

Church News Ireland



**Image of
the day –
Signs of
Spring**

People and places

Welcoming the Stranger - Homes for Ukraine people

Many of us have been heartbroken and angry at what is happening to the Ukrainian people.

We want to help, but we don't know how. On our watch, in our time, we witness "the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since WW2" according to UN.

Donna of Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland writes - An entire nation of displaced people require safe places and communities with whom they can belong and among whom they can be restored.

To do something about this historic, humanitarian crisis is to respond to a call from God, who has repeatedly revealed that the Divine Heart is with and for the vulnerable displaced people of this world and given His people a mandate to 'Welcome the Stranger'.

How can we 'Welcome the Stranger' in 2022?

How can we, God's people, in our shared place of Northern Ireland, be safe havens for the refugees from Ukraine?

What does it look like for us, the church, in our local congregations to respond, to come around Ukrainian people as the hands and feet of Jesus in response to this crisis?



How might you as a church leader lead, teach and empower your people to respond – individually and corporately? How might we offer our buildings, small groups and social networks, homes - our whole lives - to respond?

How might we support not only Christians in our communities to offer their lives, but individuals and agencies in our local community? (personally, I have 7 friends who hold no Christian faith and have registered on the government portal, and who are asking me if the church can support them to do so!). We have an opportunity for Kingdom witness, let's not miss the fullness of who we can be in this moment.

And - a favourite question of mine - how might we rediscover the kingdom truth that in giving of ourselves we become those who receive; that in blessing others, we become those who are blessed?

What can you do now? 3 things:

1. Register your interest to respond to the need at Homes for Ukraine – Homes for Ukraine – Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukraine (campaign.gov.uk) - you can register as individuals, or organisation.

2. Start the conversation within your leadership team of church community.

3. If you are a Church Leader - Plan to join me, Malcolm Duncan, Nathaniel Jennings, Welcome Churches and other agencies who have been working on the ground in NI on our webinar this Thursday at 10am. We are ready to help you, to help your people to respond.

Thursday 24th March

10-11am online

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/296852292197>

Donna of EANI says - “Together, we want to discuss and develop a strategic united Christian response to the crisis within Northern Ireland.

“Together, we can imagine and embody the Good News of belonging and hope to Ukrainian people who come to live among us.”

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Applications open for student accommodation at The Hub

The Church of Ireland & Methodist Chaplaincy (The Hub Belfast) is now accepting applications for its student accommodation this September.

Situated on the Queen's University campus in south Belfast, the houses at 'the centre' have space for around 50 students every year. Young people from a range of church backgrounds have been making this place their home since the 1950s, and it is a great way to experience university or college as part of a supportive and welcoming community.

The chaplaincy has always placed a high value on living together, sharing meals, and a wide range of activities centred on exploring faith and life together. Students get to enjoy the unique on-campus houses, and the Church of the Resurrection and The Hub Café are also situated on-site.

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Applications are welcome from students hoping to study at any university or college in Belfast. You can find out lots more information at the website:

[\[https://thehubbelfast.org/2022/03/14/apply/\]](https://thehubbelfast.org/2022/03/14/apply/)

Charles Wood Festival prizes



There was a fantastic Junior Class final. Such incredibly talented young singers.

First prize (top photo) goes to David Kennedy.

Second prize and the Charles Wood Song Prize to India Lor



The winner of the 4th Charles Wood International Song Competition



and the Charles Wood Song Prize is Natasha Agarwal. (Second Photo)The runner up is Rosie Lavery, and the inaugural Irish Prize was awarded to Eilis Fox. Fabulous final!

Church of Ireland General Synod to meet in Assembly Buildings, Belfast

The Church of Ireland General Synod's 2022 meeting will take place from Wednesday, 4th May, to Friday, 6th May, in Assembly Buildings, Belfast.

This will be the second meeting of the 52nd General Synod, and the venue will facilitate the first in-person meeting of General Synod since 2019 when it met in Derry/Londonderry.

The General Synod consists of a House of Bishops with 11 members and a House of Representatives, which currently has a membership of 648 – 216 clerical members and 432 lay members who are elected by the diocesan synods and who hold office for a three-year period.

