

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Bruges**

January 21, 2023

## Image of the day

Bruges revisited

## People and places



## Charles Wood International Song Competition 2023

Applications are now open for the fifth annual competition. This brings young singers from across the UK, Ireland and beyond to perform in Armagh in March 2023.

Accommodation and travel subsidies are available for all finalists. 1st Prize: £1,000 & Trophy. Highest Ranking NI/ROI Competitor: £200 & Performance Opportunity

[charleswoodsummerschool.org/song-comp](https://charleswoodsummerschool.org/song-comp)



## **Local volunteering with Habitat in Ballymena, Belfast or Lisburn**

**Habitat has announced “We will be piloting our House to Home programme in the Ballymena area over the next few months”.**

The ‘House to Home’ programme supports vulnerable people who have been homeless to sustain tenancies in rental accommodation by helping them to make a house a home.

Habitat need some eager volunteers to grab a paintbrush and support vulnerable people to make their house, a home. No skills needed, just a willingness to work as directed by the Habitat Supervisor.

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The volunteer days in the Ballymena area are Thursdays & Fridays, 9.30am - 4.30pm. House to Home volunteer days are Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 9:30am – 4:30pm in the Lisburn & Greater Belfast areas.

Sign up today: <https://www.tfaforms.com/5002621> or learn more about Habitat's #HouseToHome programme here: <https://bit.ly/3zuJrUu>

## **ReLENTless Prayer returns to north and west Belfast**

**ReLENTless Prayer returns to north and west Belfast for Lent 2023, with prayer spaces in churches and Christian communities in the area open from February 27 until March 31.**

Stephen Whitten, Church Army Evangelist with Connect Base, Connor Diocese's North Belfast Centre of Mission, is one of the organisers.

“In a busy world, God can seem far away and difficult to connect with but giving time to earnestly pray can create doorways through which the reviving life of God can bring change and blessing on us and our communities,” Stephen said.

“With this hope in mind, we will be running ReLENTless Prayer again this year through the season of Lent and inviting other churches to get involved in creating space for people to connect with God.”



ReLENTless Prayer provides space for people to pray for north and west Belfast following a series of shared themes.

“The key basis is a partnership and collaboration to open prayerful doorways to the reviving power of God through the Holy Spirit which brings blessing upon our community,” Stephen said.

Each participating venue offers prayer space in its own tradition in its church, hall or small room, on a nominated day or days.

“Each prayer space is unique in its own right, but giving opportunity and space for people to pray through the themes that everyone will be praying for,” Stephen explained. “This can be done in various ways using music,

light, opportunities for people to draw or write prayers, or simply be quiet. You can be creative to use your space, pictures, displays to focus people's minds to prayer and draw them deeper in relationship with God."

There will also be a book that 'travels' between each venue – this is a journal which gives people opportunity to include prayers of interest, pictures and prayer themes.

ReLENTless Prayer has been running for several years outside of the Covid-19. It was initially supported by churches which participate in the North Belfast Prayer Walk and has expanded to include many others.

An information event for any church or Christian community interested in getting involved will be held on Wednesday January 25 from 12.15 -1:15pm in St Stephen's Parish Church, Millfield. A light lunch will be provided.

[For further information](#), please contact [stephen.whitten@churcharmy.org](mailto:stephen.whitten@churcharmy.org) or the Rev Canon Jim Carson at [jamescarson203@btinternet.com](mailto:jamescarson203@btinternet.com).

## **Core Prayer Topics for ReLENTless 2023**

Family Life – bless and strengthen families as folk struggle economically.

Mental Health – for those struggling with loneliness and effects of Covid and financial pressure.

Good working and relationships in government – return to Stormont.

The NHS and all doctors and nurses and ancillary staff at a time of great pressure.



Those suffering illness, bereavement, and loss.

Local schools – safe education for our children.

Peace and reconciliation in our communities especially at election times.

Local businesses – that they can survive the effects of economic stress.

Growth in good neighbourliness amongst Christian churches and communities.

Renewal and revival of all churches for a positive influence on our community.

In addition to these, Stephen has highlighted two other prayer topics – firstly, prayers for peace among nations, races, and people groups and specially for an end to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine; secondly – in days of change and pressures on ‘the Church,’ what is God saying to the individual Christians, churches and Christian Communities about the future? As from The Book Revelations, (ch2-3) What is the Holy Spirit saying to the churches today?

