



Image of the day - Belfast Cathedral

Reports



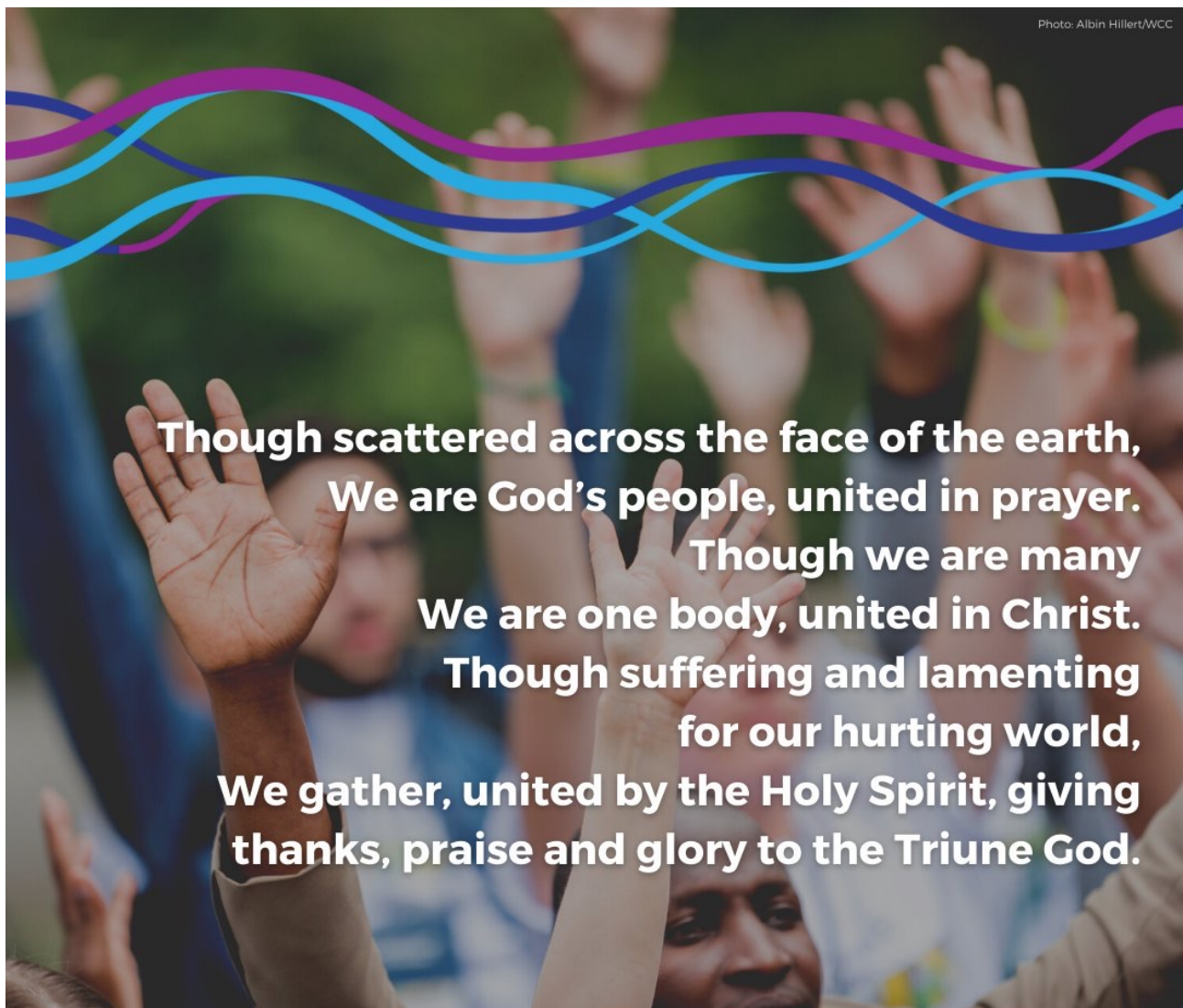
WCC central committee meets to prepare for 11th World Assembly in 2022

The World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee meets online today 24 June at 12:00-12.45 CET, during which WCC central committee moderator Dr Agnes Abuom and WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca will provide an orientation of the work of the committee.

