



Image of the day - The Armagh Mace

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Front page photo -The Armagh Mace, see People and Places in this issue.

Reports

NI Protocol 'puts Jewish community under threat'

The Jewish community in Belfast could “collapse” due to disruption caused by the Northern Ireland Protocol, it has been warned, Andrew Madden reports in the Belfast Telegraph.

Under the protocol, which was designed to prevent a hard Irish border, a de facto trade border has been created in the Irish Sea and resulted in increased checks on some goods moving into NI from GB.

This includes kosher food, which has been supplied under interim trade arrangements due to end in September.

Northern Ireland has a small Jewish community mainly in north Belfast. Many Jews only consume kosher foods that comply with dietary guidelines set by traditional law.

On Tuesday, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Reverend David Kale and Michael Black of the Belfast Jewish community, along with the President of the Jewish Board of Deputies, Marie van der Zyl, met with NI Secretary Brandon Lewis to urge the Government to take action to avoid the protocol “potentially ending Jewish life in Belfast”.

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The Belfast Jewish community representatives said once kosher food and religious artefacts cannot be supplied by GB, the community here is “likely to collapse”. They said Mr Lewis, as well as Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brexit negotiator Lord Frost, have pledged their support to ensure the arrangements continue after September.

Ms van der Zyl said: “The Belfast Jewish community is a great community with a rich history, but also an older and vulnerable one. We thank the Minister for his time and urge the UK and the EU to generate a creative solution which means that Jews can continue to practise their faith in Northern Ireland.”

The Board of Deputies of British Jews said importing kosher goods from Dublin, the only other Jewish community on the island, is prohibitively expensive. During Passover, the cost of two kosher chocolate bars and three boxes of unleavened bread from Dublin came to £33.

A Government spokesperson said it recognised the importance of ensuring continued access to kosher meats. “This is a further example of how the Protocol as currently operated is causing very significant challenges for people in Northern Ireland. We continue to work in good faith to find solutions.”

Cleric rejects C of I homophobic claim

A former editor of the Church of Ireland Gazette has rejected claims from a resigning cleric that the

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denomination is “structurally, culturally and socially homophobic”, Philip Bradfield reports in the Belfast News Letter.

Canon Ian Ellis defended his church after Co Tyrone cleric Rev Andrew Rawding, who campaigns on LGBT issues, announced his resignation. The rector of Brackaville, Donaghendry and Ballyclog, broke the news to parishioners on Sunday morning.

He told the BBC that the his church was “structurally, culturally and socially homophobic”. He added: “There are some kind and compassionate individuals but corporately, at best there is indifference, at worst there is hypocrisy.”

He also claimed that there was “an aggressive and proactive opposition to full inclusion and equality for LGBT+ people, with some people still weaponising Bible verses and using the language of condemnation and rejection”.

“I have made a public stance in the past as a Church of Ireland rector to send a message to the LGBT+ community that it’s OK to be LGBT+ and to be a Christian and to show my full support for same-sex marriages within the Church of Ireland,” he said.

In 2012 the church’s general synod affirmed its teaching on marriage but acknowledged that members have “hurt and wounded people” over sexuality. In 2017 it rejected a motion to accept same-sex marriage. Yesterday it declined to comment.

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Photo - Dunluce
Castle, near
Bushmills,
County Antrim



Rev Rawding said the church's listening process for LGBT+ people has been "a tick-box exercise" and that there is a very serious issue of "suicidal ideation" within

the LGBT community. He now plans to start a degree in social work.

But speaking in a personal capacity, Canon Ellis, said he regretted Rev Rawding's decision and appealed to him to reconsider.

"His characterisation of the Church of Ireland as structurally, culturally and socially homophobic raises the question of what is meant by 'homophobia' as a term," he told the News Letter.

"How it is understood varies from negative feelings about homosexual people, to fear of them, to actual hatred. I don't

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think the Church of Ireland falls into any of those categories.”

Individual members of the church who don't demonstrate care are not characteristic of the church as a whole, he said. The Church of Ireland has acknowledged that members have at times “hurt and wounded” people in relation to sexuality, which is “clearly wrong” he said, but he rejected the claim his church's listening to LGBT people was “a tick-box exercise”.

“The Church of Ireland has tried very sincerely to engage on the subject and I know that great efforts have been made in that exercise.”

The matter concerns tensions in differing interpretations of scripture, he added.

Presbyterian minister Rev Ian Carton resigned in June over his church's decision to deny same-sex couples full membership.

