

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – RBLI honours their late President**

# Image of the day


## RBLI honours their late President

The Royal British Legion Ireland laid up its colour in memory of Maj-Gen David Nial Creagh, The O'Morchoe CB CBE,

## People and places

 **Christ Church, Gorey, Co Wexford**  
Laying up of the Royal British Legion Ireland (Southern) Area Standard in honour of Maj-Gen David Nial Creagh, The O'Morchoe CB CBE, esteemed President of the Republic of Ireland 1999-2018



  Mme. Margaret with son, Desmond, The O'Morchoe, and members of O'Morchoe family with the Standards of the Royal British Legion, The Irish Guards Association and RAF Association of Ireland.

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The Royal British Legion Ireland said it was a huge privilege "to honour our esteemed late president Maj Gen David by laying up our old 'Area' standard in his honour. Thank you to all who contributed to a create a very special day in Christ



Church, Gorey for Madame Margaret and the O'Morchoe family.”

RBL ROI Chairman Brian Duffy offered the old standard as President Ken Martin charged Rev Canon Mark Haydon with its custody in Christ Church, Gorey.

## **Rector's concern about lack of prayer for time of war in Prayer Book**

**Canon Paul Holy, rector of Eglinton in Derry diocese recently commented - “We may not be at war with Russia in the technical sense but somehow it does feel as if the war in Ukraine is "our" war too.**

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“Many prayers are being offered, both for the people of Ukraine and for a containment of the conflict lest it become global.

“The current edition of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Ireland does not have a prayer specifically for a time of war as earlier editions did. Did the compilers consider perhaps that it was no longer necessary in our modern world? Or was the rather direct language of the old prayers that called on God to confound the devices of the enemy and to punish sinners simply considered out of tune?

“At any rate, I've had to go back to the old 1926 Prayer Book to find the following prayer. I must say it's one that I find myself praying with total sympathy”

Canon Hoey quotes from the earlier Prayer Book -

In the time of War and Tumults.

O Almighty God, King of all kings, and Governor of all things, ‘whose power no creature is able to resist, to whom it belongeth justly to punish sinners, and to be merciful to them that truly repent; Save and deliver us, we humbly beseech thee, from the hands of our enemies; abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices; that we, being armed with thy defence, may be preserved evermore from all perils, to glorify thee, who art the only giver of all victory; through the merits of thy only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## **Governors and principals of Protestant second level schools in Republic praised by Minister for Education**

**The governors and principals of Protestant second level schools have been praised for their flexibility and openness to change by the Minister for Education. Minister Norma Foley told the Council of Governors of Protestant Second Level Schools last Thursday (March 10) that she deeply appreciated the leadership they had shown over the last two years.**

The Minister was addressing the annual conference of the Council, which represents 27 Protestant managed schools in the Republic of Ireland, in the Clayton Hotel Liffey Valley.



**Dr Ken Fennelly, Minister Norma Foley, Archbishop Michael Jackson and Lesley Ruttle at the conference of the Council of Governors of Protestant Second Level Schools.**

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Members attended both in person and online. The Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, was also in attendance.

Minister Foley acknowledged the enormous efforts and energy the schools had shown during the pandemic. “Much has been asked of the education sector and even more has been given with a generosity of heart and spirit that has been such a core sustaining element of Irish education,” she commented. She added that schools who accommodate boarders had additional tasks to ensure infection control.

She thanked the school principals and expressed her deep appreciation for the leadership they had shown. “All through the pandemic important attributes such as flexibility and working collaboratively have showcased the key strengths of our public service ethos in keeping schools open and keeping schools safe. You and your teams of staff have demonstrated those attributes in a whole myriad of ways. We need to celebrate and shine a light on this collective national effort as we now hopefully reach calmer waters that allow us to return to the richness of school life that had by necessity become restricted in these last two years,” Minister Foley said.

She said she was conscious that the schools represented by the Council of Governors had a long honourable tradition of service to the Protestant community. “Some of your member schools have educated young people for literally hundreds of years

[...] “...As a sector you have always and consistently been open to new ideas and to change. It is truly heartening to know that know that this vibrant tradition of excellence in



## Minister Norma Foley receives a presentation from Lesley Ruttle.

education lives on in modern, dynamic schools all across the country. Schools that serve the Protestant tradition but which also reach out to others and indeed celebrate diversity,” she stated.

