



Image of the day
Sunrise at Durham Cathedral



Parishes urged to offer Churches for use as vaccination centres

Parishes throughout Dublin & Glendalough are being urged to volunteer suitable churches and parish buildings for use as mass vaccination centres.

The Government plan for the rollout of vaccines, published in December, suggests that mass vaccination centres will be established once the availability of vaccines increases.

Archbishop Michael Jackson is urging all parishes to examine their church and parish buildings to see if they may be of use in this crucial phase of the vaccination plan.

“The rollout of the vaccination programme is an important next step in our country’s response to the coronavirus,” he stated.

“As might be expected, those responsible for the programme will be looking for suitable venues to administer the vaccine. If you and your Select Vestry or other governance body decide that the church building or the halls are suitable and safe for this purpose please express your interest by following the link below,” the Archbishop added.

The Archbishop’s call comes as St Patrick’s Cathedral has announced that it has offered its services as a mass vaccination centre. The Cathedral’s Dean, the Very Revd William Morton, confirmed that they had made the offer in recent days. He acknowledged that the cathedral had received support from the State in recent times. “We are aware that in the surrounding areas of the Liberties and the Coombe, large buildings were in short supply and if the need is there, we would like to help,” he said.



The Office of Government Procurement has developed a central database for offers of goods and services on behalf of the whole of the public service, including the HSE. The link below is to a form

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which is intended for use by anyone who wishes to offer goods or services that they believe may assist in Ireland's response to COVID-19.

[<https://offersofsupport.gov.ie/offers/new>]

Episcopalians join in prayers for new administration as Biden is inaugurated as US president



Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th president of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts as Jill Biden holds the Bible on Jan. 20.

Episcopalians across the church on Jan. 20 joined in prayers for the new administration as Joseph R. Biden Jr. was sworn in at noon as the 46th president of the United States.

In his inaugural address, Biden drew from Scripture and his own faith in calling for a unified national response to the “cascading crises” facing America, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol to climate change to rampant disinformation. Projecting perseverance and hope, Biden urged Americans to be civil in their disagreements and join forces to defeat the coronavirus, extremism, hatred and lies.

“We must end this un-civil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal. We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts.”

Most of the celebrations and prayer services were held online because of the pandemic. On the eve of the inauguration, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry was among an ecumenical group of 30 faith leaders who offered prayers in an online #PeaceWithJustice prayer vigil organized by Sojourners.

“Teach our leaders to love,” Curry said in the vigil. “Grant them and grant us your loving, liberating and life-giving spirit. Move our hearts and then show us the way to break down barriers that divide, to make suspicions disappear and hatreds to cease. There are divisions being healed, wrongs being righted. We may learn to live in justice, love and peace.”

The Diocese of Texas held an evening prayer service on Jan. 19, while the three dioceses in Wisconsin promoted a 24-hour prayer vigil leading up to the ceremony. New York’s Trinity Church Wall Street invited parishioners Jan. 20 to join a pre-inaugural vigil on Zoom. The Diocese of Hawaii was

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scheduled to follow the inauguration with “Noonday Prayers for Our Country.”

Washington National Cathedral tolled its bell 400 times on Jan. 19, once for every 1,000 lives lost in the coronavirus pandemic.

The Presidential Inaugural Committee also held a lighting ceremony that evening at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in memory of the nearly 400,000 Americans who have died of COVID-19.



President-elect Joe Biden and his wife Jill Biden are joined by Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and her husband Doug Emhoff during a COVID-19 memorial event at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool on Jan. 19 in Washington.

Pope Francis prays Biden works to heal divisions, promote human dignity



Pope Francis greets U.S. Vice President Joe Biden in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican March 19, 2013, as the new pontiff receives dignitaries following his inaugural Mass. The Holy Father sent a written message to Biden upon his Jan. 20 inauguration as President of the United States.

Pope Francis prayed that President Joe Biden would work to heal the divisions in U.S. society and promote human dignity and peace around the globe.

“Under your leadership, may the American people continue to draw strength from the lofty political, ethical and religious values that have inspired the nation since its founding,” the pontiff wrote in a congratulatory message Jan. 20 as Biden was inaugurated as the 46th president of the United States.

