



Image of the day - a touch of Pugin



Presbyterian Moderator assures new Myanmar Moderator of prayers

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, has sent his congratulations to the Rev Ling Zaw, the new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM). Dr Bruce also assured him of his prayers and those of PCI, especially at this particular time, following last month's military coup and the civil unrest.

Initial contact with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar by PCI, began in the early 1980s, and for many years it had been a challenge for PCI to develop a strong relationship

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with the denomination on the ground. With the political and economic reforms that led to the ending of more than five decades of military dictatorship in 2011, Rev Ling Zaw, as PCM's General Secretary, was able to attend PCI's General Assembly in Belfast in 2016. The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar is now recognised as one of PCI's Global Mission Partners.

“From colleagues in PCI who have been in contact with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, the situation following last month's coup is very difficult. At this particular time, as he has been called to lead his church, I want to assure Rev Ling Zaw of the prayerful support of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland,” Dr Bruce said.

“We have all seen on the news that there have been many peaceful demonstrations opposing the overthrow of civilian rule - but with live ammunition being used to disperse crowds, many demonstrators have lost their lives, and many others have been injured, beaten and imprisoned. With many workplaces closed, the economic situation already worsened by the pandemic, is also taking a huge toll on local people.”

The Moderator continued, “We are deeply disturbed by these scenes, but the primary request from our church partners in Myanmar is that we pray for a just and peaceful resolution, and they can be assured of that.”

With more than 30,000 members, the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar is a small denomination in a majority Buddhist country of over 50 million people. Rev Dr Liz Hughes,

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Convener of PCI's Council for Global Mission, met Rev Ling Zaw in 2016 when he was in Belfast for PCI's General Assembly.

Assuring the new Myanmar Moderator of her prayers also, Dr Hughes said, "As our relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar develops, I am really heartened by the fact that over many years a number of our congregations across Ireland have had direct links and close ties with the Christian community in Myanmar and continue to support them in a range of ways, not least prayer."

Encouraging people to pray, Dr Hughes said, "With a six and a half hour time difference between us, our day has come to an end as the people of Myanmar are waking up to face another. Could we all commit to pray for the people of Myanmar at our bedtime so they can face the day – particularly during this time of emergency - especially remembering those of the household of faith," Dr Hughes said.

Dr Hughes also encouraged people to pray for specific situations

- for the current crisis to come to a just and peaceful resolution
- for the issues and people laid on our hearts as we watch, hear and read the news
- for the families of those who have lost their lives and also for those who have been beaten and imprisoned during this crisis

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- for those who have positions of influence inside and outside of Myanmar that their actions may promote peace
- for the worsening economic situation, especially for those already adversely impacted by the pandemic and that it would ease
- for the new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church and for all other leaders in the Christian community in Myanmar that they may have the wisdom and discernment needed to spiritually equip their members at this time, and bear ongoing witness to the love of Jesus for all people.

Last month Dr David Bruce, joined with his Scottish counterpart in urging the UK government to ‘do all that it can to ensure the restoration of democracy which fully respects the November election.’ In their letter they fully endorsed a statement released by the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar in condemning oppression and calling for the release from house arrest of the State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar President Win Myint and other elected leaders.

Ireland’s oldest school seeks choir members

The oldest school in Ireland, dating back to 1453, is recruiting boys and girls for its choir, a place on which come with the promise of a “first-class musical education”

St Patrick’s Cathedral Choir School in Dublin features children from third class upwards, and their day includes rehearsals and singing during services in the cathedral, Patsy McGarry writes in The Irish Times.



St Patrick's is believed to be the only cathedral in the world with a Choral Matins each morning, Monday to Friday, during term time, sung by the choristers.

As well as the usual curriculum, children at the school are educated in music and singing, they tour (when it is possible to do so) and take part in radio and television broadcasts.

In recent years, the choir has performed for President Michael D Higgins and Pope Francis, and at the Gaiety Theatre and National Concert Hall with the RTÉ symphony and concert orchestras.

A number of children are moving on from the school choir in June, particularly boys whose voices have broken, and the school is finding recruitment much more challenging now due to pandemic restrictions.

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Master of the music Stuart Nicholson has written to school principals in Dublin hoping, with the consent of parents, they might direct boys and girls who like to sing to go forward for voice trials in St Patrick's.