The central committee is convening via video conference from 23-29 June. The agenda includes the presentation of the 11th World Assembly programme for approval.

June 24, 2021

The central committee will also receive member church delegations, nominate additional delegates and review its report to the assembly entitled 'From Busan to Karlsruhe'. The central committee is also expected to receive the applications for membership of two churches and approve addendums extending the WCC strategic plan and financial strategy to include 2022. This is the first meeting of the WCC central committee to be held online, due to travel and meeting restrictions caused by the pandemic.



World Council
of Churches

#WCC #PRAYTOGETHER
WCC CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING
23-29 JUNE 2021, ONLINE

June 24, 2021

Yesterday, 23 June, the central committee received the opening address by Dr Abuom. The opening prayer included a reflection by the Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, presiding bishop of the Church of Norway and former WCC general secretary. This was followed by the report of the WCC executive committee and the report of the acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca.

Regional meetings and prayers will occupy today, June 24, while 25-26 June will feature meetings and prayers of standing committees. On Sunday, the central committee will attend worship with local congregations. On 28-29 June, the WCC governing body will convene for hearing and decision-making sessions.

The 11th WCC Assembly will take place in 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany, under the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

[www.oikoumene.org/live]

Accomplished BBC NI producer in prestigious role at elite English public school

EXPERT IN CLASSICAL FIELD NAMED BY REPTON AS ITS FIRST MUSIC FELLOW

Award-winning BBC arts producer and presenter Richard Yarr has become the first music fellow to be appointed at the elite Repton School in Derbyshire, Stephanie Bell reports in The Belfast Telegraph

June 24, 2021

One of the UK's top public schools, Repton has a history going back to 1557 and its list of alumni includes author Roald Dahl, poet James Fenton, musician and actor Blair Dunlop, and TV presenter Jeremy Clarkson.

Repton, which costs over £36,000 a year for boarders, invited the Co Antrim man to judge a music contest in February 2020.

Yarr made such a big impression that it created a role to ensure his continued association with music students in the school.

A delighted Richard said: “The musical talent at Repton is outstanding and it's wonderful to see that every musical endeavour is supported at the school.

“I will enhance that by showcasing some of Northern Ireland's top talent, from international performers to opera directors, in a range of contexts and look forward to providing opportunities for the school back home and beyond.

“I would hope to bring young people from here to Repton and also some of Repton's students to Northern Ireland to see what we do here.

“While it can be seen as an elite school I also hope to work with other schools in the area to give those children who are less fortunate a chance to also join in the workshops.

June 24, 2021

“Music has provided me with some truly life-changing moments, so I am passionate that young people should enjoy all its possibilities.”

Richard (47), who is from Upper Ballinderry, is a senior producer of arts, music and events with BBC Northern Ireland.

He also presents Sounds Sacred, BBC Radio Ulster's Sunday evening requests programme.

An accomplished musician, he created BBC NI's School Choir of the Year in 2014 and the NI International Organ competition.

His contribution to music was recognised in 2019 when he was given the Freedom of the City of London at the Guildhall and elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Repton's headmaster Mark Semmence said: “We are delighted to welcome Richard as our first music fellow.

“Music is an integral part of a Repton education and many Reptonians go on to have successful careers across many genres.

“We place enormous value on the richness that a lifelong love of music brings and encourage Reptonians to enter our music school with an open mind and a keen ear.”

Repton's director of music Oliver Walker said Richard's involvement will bring fantastic benefits to the school.

June 24, 2021

“As well as providing career advice, Richard will support us in introducing pupils to exciting new musical talent and contribute to our active programme of master classes and workshops,” he said.