The primary purpose of the Synod is to enact legislation for the whole Church of Ireland. Less formal proposals are submitted as motions which, if approved, become

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resolutions. The Synod also receives reports from various committees and boards, which are debated by the members.

More information on the 2022 General Synod, including details for media accreditation, will be made available nearer to the time of the meeting at <https://synod.ireland.anglican.org/2022>

The 2023 General Synod is scheduled to take place in the Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin, from 11th to 13th May 2023.

Death of President of the Belfast Jewish Community

Dr Dennis Coppel, President of the Belfast Jewish Community, has died.

Sympathy and condolences have been expressed to the Coppel family and to friends at the BJC.

New publication on architect William Barre's life and practice by former C of I Press Officer

William Barre was a highly talented, special kind of architect who lived a short but very prolific and eventful life, during the course of which he designed several fine churches – rather unusually, across all denominational lines in Ireland.

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For the Church of Ireland, in the Armagh diocesan area, these included the really remarkable St Anne's, Dungannon (Drumglass) and the prettily situated St Mary's Drumbanagher, and he transformed St Luke's, Ballymoyer along ecclesiological lines for the Synnott family. He also had a hand in changes to St James's, Moy and St Luke's, Loughgall, and he did design work for Archbishop Beresford at the Music Hall in Vicar's Hill and at the Palace Stables.



Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH), a charity which promotes the value of and aims to protect the historic built environment, has just published a beautifully illustrated, comprehensive and lively account of Barre, written by the former Church of Ireland Press Officer, the architectural historian Paul Harron (who is now Chief Executive of UAH), who will be known to many - Photo above) The handsome new monograph is a further title by the author in UAH's 'Architects of Ulster' series (his first book was the acclaimed Young and Mackenzie: A Transformational Provincial

Practice) and produced to the high publishing standards for which UAH is well renowned.

Beyond church designs and indeed the Armagh diocesan area, WJ Barre was the designer of many landmark buildings such as the Albert Clock, the Ulster Hall, the former Provincial Bank at 2 Royal Avenue and ‘Danesfort’, the US Consulate, all in Belfast; both the Non Subscribing Presbyterian and Riverside Presbyterian churches in Newry – both very notable buildings there – and the unusual and distinctive Crozier Memorial in Banbridge. Barre’s life was tragically short by contracting TB but he was highly ambitious and no shrinking violet, challenging the architectural elites of his day. A native of Newry, Co. Down, he moved his practice to Belfast in 1860 as Belfast began to burgeon. Distinctive, original, eclectic, sometimes quirky and often dramatic, his building designs form some of the richest components of Ulster’s built environment from the High Victorian period. The author says simply, ‘Barre was driven by ambition to be the best architect around. “Just look what I can do”, he often seems to say.’

The new publication covers Barre’s life and practice, his ecclesiastical, domestic, commercial, civic and memorial work, and also includes a full gazetteer for those who wish to explore his buildings with fresh eyes and useful information to hand. It is illustrated with specially commissioned, striking new photographs by David Bunting.

For further information on the new book – and other UAH titles and the vital work of UAH – visit:
www.ulsterarchitecturalheritage.org.uk.

UAH members receive a 25% discount on purchase of publications.

Published in hardback, full-colour, priced £28. ISBN 978-0-900457-84-5

News reports

HART Report details terror and mass displacement in the Middle Belt of Nigeria

The foreword of a report from Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)states -

“As the world’s attention turns to Ukraine, we must not forget the suffering of Nigerians. Across Nigeria, tens of thousands have been killed or wounded in horrific terrorist attacks. Millions are displaced. Children cannot go to school, at the expense of their education. Some local observers have gone so far as to describe the rising attacks as a campaign of ethno-religious cleansing.

“Many are asking the question: is a genocide unfolding in Nigeria? Ethnic and religious animosity has fuelled conflicts in Nigeria for decades. The emergence of radical Islamist sects in the north has been a source of considerable tension since the country gained independence over sixty years ago.

