

January 15, 2021



Image of the day - York Minster

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4 Corners Festival taking varied programme online amid Covid-19



4 Corners Festival co-founders Fr Martin Magill, pictured left, and Rev Steve Stockman. This year's festival starts on January 30.

The 4 Corners Festival is going fully online this year because of Covid-19, with a programme of 30 live-streamed events planned for between January 30 and February 7.

Drawing on this year's theme of 'breathe', co-founders Rev Steve Stockman and Fr Martin Magill said the festival was "trying to breathe hope and creativity into our very difficult situation".

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"It is still our intention to invite people in Belfast and elsewhere to pause and take the deep breath we all need at this exceptionally trying moment in our history."

This year's keynote speaker at the inter-Church arts and culture festival will be international conflict resolution expert Professor John Paul Lederach from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

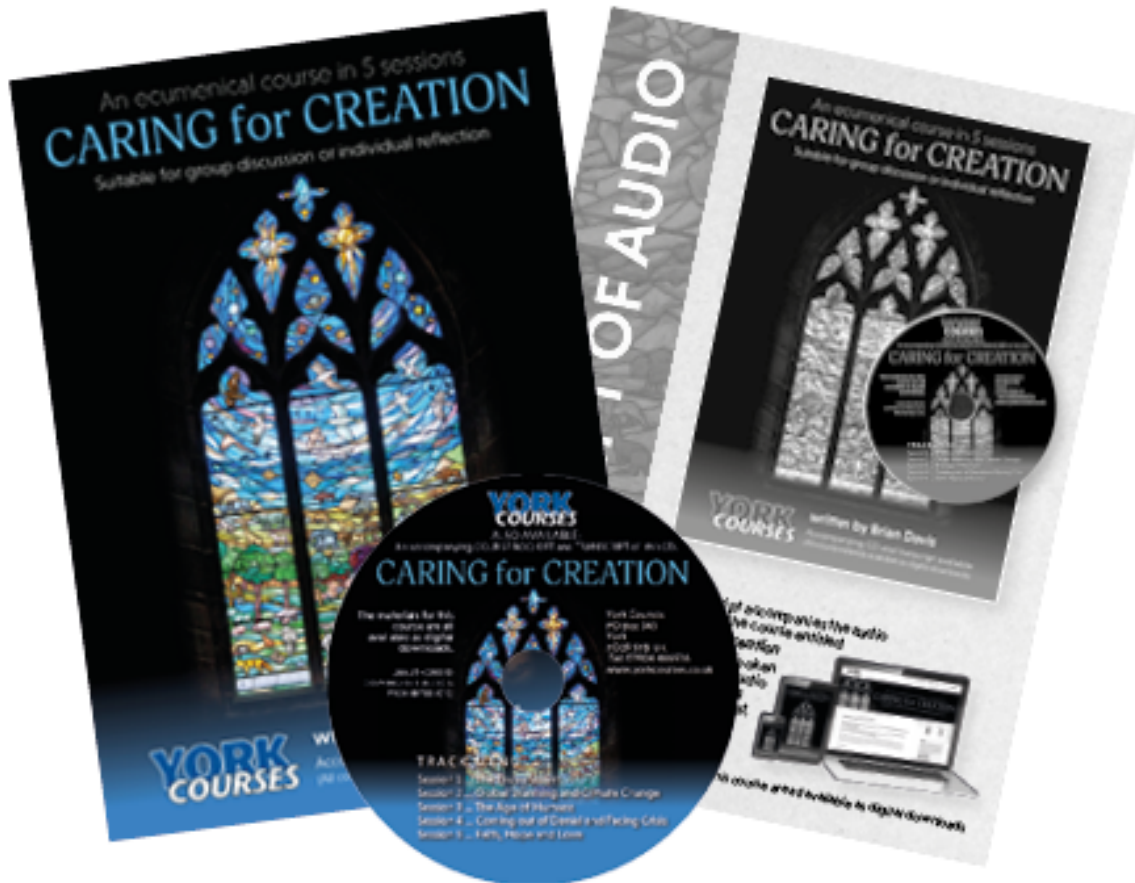
Other contributors include poet and theologian Pádraig Ó Tuama, Jamaica-born singer-songwriter and teacher Raquel McKee, musician Duke Special and screenwriters Declan Lawn and Adam Patterson.