Popes traditionally have sent such messages and assurances of prayer to a new U.S. president upon his inauguration and have included mention of issues of concern, particularly about the dignity of every human life.

“At a time when the grave crises facing our human family call for farsighted and united responses,” Pope Francis wrote to Biden, “I pray that your decisions will be guided by a concern for building a society marked by authentic justice and freedom, together with unfailing respect for the rights and dignity of every person, especially the poor, the vulnerable and those who have no voice.”

“I likewise ask God, the source of all wisdom and truth, to guide your efforts to foster understanding, reconciliation and peace within the United States and among the nations of the world in order to advance the universal common good,” he said.

Pope Francis also prayed that Biden, his family and “the beloved American people” would receive “an abundance of blessings.”

Biden, the nation’s second Catholic president after John F. Kennedy, has not always publicly supported legislation in line with all the church’s teachings, particularly when it comes to abortion. But his faith has been reflected in a

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range of other issues, especially concern for the poor, care for the environment, immigration policy and international peace.

Pope Francis already had a phone conversation with Biden Nov. 12 to congratulate him on winning the election.

“The president-elect thanked His Holiness for extending blessings and congratulations and noted his appreciation for His Holiness’s leadership in promoting peace, reconciliation and the common bonds of humanity around the world,” said a readout on the call released by Biden’s transition team in Wilmington.

Biden, it said, “expressed his desire to work together on the basis of a shared belief in the dignity and equality of all humankind on issues such as caring for the marginalized



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and the poor, addressing the crisis of climate change, and welcoming and integrating immigrants and refugees into our communities.”

The pontiff and Biden have met on several occasions: as vice president, Biden attended Pope Francis’ inauguration in 2013 and the two met briefly afterward; when Pope Francis visited the United States in 2015, Biden was present for several events, but he and his wife also had a private meeting with the pontiff; and in 2016 the two met when Biden spoke at a Vatican meeting on regenerative medicine.

General Synod of C of E is to hold special online meeting

The General Synod of the C of E is to hold a special online meeting next month examining challenges facing the Church and world in light of the coronavirus pandemic followed by a formal session in the spring, as a result of the current lockdown restrictions.

Members will discuss questions including the future shape of the Church in the wake of Covid-19, independent oversight of safeguarding and proposals by a Commission of the Church of England towards addressing the Housing Crisis at a meeting held entirely remotely on February 27.

Legislation and other business which can only be addressed in a formal session will be discussed slightly later – expected to be from April 23 to April 24. The two meetings will replace the planned group of sessions which would have taken place from February 26 to March 1.

The decision was taken by the officers of Synod – the Archbishops, Prolocutors of Canterbury and York of the House of Clergy, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity with the support of the Chair of the General Synod Business Committee.

It was taken in order to follow the Government's call for people to stay at home to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The Officers of General Synod agreed that Synod chairs and the staff needed to manage formal proce

750 reportedly dead after attack on Ethiopia church

A Belgium-based peacebuilding non-profit is reporting 750 people killed in an attack on Ethiopia church.

The attack was detailed in the January 9 'Situation Report' of the Europe External Programme with Africa (EEPA).

The non-profit said people who were hiding in the church were brought out and shot in the square in front of the building.

The attack happened at the Maryam Tsiyon Church in Aksum, also known as the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion.

The church is located in Tigray, a region in the north that is home to many churches and monasteries but also beset by conflict.



The Maryam Tsiyon Church in Aksum is believed by Ethiopian Christians to house the Ark of the Covenant.

The church is part of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, which has around 36 million members.

EEPA said that locals believe the attackers wanted to make off with the Ark of the Covenant believed by Ethiopian Christians to be housed in the church. The locals told EEPA that the attackers wanted to take the Ark of the Covenant to the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

The organisation said the massacre was carried out by Ethiopian federal troops and Amhara militia.

Makers of Christian Easter egg plead for online support after being dropped by supermarkets



David Marshall, of the Meaningful Chocolate Company, launched the Real Easter Egg 10 years ago after discovering that not a single Easter egg mentioned the Christian faith.