Governors played an enormously important role in managing schools on behalf of the communities that they serve, she observed adding that it was not an easy task but was a vital one in supporting principals and staff who work in school communities. She thanked them for their volunteerism.

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She acknowledged that Protestant schools often served communities that were dispersed over a wide geographical area and noted that the Bloc Grant was made available by the Department of Education each year. She paid tribute to the work of the Secondary Education Committee in ensuring that funds were distributed equitably and to Dr Ken Fennelly for his work.

Turning to the 2022 Leaving Certificate exams, the Minister said planning for them was well underway following wide consultation. She also gave an update on the Junior Cycle.

She said the next exciting challenge related to reform of the Senior Cycle which was currently being reviewed.

She said that the experience of the last 24 months had challenged everyone greatly but she hoped we could all look forward, albeit with continuing caution, to better and brighter days ahead.

Speaking earlier in the meeting, the chairman of the Council of Governors, Lesley Ruttle, explained the role of the council. He said their primary purpose was to address the concerns of the governors of the Protestant and reformed voluntary, comprehensive and secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland and to promote issues relating to Irish Protestant managed secondary schools.

Mr Ruttle pointed out that the ethos of the schools was of the Reformed Christian faiths but they were open and inclusive to all, contributing to diversity in the country. He told the minister that their schools deserved to be protected and cherished.



## Melanesian Church brings Lord's Prayer in Pidgin English to Limavady



Canon Roemmele, Bishop Forster, Bishop Pwaisiho and Canon Mayes

**There was a very healthy turnout of people from different parishes in the Diocese of Derry for Sunday's Evening Service in Christ Church, Limavady where there was a special visitor from the South Seas.**

Rt Rev William 'Willie' Alaha Pwaisiho, a retired bishop of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, was in the North West at the invitation of old friend Rev Canon Mike Roemmele to share about ministry, life and culture in Solomon Islands, where the two men first met more than 50 years ago.

In the late 1960s, the young Mike Roemmele was teaching in the Solomon Islands with Voluntary Service Overseas and the even younger William Pwaisiho was a student in the school where he taught. The two have since completed many decades in ministry – in Rt Rev William Pwaisiho’s case as a bishop – before their well-earned retirements.

It was a busy day for Bishop ‘Willie’ who preached in St Columb’s Cathedral, Londonderry on Sunday morning before delivering another homily seven hours later in Limavady. In his address there, Bishop Pwaisiho talked about the Melanesian Church’s debt to people from these shores who brought the faith to the South Sea Islands, and who supported the church there with people, money and prayers.

The Rector of Christ Church, Rev Canon Aonghus Mayes, led Sunday evening’s Service. He was assisted by Bishop Andrew Forster, who welcomed Bishop ‘Willie’ to the Diocese. Canon Mayes thanked Bishop Pwaisiho and Canon Roemmel for sharing with the congregation. The Rector led the congregation in praying for the people of Ukraine, in light of recent events there, and for better stewardship of the earth’s resources.

After the service, Canon Roemmele gave a slide presentation in Christ Church Limavady’s Parish Hall, assisted by his old friend. Canon Roemmele brought along many artefacts and mementoes from his time in Solomon Islands which were placed on display for their audience to view. The two men talked to the group about the impact of climate change on the islands – a number of which have

been lost to the sea in recent decades – as well as the effects of decolonisation.

The evening concluded with Bishop Pwaisiho reciting the Lord's Prayer in Pidgin English.

## News reports

### Online worship did not satisfy the majority of people, Church Army report

**Online worship did not satisfy the majority of people, and should be used as a supplement, not a substitute, for on-site worship, concludes a Church Army report, Zoomed Out?, on Anglicans' experience of distanced church amid Covid-19.**

Experiences of holy communion in particular — where more than 80 per cent described their experience as having worsened — along with corporate prayer and corporate worship, were rated as “worse” or “much worse” by the majority of the 607 individual participants and the several focus groups who took part in the detailed research project.

“Worshippers from more sacramental traditions questioned the validity of a digitally mediated sacrament; others simply found it to be experientially inferior,” it concludes. “There may be good reasons for online Holy Communion, but we do not advocate its practice in the absence of these.”