Domestic violence will be among the issues examined during the festival, with a panel including Nicole Jacobs, the UK's first domestic abuse commissioner, and detective superintendent Lindsay Fisher of the PSNI.

A full programme can be viewed at 4cornersfestival.com and there will be more about the festival in forthcoming editions of Faith matters.

Caring for Creation - York Course

New for Lent 2021 – suitable for virtual and live groups. This open-minded Lent course discusses the environment and climate change - and how our faith in God can make a difference. Comprises course booklet, audio and transcript. Written by Brian Davis.



This open-minded Lent course discusses the environment and climate change - and how our faith in God can make a difference.

The human race is facing its greatest challenge: the threat to the environment and climate change. Faith in our Creator God should enable us to see what is actually happening.

The human race is facing its greatest challenge: global warming, leading to climate change. This, along with the damage we have done, and are still doing to the environment, God's wonderful creation, means that we all have to make radical changes to our whole way of life.

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Many of us who care about this issue are sometimes understandably quite pessimistic about the future. That's where faith in God should make a difference. Hope for the future is not the same as being optimistic. Being optimistic suggests always looking on the bright side. A hope based on faith in God should enable us to open our eyes and see what is actually happening to our planet today, and still believe there is much that we can do, individually and together, with God to guide and strengthen us.

The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic continues to have a big impact on all our lives. It has important lessons to teach us about our life together on this planet, especially when we compare it to the greatest challenge of all to life on earth: climate change.

SESSION 1: The Environment

Focusing on God's wonderful creation, planet earth, the place of human kind in it, and why it is under threat.

SESSION 2: Global Warming and Climate Change

Some facts and figures about climate change, and why faith in a Creator God should give us hope.

SESSION 3: The Age of Humans – The Anthropocene Era

How we human beings with our god-like powers can still undo some of the terrible damage we have done and are doing to our planet.

SESSION 4: Coming out of Denial and Facing Crisis

Many of us find it hard to face up to the reality of climate change, and make the necessary changes to our lifestyle.

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We need to understand why this is so, and how our faith can help us.

SESSION 5: Faith, Hope and Love

We urgently need to be clear about our Christian response to the present crisis: it challenges what we believe; it is also about how we can live in hope, and meet the demands of Christian love.

Cost and order response -

[[] <https://www.yorkcourses.co.uk/product/caring-for-creation/>]

The Weight of this Calling - Clergy burnout, well-being, and resilience

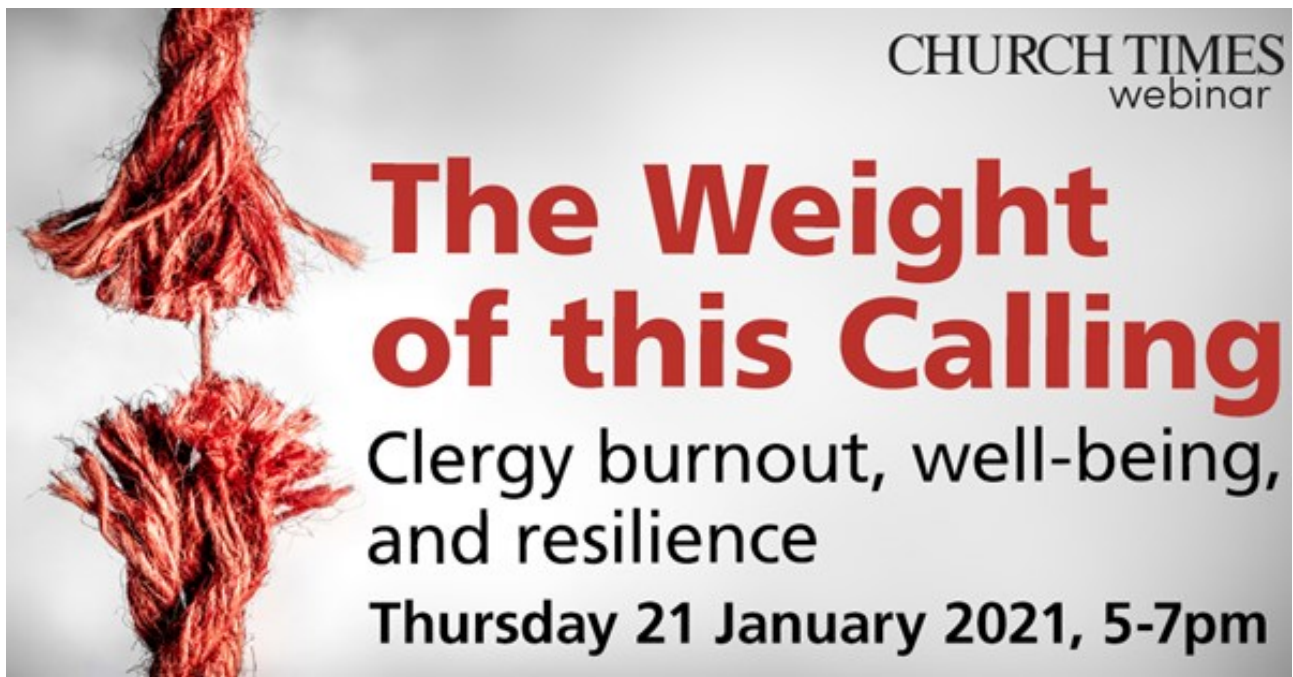
A Church Times webinar on Thursday 21 January 2021, 5-7pm

