



Image of the day - Pope to remain in hospital

Despite initial estimates of requiring a week of inpatient care, Pope Francis will continue his recovery as a patient at Rome's Gemelli hospital after undergoing colon surgery, the Vatican press office said. A statement released July 12, said the pope "will remain hospitalised for a few more days in order to optimise his medical and rehabilitation therapy."

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Reports

‘Meeting need with dignity’ – The Storehouse at Crinken officially opens



Archbishop Michael Jackson and the Revd Trevor Stevenson with Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipality District Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

The leafy surrounds of St James’s Church, Crinken, provided the backdrop for the official opening of The Storehouse by Archbishop Michael Jackson recently.

An initiative by Crinken’s Rector, the Revd Trevor Stephenson and parishioner Glynis Good, The Storehouse Foodbank Team currently works with eight agencies including St Vincent de Paul Bray and Fassaroe, Barnardos,

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Purple House, Ark Housing, Tusla and Springboard as well as supporting Shankill Day Care Centre, Bray Women's Refuge and a homeless outreach programme run by parishioners, Orla and Neville Wood. In all the foodbank assists up to 100 individuals weekly.

The Storehouse was officially opened during a short service which included an address by the Archbishop who spoke of the practical witness of the initiative stating that it promoted 'the Heartbeat of Friendship' with an 'open-hearted and open-handed' disposition, using Matthew as his text [25: 34-40 and 6: 1-13]

He said that we instinctively think of friends as people who we already know. However, frequently friends were people who we do not know and do not know us, he said. "The Storehouse here at St James's Church, Crinken models such friendship. Essential to how this friendship works is a combination of knowing and not knowing, of encounter and of anonymity, in the meeting of raw need.

"How do I feed my children?... How do I then feed myself?... I really can be a lot smarter with dry and tinned foodstuffs because they are non-perishables... This place helps me... These people ask no embarrassing questions of me. These may be some of the issues that race through the minds of those who come here.

People who have needs for food that can be met from the resources of The Storehouse come; they are welcomed and are given a decent sized bag and they fill it for themselves; and they go. They have need. They have dignity. The one is met. The other is upheld. No questions are asked. They

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may, or they may not, have a relationship with the church. They may, or they may not, engage in conversation. Friendship, by and large, in our world works by personal introduction and by word of mouth. As you go in and out of St James's Church, you will see a stone that says on one side: Come and See and on the other side: Go and Tell. This also is how The Storehouse works: open-hearted and open-handed: an invitation and a mission," the Archbishop stated.

The service took place within Covid guidelines and the congregation included local councillors as well as representatives of the agencies supported by The Storehouse. It was a wonderful evening with many and was certainly, as described by the Archbishop, a 'Good News Story' that met need with dignity.

C of E sees Daily Prayer podcast used 500,000 times in three months

Around 8,000 people a day are listening to the Church of England's daily cycle of prayer traditionally associated with monastic communities.

The Daily Prayer podcast, integrated into the free Daily Prayer app, enables worshippers to listen to the short traditional services of Morning, Evening and Night prayer.

The services are usually led by the Revd Catherine Williams from Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire and follow the pattern set out in the Church of England's Common Worship

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services, with readings recorded by people from around the country and music from St Martin's Voices.

The podcast, which was launched in March, has surpassed 500,000 downloads, with around 8,000 people listening a day, either alone or in small groups.

The Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek, said: "I'm delighted to see that the Daily Prayer podcast has had half a million listens - helping holy habits to become part of our daily rhythm amid life's joy and pain, activity and rest.

"Whether people pray alone or alongside others, this podcast is an easy way of being united in prayer with brothers and sisters in Christ as we share the same words, and open ourselves to encounter God in prayer, silence and Scripture.

"Together, yet in different contexts and carrying different stories, we are participating in a pattern of prayer which has been practised down the centuries."

Daily Prayer is the latest in a series of apps and podcasts available from the Church of England. Last year they were accessed eight million times, up 50 per cent on the previous year due to the pandemic

Church to apologise for medieval expulsion of Jews

Jewish groups welcome plans for 'act of repentance' to mark 800 years since anti-Semitic decrees

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The Church of England is to apologise for the expulsion of Jews from medieval England, bishops have confirmed, Gabriella Swerling reports in the Daily Telegraph.

In written questions submitted to the General Synod, the Church's legislative body which finished sitting yesterday, Anglican leaders announced plans to offer an "act of repentance" in a move welcomed by Jewish groups who say the action is "better late than never".