For participants from less sacramental traditions, the pandemic “exacerbated pre-existing frustrations around the

exclusively clerical celebration of Holy Communion, particularly when it was possible to meet others but not to take communion with them due to the lack of an ordained minister”.

Non-conferenced live-streamed services disappointed many. Churches referred to poor bandwidth and the inability of the congregation to engage online as reasons why they chose not to offer these. “Being able to see the faces of the participants during a live stream meant a higher likelihood of improvements to corporate prayer, corporate worship, and an ability to care for others in the congregation,” the research found.

“It also helped to maintain a sense of belonging and feeling loved and encouraged. We recommend that churches scrutinise digital platforms they use to ensure that they best serve those who make use of them.”

But there were also unforeseen benefits of video conference meetings. One participant, a woman from an Anglo-Catholic parish, said: “When we were on Zoom it was as if people were given the ‘OK’ to speak”.

## **Evangelicals claim they have experienced ‘hostile’ backlash for opposition to gay conversion therapy ban**

**Evangelical ministers who signed a letter raising concerns about the government’s upcoming gay conversion therapy ban say they have “experienced**

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## **backlash” in a “co-ordinated and hostile” campaign by LGBT activists.**

The Ministers’ Consultation Response letter was sent to Equalities Minister Liz Truss and to date, has been signed by nearly 5,000 people, including many Christian ministers and pastoral workers.

They write that they are “deeply concerned” that “the normal practice of religion” will be impacted by the proposed ban.

The names of the signatories to the letter, which were originally published in full on the Ministers’ Consultation Response website, have now been taken down in a bid to prevent church ministers being targeted further.

Co-author of the letter, Rev Graham Nicholls, pastor of Christ Church Haywards Heath and director of evangelical network Affinity, called the backlash “unfair”.

“Some of them are even slanderous,” he said.

“What we have done is simply to participate in a legitimate democratic process in response to a government consultation.”

## **In the media**

### **Episcopal leader tells Putin to end Ukraine invasion**

#### **Washington Times**

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[[] <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/episcopal-leader-tells-putin-end-ukraine-invasion/>]

## **Fears funeral plan reforms could mean thousands lose money**

### **BBC News**

The funeral plan market is being reformed and industry insiders are worried that this could mean some providers will go out of business, leaving tens of thousands of customers out of pocket.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-60667173>

## **Holy Cross primary pupils inspired by philosophers**

### **BBC NI news**

"My favourite philosopher is Aristotle and his motto is 'make thinking a habit not a skill.'"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-60698816>

## **Which European countries are most reliant on Russian gas?**

### **The Spectator**

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/which-european-countries-are-most-reliant-on-russian-gas>

# CNI

# Perspectives on Ukraine

## Presiding bishop and Christian leaders ask Russian patriarch to reconsider his support for Ukraine invasion

**More than 100 U.S. Christian leaders, including Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and the leaders of multiple denominations, sent a letter to the head of the Russian Orthodox Church on March 11 asking him to use his influence to help stop the invasion of Ukraine and “prayerfully reconsider the support you have given to this war.”**

The letter was addressed to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, who is known to have a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“With broken hearts, we are making an earnest plea that you use your voice and profound influence to call for an end to the hostilities and war in Ukraine and intervene with authorities in your nation to do so,” the letter read.

The letter appeared to reference Kirill’s widely criticized responses to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. His initial generalized call for peace at the outset of the attack was lambasted by leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church based in Kyiv, with one cleric decrying it as the words of a “religious politician” and a tacit endorsement of Putin’s justifications for invasion.

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Kirill's rhetoric has escalated since then: He referred to Russia's opponents in Ukraine as "evil forces" in a statement and argued in a recent sermon that the conflict was part of a larger battle against sin and pressure from Western nations to hold "gay parades."

"We are in the season of Lent," the letter from U.S. faith leaders read. "In that Lenten spirit, we ask you to prayerfully reconsider the support you have given to this war because of the horrendous human suffering it has unleashed."

Signers of the letter include Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton, President of Churches Uniting in Christ of board chair of the National Council of Churches; the Rev. Walter Kim, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; the Most Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church; the Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, general minister and president, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada; Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary emeritus, Reformed Church in America; Sister Carol Zinn, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious; and Sister Donna Markham, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA.

Granberg-Michaelson helped organize the letter with Jim Wallis, head of Georgetown University's Center on Faith and Justice.

