



Image for today - A touch of Pugin



Presiding Bishop joins other NCC leaders in call for Trump's removal from office

The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Michael Curry, has joined other faith leaders of the National Council of Churches in calling for the resignation or removal of President Donald J. Trump.

The letter issued by the NCC was addressed to Vice President Mike Pence, members of Congress, and members of the president's Cabinet.

According to CNN reporting, Pence is holding out the option of invoking the 25th amendment should Trump become more unstable.

New reporting from Acosta states, "VP Pence has not ruled out an effort to invoke the 25th Amendment and wants to

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preserve it as an option in case Trump becomes more unstable, a source close to the VP says."

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore has called for Trump to resign stating, "Mr. President, people are dead. The Capitol is ransacked. There are 12 dangerous days for our country left.

"Could you please step down and let our country heal?"

<https://t.co/wP3nilTQv6>

In addition, the presidential cabinet of the Society for Christian Ethics has called for Trump's removal.

The NCC letter of January 8, 2021 follows:



“Our faith instructs us to take seriously positions of leadership, not to lead others astray and to be careful about what we say and do. In Philippians 2:3-4 we are taught to, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”

“President Donald J. Trump’s actions and words have endangered the security of the country and its institutions of government by inciting a violent, deadly, seditious mob attack at the U.S. Capitol. His words and actions have placed the lives of the people he is supposed to serve in grave danger to advance his own interests. Further, he not only failed to stop or condemn the attack after the Capitol had been stormed but instead encouraged the mob by calling them patriots. This domestic terrorist attack resulted in at least five deaths, including a Capitol Police Officer, and more than a dozen police officers injured. The desecration of the Capitol building was also disgraceful and reprehensible.

“For the good of the nation, so that we might end the current horror and prepare the way for binding up the nation’s wounds, we, as leaders of the member communions of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), believe the time has come for the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, to resign his position immediately. If he is unwilling to resign, we urge you to exercise the options provided by our democratic system.

“In addition, we recognize the need to hold responsible not only those who invaded the Capitol, but also those who

supported and/or promoted the President's false claims about the election, or made their own false accusations.

“We grieve for our country at this difficult time and continue to pray for the safety and security, and ultimately the healing of our nation. Holding those who have abused their power and participated in these immoral and tragic actions, in particular the President of the United States, is one step toward healing.”

- The letter is signed by 24 leaders of national churches and interdenominational bodies.

Pope Francis appeals for peace, reconciliation in wake of deadly US

Pope Francis issued an appeal for peace and reconciliation in the United States of America yesterday (Sunday), calling on citizens and government leaders alike to lower the temperature of public discourse and otherwise create the conditions necessary for a “national reconciliation” in the wake of deadly riots at the US Capitol on Wednesday.

Goaded by outgoing US President Donald J. Trump and his lieutenants — including Trump's attorney, former New York mayor, Rudy Giuliani — hundreds of protestors loyal to Trump forced their way into the US Capitol building on Wednesday of last week, and disrupted a joint session of Congress convened to certify the results of the recent US presidential election, which Trump lost.



Five people died as a result of the violent disorder, including a US Capitol Police officer, 42-year-old Brian D. Sicknick, a twelve-year veteran of the force.

“I urge [government] authorities and the entire population to maintain a high sense of responsibility,” Pope Francis said yesterday, “in order to soothe tempers, promote national reconciliation, and protect the democratic values rooted in American society.”

“Violence,” Said Pope Francis, “is always self-destructive.”

“Nothing is gained by violence ,” Pope Francis went on to say, “and so much is lost.”

“I reiterate that violence is always self-destructive,” Pope Francis said, adding that “Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost.”

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“I urge the State authorities and the entire population to maintain a high sense of responsibility in order to soothe tempers, promote national reconciliation, and protect the democratic values rooted in American society,” he said.

Pope Francis made his remarks after leading the faithful in reciting the Angelus prayer – the traditional act of Marian devotion – which was carried via radio, television and internet live stream.



Cork keep the Christmas lights lit

The pope concluded his appeal with an invocation of Our Lady, Patroness of the United States of America: “To help keep alive the culture of encounter, the culture of care, as the way to build the common

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good together, and do so with all those who live in that country.”