Is ministry burnout inevitable? Can self-sacrificial living ever be viable? Or, do clergy, in fact, have it better than most when it comes to work-life balance?

The CT states -

In this webinar we'll explore what it means to build resilience. Parish ministry comes with its own particular challenges and anxieties. How do you avoid emotional exhaustion and burnout?

And in the context of a pandemic - where significant numbers of clergy have reported increased stress, fatigue



and exhaustion - what does truly sustainable ministry look like?

Our expert panel will look at what churches are doing to support their clergy, how parishes can help, and what needs to change. This Church Times webinar will focus specifically on clergy well-being, however anyone, lay or ordained, and from any denomination, is welcome to attend.

Programme

How bishops can help clergy to thrive

John Inge, Bishop of Worcester

How the pandemic has affected clergy well being

Justine Allain-Chapman, Archdeacon of Boston and author of *The Resilient Disciple*

Six ways to thrive in ordained ministry

Liz Graveling, Research Officer for the Ministry Division and author of *How Clergy Thrive*

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How the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing can help clergy to flourish

Simon Butler, Vicar of St Mary Battersea and Chair of the House of Clergy

Hard Learned Principles for Sustaining Ministry long term

Paul Swann, priest, spiritual director and author of Sustaining Leadership

Speaker Q&A

Chair: Angela Tilby, Anglican priest, writer, broadcaster, and Church Times columnist.

Tickets

Tickets are £10, or £5 for Church Times subscribers.



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Details of how to watch the webinar will be sent by email to ticket holders the week of the event.

Can't watch live? A recording of the webinar will remain available for ticket holders to watch later.

To order -

[[] https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/the-weight-of-this-calling?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1610617655]

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to begin

Beginning on Monday 18 January, churches around the world will mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity over eight days.

This year's worship materials have been created by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland and are themed around 'Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit', (John 15:1-17).

The annual event, which first began in 1908, is designed to strengthen the ecumenical ties between denominations and encourage a sense of mutual support.

It is timed to run from the date commemorating the Confession of St Peter to the Conversion of St Paul, marked on 25 January.



*Abide in my love
and you shall bear
much fruit*

(cf. John 15:5-9)

RESOURCES FOR
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
CHRISTIAN UNITY

2021

Rev John McPake, who is the ecumenical officer of the Church of Scotland said: "At this particular moment in the life of the Church, and as we face the challenge the pandemic confronts us with, we affirm the significance of prayer.

"We recognise the truth of these words: 'Jesus Christ is our Mediator with the Father, constantly praying for us before the throne of God.' In response to the prayer of Jesus Christ, we offer our prayers.

"As we pray during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we live out our response to the prayer of Jesus that we 'may all be one...that the world may believe' (John 17: 21)."

Prayer for Christian Unity:

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Thrice-holy God, we thank you for having created and loved us.

