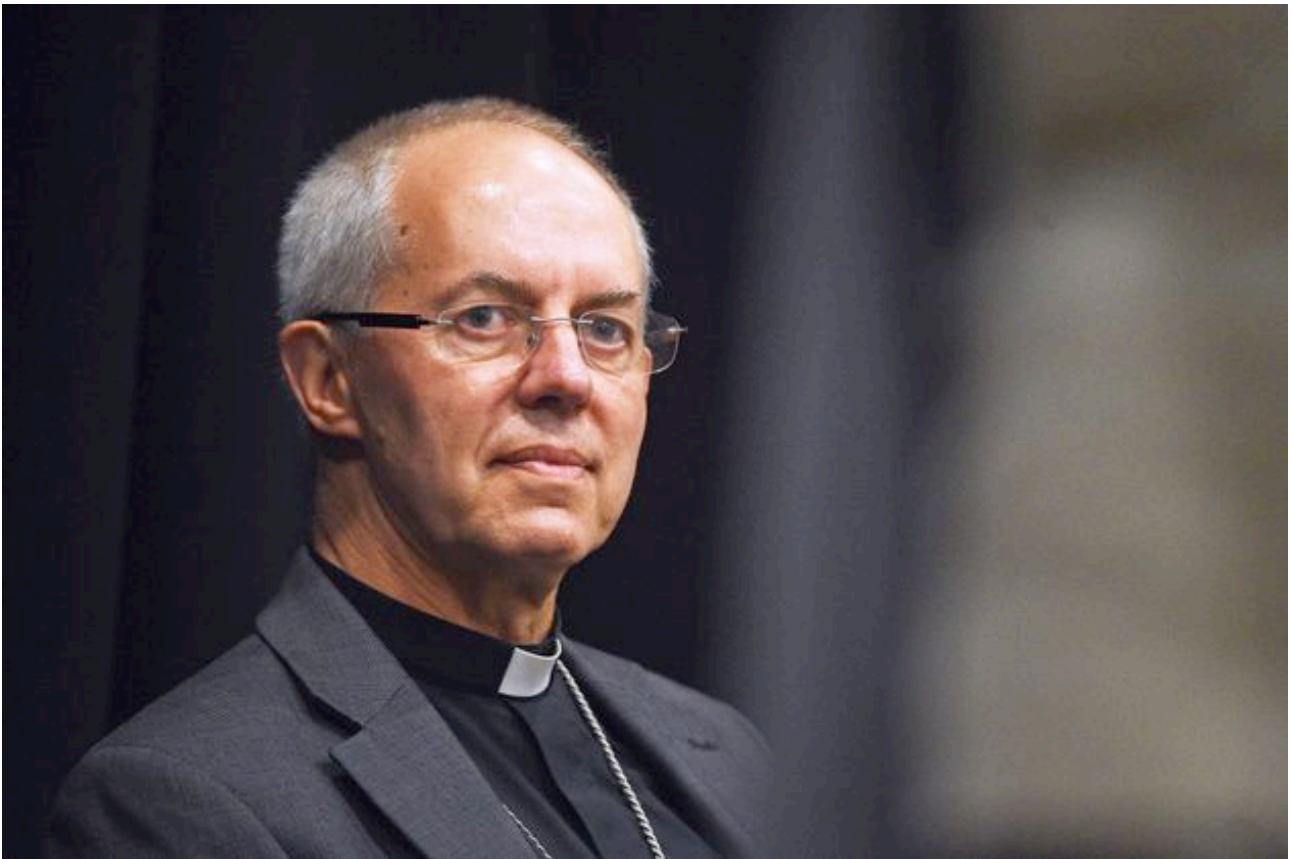




**Image of the day - Bossanyi window, Canterbury Cathedral**



## **Violence and harassment against women 'ignored for far too long' - Welby**

**The Archbishop of Canterbury has called for "urgent repentance" and "resolute action" from men in the wake of Sarah Everard's tragic murder.**

The 33-year-old's death has sparked an outpouring of grief across the nation, and inspired many women to share their stories of violence and harassment by men.