Cork churches keep Christmas lights on as a sign of ‘the light of Christ in this hurting world’

A number of parishes in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross that have outdoor decorations on their church

buildings for Christmas have taken the decision this year to keep the lights on until Candlemas, 2nd February, the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

Last week, the decision was made in the coastal village of Crosshaven to keep the



lights on and the local Church of Ireland church, Templebreedy, has joined in the initiative.

The brightly shining stars gracing the bell towers of St Mary's Church in Carrigaline and St John's Church in Monkstown are normally only in situ for a period of four weeks each year. These large stars, much beloved by local people, are erected on the bell towers on Advent Sunday each year and remain in place, lit 24 hours a day, until the Feast of the Epiphany (6th January).

This year, a decision was made by the Rector and Select Vestry of the Carrigaline Union of Parishes to keep the stars in place and shining brightly until after the feast of Candlemas (2nd February) as a reminder of the light of Christ in this hurting world.

On hearing of the initiative in Carrigaline and Monkstown, St Mary's Church in Dunmanway has also extended the time when their stars are illuminated in the windows of the ringing room of the Sam Maguire Community Bells as a symbol of hope in these troubled times until the end of the Epiphany season (2nd February).

Archbishop of Wales, John Davies, to retire

The Archbishop of Wales will be retiring in May after four years as leader of the Church in Wales.

Most Rev John Davies, 67, has also served as Bishop of Swansea and Brecon for the past 13 years. He's the 13th



Archbishop of Wales, and also the first Bishop of Swansea and Brecon to be elected as Archbishop. He will retire from both roles on 2nd May.

Archbishop John led the Church in Wales as it reached its centenary last year and also as it faced one of its toughest challenges in responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

Announcing his retirement, Archbishop John said, "Leadership is both a privilege and a challenge. During my time as both Bishop and Archbishop I have tried to exercise the first and face the second with vision, courage and patience, always hoping to make the Church better equipped, better understood, less mysterious and more welcoming.

"In the current exceptionally trying circumstances. I have been immensely impressed with the compassion, imagination and innovation with which so many have responded, succeeding in making the Church more accessible and, dare I say, relevant. At all stages of my ministry, I have been fortunate to have the support of many valued lay and ordained colleagues, from both within and outside the Church, and a wonderfully loving and understanding family. I thank all of them for that support, without which, the task would have been all but impossible."

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The Archbishop of Canterbury, Most Rev Justin Welby, paid tribute to his wisdom and skill, describing him as a "valued colleague".

"I have very much enjoyed working with John during his time as Archbishop of Wales," he said in a statement.

"I have greatly valued his wisdom, his passion for the Gospel and evangelism, and his skill and diplomacy in dealing with often complex situations. He has been a valued colleague not only as a fellow Primate in the United



Carnlough harbour, Co. Antrim

Kingdom and Ireland but also in the wider Anglican Communion."

Archbishop John has been interested in matters of social justice, speaking out on a range of issues, including

homelessness and housing, rural problems, assisted dying, organ donation and poverty.

He has been chair of Housing Justice Cymru since it was launched in 2016, and has served as a trustee of Christian Aid, chairing its Wales National Committee for almost nine years from 2010.

He has also focused on the need for the Church in Wales to refresh its vision, its image and purpose, to embrace change and to aim for growth. He oversaw the launch of a major £10m Evangelism Fund.

Following Archbishop John's retirement, the Bishop of Bangor will lead the Church until the election of a new Archbishop later in the year.

Christ Church dean in renewed battle over 'hair stroking' claims

The Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, faces a fresh attempt to oust him following an investigation into an alleged hair stroking incident, the Daily Telegraph reports.

The Very Rev Martyn Percy, who presides over the college and the cathedral, has been embroiled in a long-standing row with fellow Oxford dons over his tenure.

The college's governing body and the Chapter of the cathedral are due to vote on Monday on whether Dr Percy should face an internal tribunal that could result in him being removed from office.

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‘There have been attempts to suggest this allegation is linked to historical matters ... there is no truth in this’
It is the latest effort to force out the dean and follows an alleged incident that took place in Christ Church cathedral in October, where it is claimed that he stroked a woman’s hair and complimented her on her appearance.

Thames Valley Police said they conducted a “thorough investigation” into the matter at the time, adding: “Our investigation has now concluded and the matter has been filed pending further information coming to light”.

But the college set up its own internal investigation into the incident and is preparing to use it as the basis to remove Dr Percy from his post.