“The recent reign of terror inflicted by Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) is well documented. Less well known, however, is the escalation of attacks by Islamist Fulani militia against predominantly

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Christian communities in the Middle Belt. I have visited Nigeria many times, to stand alongside HART's courageous local partners in the north and Middle Belt. Yet this was the first time I was advised to fly from Abuja to Jos, rather than travelling by road, due to the increased frequency of killings and kidnappings – another indication that insecurity is worsening in central states.

“Despite the scale and nature of the violence, it rarely hits our headlines. The crisis remains out of sight of the world's media. My urgent plea is that we no longer turn a deaf ear to the suffering of Nigerians, including the families, widows and orphans displaced in the Middle Belt. Their plight is deserving of our unwavering solidarity, our constant media interest and an immediate humanitarian response.

The Baroness Cox

Founder President of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)
Independent Member of the UK House of Lords”

https://www.hart-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Nigeria-Visit-Report_March-2022-web.pdf

Vatican releases Pope Francis' Lent, Holy Week, Easter Schedule

The Vatican published Pope Francis' calendar for Holy Week and Easter, which includes the Way of the Cross at Rome's Colosseum for the first time in two years.

The annual commemoration of Christ's passion at the Colosseum was canceled in 2020 due to restrictions on

outdoor gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19. And in 2021, there was a pared-down Way of the Cross service in St. Peter's Square.

The Vatican said that Masses on Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, as well as a canonization Mass May 15 will be celebrated outdoors for the first time since the pandemic began.

During this Lenten season, let us pray by looking at the Crucified Lord. Let us open our hearts to the touching tenderness of God, and in his wounds place our own wounds and those of our world. #Lent

— Pope Francis (@Pontifex) March 21, 2022

As is customary when first publishing the pontiff's calendar for Holy Week, the Vatican did not provide the time or place for his celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 14.

Before the pandemic, Pope Francis had made it a tradition to celebrate the Mass and foot-washing ritual at a prison or detention center, refugee center or rehabilitation facility.

Last year, the pope celebrated a private Mass on Holy Thursday with Cardinal Angelo Becciu, the former prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, who was forced to resign amid an investigation into suspected financial malfeasance.

The evening Mass of the Lord's Supper in St. Peter's Basilica that year was instead celebrated by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals.

Here is the schedule of papal liturgical ceremonies and event for April and May released by the Vatican March 21:

- April 2-3, Apostolic visit to Malta.
- April 10, Palm Sunday, Mass in St. Peter's Square.
- April 14, Holy Thursday, morning chrism Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.
- April 15, Good Friday, afternoon liturgy of the Lord's passion in St. Peter's Basilica.
- April 15, Way of the Cross at night in the Colosseum.
- April 16, Easter vigil Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.
- April 17, Easter morning Mass in St. Peter's Square, followed at noon by the pope's blessing "urbi et orbi" (the city and the world).
- April 24, Divine Mercy Sunday, Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.
- May 15, Canonization Mass in St. Peter's Square.

Americans' return to church has plateaued

Two years in, more congregations are open without COVID-19 precautions, but Americans aren't getting more likely to show up.

Churches waiting for more people to return on Sunday mornings are still waiting, two years into the pandemic.

Over the past six months, nearly all houses of worship have reopened for services and, week by week, more dropped mask requirements, social distancing, and other COVID-19 precautions. But the latest figures from Pew Research Center show that once-regular churchgoers aren't much more likely to show up than they were back in September.

While people steadily returned to church services in the first half of 2021, the trend hit a plateau. Going into the third year since COVID-19, congregations and their leaders are left with the reality that the people who worshipped alongside them before may not be coming back.

Around two thirds of people who usually attend church at least monthly said they were back in the pews in March (67%), roughly the same as in September 2021 (64%).

“2021 had many leaders clinging to the idea that the next season—Easter, the new school year, Christmas, etc.—would bring attendance back to 2019 levels. For most churches, that ‘magic season’ never materialized,” wrote

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Carey Nieuwhof, former pastor and church leadership strategist, at the start of the year.

“In 2022, the constant cycle of hope and disappointment will give way to the new reality that this is your church. It will become evident that some of the people who said they’re coming back later clearly aren’t coming back—ever.”

Churchgoing evangelical Protestants have returned at the highest rates, but their figures are also holding steady rather than growing: 75 percent attended in March and 72 percent the September before.