In a statement, Archbishop Justin Welby said he was "heartbroken" for the friends and family of Everard, who disappeared from a street in the Clapham area of south London.

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Her body was found in Kent woodland on Wednesday, with police charging serving Met officer Wayne Couzens with her murder on Friday.

The Archbishop said he was praying for all those who knew Everard, that they would "know the suffering God alongside them in this unimaginable pain".

The Archbishop went on to condemn the sin of male violence and abuse, as he called for repentance and action.

"Testimony after testimony from women over recent days have shown us something we have known and ignored for far too long: the profound impact of the sin of male violence, intimidation, harassment, sexism and abuse carried out against women," he said.

"It is these sins - and the culture that perpetuates and condones them - that need our urgent repentance, our fervent prayer, and our resolute action as men."

## **Churches to reopen for public worship in Scotland before Easter on 26th March**

**Churches in Scotland will be opening earlier than originally planned, on Friday 26th March.**

They were due to open on Monday 5th April, a day after Easter Sunday.

Announcing a number of changes to the Covid restrictions, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: "The other careful



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change that we feel able to make, at this stage, relates to places of worship.

"I can confirm that, assuming no deterioration in the situation with the virus between now and then, we intend to allow communal worship to restart from Friday 26th March.

"This is in time for Passover, Easter, Ramadan and Vaisakhi.

"In addition, the limit on attendance at communal services will be increased from 20, which was the limit in place before lockdown, to 50 – assuming of course that a place of worship is spacious enough to accommodate that many



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people with two-metre physical distancing. “I know that the restrictions on communal worship have been difficult for many people, despite the exceptional efforts made by faith groups to reach out to their communities.

“This change is a proportionate step, which we believe can be achieved relatively safely, and which will hopefully enable more people to draw strength, comfort and inspiration from acts of collective worship.”

The earlier date means it also includes the whole of Holy Week and thus Good Friday services as well.

## **Bishop appeals for caution at funeral gatherings**

**Bishop Fintan Monaghan, from the Diocese of Killaloe writing on Sunday past -**

“In conversations with priests and people around the Diocese of Killaloe in recent weeks many have expressed their serious health and safety concerns to me regarding the number of people gathering after funeral ceremonies in church and also at burials in cemeteries.

“Whilst it is such a positive and deeply ingrained aspect of our culture in Ireland to gather and offer condolences to the bereaved family, unfortunately due to the highly contagious nature of the coronavirus it is still not safe to do so. While being sensitive to the needs of mourners for care and compassion at such a difficult time, many priests have

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expressed deep concern for the wellbeing of parishioners gathering in such a manner and I share that concern.

“Since the start of the pandemic, at funeral Masses, mourners and families have been most understanding and patient about the public health limit of only ten people permitted to gather for such ceremonies. Clergy, parish personnel and undertakers have undertaken Trojan work with people in the context of these difficult, stressful and sad circumstances, and I commend them for that. However, it is in the gatherings of genuine and well-meaning people, before and after the funeral Mass, when such occasions, that raise concern, can occur.

“People by and large are wearing masks at these open-air gatherings, but some choose not to. I appeal to people to take whatever precautions possible to maximise the safety of all.

“I earnestly appeal to people to find alternative ways to offer condolences at this time of pandemic, and for the foreseeable future until vaccination has all of us in a better place. Perhaps a prayer, a card, a phone call, a letter, a text, a message on social media, lighting a candle at home or in your local church, would be a safer way to offer consolation with a view to offering personal support in the near future.

“My prayers are continually for those who have been affected through illness and bereavement since the pandemic began. Let us all look out for each other, and together we will get through this difficult time.”

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## **NI judges killed by IRA should be beatified by Pope: ex-Provo**

**A former IRA bomber is urging Pope Francis to consider beatifying Northern Ireland judges and their family members who were killed by republican terrorists, Lauren Harte writes in the Belfast Telegraph.**

Shane Paul O'Doherty has written an open letter to the pontiff after the Catholic Church recognised the martyrdom of Italian judge Rosario Livatino, who was gunned down in September 1990 by the Sicilian Mafia, paving the way for his beatification.