Scrabo tower, near Newtownards

Allies of Dr Percy say this is “certainly not a safeguarding issue”, but part of a long-running “persecution” of the dean by other senior dons.

“This has just become a vendetta against him,” one friend said.

It is the latest twist in a dispute dating from 2018 when Dr Percy was suspended from his £90,000-a-year post for alleged “immoral, scandalous and disgraceful behaviour”.

An internal tribunal dismissed complaints against the theologian after a hearing the following year.

In September, church officials cleared him of safeguarding charges, saying he “acted entirely appropriately” in each of four cases referred earlier this year by the college’s governing body.

Jonathan Aitken, a Christ Church alumni and former Tory cabinet minister who was jailed for perjury and has since become an Anglican priest, has written to members of the Chapter ahead of Monday’s meeting to defend Dr Percy. He said he would apply to the High Court for a judicial review should they vote to take Dr Percy to tribunal.

A spokesman for Christ Church said that the college “unequivocally condemns sexual harassment in any form” and will always treat complaints with “the utmost seriousness”. They added: “There have been attempts to suggest that this allegation is linked to historical matters at Christ Church. There is no truth in this and to suggest otherwise is an insult to the victim.”

Sr Breid Cunningham: Co Tyrone-born Loreto sister changed thousands of girls' lives in Kenya

Co Tyrone native Sr Breid Cunningham lived and worked for 73 years in Kenya where her talents as a teacher and school principal changed the lives of tens of thousands of African girls, a tribute in the Irish News records.

She is remembered as a meticulous and dedicated educator as well as a very kindly person who was popular everywhere she served.

Former pupils have recalled her warm heart and “beautiful and captivating smile” since her death on December 18 in her 100th year.

However, Sr Breid, interviewed in 2018, was typically modest about devoting almost three-quarters of a century to God’s work thousands of miles from home.

"I don't think I would like to change my life at all, I would do it all again," she said.

Sr Breid was born Maura Cunningham in 1921, the second of 13 children of Patrick Cunningham, a Nationalist MP at Westminster and owner of Strathroy Dairy outside Omagh, and his wife Isabella (O'Neill).

Four of her brothers would also enter religious life, a remarkable contribution from one family.



Sr Breid Cunningham

Their aunt, Mother Teresa O'Neill, was Superior of the Loreto community in Omagh and head of the convent school, where Maura boarded so she could attend Mass every morning.

She entered the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dublin aged 18 and after making her final profession in 1947 was asked to serve in Kenya.

Her father and sister travelled to Southampton to wave her off on the long trip, the ship still covered in camouflage following the Second World War.

Sr Breid's first posting was in Eldoret, where she was taught in the order's primary school.

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She would go on to work in Loreto institutions around the country including as headmistress in several schools, ending her career in Mombasa.

Before the Sisters opened their first school in Kenya in 1936, education for African girls was virtually unknown.

The Irish nuns helped change the culture and have been responsible for educating many prominent women in Kenyan society, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai and the wife of President Uhuru Kenyatta, himself a product of the Holy Ghost Fathers on a shared site.

As well as teaching, Sr Breid found joy in writing and publishing a Rosary book. Her mantra until her last breath was “Jesus mercy, Mary help”.

She was able to visit home several times, including for a sabbatical year in Dublin in the late 1960s, and family members also made the trip to Kenya.

The Loreto order, who will celebrate their centenary of working in Kenya this year, said she was a great educator who will be greatly missed by her fellow Sisters, family, pupils and friends.

She was laid to rest in Msongari outside Nairobi following Requiem Mass at the Loreto Convent chapel there.

Sr Breid is survived by her sisters Rosemary (Marshall) and Carmel (Rosen), brothers Fr Tom, Fr Seán and Eamon, and extended family. She was pre-deceased by her brothers

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Páraig, Fr Séamus, Fr Colum and Michael and sisters Kathleen (Nolan) and Breid.

News briefs



Appointment to Annalong - The Revd Geoff Hamilton has been appointed Incumbent of the Parish of Annalong in Dromore Diocese. Geoff was ordained deacon in Down and Dromore in 2016 and spent his internship in Seagoe Parish. He is currently curate assistant in St Mark's, Armagh. Geoff is married to Jill who is the Children's Project Development Officer for Connor Diocese.

Speaking of his appointment Geoff said, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous people from Seagoe, St Columba's and St Mark's whom God has used to encourage me in preparation for this next chapter.