“Membership of the choir provides a first-class musical education” and helps the children “develop a love of music which stays with them for the remainder of their lives”, he said in the letter.

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Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral William Morton said: "Choir places are open to children from any school, regardless of denomination, but they do have to move to the Choir School from class 3 onwards if they pass the audition and are willing to join."

Parents whose children are interested should email Stuart Nicholson at music@stpatrickscathedral.ie or write to Stuart Nicholson, Master of the Music, St Patrick's Cathedral, St Patrick's Close, Dublin, D08 H6X3.

Courtesy The Irish Times 21.03.2021

All-Ireland parliament should be in Belfast: TD

One of the two chambers of an all-Ireland parliament could be based in Belfast if the island unites, according to a Fianna Fail member of the Dail, John Breslin reports in the Belfast Telegraph

Unionists could be guaranteed cabinet positions, while the Irish constitution may have to be comprehensively rewritten for any future united Ireland, Jim O'Callaghan believes.

The TD for Dublin Bay South, who is tipped by some to be a future leader of the party, will lay out his current thinking on what a united Ireland might look like in a speech at the University of Cambridge.



He will propose that the current two chamber system should be retained — but that either the Dail or Seanad would be based in Belfast.

“It would be beneficial for a new united Ireland to retain a bicameral system, with one house sitting in Dublin and the other sitting in Belfast,” Mr O’Callaghan will say, according to a report in Dublin’s Business Post.

He will deliver the speech at the university’s Sidney Sussex College.

His voicing of proposals on what a united Ireland might look like contrasts with party leader and Taoiseach Michael Martin’s position, according to the Post.

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Mr Martin wants to dampen down any talk of preparation for a united Ireland or calls for a border poll, at least in the next few years.

But Mr Gallagher has decided to lay out his own vision — which also includes retaining the PSNI under a regional policing structure.

While power sharing will not work, he will argue, there may be a way of ring-fencing cabinet positions for unionists to ensure they retain influence.

He does believe unionists will, nevertheless, naturally develop alliances.

“In order to ensure that pro-union parties retained influence in an Irish government, there could be a requirement in the new constitution that a certain number of cabinet would be filled by representatives of unionist parties,” he is expected to say.

The TD will play down fears that a new Ireland will not be able to match how much the UK spends on Northern Ireland through its subvention, known as the block grant.

“Harnessing the strength of the whole island would help make those six counties a more prosperous region of a prosperous country,” he will say.

Courtesy Belfast Telegraph 22.03.2021

See also - Irish News

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2021/03/22/news/retention-of-psni-and-guaranteed-cabinet->

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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[posts-for-unionists-among-fianna-fa-il-td-jim-o-callaghan-s-united-ireland-proposals-2262633/?mc_cid=776a062fc5&mc_eid=23f2f80c40](https://www.ireland.ie/en/2021/03/23/posts-for-unionists-among-fianna-fa-il-td-jim-o-callaghan-s-united-ireland-proposals-2262633/?mc_cid=776a062fc5&mc_eid=23f2f80c40)

Cavan priest fined €500 for celebrating mass with parishioners present

A Cavan priest has been fined €500 for celebrating mass in his local church while several people were present, the Irish Independent reports.



Fr PJ Hughes, the parish priest for Mullahoran and Loughduff, has been reported a number of times to gardaí over parishioners gathering for a service in his church.

Gardaí have also previously warned him that he faces prosecution but Fr Hughes has said he does not accept the Government's restrictions on religious services.

The priest has now been hit with a fine, understood to be €500, for celebrating mass with people present.

In the parish's weekly newsletter Fr Hughes wrote: "We are committing a grave mistake by rejecting our Lord and God

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Jesus Christ by staying away because Government officials say we must.

"I do not accept and will not accept this demand by people who do not realise the wrong they are doing.

"I have been reported again and the gardaí have issued a fine because I celebrated mass with people present."

Fr Hughes also said he will "exercise my constitutional right even though people are complaining" which includes disobeying his bishop and going against his advice.

Under current Covid-19 regulations a person can be given a fixed charge notice of €500 for organising a prohibited event outside of a home.

The current Level 5 guidelines state that places of worship remain open for private prayer and that services should be held online, while up to ten people can attend a funeral.

Fr Hughes also said that, despite the size of the church, they have been "deemed a hotspot for the spread of the virus by gardaí".