As a Christian who now repudiates violence, Mr O'Doherty says he wants to see similar recognition for leading legal



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figures murdered by the IRA during the Troubles, including barrister Edgar Graham, Lord Justice Maurice Gibson and Judges Martin McBirney, Rory Conaghan and William Staunton.

Mr O'Doherty joined the IRA at 15 and received 30 life sentences for a letter bombing campaign but went on to renounce terrorism and seek forgiveness from his victims. In his letter to Pope Francis, Mr O'Doherty wrote: "I read recently that you are going to beatify as a martyr an Italian judge — Rosario Livatino — who was murdered by the Mafia.

"I want to tell you about a number of judges, lawyers and family members who were murdered in Northern Ireland by terrorists of the IRA.

"I want you to consider beatifying as martyrs these innocent victims of the IRA. I write to you as a former member of the IRA who has repented."

He added: "If an Italian judge murdered by the Mafia is to be beatified as a martyr, why aren't the judges and family members who were murdered by the IRA in Northern Ireland also to be beatified as martyrs, even when some of them were leaving a Catholic church directly after attending Mass? What have you to say, Pope Francis?"

Mr O'Doherty highlights a number of killings in his letter, including the murder of Judge William Doyle as he left Mass in St Brigid's Catholic Church in south Belfast in January 1983.



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Sixteen months later, IRA gunmen used the same church to attack Judge Tom Travers and kill his 22-year-old daughter, Mary.

Kenny Donaldson, spokesman for Innocent Victims United, said he echoed the sentiments expressed in Mr O'Doherty's letter to Pope Francis.

“To beatify an Italian judge as a martyr who was murdered by the Mafia would be viewed by many as an important and symbolic step,” Mr Donaldson said.

“It certainly means that Pope Francis' attentions need to also turn to Northern Ireland where there were many judges and other family members assassinated by the Provisional IRA, with a number murdered when they were arriving at or leaving their place of worship.

“This reality makes it all the more appropriate that Pope Francis would move to beatify and officially recognise such individuals.”

Mr Donaldson added: “There were many others beyond judges who were murdered when leaving their place of worship.

“Pope Francis should also make acknowledgement of such individuals and we would call on him to engage with his Church here in Ireland and with his Irish Bishops.

“The sacrifices of those murdered through terrorism from within the Judiciary and other elements of law and order are

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as worthy of recognition in Northern Ireland as they are within Italy.”

Courtesy Belfast Telegraph 11.03.2011

## **Dolly Parton's rendition of 'Amazing Grace' proposed as new US state anthem**

**Lawmakers in the US state of Tennessee have proposed that Dolly Parton's version of 'Amazing Grace' as the official state hymn.**

In February, Tennessee State Rep. Mike Sparks and Sen. Raumesh Akbari introduced a new piece of legislation calling for Tennessee to "recognize songs of historic significance that have influenced the state".

Parton, who is a committed Christian, was born in Locust Ridge, Tennessee, in 1946.

The original version of 'Amazing Grace' was written by John Newton, a former slave ship captain who subsequently became an Anglican vicar and a leading figure in the abolitionist movement.

"John Newton struggled against the temptation of profits earned by merchants and slavers and uncertainty as to his religious belief during the first two decades of his life," the bill reads.

“Mr. Newton's life, rife with ‘dangers, toils and snares,’ frequently made him feel as though he had been



miraculously spared, despite his struggles. ... [H]e experienced a spiritual conversion after his ship was caught in a severe storm in 1748; he began reading the Bible and other religious literature during the remainder of his return journey to England.”

The bill goes on to detail how Newton came to write 'Amazing Grace' while serving at a church in Olney, noting that it had become one of the "most celebrated songs in modern history".

Parton has spoken openly about her faith in the past. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the singer said: "I think God is in this, I really do. I think he's trying to hold us up to the light so that we can see ourselves and see each other through the eyes of love. And I hope we learn that lesson."