"I'm excited as I prepare to serve within Kilhorne Parish and the wider community. At this transitional time, I'm reminded that Christian leadership isn't about control, it's about

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service, so I look forward to working alongside a talented group of people (and Ziggy) in Annalong who I've watched online as they've faithfully kept things going in challenging times.

"The words of the late J. I. Packer come to mind at this time as they encourage and challenge me: "Our high and privileged calling is to do the will of God, in the power of God, for the glory of God."

"Jill and I look forward to making new friends and being part of God's transforming agenda in the Kingdom of Mourne. Get the kettle on (post restrictions) as the best tea drinkers in the country are coming!"

A date for the service of institution will be set in due course.

Tablet webinar - with Michael Walsh, official biographer of The Tablet's history, and former deputy Editor Elena Curti in conversation with Ruth Gledhill.

To book your tickets visit: [<http://ow.ly/9ncu50CS1nJ>]

Churches' Refugee Network launch of 'God With Us' worship resource - Join the Churches' Refugee Network (CRN) at its first meeting of 2021 – on Thursday, 28th January, at 2.00pm – to help mark the launch of 'God With Us', a new resource for clergy, preachers, worship leaders and all Christians involved in organising group prayer or discussion on the theme of refugees, migration and sanctuary. Attendees can register to join by Zoom.

Catholics and Lutherans reaffirm commitment to communion
- The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and

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the Lutheran World Federation have announced the publication of the updated Italian translation of the historic ecumenical document called the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. A post on the Council's website notes that by launching the updated document on 3 January - the 500th anniversary of the excommunication of Martin Luther - both the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity underscore their commitment to walk together on their common journey from conflict to communion.

Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for the USA. We pray for stable democracy and an end to divisions in the USA as a new president is inaugurated this month.

Today we pray for teachers and students. As the new term starts, schools have faced a lack of clarity over reopening which has made it more difficult to plan appropriate education for students and has left teachers and support staff without clear guidance.

Today we pray for disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. As Iran have accelerated their nuclear programme and with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons about to come into force, we pray for constructive relationships between nations.

As we begin a new year that none of us would have imagined this time last January, we pray for God to give a



As Thou didst care for us sleeping, guard us waking. Be with us in our tasks and pleasures this day. Deliver us from gnawing anxiety by that trust that sees all things working for good in those that love Thee. ~ Charles Henry Brent 1862-1929



sense of purpose and faith that he has good plans for us, however the year unfolds.

We pray today for all who are facing the new year alone, having lost loved ones recently. We ask that God will give them hope for the future, and show us how we can come alongside them with comfort and companionship.

Today we pray for people who will be homeless in 2021. As we look towards the new year, people experiencing homelessness will once again be faced with a new set of distinct challenges.

Today we pray for COP26. The global climate conference, rescheduled from 2020, will be taking place in Glasgow in 2021. We pray for ambition and action from world leaders

on climate change, and pray that those already affected by climate chaos would be kept safe.

Speaking to the soul

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27 NLT

People fascinate me. I can happily sit watching people because they are so incredibly different from one another. In size, shape, colour, height, age and ability they are all absolutely unique. However, we have one thing in common – we have all been made in the image of God.

This is a very interesting way of describing human beings and not least because the second commandment tells us that we should never create an image of God. That's understandable because if you make an inanimate image of God there is every possibility that you will focus your worship on the image and forget about God himself. And yet God has made and you and me as images of himself. Isn't that amazing? What we learn from this is that we resemble God. In our creativity, our loving, our kindness, our need to communicate and in many other ways we reflect the nature of God.

I have found these insights particularly powerful and precious in the last few years as I have spent a great deal of time with disabled people. I've spent time with people with

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learning disabilities who have never been able to speak, and with visually impaired people who have never seen anything. I have treasured the fact that, different as our lives obviously are, we are all made in the image of God and that is more important than anything else.

Our society showers us with images of beautiful young able-bodied people. We should praise God for the fact that they have been made in the image of God. And when we see a tiny baby born prematurely and supported by a ventilator, an elderly person with dementia or a person with multiple disabilities we should praise God for them as well, for they too have been made in God's image.

QUESTION

What do you see of God in the people around you?

PRAYER

Thank you, Creator God, that we have all been made in your image and reflect your likeness. Help me to treasure every single person. Amen.