Robin Schiller in Irish Independent, 21.03.2021

Books, broadcasts, resources, and webinars

Service of Reflection on first anniversary of lockdown

Service of Reflection on the first anniversary of Lockdown on Belfast Cathedral Facebook page this evening (Tuesday

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23rd March) at 7.30pm. The service will take the form of Choral Evensong, featuring settings by David Terry and Matthew Owens, and the anthem Pie Jesu from Gabriel Fauré's Requiem. Candles will be lit in remembrance of every person who has died with a Covid diagnosis.

BBC Radio Ulster's Morning Service for Palm Sunday

The service on 28th March will be led by Canon Dr Peter Thompson, Rector of Castlecaulfield and Donaghmore, in the Diocese of Armagh. The service will be broadcast at 10.15am and will be available for listening back afterwards at this link -

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000tmsp>]

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross have formed part of Christian devotion for many centuries because they offer a particularly vivid way of following in the steps of Jesus on the way to the Cross.

Explore the content below and find out more about the Walking the Way of the Cross book and Kindle e-book, published by Church House Publishing, which features further reflections on all fifteen Stations by Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, Canon Dr Paula Gooder and Bishop Philip North.

You can also explore the Common Worship service of 'The Way of the Cross' in our Prayer and Worship section.

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The Stations of the Cross have formed part of Christian devotion at Passiontide for many centuries because they enable us to engage actively with the path of suffering walked by Jesus. They originated when early Christians visited Jerusalem and wanted to follow literally in the footsteps of Jesus, tracing the path from Pilate's house to Calvary. They would pause for prayer and devotion at various points. Eventually, those pilgrims brought the practice back to their home countries and ever since then Christians of differing traditions have used this form of devotion.

Read more about the Stations of The Cross at -
[] <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/stations-cross>
[]

Daily Prayer: Common Worship Morning and Evening Prayer

The Church of England
[<https://cofe-daily-prayer.captivate.fm/>]

Choral Evensong - King's College, Cambridge

BBC Sounds -
Chapel of King's College, Cambridge - Available for 22 days from March 10

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000sz61>

Media review

Line of Duty is top of the cops

Daily Telegraph

It's back. Never mind all those other police dramas clogging up the schedules. Line of Duty is the gaffer around here. Prepare to spend the next six weeks gripped by its plot, dealing with your crush on Ted Hastings and confidently nodding along when a character says: "We can keep it on the DL only if we have a CHIS in MIT."

But let's start with an acknowledgement. The last series of this show had its moments, and a belting turn from Stephen Graham, but collapsed under the weight of its own cleverness. The moment in which DS Arnott worked out that the dying Dot Cottan was conveying the identity of "H" through Morse code was so ridiculous it brought to mind Skippy the Bush Kangaroo.

[[] <http://digitaleditions.telegraph.co.uk/data/545/reader/reader.html?social#!preferred/0/package/545/pub/545/page/36/article/154315>]

Canon Ian Ellis: Trust has slipped away amid fall-out from Northern Ireland protocol

Belfast News Letter

One of the aspects of Brexit that has been particularly concerning both before and after the 2016 referendum has been the issue of relationships.

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[\[https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/canon-ian-ellis-trust-has-slipped-away-amid-fall-out-from-northern-ireland-protocol-3172669\]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/canon-ian-ellis-trust-has-slipped-away-amid-fall-out-from-northern-ireland-protocol-3172669)

Co Cork priest says he would bless marriages of same sex couples

Irish Times

Co Cork priest Tim Hazlewood has said that he would bless the union of same sex couples. Reacting after a Vatican document published on Monday sustained a ban on same sex blessings, he said: “If Christ was with us now, he would do the caring, the loving thing” .

Fr Hazlewood, who ministers in a parish in east Cork and is a representative of the Association of Catholic Priests, said he had been approached by families who have somebody who is in a same sex relationship. “Our experience is that they are lovely couples and to hear something like that, that their relationship is sinful, I wonder how many of them know and meet and interact with those families and those people,” he told RTÉ radio’s Morning Ireland

[\[https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/co-cork-priest-says-he-would-bless-marriages-of-same-sex-couples-1.4514578\]](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/co-cork-priest-says-he-would-bless-marriages-of-same-sex-couples-1.4514578)

Irish priests, former president outraged over Pope Francis’ stance on gay marriage

Irish Central

Former President of Ireland Mary McAleese has issued a scathing criticism of Pope Francis after the Pope approved a Vatican document that ruled that the Catholic Church doesn't have the power to bless same-sex marriages. Pope

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Francis approved a Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) judgment that stated "the Church does not have, and cannot have, the power to bless unions of persons of the same sex," drawing criticism from McAleese and the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP).