“He will also adjudicate for music competitions and assist us in marketing our most able and talented musicians.”

Courtesy The Belfast Telegraph, 23.06.2021

British and French bishops joint call for more "constructive" policies on migrants and refugees

Bishops on both sides of the English Channel have appealed to their countries for more "constructive" policies on migrants and refugees than "closing frontiers".

In a joint statement to coincide with World Refugee Week, the Anglican and Catholic bishops called for "better treatment" of undocumented migrants trying to reach Britain from France.

They were critical of current policies, which they said were being driven by "prejudice and fear".

"These are fellow humans who deserve to be helped to find places where they can live in dignity and contribute to civil society," they said.

June 24, 2021

"With sadness, we observe the lack of hope that drives people in distress to become exploited by traffickers and add to the profits of their illegal trade."

The bishops went on to say that they were committed to creating a "climate of welcome".

"We are heartened by those who generously offer financial and material support, time and skills, shelter and accommodation, whatever their religious conviction," they said.

"They ignore the myths that lead to prejudice and fear that apparently prevent politicians from creating new and constructive policies that go beyond closing frontiers and employing more security staff.

"Their stories should be heard before decisions about their futures are announced."

Figures show that 5,000 people have attempted the dangerous crossing in the first half of 2021.

Kent County Council has threatened legal action against the government over the crisis and refused to take any more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into its care.

The council, which already has care of 400 unaccompanied migrant children, said its services were under "extreme pressure" and had reached "the limit of safe capacity".

June 24, 2021

People and places

Belfast Cathedral to re-open to visitors

Belfast Cathedral will re-open its doors to the public from Thursday 1st July at 11am. This summer the opening hours have altered, the

Cathedral will be open to the public Monday–Saturday from 11am to 6pm, and on Sunday from 1pm to 6pm.

Make use of the state-of-the-art audio guide, provided in compliance with Covid guidelines (and available in eight languages!), and explore the architecture, beautiful stained glass and artwork throughout the Cathedral. Children will enjoy the InSpire Kids' Trail, with chances to create their own memorable artwork. For more information on what you can do at the Cathedral, visit www.belfastcathedral.org

Please feel welcome to join throughout the week at the Cathedral for private prayer in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit.

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Page 9



June 24, 2021

Sunday services will take place at 11am; please make sure to check the cathedral website for up-to-date times.

Archbishops tribute to the Bishops of Tuam, Killala and Achonry & Limerick, Killaloe and Ardfert

Commenting on the announcement that the Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry and the Bishop of Limerick, Killaloe and Ardfert are to retire on 31st October 2021, the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Most Revd John McDowell, said:

“There will be time and opportunity to say something more when the date of the Bishops’ retirement comes round, but for now I wish to thank Bishop Patrick Rooke and Bishop Kenneth Kearon for their respective and very distinctive contributions to the work of the House of Bishops and to the life of the Church of Ireland.

“When each was elected to the House, they brought with them a combination of wide experience and unique gifts. Bishop Rooke has worked tirelessly on an enormous range of projects on behalf of the Bishops with his characteristic thoroughness and energy. Bishop Kearon brought with him an unparalleled knowledge and experience of the Anglican Communion which he generously shared with many of us during the course of the last six years.

“Both Bishops, working together, with patience and pastoral care, successfully negotiated (in every sense of that word)

June 24, 2021

the amalgamation of their united dioceses, which can now look to the future with confidence and optimism.

“May I wish both Bishops God’s continued presence and blessing as they prepare, over the coming months, to move into a new phase of life and vocation.”

The Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, remarked:

“I would like to commend Bishop Patrick Rooke and Bishop Kenneth Kearon for their positive contributions to the life of the Church of Ireland in the dioceses of Tuam, Killala and Achonry and Limerick, Killaloe and Ardfert and beyond. Geographically, the dioceses cover a large area along our western seaboard with a diverse population. Members of the Church of Ireland in the West of Ireland make a great contribution to their own communities and to the wider Church.