## **New Rector continues historic ministry in Narraghmore**

**Parishioners in the United Parishes of Narraghmore, Timolin, Castledermot and Kinneagh celebrated the opening of a fresh chapter with the institution of their new Rector on last Friday evening, January 13.**

The Revd Ken Rue was instituted by Archbishop Michael Jackson in a packed St James’s Church In Castledermot.



The Revd Ken Rue with Archbishop Michael Jackson and church wardens and representatives of Narraghmore, Timolin, Castledermot and Kinneagh with Archdeacon Neal O'Raw, Archdeacon David Pierpoint and the Revd Robert Marshall, registrar.

Ken, who was associate vicar in Wicklow and Killiskey, was joined by his wife Lesley and her sister. Many former parishioners travelled across the diocese to wish him well. Also in the congregation was local TD, Minister Martin Heydon and local councillor, Ivan Keatley, along with representatives of the wider community.

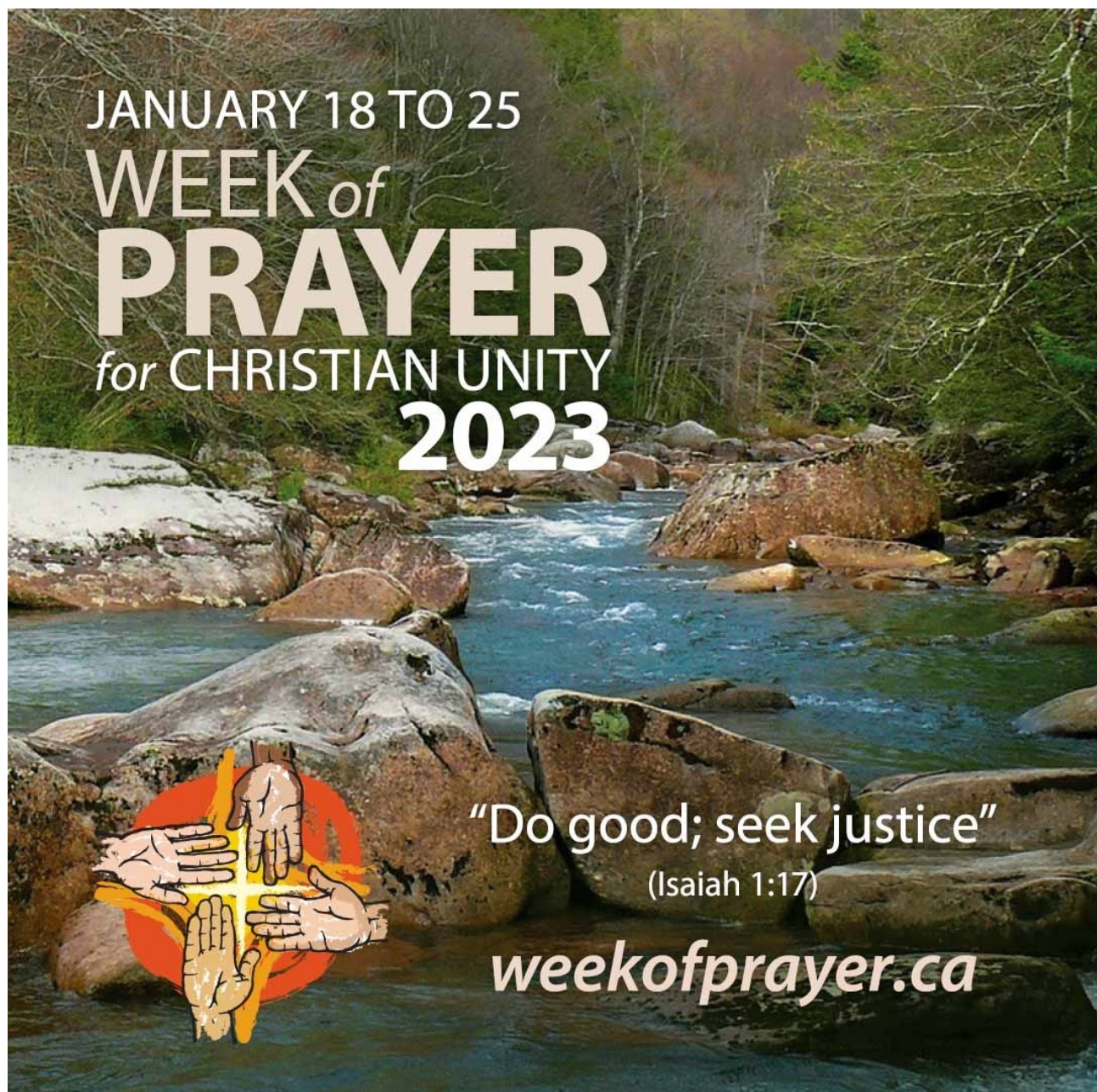
In welcoming the congregation, Archbishop Michael Jackson said that Ken and Lesley were well known to all and would



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serve the people of the parish and their communities in the way for which they were renowned.