'The trauma of medieval English anti-Semitism can never be erased and its legacy survives today'

Despite the Church of England not having been created until the Reformation, officials are apologising for the role of the church in England throughout history in stoking anti-Semitism.

The medieval church endorsed laws that forced Jews to wear badges and banned them from certain professions, leading to their nationwide expulsion in the 13th century.

Asked what church leaders were planning to do to commemorate 800 years since the 1222 Synod of Oxford – "the 'Magna Carta' of English canon law which implemented some of the most egregious anti-Semitic decrees" – the Bishop of Lichfield said the Church was proposing to hold a symbolic service.

The Rt Rev Dr Michael Ipgrave said: "The Archbishop's office has indeed received a letter proposing a service that

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might offer an act of repentance at the 800th anniversary of the Synod of Oxford and its anti-Semitic laws.

“We are exploring the idea of such a service to be planned in conjunction with the Council of Christians and Jews, as well as the potential for a liturgical resource that might be offered to local churches to model an appropriate symbolic repentance.”

Responding to the plans, Dave Rich, director of policy at the Community Security Trust (CST), a charity that provides security to the Jewish community and records anti-Semitic incidents, said: “The phrase ‘better late than never’ is truly appropriate here. The historic trauma of medieval English anti-Semitism can never be erased and its legacy survives today, for example through the persistence of the ‘blood libel’ allegation that was invented in this country.

“But at a time of rising anti-Semitism, the support and empathy of the Church of England for our community is most welcome as a reminder that the Britain of today is a very different place.”

A record number of anti-Semitic incidents have been recorded in the UK since the latest outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence, the CST said. From May 8 to June 7, 460 incidents were reported to the charity, the highest monthly total since records began in 1984, with 316 happening offline and 144 online.

By the late 1200s, a number of laws had been passed in England restricting the rights of Jewish people. They were forbidden to own land or pass on inheritance to their

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children instead of the Crown. Hundreds were arrested, hanged or imprisoned.

In 1290, Edward I passed the Edict of Expulsion, a royal decree which remained in place for the duration of the Middle Ages, expelling all Jews from the country. It was only overturned when Oliver Cromwell permitted Jews to return to England in 1657.

The Bishop of Lichfield was answering the question in response to Jacob Vince, a member of General Synod from the Diocese of Chichester, who asked: “Have these foundational canon laws ever been formally repented of in the intervening centuries?”

“In light of rapidly worsening anti-Semitism in the UK in recent months, might the 800th anniversary next year be an opportune moment for the Church of England to consider making a formal break with these historic prejudices as a gesture of solidarity with our Jewish neighbours, England’s oldest ethnic minority?”

“Has the Archbishop’s office received a letter and research paper on the topic of this octocentenary, and are there any plans to appoint suitable individuals to investigate these matters further with a view to conducting a fitting service of corporate repentance?”

The plans for the symbolic act of repentance would mark the first time the Church of England has directly apologised for the expulsion of Jews.

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In 2019, it published a teaching document, titled God's Unfailing Word, which acknowledged that Christian theology played a part in the stereotyping and persecution of Jews, which ultimately led to the Holocaust.

People and places

Retirement of Dean of Ross



The Dean of Ross, the Very Reverend Christopher Peters, has indicated to the Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross his intention to retire on 31st October 2021.

Born and brought up on the Isle of Wight, Dean Peters began to sense a call to ordination while reading History at Oxford. He, together with his wife Judy, arrived in Belfast as newly-weds in 1982 and Chris was ordained in Down

Cathedral that September and served as curate in

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Knockbreda Parish until 1984 when he was appointed as curate in Lisburn Cathedral.

Dean Peters says, “It was in Lisburn that I first came to know our Bishop. In 1988 I was appointed as incumbent of Kilmocomogue Union which began my association with the diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Between 1993 and 1998 I was incumbent of Killiney (Ballybrack) in the diocese of Dublin. In 1998 I was appointed Dean of Ross and incumbent of Ross Union of Parishes where I have served for the last 23 years.

“Leaving a parish is never easy, especially one where you feel such a bond with the people and the communities you have tried to serve. An indication of that strong bond is that we are only moving a few miles down the road. I look forward to continuing ministry in our united dioceses in retirement, but in a different way and am very grateful for the friendship and support I have received over the years from so many”.