“The retirement of Bishop Rooke and Bishop Kearon will bring significant structural change to the dioceses.

Both the Bishops now retiring and the people of Tuam, Killala and Achonry and of Limerick, Killaloe and Ardfert have done sustained work in building a firm foundation for their future together.

They are to be commended on the spirit in which this work has been carried out collaboratively. There will be much to do in the coming months and years but I wish to assure them of my support as they travel this road together.”

June 24, 2021

Mrs Elsie Watson, former choir member at Belfast Cathedral

It was with great sadness we heard this week of the sudden death at home, of Mrs Elsie Watson (née Campbell). She was known by many former Cathedral Choir members, a number of whom had remained firm friends of hers down the years.

Although she sang at St Anne's each Sunday, Elsie retained close ties with her home church, the historic Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian in Corporation Square, Belfast. Her family had close associations with the seafaring community and her late father had been a Master Mariner. She also volunteered in actively raising funds for the Missions to Seafarers for many years.

Elsie had a rich contralto voice, taking lessons from the late Muriel Childe. She had previously been singing in the former Cathedral Evening Choir for a number of years until being encouraged to audition for the main Cathedral Choir. After becoming a member she was subsequently appointed as lead contralto, succeeding Miss Childe. She served with distinction under four successive Cathedral Organists: Capt.



June 24, 2021

CJ Brennan, Dr. Harry Grindle, Jonathan Gregory, Andrew Padmore and David Drinkell.

Elsie was a quietly spoken and private person who never sought the limelight, particularly with regard to her fine singing ability. Very sadly, she lost her late husband, Edward, at sea in 1989. This affected her so profoundly that thereafter she retired completely from singing. She has died in faith and risen to that place where music is perfectly sublime.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars



Online concert by Choral Scholars of St George's Belfast

On Friday at 7:30pm the Choral Scholars of St George's Belfast who have worked and studied online and in person

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June 24, 2021

over the past year will present their end of term concert. The online recital will last for an hour but is not open to the public.

St. George's Church, Belfast is a Church of Ireland church located on High Street in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It is the oldest Church of Ireland church in Belfast. It was designed by Irish architect, John Bowden, and opened in 1816. Major refurbishment work was completed in June 2000.

The church stands on what had been a fording place where the River Lagan and River Farset met. The earliest mention of a place of worship existing on this site is in the papal taxation rolls of 1306. The Chapel of the Ford was a chapel of ease of the main parish church at Shankill, and was constructed there for those waiting to cross the mud flats which covered most of the area that has since become central Belfast. The chapel later became known as Corporation Chapel after the newly founded Belfast Corporation.