We thank you for your presence in us and in creation.

May we learn to look upon the world as you look upon it, with love.

In the hope of this vision, may we be able to work for a world where justice and peace flourish, for the glory of your name.

(From the booklet for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity)

Christian Aid



Each year Christian Aid provides the Go and Do action points for each of the daily reflections which link to the important work of Christian Aid in the relief of poverty and advocacy of justice.

Social media

Show your

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support for Christian Unity by posting messages to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Twitter wall. To do so, add the #wpcuwall hashtag to your Twitter post (note there is a delay before they appear). You can also find updates about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Twitter by following the #wpcu2021 hashtag.

See download links at -

[\[\[\] https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-to-begin](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-to-begin)

Inspirational Presbyterian minister Adrian Adger loses cancer battle

A Presbyterian minister who inspired many fellow cancer patients by writing a book on his experience has died following a long battle with the disease.

Rev Adrian Adger, the minister with Clough and Seaforde congregation, passed away in the early hours of Wednesday morning, Mark Rainey writes un the News Letter.

Married to Karen, Rev Adger was originally from Ahoghill in Co Antrim but had settled in the Mourne area.

Speaking to the News Letter in July 2019, he said he had only been married for four years when he learnt that the kidney cancer which he had previously beaten had returned, and this time it was incurable.

However, he said, he found hope in the scriptures.

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“Being diagnosed is a dark and difficult time. There are a lot of people in despair and heartache. 38.4% of people in the UK will have cancer at some stage in their life. My story is not a unique story.

“I was 54-years-old whenever I was told I had incurable cancer. I felt a sense of loss, my life has been cut short. But as I worked through those questions – although I don’t have all the answers – I found hope from reading the scriptures.”

As well as writing the book, ‘Facing Cancer Standing Tall: One Christian’s journey to finding joy,’ Rev Adger also recorded several inspirational videos of his journey.

In a message on Facebook, Clough and Seaforde Presbyterian Church said: “Our dearly loved Minister, Husband and Friend Adrian was called home to Glory in the early hours of Wednesday morning.”

The message states that the manse remains strictly private due to the Covid restrictions, and adds: “There will be a service of thanksgiving for the life of Rev Adrian Adger live streamed on Facebook on either Friday 15 or Saturday 16 January and time will be confirmed later. Please uphold Karen and the family circle in prayer.”

Clough Ulster Unionist councillor Alan Lewis said Rev Adger was both a minister and “a very dear friend” to the congregation.

“I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Reverend Adrian Adger. A man of strong Christian faith, full of joy and a contagious smile which spread to everyone that he met.

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This loss is a truly devastating blow for not only his family but the wider community and congregation of Seaforde and Clough.

“Adrian and Karen moved to Clough and made the village their home. They instantly became part of our community. Rev Adger went the extra mile to attend events and involve himself to reach out and integrate himself into the fabric of our lives. He was not only our Minister but a very dear friend,” he said.

“His bravery and dedication was evident, following the diagnoses of his illness. He authored books and produced short videos while carrying on at the pulpit, articulating his struggle and faith in the hope that others might find comfort in their hour of need. Adrian embodied all the Christian qualities which ensured his light shone onto those who needed help and reassurance.

“On a personal level he strengthened my faith, steadied me in times of worry, and was very much the pillar of spiritual guidance both personally and professionally. I’ll remember the long-detailed telephone calls which began with a problem and concluded with a solution followed by some laughter. Not long after I was elected I welcomed Adrian and Karen into the council offices, where we shared a prayer, to me that will always be a very special personal memory, which I will hold dear.”

Cllr Lewis added: “We have lost a true friend, an absolute gentleman, which we will never see his likes again. I send my deepest condolences to Karen, and the wider family

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circle. Adrian will be sadly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.”

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life and ministry of the late Rev Adrian Adger, minister of Clough and Seaforde Presbyterian Churches, will be held today, Friday 15 January at Clough Presbyterian Church, County Down. The service will start at 2pm. it will take place under current restrictions, but will be livestreamed via the [Clough and Seaforde Presbyterian Churches' Facebook page](#).