Courtesy The News Letter

Knock National Novena postponed until later this year

“At this time the national Marian Shrine is open to the public and pilgrims for the celebration of daily Mass with restricted capacity at Knock Basilica” – Father Gibbons

Parish priest and rector of Knock Shrine, Father Richard Gibbons, has announced that the National Novena to Our

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Lady of Knock is being postponed until later this year. The annual novena of prayer and reflection was due to take place next month from the 14 to 22 August.

Father Richard said, “We have taken this difficult decision in the interest of the health and safety of our pilgrims and staff here at the Shrine. Given the recent concern from both government and health agencies regarding the Delta variant of the coronavirus, the responsible course of action is to postpone the National Novena at this time.”

Father Richard expressed his disappointment at the postponement of the Novena for the second year in a row, and his hope that the national celebration of faith will take place later this year. He said, “It is vital that we allow the national vaccination programme to proceed across all age groups. Once we can safely gather again at Knock Shrine a full programme will be announced for the Novena to take place later in the year.”

Father Richard continued, “At this time the national Marian Shrine is open to the public and pilgrims for the celebration of daily Mass with restricted capacity at Knock Basilica. The Sacrament of Confession is available daily as well as other services including the Mass Enrolment Office, Knock Museum and Knock Counselling Centre.”

“We continue to welcome pilgrims to the Shrine. All who visit can be rest assured that Knock is a very safe place and that every precaution is in place to ensure the safety of all our pilgrims. We have queueing systems in place at all public buildings on the grounds of the Shrine, as well as ushers and staff that are present to ensure everything is

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done correctly and in line with latest public health guidelines,” Father Richard said.

Throughout the month of August additional Masses will be available. Full details are available on the Knock Shrine website www.knockshrine.ie

Bill 'puts integrated schools above others'

A Bill to reform integrated education is “unwelcome and unhelpful” and would “completely undermine” a Stormont review of the schools system, according to a DUP minister, Mark Bain reports in the Belfast Telegraph

Education Minister Michelle McIlveen was speaking during a debate on an Integrated Education Bill brought to the Assembly by Alliance MLA Kellie Armstrong.

“All other schools would become secondary to integrated if this bill becomes law,” the DUP minister said.

Despite objections from the DUP, the bill passed its second stage by 56 votes to 27 and will go on to the committee stage.

DUP members said there were serious concerns that the bill had reached Stormont without consultation from either the controlled education sector or the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

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Integrated education also came under attack from Sinn Fein, with former Education Minister John O'Dowd telling the Assembly the current integrated sector did nothing to promote Irishness and was instead seen by many as having a British identity.

“If the integrated sector is serious about respecting all identities, it has to get its head around that one. Very few integrated schools play Gaelic football and none promote the Irish language,” he said.

While Sinn Fein supported the bill, the party warned it would need “serious and significant changes” to make the proposals fit for purpose.

Ms Armstrong told the Assembly that the Executive Office's Good Relations report said 21% of children whose first preference was an integrated post-primary school were not able to secure a place. “That is evidence of the lack of places in existing integrated schools to meet demand, a demand further evident in last week's Life and Times survey, which confirmed 69% of parents would prefer their child went to a mixed religion school,” she added.

“This bill aims to address parental demand and grow community cohesion by making integrated schooling a viable choice for parents across Northern Ireland.”
DUP members raised a series of issues with the plans.

“This is a clear attempt to put one sector on a higher plane than others,” said former DUP Education Minister Peter Weir, referring to a clause that would require all new schools to have integrated status.

His colleague Robin Newton asked why the bill was being brought forward when it was “stepping on the toes” of the independent review of education due to start this year.

“The controlled sector and the Catholic maintained sector both say they have serious reservations. Should they not have had involvement?” he said.

“It is somewhat rich that the member at this stage says she is willing to meet with these bodies after they contacted her and after she has published the bill.”

Though supporting the bill, SDLP MLA Daniel McCrossan said his party would rather have waited until the independent review of education had happened before it was brought forward.

TUV leader Jim Allister, meanwhile, described the proposals as “a determined assault on academic selection”.

“You cannot have selection and integrated in the same room. There is breathtaking arrogance to this,” he said. Courtesy The Belfast Telegraph.

People and places

Armagh's silver maces

Oliver Cromwell declared the English parliament's ceremonial mace a “fool's bauble”. That didn't deter the borough of Armagh from having new silver maces made for



itself in Dublin in 1656. See these rare examples of Commonwealth silver on display at No 5 Vicar's Hill. The Robinson Library

Canon Crooks starts fundraising cycle

And he's off. The Rev Canon David Crooks has begun the first of his three marathon fundraising cycles in the Diocese of Raphoe.