The sermon was preached by the Revd Alec Purser of Stradbally and Portlaoise Union of Parishes who has known Ken since they were in college together. He highlighted the long and rich history of St James's Church which dates back to the year 800 and said that Ken was now ready to lead God's people in that place. "It may seem daunting but that is what we are called to do. We heard this in the Psalm this



evening: 'Such as we have heard and known, which our forebears have told us. We will not hide from their children, but will recount to generations to come, the praises of the Lord and his power and the wonderful works he has done'." Psalm 78

## **Diploma in Youth Ministry and Spirituality launched at St Patrick's University, Maynooth**

**This programme in Youth Ministry and Spirituality is designed to be a pathway for someone with sufficient working experience in youth ministry but who does not have a previous degree in theology or youth ministry.**

Such a candidate may desire to develop their conceptual, theoretical, and practical skills, and to receive a professional qualification in youth ministry.

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The programme is also designed for students or graduates of primary degrees in theology who intend to engage in further studies (e.g. Masters in Youth Ministry) but need a preparatory Diploma to have the right methodological and





pastoral qualification to engage in research in youth ministry at a post graduate level.

The programme commences in September 2023 with the registration and recruitment of new students (with individual and group interviews) concluded during the academic year 2022 in line with the normal college admissions guidelines and dates.

Aims of the course and more information at -

[\[http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/news/2022/symposium--listening-to-the-west-.html\]](http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/news/2022/symposium--listening-to-the-west-.html)

## News reports

### Leading chamber choirs to present joint concerts in Belfast and Dublin

**Two leading chamber choirs are joining forces across the border to present concerts in Belfast and Dublin. Cappella Caeciliana and New Dublin Voices will perform in Belfast on Saturday 28 January, and in Dublin on Saturday 25 February.**

The performances will follow a very busy 2022 for both choirs, which featured many high profile engagements such as New Dublin Voices singing at the Irish Defence Forces' annual carol service, and Cappella Caeciliana performing with Andrea Bocelli.

Entitled TWO CITIES in recognition of the choirs being based on the two largest cities on the island of Ireland, the concerts feature one of the most extraordinary works in the choral repertoire – the Mass for Double Choir by Swiss composer Frank Martin. The son of a Calvinist minister, he was drawn to the ancient text of the Roman Catholic Mass despite himself being a devout Calvinist. Composed in the 1920s, it was not performed for four decades as Martin regarded it as a matter between God and himself. He wrote “I felt that a personal expression of religious belief should remain secret and hidden from public opinion”. However, pressure from various quarters eventually resulted in the



reputation of the composition has grown steadily to the extent that it is now regarded as one of the great masterpieces of a cappella choral music.

The programmes for the two concerts also include a very varied selection of short items performed by the two choirs individually, particular highlights being compositions by Sir James MacMillan and Duke Ellington. With a strong contingent of Irish composers on the bill - including rising stars Áine Mallon and Eoghan Desmond - the choirs will showcase excellent choral music from both sides of the border.

In each of the two cities, the concert takes place in one of its most significant and historic religious buildings - St





Malachy's Church in Belfast (opened 1844) and the Chapel of Trinity College Dublin (opened 1798). Matthew Quinn, Musical Director of Cappella Caeciliana, said "I am extremely excited that Cappella Caeciliana and New Dublin Voices will be presenting the Martin Mass for Double Choir in both Belfast and Dublin, bringing this gem (rarely performed on these shores) to an even wider audience. It's a powerful work which is as expansive in its joyous moments as it is intimate in its more gentle and reflective passages".

The Belfast concert takes place in St Malachy's Church, Alfred Street, at 7.30pm on Saturday 28 January. Tickets cost £15, with free admission for students and under 25s. Available on [www.caeciliana.org](http://www.caeciliana.org) and Eventbrite.

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The Dublin concert takes place in the Chapel of Trinity College at 7pm on Saturday 25 February.