"There is not, and can never be, any ethical, religious or theological justification for Russia's invasion of Ukraine," Wallis said in a statement. "When bombs rain down on maternity wards and hospitals, as well as other innocent civilians, we should be utterly clear: this is the work of an



immoral maniac who must be removed from power, and anyone who supports Putin is sanctioning murder.”

The letter is one of several efforts by faith leaders to pressure Kirill, whose church has often operated in tandem with the Russian government. Last week a group of Catholic bishops from Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales called on Kirill to help end the violence, and Romanian Orthodox priest Ioan Sauca, head of the World Council of Churches, similarly implored Kirill to speak with the Russian president.

“I write to Your Holiness as acting general secretary of the WCC but also as an Orthodox priest,” Sauca wrote in an open letter. “Please, raise up your voice and speak on behalf of the suffering brothers and sisters, most of whom are also faithful members of our Orthodox Church.”

Kirill responded to Sauca on Thursday by arguing that blame for the invasion lies not with Russia but “in the relationships between the West and Russia.” He insisted Western nations have attempted to “mentally remake Ukrainians and Russians living in Ukraine into enemies of Russia.”

Kirill also dismissed Ukrainians who broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in 2018 to form their own Orthodox tradition based in Kyiv, saying the “schism” was “pursuing the same end.”

Yet calls for Kirill to do more are also coming from inside the Russian Orthodox Church. On Wednesday, Metropolitan John of Dubna, an archbishop of Russian Orthodox churches in Western Europe, publicly asked Kirill to “raise

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(his) voice” with Russian authorities against the “monstrous and senseless war.”

John also challenged Kirill’s framing of the war as a “metaphysical” battle against a liberal West, saying he “cannot subscribe to such a reading of the Gospel.”

Meanwhile, hundreds of Russian Orthodox priests recently signed a petition decrying the invasion, and one of the signers was later arrested for preaching a sermon criticizing Russia’s actions. And in Ukraine, Russian Orthodox priests have singled out Kirill, refusing to commemorate him during liturgies and even raising the question of initiating their own breakaway from the church.

Pressure is increasing on other Russian Orthodox leaders as well. Metropolitan Archbishop Hilarion, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church’s department for external church relations who spent years trying to forge relationships with American conservatives such as former-Vice President Mike Pence, lost his teaching position at Germany’s University of Freiburg this week due to his silence on the Russian invasion.

## **Needed: An Ecumenical Reset by George Weigel**

**In the early 1990s, I met Kirill, now Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’, when the man christened Vladimir Mikhailovich Gundyayev was chief ecumenical officer of the Russian Orthodox Church.**

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The occasion was a dinner hosted at the Library of Congress by the late, great James H. Billington, whose history of Russian culture, *The Icon and the Axe*, remains the classic work on the subject. Metropolitan Kirill, as he was then styled, struck me as a sophisticated cosmopolitan, not unused to the finer things of life; there was nothing of the Dostoevskian ascetic or mystic about him. And if he seemed less a churchman than a suave and worldly diplomat in ecclesiastical garb, one had to be impressed by the cool composure with which he played that role. Much of the table talk and subsequent conversation over postprandials revolved around the possibility of Russia's becoming a functioning democracy—a prospect for which, if memory serves, Kirill showed considerable, if urbane, skepticism.

Investigating his biography later, certain things about Kirill came into sharper focus.

In 1971, at the tender age of twenty-five, then-Archimandrite Kirill was sent by the patriarchate of Moscow as a Russian Orthodox representative to the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Ten years earlier, the Soviet regime, then conducting a draconian persecution that shut down half the country's Orthodox churches, had "allowed" the Russian Orthodox Church to join the World Council. The regime's motives were hardly ecumenical, however. Russian Orthodox representatives at the World Council were carefully selected by the KGB, the Soviet secret intelligence service; their task was to block any challenge to the Soviet Union's violations of religious freedom, while turning the World Council into a constant critic of the West. All this is detailed in *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive*

and the Secret History of the KGB. And from that invaluable resource, it is impossible not to conclude that Kirill was, at the very least, a KGB asset; he may well have been a KGB agent like another Vladimir, Putin.