Expressing gratitude to Dean Peters, Bishop Paul Colton said, “Dean Peters has had a very significant and formative ministry here in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. He and Judy have taken this very special part of the world and its people, very much to their hearts. This is the home they love and where they, and their family, are loved. There will be opportunities for saying ‘thank you’ in due course, but already I do wish to express our deepest gratitude to the Dean for his faithful ministry in the parish, in the diocese and in the wider Church of Ireland. We look forward to our continuing contact with him and with Judy.”

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Founder of NI charity for the disabled passes away

The founder of a Northern Ireland disability charity who was the recipient of two honours from the Queen has passed away.

Evelyn Greer MBE, OBE, who launched Mencap NI after being appointed the first chief executive of the Royal Society of Mentally Handicapped People, died on July 9.

A death notice said that she had passed away peacefully at Nazareth House Care Village, Belfast.

A private family funeral service for Mrs Greer took place in Belfast South Methodist Church, Lisburn Road.

She was described as the “dearly loved wife” of the late Carlisle and the “truly inspirational mother of Robert, Philip and Dot”.

Mrs Greer established Mencap NI with just two staff members and the charity went on to become one of Northern Ireland's most foremost organisations in providing services — including parent courses, clubs, nursery units and residential homes — for people with a learning disability.

One of these homes has been named after the charity's founder — Evelyn Greer House in Bangor, Co Down.

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Mrs Greer enjoyed a long and distinguished career working with various organisations and initiatives.

In 1972, she was awarded a Churchill Travelling Fellowship allowing her to study services in 15 European countries and introduce new ones to Northern Ireland.

Five years later Mrs Greer became a founding member of Special Olympics, Ireland, liaising closely with American philanthropist Eunice Shriver Kennedy, who in 1980 invited her to serve on the International Special Olympics Board. Mrs Greer then went on to found the Northern Ireland Special Olympics, which is now known as Special Olympics Ulster.

In 1979 Mrs Greer was awarded a MBE and was then the recipient of an OBE in 2004 for her role as a board member on the 2003 Special Olympics Summer Games which was hosted in Dublin.

Throughout her lifetime, Mrs Greer also held other prominent positions at various organisations, including patron of Reconnect NI, a group which helps those with acquired brain injuries.

She was also chairperson of Sense NI, a charity that supports those who are deaf, blind or have sensory impairments, representing the region on the UK Sense Council in London.

Her other roles include vice-president of Speech Matters, a charity that offers services for stroke and speech impaired

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people, trustee of the Ulster Theatre Trust and trustee of Blossom Trust in Keady, Co Armagh.

Following the funeral service, interment took place in St John's Parish Churchyard, Moira. A funeral notice said Mrs Greer will be “lovingly remembered” by her sorrowing sons, daughter, daughters-in-law, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

By Gillian Halliday, courtesy the Belfast Telegraph

Media review

Books, broadcasts, resources, and Webinars

Forward Day by Day app and website receive major update

Forward Movement announces a major update to its popular Forward Day by Day smartphone app, as well as a relaunch of its Daily Prayer website, prayer.forwardmovement.org. The complete overhaul includes a new clean design with simplified navigation, as well as podcast integration and expanded customization settings for users.

Visitors to the Daily Prayer website [prayer.forwardmovement.org] will see the new design immediately, while users of the Forward Day by Day app should automatically receive the update within a few days, depending on their device and settings. The app is available

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on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the app has been free to download since early 2021.

The long-awaited upgrade was completed in partnership with the Rev. Greg Johnston of Cambridge, MA, the creator of the popular Venite app, which Forward Movement began sponsoring in 2020.

“We are committed to our mission to inspire disciples and empower evangelists, wherever they are,” said the Rev. Canon Scott Gunn, Forward Movement executive director. “This upgrade to our app and website will provide users with an improved user experience, including customizable features and settings, to strengthen a habit of daily prayer and scripture engagement, both known catalysts to a deepening life of faith.”

To assist visitors with bookmarked pages, the existing version of prayer.forwardmovement.org will remain intact for several weeks as users become accustomed to the new website. By late August, pages will redirect to the upgraded site.

The Forward Day by Day app and Daily Prayer website were initially launched in 2012.

About Forward Movement - Inspiring disciples and empowering evangelists around the globe every day, Forward Movement has been producing innovative resources to encourage spiritual growth in individuals and congregations since 1935. Best known for the daily devotional Forward Day by Day, Forward Movement also

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produces books, smart phone apps, pamphlets, conferences, online courses, church leadership resources, and more, in English and Spanish.