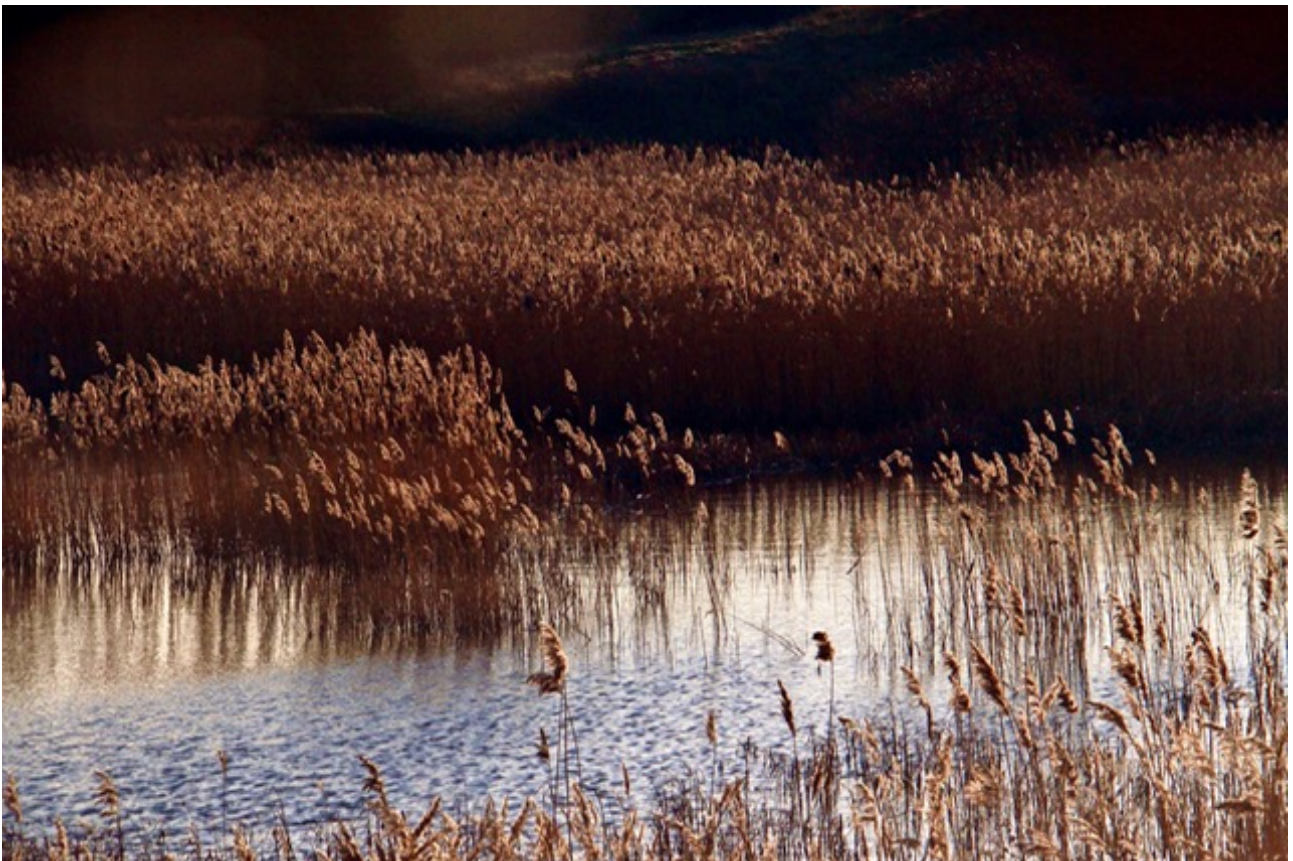
By the time of the Plantation of Ulster, the church had become the main parish church for the area. In 1613 James I of England granted a charter to Belfast as a key garrison town in the plantation, and St. George's became the 'corporation' church. William of Orange passed through Belfast on his way from Carrickfergus to the Battle of the Boyne, and had a famous sermon, Arise Great King, preached to him in the corporation church.

By the late 18th century, however, the church had fallen into disrepair and the Earl of Chichester, the dominant local landowner, gave land for a new parish church for Belfast to

June 24, 2021

be built on a more expansive site a few hundred metres away on Donegall Street. This church would later become St Anne's Cathedral. Henry Joy McCracken, a leading member of the Society of the United Irishmen and 1798 rebellion was buried in the churchyard after being hanged, before later being moved to Clifton Street Cemetery.

However, by the 1800s, the growth of industrial Belfast necessitated a second Anglican church being built, and a new St. George's was built on the old site, opening in 1816. Throughout the 19th century, the church had a series of rectors known for their flamboyant style, and in the early 20th century, St. George's developed its distinct High Church ethos. The movement of people out of the City Centre in the 20th century saw the congregation drop, and during The Troubles, the church was seriously damaged on



June 24, 2021

a number of occasions by Provisional Irish Republican Army bombs.

St. George's continues to be noted for its liturgical and musical tradition – it has one of the few men's and boys' church choirs in Ireland. Its ministry, both to the business community and to Belfast's homeless population, are an important part of parish life. St. George's has a diverse congregation, drawing members from different religious, cultural and social backgrounds. As of 2010, the rector of St George's (since 1994) is the Reverend Brian Stewart.