Kirill's ecclesiastical career prospered during the Putin decades and he reportedly became a wealthy man—if not on the colossal scale of Putin himself, then to the point where he was once photographed, to his embarrassment, wearing a \$30,000 Breguet watch, which he assumed was hidden beneath his robes. (The Russian Church put up a fusillade of propaganda suggesting that the photograph had been doctored, although what seems to have been a subsequently airbrushed photo, deployed in Kirill's defense, clumsily showed the watch's reflection on a shiny tabletop.) Whatever his financial circumstances, it is indisputable that Kirill has been a faithful servant of the Russian state since his election as patriarch in 2009. And while he got blowback from reactionary Russian Orthodox circles for his meeting with Pope Francis in Havana in 2016, he must have known that, whatever internal opposition he faced from anti-Roman clergy and congregants, the Kremlin and its master—without whose green light the Havana meeting would not have happened—had his back.

Thus it should be no surprise that Patriarch Kirill has attempted to provide cover for Putin's unprovoked and brutal aggression against Ukraine, which Kirill has long insisted is part of the *Russkiy mir*, the "Russian world." The war in Ukraine, he said on the fourth day of the Russian invasion of its neighbor, had been caused by "dark and hostile external powers," the "forces of evil," and "the attacks of the evil one."

For Kirill to act as an instrument of Russian state power is nothing new. He has been doing that for decades. His February 27 statement set a new low, however, deliberately invoking Christian imagery to falsify what was going on in Ukraine. The technical word for such willful, aberrant use of the things of God is blasphemy. Kirill's profane agitprop also undercut his own Church in Ukraine, whose leader, Metropolitan Onufry, condemned the Russian invasion.

Ever since the early 1960s, the Vatican has been infatuated with the idea of a bilateral entente with Russian Orthodoxy. Whatever its noble intentions, that has been a fool's errand and it is past time for an ecumenical reset. If two of the most venal, corrupt organizations on the planet—the International Olympic Committee and FIFA, the world soccer hegemon—can sever relations with Russia because of its lethal aggression, the Vatican can surely inform Patriarch Kirill that the Holy See's ecumenical contacts with Russian Orthodoxy are suspended until Kirill condemns the invasion of Ukraine, thereby proving himself something other than Putin's puppet.

**George Weigel is Distinguished Senior Fellow of Washington, D.C.'s Ethics and Public Policy Center, where he holds the William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies**

<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2022/03/needed-an-ecumenical-reset>

## Poem for today

### Diary of a Church Mouse by John Betjeman

Here among long-discarded cassocks,  
Damp stools, and half-split open hassocks,  
Here where the vicar never looks  
I nibble through old service books.

Lean and alone I spend my days  
Behind this Church of England baize.  
I share my dark forgotten room  
With two oil-lamps and half a broom.

The cleaner never bothers me,  
So here I eat my frugal tea.  
My bread is sawdust mixed with straw;  
My jam is polish for the floor.

Christmas and Easter may be feasts  
For congregations and for priests,  
And so may Whitsun. All the same,  
They do not fill my meagre frame.

For me the only feast at all  
Is Autumn's Harvest Festival,  
When I can satisfy my want  
With ears of corn around the font.

I climb the eagle's brazen head  
To burrow through a loaf of bread.  
I scramble up the pulpit stair

And gnaw the marrows hanging there.

It is enjoyable to taste  
These items ere they go to waste,  
But how annoying when one finds  
That other mice with pagan minds  
Come into church my food to share  
Who have no proper business there.

Two field mice who have no desire  
To be baptized, invade the choir.  
A large and most unfriendly rat  
Comes in to see what we are at.

He says he thinks there is no God  
And yet he comes... it's rather odd.  
This year he stole a sheaf of wheat  
(It screened our special preacher's seat),  
And prosperous mice from fields away  
Come in to hear our organ play,

And under cover of its notes  
Ate through the altar's sheaf of oats.  
A Low Church mouse, who thinks that I  
Am too papistical, and High,  
Yet somehow doesn't think it wrong  
To munch through Harvest Evensong,  
While I, who starve the whole year through,  
Must share my food with rodents who  
Except at this time of the year  
Not once inside the church appear.  
Within the human world I know  
Such goings-on could not be so,

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For human beings only do  
What their religion tells them to.  
They read the Bible every day  
And always, night and morning, pray,  
And just like me, the good church mouse,  
Worship each week in God's own house,  
But all the same it's strange to me  
How very full the church can be  
With people I don't see at all  
Except at Harvest Festival.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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