Bishop Andrew Forster joined well-wishers from the Moville Group as Canon Crooks left from St Columb's Church in Moville on the 41km first leg which ended at All Saints Church in Newtowncunningham .



All proceeds from Canon Crooks' cycles will go to the Diocesan 'Mahajanga Calling' Appeal, which will support Bishop Hall Speers' ministry in north-west Madagascar. Bishop Speers and Canon Crooks are brothers-in-law.

Donations for the 'Mahajanga Calling' Appeal will be gratefully received c/o Taughboyne Rectory, Churchtown, Carrigans, Lifford, Co Donegal.

New clergy in Derry and Raphoe

Two new clergy will be joining parishes in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe this autumn once they complete their deacon internships in the Diocese of Connor.

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Rev Andrea Cotter, who has been serving her Deacon internship in the Parish of Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, has been appointed Curate Assistant of All Saints Parish, Clooney, where she will serve with Rev David McBeth.

And Rev Alan McCracken will leave the United Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston to succeed Rev Suzanne Cousins in the Moville Group of Parishes, which has been vacant for the past two years.

The two deacons will be ordained to the priesthood in September, after which they will take up their new appointments.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Sunday Morning Service from Ballyholme

BBC Radio Ulster's Morning Service this Sunday, 11th July, will be led by Canon Simon Doogan of the Church of St Columbanus in Ballyholme, Co. Down, with the Revd Jan Stevenson, Ballyholme's Community Pastor. The programme will start at 10.22am and will be available afterwards on the Down & Dromore web site.

July C of I Gazette

This issue is a bumper edition for July/ August, with plenty of news and features for you to read on these long Summer

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days. And, while international travel still seems a long while away, there is a staycation special,...
gazette.ireland.anglican.org/2021/07/07/

Every Nation, Tribe and People? Race and the churches in Ireland

A live in–depth online survey, a new all–island piece of research led by the Irish Council of Churches, Irish Inter–Church Meeting and VOX Magazine, with the support of Evangelical Alliance Ireland, Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland and Tearfund Ireland.

“We want to deepen our understanding of the experience of and attitudes towards racism and discrimination in churches in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. We explore the potential for unity, integration and inclusion and examine how the church can lead the way in tackling racial injustice.

“The survey is anonymous and we hope to gather views from Christians all across the island of Ireland. It should take about 10–15 minutes to complete.”

Click Here to take the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DNYNF5Q>

More info here: irishchurches.org/research

Pointers for prayer

Mighty God, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time.

churchnewsireland@gmail.org



As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured

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by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbours.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it....

Petitions... concluding with:

Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and
enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

Petitions... concluding with:

Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

Matthew 5:9 NLT

In this Beatitude Jesus isn't talking about being peacelovers but peace-makers, and that's something very different. A peace-lover will often do anything to avoid conflict, and will even allow bad behaviour to continue because of the desire to "keep the peace". Sadly, that kind of attitude does nothing to bring healing to the situation and can easily lead to the situation becoming far worse. Peace-making is the tough task of not turning away from conflict but, in the name of Christ, deliberately facing it and seeking to bring his miraculous gift of peace. Robert V. Taylor, the President of the Desmond Tutu Foundation, wrote, "If you want peace, don't talk to your friends, talk to your enemies."

I suspect we all dislike conflict. We hate it when voices are raised, and people storm out of meetings or there is antagonism in relationships. It's exhausting, discouraging and sad. But it's also very common, and always has been. That's precisely why Jesus recruited followers 2,000 years ago and still does. He needs you and me to get to know him well enough to have the courage to walk towards conflicts and not away from them. If we always run away from places of anger and brokenness we will never be able to make Jesus' offer of peace and we will deny ourselves the joy of seeing people find unity and a new future.

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Northern Ireland has seen decades of sectarian violence. The relative peace that is being enjoyed these days didn't just happen, but was the result of godly peace-makers getting to work. It was tough, protracted and exhausting work but we rightly honour those who had the guts to walk towards the conflict to bring peace. In 1995 John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, said, "As everybody knows, the patience, skill and determination shown by clergy has been nothing less than indispensable in bringing about the peace we now enjoy. I can say that without them, the present hopeful situation would not and could not have come about." The situations of conflict that we face may seem very minor by comparison, but they equally call us to take the tough path of peace-making for Christ's sake.

QUESTION

Where is God calling you to be a peace-maker at the moment?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for your gift of peace. Give me renewed determination to bring your peace wherever I go.
Amen