Rev Brian Smyth, minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Ahoghill, County Antrim, will be taking the service. Mr Smyth has known Adrian for 30 years, having met him at Belfast Bible College in 1991. They were also colleagues working together at the Belfast City Mission for a number of years and in 2013 he married Adrian and his wife Karen.

How House chaplain calmed tense hours in besieged Capitol with prayers for 'God's covering'

As a mob overtook the Capitol and the work of lawmakers ground to a halt, Rear Adm. Margaret Grun Kibben's work began in earnest.

As Rear Adm. Margaret Grun Kibben, the chaplain to the U.S. House of Representatives, made her way through the echoing halls of the U.S. Capitol Wednesday (Jan. 6), she could feel a charge of anticipation in the air. It was an auspicious day: Lawmakers were meeting in joint session to formally approve President-elect Joe Biden's victory, a



Rear Adm. Rtd. Margaret Grun Kibben preaches at Washington National Cathedral on Nov. 10, 2019.

historic moment — and, thanks to the outgoing president’s refusal to concede, an atypically contentious one.

But Kibben had her own reason for feeling an unaccustomed excitement: It was her third day on the job.

As she walked through the Capitol, Kibben, 60, a Presbyterian Church (USA) minister who had been sworn in Sunday, peeked out a window and saw a swelling crowd of Trump supporters massing at the East front of the building. She thought little more about it than what she’d said in her prayer before the House that morning: America is enduring a time of “great discord, uncertainty and unrest.”

She hurried on to the House Chamber for the joint session, where she found a seat on the right side of the main aisle.

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Her placement didn't represent any particular political leaning. "When I go to church, that's where I usually sit," she told Religion News Service on Friday (Jan. 8). She wasn't even supposed to be sitting there: She was so new, no one had told her that she and her Senate counterpart, the Rev. Barry Black, have designated seats during joint sessions of Congress.

It was from there, about an hour later, she observed a "flurry of activity" around House leadership as House members, now separated from their Senate colleagues into their respective chambers, debated the election results. Within seconds, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others on the dais were whisked away.

Then, word came: The crowds outside had turned into a violent mob. The Trump-supporting extremists had overpowered police and were storming into the U.S. Capitol. It was time to evacuate.

As the work of lawmakers ground to a halt, Kibben's began in earnest: A House clerk looked over at the chaplain and asked if she could offer a prayer.

"I thought: 'Well, I've been praying all along,'" she said.

For Kibben, who previously served as the U.S. Navy's chief chaplain before becoming the first female chaplain to serve the House, it was an opportunity to do what she does best: offer comfort to those in crisis.

Kibben told RNS she doesn't remember the exact details of her initial prayer. The room, she said, was buzzing with a



People shelter in the House gallery as protesters try to break into the House Chamber at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington.

“great sense of alarm” as lawmakers scrambled in preparation to leave.

She was made keenly aware of the looming danger as she approached the microphone: An aide handed her an “escape hood” — a protective mask developed as a precaution in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Kibben, who has served in combat, was not rattled. Instead, she set the mask aside, gathered herself and prayed. “It was a matter of asking for God’s covering and a hedge of protection around us,” she said, remembering the House

recorder was diligently documenting her words as she prayed. “And that in the chaos, the spirit would descend in the room to offer us peace and order. That we would look to care for each other, even as we are under stress.”

Capitol police began swiftly escorting lawmakers and House staff out of the room shortly thereafter. As others concentrated on getting out, Kibben concentrated on them: She began working the column of evacuees, offering what comfort she could to anyone who needed it.

“There were people of varying abilities, health conditions and emotional states,” she said. “My concern was to keep an eye on who was frightened, who was struggling, so that I could come alongside them — and there were a few under duress.”

The group eventually reached a secure location, but tensions continued to run high. As security personnel offered status updates, those sequestered with Kibben were increasingly aware of the chaos swarming outside the door. Insurrectionists were breaking into the offices of lawmakers and engaging in violent clashes with law enforcement that would leave at least five dead — including one police officer.

Kibben was asked to pray once again. She began by reading from the Bible’s Psalm 46, the same passage she had included in her scheduled prayer before the House that morning. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea.”