The Real Easter Egg - the only Easter egg in the UK to tell the Christian story behind the holiday - has been dropped by supermarkets as Covid hits demand.

Makers, the Meaningful Chocolate Company, said the decision was down to a bad year for Easter trade during the first national lockdown last March.

While the company saw an increase of 40% in online purchases of the egg, the major supermarkets struggled.

With the country in yet another lockdown one year on, the difficult trading climate has led to supermarkets reducing their Easter stock this time round.

It means that for the first time in 10 years, major supermarkets like Tesco, Waitrose, ASDA and Morrisons will not be selling the Real Easter Egg.

In light of this change, Meaningful Chocolate Company CEO David Marshall is asking people to show their support for the egg buy purchasing it online.

“Easter 2020 was right at the start of lockdown and we saw people change the way they shopped,” he said.

“We saw an increase of 40 per cent in people buying from our website for friends, family and food banks. However, at the same time, the early pandemic led to the supermarkets having a disastrous Easter as people stayed away from high streets.

“This year, supermarket buyers were told to cut brands, reduce the volumes and in some cases ask for stock to be supplied at a loss or cost price.

“It means there will be fewer brands, including the Real Easter Egg, on supermarket shelves this Easter.”

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Around 80 million Easter eggs are sold in the UK each year, but the Real Easter Egg is unique in being the only one that mentions Jesus.

The egg is made from Fairtrade chocolate and is sold in plastic-free packaging together with a full colour, illustrated children's book of the Easter story.

The Meaningful Chocolate Company works in partnership with foodbanks to donate Real Easter Eggs and has donated around £300,000 to charitable causes since it first went on sale in 2010.

The eggs are available to buy online at www.realeasteregg.co.uk.

Longer read links

Pointers for prayer

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

In this week of prayer for Christian Unity with its theme of “abiding in Christ” we’re more aware than ever of the importance of working together to serve the world. We pray for God to unite us together in his love.

Let's remember and thank God today for friends and connections with different church traditions, and pray that

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we'll fully embrace and enjoy the richness of diversity that we all bring to worship and service.

In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we pray all Christians may come together in prayer and action against all injustice and oppression so we may bring hope and healing to our world



We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of earth and sky and sea; for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers. We praise you for these good gifts, and pray that we may safeguard them for our posterity. Grant that we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honor and glory of your Name, now and for ever. Amen. ~ The Book of Common Prayer



We pray today for God's help as we unite across denominations to bring hope and practical care to those in need, and ask that any differences and misunderstandings will be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today we pray for Uganda. Last week, elections were held after dozens of people were killed in the run up to voting day, and violence has been at an unprecedented level. We

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pray for stability in Uganda and safety for those taking part in democratic processes

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.

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.

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 week.

Speaking to the Soul

“I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 12:2-3 NLT

Never forget this! God is in the business of blessing people! That's what he loves to do and that's what Abram was just about to discover. At a time of life when most people would be seeking to take things more slowly, God calls him to be the father of a nation. Nothing suggests that this is remotely

likely. One practical problem was that Abram and his wife Sarai had no children, but with God around that wasn't going to be a major difficulty.

In life we face many challenges but God doesn't want them to have the last word. Amidst the bumps and difficulties of life God's desire is to bless us so that, in turn, we can bless other people. I love seeing that in action. I can think of many friends over the years who have had to face significant problems in life. I think of friends like Richard, Sandra and Tim all of whom had severe life limiting disabilities. They could have spent their lives moaning about the challenges that they had to face every single day. But instead they chose to thank God for his blessings and then generously to pass them on to others.

Abram and Sarai could easily have reflected on their age and childlessness and spent the rest of their lives stuck at home being miserable. But instead they chose to trust God and head off on an incredible adventure in which God's amazing words of blessing would come true. Whatever you do today remember that before anything else God wants to bless you and help you to be a blessing.

QUESTION

In what ways has God blessed your life, and in what ways can you pass on his blessing?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to become increasingly generous in passing on your blessings to others. Amen.