Visit [www.forwardmovement.org]or [www.venadelante.org]to learn more.

Reminder: Enroll for the Aurora certificate in youth ministry

Aurora Youth is a youth ministry training course, available for applicants from the Republic of Ireland. This ecumenical course is delivered by the Church of Ireland's Youth Department. Anyone aged 16 or older from any Christian youth work setting is welcome.

The course is offered in conjunction with St Peter's College (part of Sheffield Diocese), and is designed to meet the needs of volunteer youth leaders who have busy lives and no formal youth work qualifications.

Aurora Youth will provide participants with the essential skills, knowledge and understanding needed to be effective in youth ministry.

Running from September 2021 to May 2022, it is intended to deliver the course using a mixture of modes.

Depending on restrictions nearer the time, it is hoped to host one face to face day each term (full day Saturdays, venue to

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be confirmed) and deliver the remainder online (Wednesday evenings).

Students complete a portfolio of learning to gain the President Bishop's Certificate in Youth Ministry, and may also work towards the St Peter's College Certificate in Youth Ministry by completing a number of assignments.

Cost: €300 per student (some discounts and bursaries available). Applicants are asked to express their interest before the end of August 2021

For more details and to book a place, visit
[www.auroratraining.org.uk/eire]

Media review

Abp Welby's support for England players hit by racist abuse

ITV news Report on the racist abuse suffered by some England footballers following the team's defeat to Italy at the weekend, including the Archbishop of Canterbury's tweet in which he said, "Rashford, Sancho and Saka showed incredible courage in stepping up to take penalties. Those who are racially abusing them show the opposite and must be held accountable."

[<https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2021-07-12/justin-welby-those-who-racially-abuse-players-must-be-held-accountable>]

C of E Vision and Strategy paper

Church Times coverage of the presentation by the Archbishop of York at General Synod on the Vision and Strategy paper.

[<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/16-july/news/uk/parish-clergy-are-at-the-heart-of-any-new-strategy-archbishop-of-york-insists>]

Repentance for antisemitic laws

Coverage of a proposal put to the General Synod for a service of repentance to mark the 800th anniversary of the 1222 Synod of Oxford at which antisemitic laws were introduced. The Bishop of Lichfield is quoted.



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[<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/anglican-church-repents-for-antisemitism-in-the-13th-century-jmtlrrrj9>]

[<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/07/12/church-issue-first-ever-apology-expulsion-jews-medieval-england/>]

Opinion

Welcome to Sfira's Paradise, SERVILIA. by Kevin Myers

It's hard to know which is more worrying; the unanimous decision by Cork City Councillors to denounce Eoghan Harris, or the equally unanimous indecision of Irish journalists in reply.

Welcome to Servilia, the state whose citizens abjectly comply with the consensus emanating from our new cultural rulers, Sinn Fein-IRA, Sfira.

To be sure, Eoghan Harris was – as charged – critical of John Hume's role in the so-called peace process: but no more critical than I was or Seamus Mallon, who saw his party being sacrificed to the twin projects of Hume's ego and Sfira's great political project. Mallon, a true hero who denounced the IRA as Nazis even as he lived in their very midst, duly died in relative obscurity, while Hume, the architect of Sfira's rescue from military defeat, was given a funeral nearly to match Prince Philip's.

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Ireland is now a lethal place for dissenters. Cork, the city that gave Queen Elizabeth a legendarily warm welcome in 2011, a decade on has now apparently reverted to a sinisterly grim and tribal mood. How the Sfirra army council must have smirked in silent disbelief as Shane O'Callaghan, a Fine Gael councillor, and (apparently) a barrister, last week set about the ad hominem task of personally destroying Harris. Even by the generous latitude for vituperation allowed in Servilia, O'Callaghan's remarks were so incendiary that he was warned by the mayor that he did not have parliamentary privilege; but what had this plucky creature to fear from the most sued and most persecuted journalist of our times?

Thus the project to silence all journalists critical of republican mythology is almost complete. Eoghan was of course already gone, publicly sacked and humiliated, just as I was four years ago. But in his case, this delayed final coup de grace from his home base was a warning to all young journalists: this is what awaits you if you depart from the consensus in Servilia.

And all this heaped upon a man in his late seventies who has cancer that will accompany him to his grave. By God, one day they'll be writing ballads about the reckless courage of his many persecutors in taking on such an isolated and defenceless target.