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Parton recently turned down the offer of having a statue of herself erected on Nashville's Capitol Hill.

"Given all that is going on in the world, I don't think putting me on a pedestal is appropriate at this time," she said.

Some 51 years after her first nomination, Parton has been given the nod for the best contemporary Christian music performance/song, for her song "There Was Jesus" with Christian singer Zach Williams.

Parton took home the same award last year for her guest appearance on "God Only Knows" by Christian duo for King & Country.

"It's always special. You always love to be acknowledged," Parton said of her 50th nomination, before adding: "Like I've always said, 'I don't work for awards and rewards.'"

## **Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars**

**Corrymeela Community Leader, Alex Wimberly**, speaking on Sunday Sequence about #couragepentecost, their new initiative to inspire acts of courage in the face of sectarianism and paramilitary violence.

Link to the broadcast below (interview begins 8min in);

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000t44m>

## **WCC to observe Week of Prayer on COVID-19 pandemic 2-27 March**



The World Council of Churches will observe a week of prayer from 22-27 March, one year into COVID-19 pandemic.

The week will invite a time of prayer and reflection on both the lament and the hope expressed and experienced across the world during what has been a year of unprecedented suffering, but also one when churches have worked together in ever new ways to adapt, respond and accompany communities through mental, physical, economical, spiritual, and environmental crises.

The week of prayer is convened with WCC member churches and ecumenical partners, and will share prayers and spiritual resources produced in response to the pandemic.

A global online prayer service with participation from the eight WCC regions will be convened during the week, and a collection of resources will be made available on the WCC website by 18 March 2021, in English, French, German and Spanish.

See WCC resources on COVID-19: [www.oikoumene.org/resources/covid-19-resources](http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/covid-19-resources)

## **Online event from Armagh library to focus on religion and science**

Well known as the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland, Armagh is also famous for its renowned Observatory, the oldest scientific research institution in Northern Ireland.



## Professor Alister McGrath

Established in 1790, the Observatory was the last of Archbishop Richard Robinson's public building projects in the city. Robinson's first public building was Armagh Public Library, now known as Armagh Robinson Library, which was founded 250 years ago, in 1771.

Beginning at 7.30pm on Tuesday 23 March 2021, Armagh Robinson Library will be holding an event on the topic, "Science and Religion: Conflict, Coexistence, or Mutual Enrichment?"

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The speaker will be Professor Alister McGrath. His talk will explore the complex ways in which science and religion can interact with each other, with a view to exploring how we can think about their relationships. Engaging in dialogue with the writings of Albert Einstein and Richard Dawkins, Professor McGrath will map out a range of possibilities, and offer his assessment of their merits.

Professor McGrath is the Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at Oxford University. He grew up in Northern Ireland, before going to Oxford to study chemistry, followed by a doctorate in molecular biophysics. McGrath then moved to studying theology. He is the author of many books and academic articles.

The event will be delivered by Zoom. To reserve a place, please email [director@armaghrobinsonlibrary.co.uk](mailto:director@armaghrobinsonlibrary.co.uk)

## Media review

### **Alan Rusbridger steps down from Future of Media Commission after Roy Greenslade IRA row**

Belfast News Letter

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/alan-rusbridger-steps-down-from-future-of-media-commission-after-roy-greenslade-ira-row-3165561> ]

See also Eoghan Harris in Sunday Independent 14/03/2021-  
“Unless you read the Irish and Sunday Independents, this story may be new to you. The Irish Times delayed covering it and RTÉ did not interview Máiría Cahill until it was over. Here's the story.

“Last Sunday week, British newspapers were agog at an admission by Roy Greenslade, a former columnist on The Guardian, that he had been an active agent of influence for the Provisional IRA, in writing for that paper.

“Máiría Cahill recalled that when Spotlight, in 2014, revealed her rape by an IRA member, Roy Greenslade had attacked her, and his editor, Alan Rusbridger, gave her no redress. Cahill reasonably called on Rusbridger to resign from the Future of Media Commission to which he had been appointed...”