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She then prayed for a “covering of peace and shelter” and lifted up prayers for those ransacking the Capitol — that those “who felt so strongly against us” might come to understand that the lawmakers they decry ultimately want precisely what the attackers insist they were denied: “That our legislative process is appropriate and legal and representative.”

As she finished, the room was quiet.

Kibben then engaged in what she called a “ministry of walking around,” talking to members of Congress, staff and Capitol police who appeared to be in distress. She said it helped that she wore a clerical collar; having not even completed her first week, she was meeting many in the room for the first time.

In another secure location on the Senate side, Black reportedly led Senators who were gathered in prayer. He was aided by Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, who called it a “calming moment.”

Through it all, Kibben said she worried little about her own safety. Instead, she felt something she hadn’t experienced since her time in combat: a sort of spiritual “covering” that allows her to be present for others.

“It’s a sense of ‘God’s got this,’ and I am but an instrument of bringing God into this moment,” she said. “Ministry in crisis was not new to me. This idea of engaging people at a level where you’re just taking them where they are and what they’re willing to share at that moment — I mean, that’s what we do.”

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After law enforcement finally cleared the mob from the building at about 6 p.m., Kibben returned to her office where she reunited with her executive assistant. Two hours later, as Congress reconvened to continue their work, she joined them once again.

“I will tell you, the tenor in the room changed significantly,” she said. “There was clearly a sense of, ‘Our lives are important. Our business is important. The welfare of the country is important.’”

When the joint session finally concluded around 4 a.m., it was Black who offered the closing prayer.

“Lord of our lives and sovereign of our beloved nation, we deplore the desecration of the United States Capitol building, the shedding of innocent blood, the loss of life and the quagmire of dysfunction that threaten our democracy,” he said. “These tragedies have reminded us that words matter and that the power of life and death is in the tongue. We have been warned that eternal vigilance continues to be freedom’s price.”

Even with the crisis behind them, Kibben said her work continues. After taking a day to rest, she returned to the Capitol to be available to those in the building — something she noted is offered irrespective of one’s faith, assuming they claim any tradition.

Emotional and spiritual wounds from the attack will take time to heal, and many are in mourning. She has been especially attentive to Capitol police, who lost one of their own, and

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has “deputized” those who insist they are “fine” to keep a lookout for others who are struggling.

“I feel very privileged to be here in this time and that it is my first week,” she said. “It doesn’t faze me but instead actually confirms why there is a chaplain here in the House and why that’s so important. It’s not related to a particular faith tradition, it’s that there is somebody here who comes alongside in this moment.”

For Kibben, the experience of this Wednesday only strengthens her belief in the value of chaplaincy.

“It’s important because ... our daily lives are not separate from God’s involvement in them,” she said. “God is very much present and very much has come alongside each and every one of us as we labor in the vineyard. And if that labor is tedious, God understands the tedium. If the labor is under siege, God understands the crisis and walks beside us in still waters — as well as in the shadows of danger.”

She added: “Faith matters. It mattered on Wednesday, it matters today and it’ll matter tomorrow.”

News briefs

Canon Brian Moller - The former Rector of St Bartholomew’s Stranmillis, Belfast (Connor Diocese) died yesterday after a short time in hospital

Christian Aid Global - In Nepal we are supporting people with disabilities with items such as hearing aids, white canes



and prosthetic limbs Ramesh Waiba lost his arm in an accident & received a prosthetic arm, he said “It will now help me with my everyday activities. I hope to learn new skills in life.”

The week of Prayer for Christian Unity - Monday 18 - Sunday 24 January 2021

If you would like to participate in the week of Prayer for Christian Unity please sign up here:

<http://ow.ly/Q0iA50D67J5>

Pointers for prayer

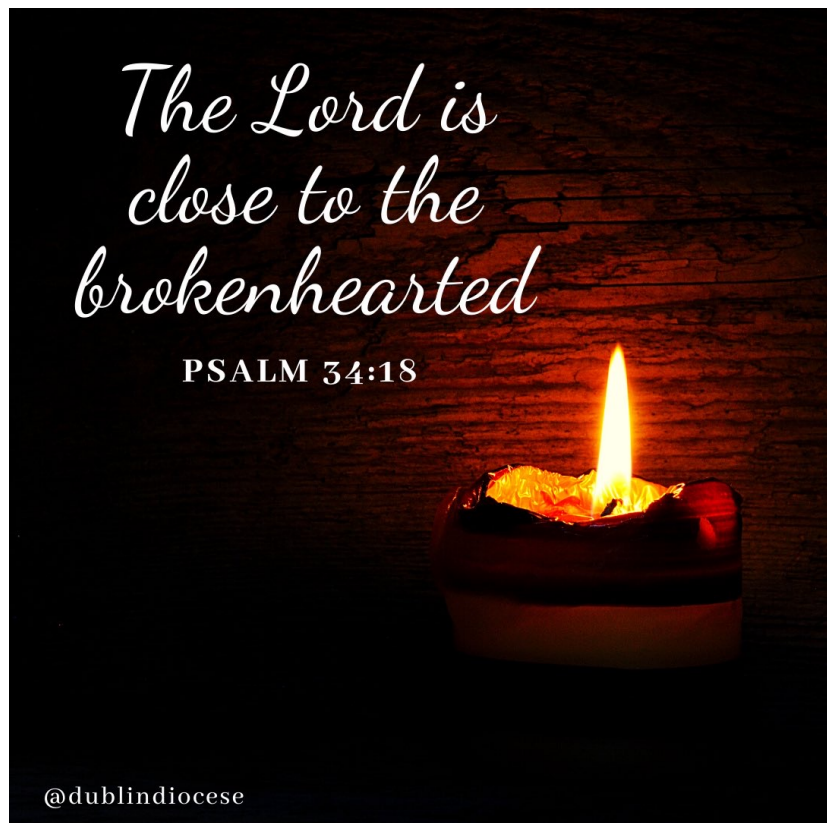
Today we pray for those facing food insecurity globally. Coronavirus, conflict and cuts to UN funding are increasing the risks of food insecurity and malnutrition in 2021, in particular in South Sudan.

An increase in domestic abuse has been an unwanted consequence of the global pandemic. We pray for all who have suffered that they will have help to rebuild their

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confidence in their self-worth and practical ways to move forward in life.

Prolonged restrictions and times of isolation can lead to a loss of confidence in venturing out and interacting with others. We pray for all who are experiencing this and ask God to help us gently reach out with encouragement and understanding.



We pray for those who have lost jobs in the last months and are now seeking new employment. May their confidence in their abilities stay strong and may unexpected doors open for them to new opportunities for work.

The #COVID19 pandemic has wreaked havoc in the lives and livelihoods of so many. We pray today for God to give us the means to help rebuild hope and confidence in people, through practical help as well as emotional and spiritual support.

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.

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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.

Speaking to the Soul

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you.”

Genesis 12:1 NLT

I wonder what your life looks like at the moment. I would guess that for many of us there are plenty of aspects of our lives that suit us really well. Life isn’t perfect, and we can easily come up with some suggested improvements, but the thought of it all changing completely would come as quite a shock. Well, if that’s true for us, imagine how much greater the challenge would have been for Abram. We would be able to reach for our computers and find out information about the wider world, but not Abram! God was taking him away from the security of his home and leading him on the most incredible adventure into a land of which he knew nothing.

And there’s another interesting detail. Abram is 75. There’s nothing wrong with being 75 but most people would consider that it is hardly the time of life when you are expecting to go on a daring adventure! One would assume that that would be left to much younger people. But that’s not how God works. Living the life of faith is one long

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adventure and, whatever your age, you need to be ready for change because that's how God works.

The writer to the Hebrews uses the example of Abram as an illustration of faith. He reflects that Abram went out “not knowing where he was going”. By any normal standard that sounds extremely foolish. Leaving home without having a clue about the destination sounds ridiculous. But Abram was a man of faith and he knew that following God's will was the wisest possible course of action. Abram was willing to head out into the unknown together with his family and cattle for the simple reason that he trusted God. And the truth is that thousands of years later God works in exactly the same way today. He may ask you to do something which appears completely crazy by human standards, but if he is truly calling you then it will always be the best way.

QUESTION

Are you willing to go on an adventure with God?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you that you still call people to live by faith today. Help me to be willing to go on an adventure with you. Amen.