I no longer consume the news as I once did, so possibly I've missed an item or ten: but did one single columnist anywhere defend Eoghan's right to free speech, anonymous or not, which included the right to be wrong, which is the basis upon which all our intellectual liberties rest? What we

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got from the whited sepulchre O'Toole was the assertion that anonymity is the mark of the coward, and that no great writers wrote anonymously.

Firstly, Harris has more courage in his earlobe than O'Toole has in the length of that gelatinous contiguity, his spine.

Secondly, O'Toole, once again, is simply wrong. He has no way of knowing whether Coleridge or Wordsworth in their revolutionary days wrote pro-Jacobin pamphlets anonymously; but since both disavowed their earlier beliefs, they were hardly likely to own up later. Anonymous usually means anonymous. Dickens secretly wrote under the pen-name "Boz" for several years. Newspaper columns have used false names since they were invented – Atticus, Peter Simple, Pro-Quidnunc, William Hickey – and the execrable Phoenix magazine administers all its colonic outpouring anonymously, but of course unrebuked by the sanctimonious O'Toole.

Eoghan and I differ on many issues, but we have been consistent critics of the Peace Process and we both warned of the dangers of the Decade of Centenaries, not least because the quasi-historian Diarmuid Ferreter was its helmsman-in-chief. However, that the twin planets of abasement and of remembrance would manage to pull Fine Gael out of its historic orbit and turn it into a satellite of Sinn Fein was certainly a gravitational depravity quite beyond my predictive powers.

Indeed, Varadkar and Coveney, the custodians of the Fine Gael heritage, that which had made the state and had then defended it with fire and sword, now permanently speak in

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the mean and bitter language of Brexit Anglophobia. Varadkar's recent boastful declaration about achieving a united Ireland within his lifetime, even as unionism was fragmenting before our eyes, thus liberating its wild men from the counsel of its wise men, was an act of irresponsible lunacy that confirmed that his party is now a slave of the Sinn Fein agenda.

Meanwhile, the credentials of the post-Adams Sfirra were being carefully burnished with a set of bogus social democratic credentials. Houses for all; jobs for all; cheap transport for all; universal child and healthcare and university education, free of charge. With these South Sea Bubble promises, the IRA army council is on the brink of capturing the institutions of the Irish state through its Sinn Fein proxies.

And of course, Sfirra's tame scribes and propagandists are writing on a blank sheet of paper; for almost no one under the age of forty has any sense of history or the importance of chronology, and the South Sea Bubble metaphor is probably beyond their understanding. Adolescent simplicities in the Dail are the daily staple of Irish politics: Mary Lou McDonald's allegation that our housing market had been rigged in the interests of international capital was met with gibbering acclaim from those useful idiots of the Kingstown Infant Left and their rather more knowing comrades of the Sfirra alliance.

We are thus poised on the brink of catastrophe – though you would never know it from reading our newspaper or listening to the brainless wittering on radio discussions. So, the Government must take steps to forestall Sinn Fein's

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acquisition of Army and Garda intelligence files if – though more probably ‘when’ – Sfirra comes to power. The entire security-apparatus of the state will then be open to seizure by the IRA army council. The name of every counter-terrorist Army and Garda officer who fought the good fight against the murderers of the IRA will be revealed. So too will many of the identities of informers within the IRA ranks.

These must be recorded – on microfiche, say – and sent to a secure location perhaps in government archives in Canada, Australia or New Zealand, where they might enjoy protection from disclosure by legal writ, as happened in Boston College. The original files will have to be destroyed. This cannot happen after an election, because Sinn Fein’s legal wizards will have already prepared court injunctions to prevent such actions.

We should remember that the origins of Sfirra lie in the insurrectionary traditions of mainland Europe, not in the parliamentary traditions of England: murder is in their bloodstream. After the Bolsheviks came to power, their secret police, the Cheka in a single year killed more people than the all the Czars in history. That doesn’t mean that a Sfirra government will necessarily imprison or kill their opponents: but it does mean that they see law not as an inhibition on their ambitions or their deeds but solely as an instrument in their service.

That is why and how the Free State could operate so completely outside the law during the Civil War years, as did Eamon de Valera during the Second World War. For the veterans of 1916, the law was largely a useful tool, not a brake. Once in government, Sinn Fein will probably appear

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to be lawful in its deeds, if only to keep Brussels happy, while being covertly criminal, rather like Haughey, only more so: Grotesque, Unbelievable But Anticipated: GUBA.

