of God to know how to communicate biblical truths, Christian truths to our children in a way that they they will be able to understand and still be able to be loving and respectful to all sorts of people of all sorts of backgrounds."

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali said in a statement: "Parents have the right to expect that their children will be taught according to their religious and philosophical beliefs. The State and schools are strictly ancillary to parental responsibility for the upbringing of their children and both must listen carefully to

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what parents are saying if the world of education is to be one of mutual respect and harmony."

The group 'strongly urges' Gavin Williamson, the current Secretary of State for Education, to delay the implementation of the programme again until September 2021.

## Books, broadcasts, resources and webinars



CTBI ZOOM WEBINAR

REGISTER YOUR ATTENDANCE

Wednesday 24th March 2021  
7.30PM - 8.30PM

### CTBI Webinar: Church of Sanctuary

The Bible has much to say about offering 'sanctuary to strangers' and those in need. But what can you or your church do to provide hospitality to those in need of it?

Join Christians Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) as we hear the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, who heads the Church of Sanctuary movement, speak about how churches can respond to those in need of sanctuary in Britain and Ireland.

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)

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In the newly revised edition of his Hospitality and Sanctuary for All, Inderjit provides churches with a range of practical and spiritual tools that will enable us to engage with this vitally important issue.

Inderjit, who established the City of Sanctuary movement many years ago, and was also a former President of Conference for the Methodist Church of Great Britain, is known to many for his commitment to justice, equity and peace. Indeed, last year he received the World Methodist Award in acknowledgement of his work for peace over several decades.

To join us for what promises to be an evening of stimulating conversation, please register your attendance.

### **RTÉ Service for Women's World Day of Prayer**

The RTÉ Service this Sunday (28th February) will be a multi-denominational service to mark the Women's World Day of Prayer, whose focus this year is Vanuatu, an island nation in the South Pacific Ocean. The liturgy was prepared by women from Vanuatu. The service will be broadcast at 11.10am on RTÉ One television and 11.00am on RTÉ Radio 1 Extra / LW252. It will also be available afterwards.

### **Reading for Lent - Women Leaders in the Church**

***Mary Magdalene and the Gardener: Women Leaders in the Church By Brian Lennon SJ***

'Mary Magdalene' is perhaps one of the best known names in history through her important role in the story of Jesus Christ.

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She was a prominent follower of Jesus but, as we travel through Lent and towards Easter, we remember her also as a witness to the crucifixion; three days later, she - with a group of other women - was the first witness of the empty tomb and of the risen Jesus himself.

In his latest book, prolific Jesuit writer Fr Brian Lennon argues that despite being such a recognisable figure in the Gospel story of Jesus, Mary Magdalene is also one of the most misunderstood. Looking at Mary and her relationship with Jesus, the 'Gardener', Lennon asks what we can learn about the future role of women in the Church: "Why is it, that since it was Mary Magdalene - a woman - who brought the dramatic news of the resurrection, have women not been given equal decision-making weight within our Church?"

Lennon has spent more than 40 years working in Northern Ireland and chairs the board of the Jesuit Refugee Service. He is also secretary of Dialogue For Diversity, which works on issues of migrants, prisoners, conflict, community development and climate.

*Mary Magdalene and the Gardener: Women Leaders in the Church, by Brian Lennon SJ with a foreword by Rev Ruth Patterson, is published by Messenger Publications, £7.50.*

## **Welsh rugby and Songs of Praise**

The West End star John Owen Jones performs a Welsh folk song that is an anthem on rugby terraces, a lullaby and a prayer. "All Through The Night / Ar Hyd y Nos" Songs Of Praise on BBCTwo 1.15pm and [here bbc.in/3dFEX3m](http://bbc.in/3dFEX3m)



## **Opinion - We need to have more moments of collective grief - Jane Recker**

**Washington National Cathedral's bell-ringing showed how important it is that we acknowledge each other's hardships.**

I grew up near a friary, where church bells were part of the fabric of my childhood. The Westminster Quarters ringing through the yard marked when it was time to go inside for dinner, and on Sundays the carillon resounded throughout  
**The National Cathedral tolls a bell 500 time in memory of the 500,000 Americans lost to Covid.**

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the morning with familiar hymns. For me, bells will always evoke memories of family, of home, of summer Sundays spent reading on the hammock.

Yesterday's peals from National Cathedral were different. There was no tinkling hymn, no melody of the passage of time. Rather, just one enormous bell was struck 500 times to honor the 500,000 Americans taken by Covid—a bell with a sound so awful and a resonance so deep that standing close to the belfry, you could feel it vibrating through your chest. It was a haunting ring that called to mind not the chimes of redemption but the striking bongs of the Dies Irae, the chant for the dead.

Walking through the grounds, I made my way to the Bishop's Garden, a small cove on the south side of the cathedral that in spring is embroidered with pastel blooms and is home to a cascading weeping willow. I came here often during the beginning of the pandemic to sit under the willow's boughs and read, crochet, listen to music—anything to distract myself from the terrible reality settling in.

This time, I sat on a bench near the barren, snow-crested grove. Allowing the gonging to wash over me, I thought I would feel morose, somber, crestfallen. Instead, I was relieved to finally have some public recognition of the terrible feelings I've kept inside for months.