Further information on Cappella Caeciliana is available at [www.caeciliana.org](http://www.caeciliana.org)

Further information on New Dublin Voices is available at [www.newdublinvoices.com](http://www.newdublinvoices.com)

## **C of E bishops says no to gay marriage – but offers blessings**

### **Bishops' decision prompts anger from equality campaigners as well as conservative lobby groups**

Church of England bishops this week have refused to endorse same-sex marriage, but have agreed to “apologise” to LGBT+ people and offer them blessings. Following six years of consultation and deliberation, bishops have rejected calls for gay marriages in churches and have instead proposed, for the first time, that same-sex couples can receive blessings after being married in a civil ceremony.

This will form part of a new set of “prayers of thanksgiving, dedication” and “God’s blessing for same-sex couples”.

The Archbishop of York, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, said that what the Church was offering “is a pastoral, not a legislative way forward”. However, the decision has prompted fury and disappointment from both equality

campaigners – who claim that “we’ve had a ton of apologies, and no action” – as well as traditionalists who say that the institution is paving the way for same-sex marriage “in all but name”.

There had been speculation that the majority of bishops could endorse plans for same-sex marriage after the Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Rev Steven Croft, became the most senior Church of England cleric to back the proposals, breaking ranks with the Church’s official view. After he spoke out in November, a number of other serving bishops came out in support of gay marriage.

However, after the meeting while the Bishop said that he was “sorry” that the plans were not endorsed by the majority of bishops, he welcomed the Church’s “significant steps forward”.

CNI understands that around a third of the bishops were in favour of same-sex marriage, a third were against and a third were undecided.

According to current canon law, no Church of England minister can bless or marry gay couples and the Church said it would not change its existing doctrine that Holy Matrimony “is between one man and one woman for life”.

However, under the bishops’ “historic” new proposals, same-sex couples could have a church service in which there would be prayers of dedication, thanksgiving or for God’s blessing on the couple following a civil marriage or partnership.

Meanwhile, civil marriage blessings will be voluntary for clergy, allowing those who are theologically opposed to opt out.

Andrea Williams, chief executive of Christian Concern, the conservative lobby group, described the proposals as “capitulation by the Church of England” and said it “is making way for the celebration of ‘same-sex marriage’ in all but name”.

However, Jayne Ozanne, an LGBT+ campaigner and member of the General Synod, described the blessings as “breadcrumbs” and “the minimum they can do”. She added: “I cannot believe that five years of pain and trauma has got us here. We have had countless apologies over the years but no action to stop the harmful discrimination.”

The News Letter in its report stated, “The CoI General Synod considered blessing same-sex relationships in 2017, however it was rejected – in a relatively narrow vote. Clerics opposed the move by 72 to 56 with nine abstentions while laity opposed it by 104 to 90 with 15 abstentions, showing significant support for the liberal reform”.

Commenting in the News Letter’s report, Canon Ian Ellis, a former editor of the C of I Gazette, said the CoE decision will stimulate conversations on this side of the Irish Sea. “I have no doubt that the development in the Church of England will be discussed at some level within the Church of Ireland,” he said. He believes that same sex couples should be “welcomed in church” but that he still believes that “Christian marriage is between one man and one woman”.





## **Pope to Finnish Ecumenical Delegation: Never tire of fostering unity**

**Pope Francis receives an ecumenical delegation from Finland, and recalls the importance of working for Christian unity and for reconciliation in the world.**

Meeting in the Vatican with an ecumenical delegation from Finland on Thursday, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of fully living the common call, shared by all Christians baptized in Christ, to work tirelessly for reconciliation, and to be agents of reconciliation in a war-torn world.

The group is visiting Rome as part of a customary ecumenical pilgrimage celebrating the Feast of Saint Henrik, an English-born Bishop martyred in Finland, who is



venerated both by Catholics and Lutherans, as well as several Protestant Churches and the Anglican Communion.

Along with Catholic and Lutheran members, the delegation also included Orthodox and Methodist representatives.

### **Promoting reconciliation among Christians and in a divided world**

Pope Francis began his address by thanking the Finnish Christian leaders for their condolences for the recent death of Pope Benedict XVI.

Recalling the recent celebration of the Baptism of Jesus, on 8 January, the Pope reminded those present that our common baptism in Christ calls on us to promote reconciliation among Christians, and in a divided world.

“Having received the one baptism, we, as believers, are called above all to give thanks because, starting with the waters of baptism, our very existence has been reconciled with God, with others, and with all creation. As reconciled sons and daughters, we are called to work tirelessly for reconciliation among ourselves, and to be agents of reconciliation in our world.”