### **Paisley urges nationalists to be less 'begrudging' around NI centenary**

Belfast Telegraph

DUP leader Arlene Foster attended a Church of Ireland event in Dublin in 2016 looking at the historical impact of the rising. However, she said she ...

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/paisley-urges-nationalists-to-be-less-begrudging-around-ni-centenary-40194685.html> ]

### **Bertie Ahern: Irish unity poll ‘could be held on 30th anniversary of Good Friday Agreement’**

Belfast News Letter

Former Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern has said a poll on Irish unity could be held on the 30th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

[<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/bertie-ahern-irish-unity-poll-could-be-held-on-30th-anniversary-of-good-friday-agreement-3165180?>]



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## **Sinn Féin places United Ireland referendum adverts in US newspapers**

Irish Post

Sinn Féin has launched a brazen advertising campaign to promote the notion of Irish unity.

It emerged today that the party has placed adverts, calling for a United Ireland referendum, in a number of prominent American newspapers.

Behind the move is the Friends of Sinn Féin organisation, who are looking to capitalise on Irish-American support for the reunification of Ireland.

According to the Irish Times, both the New York Times and the Washington Post have run half-page spreads of an advert titled: 'A United Ireland - Let the people have their say'.

[[] <https://www.irishpost.com/news/sinn-fein-places-united-ireland-referendum-adverts-in-us-newspapers-205933?utm>]

## **Robin Swann can rest assured**

Irish News

Jake O'Kane: Robin Swann can rest assured that when the story of this pandemic is written, he will be remembered as someone whose hard work and determination not only made a difference, but saved lives

[www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2021/03/06/news/jake-o-kane-robin-swann-s-hard-work-and-determination-have-certainly-made-a-difference-in-the-pandemic-2244149/](http://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2021/03/06/news/jake-o-kane-robin-swann-s-hard-work-and-determination-have-certainly-made-a-difference-in-the-pandemic-2244149/)

## Pointers for prayer



Heavenly Father,  
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,  
and grew closer to you in the desert:  
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer  
that we may witness to your saving love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Hold in your hands, Lord  
our families & friends

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our neighbours  
those whom we worry about  
and those who worry for us.  
And in these same hands  
hold every family,  
especially those for whom today  
has brought new burdens and fresh sorrows

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Holy God,  
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:  
set straight our crooked hearts,  
and bend our wills to love your goodness  
and your glory  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

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who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,  
now and for ever.

## Speaking to the Soul



**Then Jesus said, “What is the Kingdom of God like? How can I illustrate it? It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in a garden; it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds make nests in its branches.”**

Luke 13:18-19 NLT

A mustard seed is tiny – between one and two millimetres. You would hardly notice it because it so small but incredibly it can grow into a huge plant, commonly eight feet tall and sometimes even up to twelve feet. It’s understandable that



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Jesus described it as a tree. Inevitably, a mustard plant attracts huge attention from birds who love to feed on the little black seeds.

Jesus' point is clear. When we see God at work in the world it may not look impressive. It may be overlooked because it appears so small. But the Kingdom of God is always in the growth business and so even though it might seem tiny it will keep growing. In many parts of the world the church is small and struggling. I've visited many towns and even cities where there is only one Christian or just a small group. I've always been incredibly impressed when I've met such people. In human terms their situation looked impossibly challenging, but they had faith that God could grow his kingdom against all odds.

We live in a world that is impressed by size and success and it is easy for churches to be sucked into this kind of thinking. There is nothing wrong with either size or success, but we must never forget that we serve a God who does miracles. There are many churches and Christian organisations in this country that are, on the face of it, weak and financially insecure. They are not outwardly impressive but we need to hold onto the fact that we worship a God who brings growth and blessing in phenomenal ways. The one thing we must never do is to look down on things just because they are small.

## QUESTION

What church or Christian organization or initiative are you looking at that seems as small as a mustard seed?

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## PRAYER

Thank you Lord that you are a God of miracles. Help me to look at every situation with your eyes and to see how you can bring growth in the most unlikely places. Amen.