A sadness has lived within me since the first day of lockdown, spurred by my own struggles, observing the agony of others, watching the people who are supposed to protect us succumb to the worst impulses of human nature. This grief isn't always at the forefront. There have been moments of bliss: of solace in nature, of new love, of stolen

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time with family. But the sadness is always there—a little box in the corner of my consciousness that I sometimes crack but never fully open for fear of what might lie within.

When conversations with friends and family have reached a certain depth or drunken candor, many have expressed a similar internal conflict. But it's become harder to attain this degree of honesty as the pandemic has gone on. It seems that we as a nation have collectively returned to our Puritan roots, prioritizing industry and energy over emotions, forging a new way of life amid the horror.

That's all well and good to an extent. To open a Pandora's box of grief would be to succumb completely to our feelings and not be able to function. But it feels wrong to pretend that box isn't there. I remember a conversation I had with a therapist for an article I was working on at the start of the pandemic. I remarked to her how incredible it was that we as humans were able to adapt to such a stark new normal.

“But this isn't normal,” she replied. “We're adapting, yes, but none of this is normal.”

More than 10 million Americans out of work is not normal. Funerals for young people with friends and communities but just a handful of mourners in the pews is not normal. Five hundred thousand Americans dead from a virus in a country that boasts about the superiority of its medical advances is not normal. Life must go, and has gone on. But what's missing is the living. The big milestones surrounded by loved ones, the nights out with friends, the casual conversations with a coworker, the fascia of life connecting us and bringing meaning to our existence beyond meeting Maslow's most basic needs.

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To say the pandemic has put us all in the same boat is wrong. Different socioeconomic statuses and at times sheer luck have put some of us in mega-yachts and others in dinghies. But we're all weathering the same storm—one that at times has felt like a monsoon. We need to take more opportunities to acknowledge that upheaval and have moments of collective sadness. We need to recognize what we as a human community have lost, and to grieve for those who have suffered the most over the past year. If we don't take the time for these moments of empathy, we condemn ourselves to the fate of Job, consumed by the crushing weight of a seemingly targeted suffering.

It took a full 50 minutes for the bell to ring 500 times, a period that threw the sheer number of the dead into horrific perspective. On the west lawn, about 30 people were scattered in silence gazing up toward the belfry, some couples holding each other close. On the north side of the cathedral, a lone woman sat in a frozen courtyard, staring at nothing, lost in thought. I met her eyes and nodded, making my way to the other side to take in the sound saturating everything. Eventually, the bell ceased. The silence was deafening.

One of the wonderful things about bells is their capacity to produce overtones—different pitches produced from the massive number of vibrations within. When a bell is struck, the main sound you hear is called the strike tone. In the cathedral's case, the bell rung was in A flat, a key commonly associated with the dead and the grave. If you listened closely, you could hear another pitch ringing above it simultaneously: E flat, the key of intimate conversation with God.

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As I sat in the Bishop's Garden, allowing the sound to wash over me, I noticed that despite the fact that it was almost 6 o'clock, the sun was still well above the horizon, scattering its honeyed embers on the nave's buttresses. A breeze wafted by, uncharacteristically balmy for February, with the peaty essence of spring on its back end. Carried through that breeze, another overtone. At first it was so faint as to be imperceptible, but once heard, it was as resounding as the strike tone: B flat, the key of hope for a better world.

Courtesy The Washingtonian 23.03.2021

## Pointers for prayer

Heavenly Father,  
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,  
and grew closer to you in the desert:  
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer  
that we may witness to your saving love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.



**ABIDE WITH ME;  
FAST FALLS THE  
EVENTIDE. THE  
DARKNESS DEEPENS,  
LORD, WITH ME  
ABIDE. WHEN OTHER  
HELPERS FAIL, AND  
COMFORTS FLEE,  
HELP OF THE  
HELPLESS, O  
ABIDE WITH ME.**

*~ Henry Francis Lyte*

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

Today we pray for countries unable to access vaccines. The UN secretary general has criticised the unfair distribution of Covid vaccines, identifying that 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

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.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who

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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

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

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 and everlasting God,  
you hate nothing that you have made

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and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:  
create and make in us new and contrite hearts  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins  
and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,  
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:  
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your  
Spirit;  
and, as you know our weakness,  
so may we know your power to save;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## **Speaking to the Soul**

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.

Psalm 40:1-2 NLT

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I was born and brought up in Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex which is on the Thames Estuary. As a boy I loved exploring the coast which is well known for its generous expanses of mud, and at low tide it is possible to walk out more than a mile from the shore. However, you have to be careful. In places the mud is of such a fine quality that you can easily sink in it and I remember being told gory stories of people who got caught in the mud when the tide turned, with disastrous consequences.

The psalmist reflects on his own life and recognises that he had once been totally stuck. It was just like being stuck in the mud. He had been in a hopeless situation but he had cried out to God who had reached out to him and lifted him to a place of solid ground. What a relief! There are some predicaments in life for which no human remedy will work. However hard we try we will sink back into the mud. We need to cry out to God and have the humility to let him reach down and rescue us.

The rescue is vitally important but it's not the end of the process. God rescues us so that we can then live securely and serve him confidently. He enables us by his Spirit to live a completely new life. The last thing we would want to do is to get stuck in the mud all over again.

## QUESTION

Have you had the experience of God rescuing you?

## PRAYER

Loving God, thank you that you reach out to me when I get badly stuck in life. Thank you that you are able to set my

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feet on solid ground and give my life a new meaning and purpose. Amen.