In the media

Northern Ireland schools to benefit from £800m capital funding programme

ITV

Twenty eight Northern Ireland schools are to benefit from a £800million renovation fund, the education minister has announced.

Ms McIlveen announced the spending drive under the major capital works programme.

The schools which are attended by more than 25,000 pupils combined will benefit from an estimated capital investment of £794m.

Ireland's 104km pilgrimage route set to rival Camino

Independent.ie

The pilgrimage path of St Declan ranks as one of the most ancient holy routes in Ireland - and traces the reputed trek made by St Declan between Ardmore in Waterford to Cashel in Tipperary to meet with St Patrick. Crossing some of the most historic and picturesque areas of Ireland, St Declan's Way has been described as a fitting alternative to the Camino in Spain.

[[] <https://www.independent.ie/life/travel/travel-news/irelands-104km-pilgrimage-route-set-to-rival-camino-41456916.html>]

Most 'cash-for-ash' recommendations not implemented

RTE.ie:

Fewer than half the recommendations of a public inquiry into a financial scandal that collapsed the Stormont institutions have been fully implemented, according to an oversight body.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/ulster/2022/0322/1287704-most-cash-for-ash-recommendations-not-implemented/>

Prime Minister threw Northern Ireland under the bus' – Sir Jeffrey Donaldson

Belfast Telegraph

Boris Johnson threw Northern Ireland under the bus in terms of the Brexit Protocol, the DUP leader has insisted. Sir Jeffrey Donaldson challenged the Prime Minister to “put right what he did wrong”, adding that he has the choice whether his legacy will be Brexit or the break-up of the Union.

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Sir Jeffrey has come under fire for his stance on the protocol, effectively collapsing Stormont through the resignation of First Minister Paul Givan.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/prime-minister-threw-northern-ireland-under-the-bus-sir-jeffrey-donaldson-41472003.html>

More needed to explain impact of EU law on NI

BBC News

The UK and EU need to do more to explain how updates to EU law could impact Northern Ireland, a House of Lords committee has warned.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-60828576>

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Mothers Union on Hour of Prayer on United Christian Broadcasters radio

“We are excited to share that as a part of the programme titled 'Talking Points' on United Christian Broadcasters (UCB1 Radio), Mothers' Union will be involved in their 'Hour of Prayer' from 12-1pm to share our prayers with their listeners in the week leading up to Mothering Sunday on 27th March!” Do tune into the programme on

<https://www.ucb.co.uk/> listen to catch us on air: 21st-25th March 2022.

Church Army Zoomed Out?



Dr Bev Botting, superstar statistician, will be the guest on Zoomed Out? LIVE on Monday 28th March. Find out more here 🙋

churcharmy.org/zoomedout

National Single Parent day

Take time out to encourage those you know who are parenting alone, think of a random act of kindness you could do to encourage that parent today.

Did you know Care for the Family have a load of great resources specifically focussed on supporting single parents - check it out here:

<https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/support-for-you/family-life/parent-support/single-parenting/help-single-parents-in-your-area/>

Where Resurrection Happens: Living the Easter Story Now

Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy and Paula Gooder in conversation online

Premieres online Tuesday 19th April, 7.00-7.45pm

The story of Easter Sunday is indivisible from Good Friday, and it is happening not just 2,000 years ago, but all around us now. Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy and Paula Gooder talk about where they see resurrection in the 21st century, particularly in the movements for social and racial justice, and explore some of spiritual practices that bring the Easter spirit into reality, including contemplative prayer and activism.

Bishop Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy was installed as the new Bishop of Willesden in St Paul's Cathedral in January 2022.

Dr Paula Gooder is the Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, and a leading Biblical scholar and teacher.

[\[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/where-resurrection-happens-living-the-easter-story-now-tickets-299000447387?utm-campaign=social%2Cemail&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-source=strongmail&utm-term=listing\]](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/where-resurrection-happens-living-the-easter-story-now-tickets-299000447387?utm-campaign=social%2Cemail&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-source=strongmail&utm-term=listing)

Poem for today

Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold

The sea is calm tonight.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits; on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanced land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

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Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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