[<https://www.irishcentral.com/news/irish-priests-former-president-pope-francis-stance-gay-marriage>]



Ian Knox in The Irish News

NI secretary set for major row with DUP over abortion and devolution.

Irish Times

Northern secretary Brandon Lewis's plan to introduce regulations to implement abortion services in Northern Ireland next week is likely to trigger a row over both abortion and the undermining of devolution.

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[\[https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/ni-secretary-set-for-major-row-with-dup-over-abortion-and-devolution-1.4515028\]](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/ni-secretary-set-for-major-row-with-dup-over-abortion-and-devolution-1.4515028)

Abortion is a devolved issue, insists Lockhart

Belfast Telegraph

Secretary of State Brandon Lewis does not have the power to force Stormont to expand abortion services in Northern Ireland, according to a DUP MP.

But while Carla Lockhart argued it is entirely a devolved issue, others say Westminster has the legal power to act if the Department of Health fails to commission services across all the health trusts.

“This is an over-reach of the Secretary of State's powers. This is a health issue and therefore it is for our health minister to bring forward suggested regulations on the commissioning of services,” Ms Lockhart told BBC Sunday Politics Programme.

[\[https://www.e-pages.dk/belfasttelegraph/436/article/1321462/11/1/render/?token=81e4ab77259dc7b5ce7ebe59b40ef05f&v\ platform=ios&v\ app\ id=ie.belfasttelegraphnewsstand.ereader&v\ app\ version=2.0.3\]](https://www.e-pages.dk/belfasttelegraph/436/article/1321462/11/1/render/?token=81e4ab77259dc7b5ce7ebe59b40ef05f&v\ platform=ios&v\ app\ id=ie.belfasttelegraphnewsstand.ereader&v\ app\ version=2.0.3)

Waging war over vaccines can only end in tragedy for Britain and the EU | Vaccines and immunisation

The Guardian

[\[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/21/waging-war-over-vaccines-can-only-end-in-tragedy-for-britain-and-the-eu?\]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/21/waging-war-over-vaccines-can-only-end-in-tragedy-for-britain-and-the-eu?)

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Grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross,
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and
simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy
friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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As Jesus, in the days before his passion, offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, we pray for those who suffer, those who are in need, and those who seek reconciliation...

God of compassion,
you know our faults and yet you promised to forgive.
Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom.
Open our hearts to gladness,
call dry bones to dance,
and restore to us the joy of your salvation. Amen.

God of suffering and glory,
in Jesus Christ you reveal the way of life
through the path of obedience.
Inscribe your law in our hearts,
that in life we may not stray from you,
but may be your people. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations.

Isaiah 42:1 NLT

I became absolutely fascinated by the law when I was in my teens. I often visited our local magistrates' and crown courts in Southend and was completely gripped by the whole process. On a few occasions I went up to the Old Bailey in London where they tried the most amazing cases. My mind was well and truly opened up to the darker side of our



society and I was given a good crash course in justice. It became clear to me that the difficult work that these courts were doing was vital to the stability of society. But when we read about justice in Isaiah the subject is much wider than merely what happens in courts of law, vital as that obviously is. It refers to God's desire that everything should be done fairly throughout society. Relationships need to be healthy and strong and the way people treat one another needs to be considerate and loving.

Our verse today is the beginning of the first of the Servant Songs in Isaiah. God looked to Israel to be the servant who would fulfil his mission to the world. But we also see him pointing further forward to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. He would be filled with God's Spirit and would open up a path of salvation and justice to all who would follow

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him. And this is still our calling today. As servants of God we are commanded to live our lives in step with the Spirit. This involves living justly and lovingly but also fighting for justice for those around us. Everyone needs justice but our greatest responsibility is for those who are most vulnerable – the young, the old, the immigrants, the disabled, the homeless and all those who are most frequently overlooked by our society. When we reach out to them we can be sure that we are doing exactly what God wants us to do in bringing his justice to our world.

QUESTION

Where do you see a particular need for justice amongst the people you meet each day?

PRAYER

Lord God we recognize that you are a God of Justice. Help me to strive for justice and fairness in every part of my life. Amen.