That change in the acronym says it all. The only action that the present Government can usefully do now is to anticipate the rule of lawlessness by a future Sinn Fein government. The Taoiseach must immediately seek the opinions of the Garda Commissioner, the head of Special Branch, the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and the Director of Army Intelligence on how best to protect the security of the state and the safety of the individuals who risked all in its service.

Ireland looks as if it is going to be the first EU country to be electorally captured by an unrepentant terrorist organisation, with poverty to follow as multinationals flee in panic and inward investment halts. This is where the abject capitulations of the peace process and the malignant Decade of Centenaries have taken us, to a ruthless land called Servilia. Calamity now awaits this island, just as both Eoghan and I warned over a decade ago.

And just look where the two of us are today....

Written by Kevin Myers 20.06.2021 and published at

[[] <https://kevinmyers.ie/>]

[[] <https://kevinmyers.ie/2021/06/20/welcome-to-sfiras-paradise-servilia/>]

Pointers for prayer

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee,
that the course of this world
may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance,
that thy Church may joyfully serve thee
in all godly quietness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord of the Church, we pray for our brothers and sisters throughout the world who acknowledge your presence and power in their lives. We pray for those who are laughed at or victimised because of their faith in you. We pray that you will give us strength to be true to our faith when it is questioned or belittled.

We pray for our church and our community and for a renewal of our vision and dedication to the work you have called us to do.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of all nations, we pray for the needs of this world.

We pray for those nations where communities are broken by prejudice and hatred, where the fear of violence is never far away. We pray that where human endeavours to find peace and reconciliation seem so inadequate your power to draw people together will bring renewed hope for the future.

We pray for those who have knowledge and power in the fields of medicine and science. Let them not be corrupted by greed and ambition but grant them wisdom, integrity, humility and compassion to use the knowledge they have gained only for the good of all people.

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Throughout the world-wide community of nations may there be a sense of responsibility for each other and a desire for equality and justice for all your children.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion, we pray for all those who are suffering with anxiety, stress, grief or pain and illness.

Long ago a woman believed she would be healed if she could just touch the clothes of Jesus. May we today believe that if we pray to you for those we know and love, your healing power will also flow into their lives bringing wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

In a moment of quiet our hearts reach out to you in prayer for the needs of those we love.

Grant us strength in our weakness, comfort in our sorry, peace of mind in our anxiety and stress and the renewed hope for life which only your presence and power can bring.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of time and of eternity, we pray for those who have died and are now with you in your kingdom

We thank you for the communion we share with all those who have gone before us and pray that our lives may reflect on earth the light that surrounds them in your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, be present among us this morning and may the transforming power of your Spirit work in us and through us today and throughout the coming week.

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Merciful Father accept these prayers, For the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Wake up, my heart! Wake up, O lyre and harp! I will wake the dawn with my song. I will thank you, Lord, among all the people. I will sing your praises among the nations.

Psalm 57:8-9 NLT

I have always loved singing and have sung with many choirs over the years. I suspect that many of you will have had a similar experience and you will know what a joy it is to contribute your little sound to the united voice of a choir. It isn't surprising that singing has always played such a major role in worship. It takes our words to another level as we seek to express our love for God and our devotion to him. I find it wonderful to think of the way in which God's people have sung through thousands of years. Whether they have been experiencing poverty or wealth, war or peace, sickness or health there have always been songs on the lips of God's people.

Wonderful as singing is, I've always felt a little uneasy with it because not everyone is able to sing. Some people are tone deaf and the noise that comes out of their mouth could never be described as pleasant. It feels very unfair that some people have the ability and others don't. However, I believe that the focus of singing in the Bible is not so much upon tunefulness as upon the heart. What God is looking for

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is people who have a heart of love for him and who want to bring him their praise, whatever noise comes out. The last thing that God wants to hear is beautiful melodies from a heart that is standing in opposition to him.

Early on in my ministry I had three men in the church where I was serving who were always enthusiastic in their worship but unable to sing in tune. I derived huge pleasure from hearing them sing. They would never have won a recording contract but the noise that they made declared where their hearts were. I hope you will find this encouraging whether you are a wonderful singer or not. God wants to hear your heart and we should enjoy one another's singing whatever it sounds like.

QUESTION

In what way does singing bless you?

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that you always give us much to sing about. Help me to find ever increasing joy in singing your praises. Amen