Opinion

Reflection on Northern Ireland at 100 years: Identity Matters... by Danielle Mcelhinney

“So, what are you, Danielle?” asked my 10-year-old friend, Grainne as we walked up the town to deliver a message for her mum to the nun at the local chapel.

We were purposefully taking our time as we felt very grown-up walking through the town without an adult or older sibling. I was probably talking too much, as usual, and had many questions about nuns..., as I did not quite understand where they fit into the church picture.

Grainne's question stumped me. I knew what she meant, I was old enough to know that Northern Ireland had two distinct camps and she was asking me to declare which one I fitted into. The problem was that I did not really know! I answered her with the only answer I knew, “I'm a

June 24, 2021

Christian”... but this did not satisfy Grainne at all. She pushed further “Yes, we’re all Christians, but are you a Protestant or a Catholic?” I could feel the heat rise up my pale, white, Irish freckly face as I struggled to satisfy Grainne’s need for an answer. My 10-year-old self knew I did not fit the mould but was not yet clear where I actually did fit.

My parents grew up in the 60’s and 70’s, my dad, one of 9 children in a Catholic family, and my mum one of 8 children in a Protestant family. They met at a mixed-faith school and in sixth form at Rainey Endowed school (in Magherafelt) they both became committed followers of Jesus. My dad became a Christian first when someone he trusted told him about Jesus. He began to question himself about what he believed and questioned anyone else he thought could help. Eventually, on a quiet country road outside Randalstown, without ever hearing a preacher, my dad committed to personally following Jesus. He didn’t really understand it all, but he knew something had changed inside his heart. Perhaps naively, he began telling everyone about his new faith, including my mum, who was compelled by his words. She went home from school one evening, locked herself in the bathroom and talked to God for the first time. If what that guy said was true then she wanted that relationship with God too!

Not long after the two started dating, in secret, and soon fell in love. When they could no longer hide their relationship, they faced a backlash from their families, friends and the wider community. They experienced rejection from people they loved and physical threats to the point that they fled to England where they were married without family or friends

June 24, 2021

present. Their families were angry, and in the context of “the troubles”, their parents were rightly anxious for them.

Family reconciliation came slowly over the next few years. By the time I was born, my parents had returned to live in Northern Ireland and had set themselves the task of rebuilding relationships. They had literally to learn how to walk without causing offence to either side of the family; my dad calls it, “watching his P’s and Q’s”. To ease tension with their parents and the wider family, they had to make it clear that they were neither Catholic nor Protestant, that they were Christians. So, this is what they drummed into us as kids, and this is the answer I trotted out to Grainne.

I grew more confident in my own personal faith during my teenage years. By this time my parents were pastors in a non-denominational charismatic church, and I was part of a community that showed me how to boldly live out my faith. Our youth group was a bit of a wild child in the Christian youth group scene and emboldened my personal faith. We put on monthly events called Frontline with loud music, crazy fun sketches and visiting evangelist speakers like Mark Ritchie, who had us roaring with laughter and crying with conviction all in the same half hour.

Like my parents, I attended “Rainey” so I rubbed up alongside Protestants and Catholics with equal measure in school, and in my wider family circle. Both sides of the family provided me with grandparents that spoiled us at Christmas and plenty of aunts and uncles to provide copious amounts of chocolate at Easter and so many cousins that I cannot keep count. Religion did not play a major role in defining my family experiences. I visited Catholic and

June 24, 2021

Protestant churches with similar frequency for weddings and funerals but was equally unfamiliar with both. I became more comfortable with not fitting into either camps and yet was happy to have friends and family from both.

Adult experience and perspective have taught me that NI is a complex place where religion has been mixed in with politics and culture for 100 years. All that time our people have been asking each other similar questions to the one Grainne asked me 30 years ago, and I realise the answer still matters to many. However, my original answer still stands, "I am a Christian", only now I can say it without embarrassed blushes! I am growing surer of who I am in Christ and I want to be known by my allegiance to Jesus and identify as someone who follows Jesus, obeys Jesus and is becoming more like Jesus every day.