### **Concrete closeness to victims of injustice and war**

The Pope remarked that this aspect is particularly relevant as Churches worldwide celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from 18-25 January, focused this year on the theme: “Do good; seek justice” (Is 1:17).

“In those words,” he noted, “we hear an echo of our baptism, which calls us, justified by grace, to carry out works of justice and to offer concrete gestures of closeness to the victims of injustice, marginalization and various forms of oppression, especially war.”

“As witnesses of faith in Christ, who immersed Himself in the frailty of our human condition, we are duty bound to immerse ourselves in the wounds of all those in need. And to do this together.”

### **Walking on the footsteps St. Henrik**

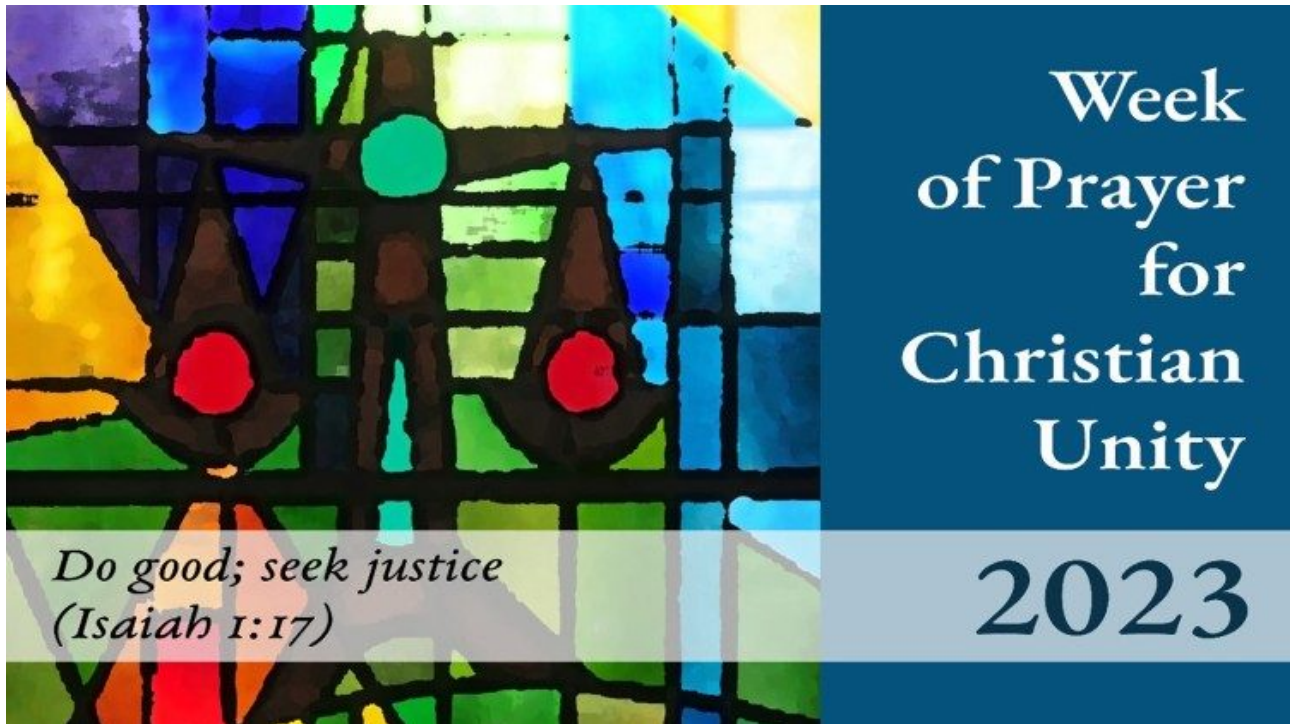
Recalling Saint Henrik as a “witness of faith, messenger of hope and instrument of charity”, the Pope insisted on the importance of recognizing the greatness of the unity we share, of praying together and working intensively to overcome divisions, and to be one “so that the world may believe”.

However, he said, awareness of this reality is not enough. We need to nourish a genuine passion that springs from “the desire to overcome the counter-witness given by the historical divisions among Christians that have harmed the unity of the Body of Christ. Above all today,” stressed the Pope, “we need an ardent zeal for evangelization.”

He therefore reiterated his call “to never tire of loving and, in hope, seeking those who are far off” and to “nurture a deep and ardent desire to proclaim Jesus and to build up the unity that He so desires.”

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Concluding, Pope Francis invited those present to pray together the Lord's Prayer which he said, "more than any other prayer, manifests the reality of our baptism."



## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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