My vision for the next 100 years in NI is to be part of a community of believers who continue to give all their allegiance to Jesus and to show the next generation that following Jesus is more than choosing a camp, a party or a flag. I want to be part of a generation of believers in NI who stand firm in their identity in Christ alone and take the gospel to every corner of our nation confident that Jesus is good news for every heart, every home and every street in this place.

Danielle Mcelhinney is Public Policy Officer for the Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland. Danielle lives in Coleraine with husband Graham and three children where she is part of Causeway Coast Vineyard Church. Danielle loves beach walks, chatting, black tea and the odd summer sea dip, and preferably all done together with great friends.

June 24, 2021

Please note that the statements and views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Contemporary Christianity... or CNI.



Pointers for prayer

O Lord,
we beseech thee mercifully to hear us;
and grant that we, to whom thou hast given
an hearty desire to pray,
may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted
in all dangers and adversities;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought

June 24, 2021

to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus' homecoming was attended by enthusiastic crowds but also by dissenters, who attributed his good works to Satan. That we might be faithful to the One who calls us his "family", blessing his goodness and striving to follow his example, we pray "True Son of God and Son of Man," and respond, "Keep us faithful, keep us true."

That the Christ's church would remain faithful in its witness to the truth of the gospel, we pray: True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That where the church of Jesus Christ finds itself a minority in the midst unfaith, it may not succumb and accept defeat. True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That homes of the church that are afflicted with violence, anger, or abuse, may find refuge and counsel in God's Word. True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That our congregation may be enabled to embrace the lost, the fallen, and the wayward of our community. True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That those who participated in baptismal and confirmation preparation , may be blessed with increasing faith and strengthened in continued, regular worship we pray: True Son of

June 24, 2021

God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

Pardon us, O God, when we are so concerned with ourselves and those near to us that we fail to pray for others. Instill within us your compassion. True Son of God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

Let your loving Spirit, O God, announce again the "Abba" word of our divine parentage and our sure inclusion as members of your family. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

“I will also bless the foreigners who commit themselves to the Lord, who serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who hold fast to my covenant.”

Isaiah 56:6 NLT

In the Old Testament, God's people were often told to be welcoming to foreigners. God's love was not confined to the Jews and they were reminded that, as a nation, they used to be foreigners in Egypt so it was only right that they should be generous and loving towards foreigners. The people of Israel had spent four hundred years in Egypt so there was nothing that they didn't know about the vulnerabilities and insecurities of being foreigners. The celebration of the Passover was a continual reminder of their roots in Egypt.

June 24, 2021

We live in a wonderfully diverse country which, over the centuries, has welcomed people from many nations. This continues to be the case and every year we welcome many thousands of people. Some of them come to us as refugees and asylum seekers because of the dangers in their own homeland. It is vital that we welcome all foreigners and that the church is a place where they can find security, compassion, understanding and love. I have been to many churches that have the flags of all the nations represented in the congregation. This is a wonderful way of affirming that we honour the different backgrounds and identities of all our brothers and sisters.

The welcome to people of all nations is clear in Isaiah but in the coming of Jesus the doors are flung open to everyone with even greater clarity. I'm very interested by the statues of Jesus that you will find around the world. He could have been depicted in many different ways but many of them show him with arms outstretched in love and welcome. I'm thinking of the statues of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Christ the King in Lisbon, Portugal. They tower over those great cities and give people the continual reminder of the New Testament's message that Christ opens his arms right now to all those who will come to him, whatever their background or nation.

QUESTION

In what ways does your church seek to welcome people who come from different nations?

PRAYER

June 24, 2021

Lord, I worship you because you are the God of all the nations. Help me continually to pass your welcome on to others. Amen

