



Image of the day

Lincoln Cathedral lights up for lockdown

Lincoln Cathedral honoured the National Day of Reflection by lighting up yellow yesterday, Tuesday, the first anniversary of the UK going into coronavirus lockdown.

March 24, 2021

On March 23, the cathedral was illuminated yellow to reflect on the last year in lockdown due to COVID-19.

It was organised by Marie Curie and supported by the Church of England, allowing for people to look ahead and hope for a brighter future.

At 12pm there was a national minute's silence, introduced with prayers at Lincoln Cathedral before a bell was tolled for a full minute.

Then at 5.30pm the regular Choral Evensong included prayers that marked the anniversary of lockdown. The service was live-streamed on the cathedral's Facebook page.

Then finally as the sun went down, the cathedral shone yellow as part of a 'Shine the Light' campaign, which also invited people to display a candle or light in their window.

The Easter Story shared with every prisoner in Northern Ireland

The 'Galilee Gazette', an imaginary newspaper being printed and circulated this Easter in Magheralin Parish, has also gone out to every prisoner in Northern Ireland's jails.

Around 1,500 copies have been delivered to the prisons in Northern Ireland for circulation among staff and inmates.

April 2021



It's been written in contemporary language as if the crucifixion and resurrection were happening today.

“We wanted a form of outreach that people might read over and keep and read again and so we’ve produced a tabloid newspaper to go into every home in our villages,” said the rector of Magheralin, the Revd Simon Genoe. “We are particularly excited it will be given to every prisoner in Northern Ireland, bringing hope to people Jesus loves and cares about very much.

“It will also be available as a PDF to be downloaded, and in Holy Week if you follow the hashtags #jesusisalive and #galileegazette you’ll get more ‘in the moment’ tweets and posts,” he added. “It’s a mission–focussed attempt to bring the Gospel into our homes this Easter.”

The paper has been written using the Bible as the basis of the Easter Story, and by also using a little creative license, in having the opinion of less credited witnesses like the donkey owner on Palm Sunday, a temple money changer

March 24, 2021

and a retired innkeeper who recalls when Christ's parents, Mary and Joseph, arrived looking for somewhere to sleep!

"It's a great, informative and often entertaining read and we really hope it resonates with our community and beyond this Easter," said Simon. "Don't forget, 'He is risen'."

The paper will be distributed and be available online from Palm Sunday at [www.magheralin.org] and on the parish Facebook page.

Report by Annette McGrath, Down & Dromore

When it comes to faith, our doors are never closed

Excerpt from a report by Lauren Harte in the Belfast Telegraph

Rev Gareth Harron, rector of St Philip and St James Church of Ireland in Holywood, Co Down, feels that we took a great deal for granted before last March.

"It's a cliché, but we have learned to appreciate something of what church is really about," he said. "As we moved our services online, we weren't caught completely cold. We had been recording services for distribution on DVD for some years, but we needed to get up to speed with live streaming.

"While we know that not everyone has access to technology, going online with things like our bible studies, prayer

March 24, 2021

meetings, fellowship groups, select vestry meetings, book-groups etc. has opened up engagement beyond our parish boundaries. We have been joined by people from around the globe.”

For Rev Gareth, the main challenges to pastoral ministry were having to grieve with families faced with limiting the numbers attending funeral services and being unable to visit hospitals and nursing homes.



Queens University, Belfast

“I am hopeful that the lessons we have learned will make us better equipped to support people - that church might not just go back to 'normal' but might actually feel better,” he adds.

March 24, 2021

“I am looking forward to meeting around the Lord's table this Easter — no outdoor dawn service, no breakfast afterwards - but blessed by the opportunity to give thanks with the church family, whether in person or online, united by the good news of hope in Christ which transcends lockdowns and social distancing.”

Rev Dr Heather Morris, general secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland, says the past year has been as challenging for churches as it has been for the whole of society.

“The grief of those who have lost loved ones through these months has been heightened by the necessary restrictions on visiting and funerals, but ministers have been 'on the frontline' of support for these families,” Dr Morris said.

“Churches have run and been part of community helplines, to support those who can't get out, whether that was delivering prescriptions or groceries, simply being available on the phone for a chat, or offering prayer.”

She adds: “There was undoubtedly initial shock and re-adjustment to this new landscape but Methodist churches responded with imagination and creativity, asking 'what can we do, rather than focussing on the things that couldn't be done in the circumstances — a community choir in South Belfast met online and churches have been able, restrictions allowing, to keep foodbanks running.

“When buildings were closed for gathered worship most Methodist churches moved online for Sunday services and mid-week Bible Studies, prayer meetings and Alpha

March 24, 2021

courses, and many found that they were being joined not just by the usual congregation but by others who were interested.

Some congregations, in Enniskillen, Togherdoo, Lisbellaw and many others have run very popular drive-in services.

Bishop pays tribute to Cork people's 'resolve, determination, creativity, and adaptability' throughout pandemic

The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross sends message of thanks to people marking the first anniversary of the closure of churches for public worship.

The Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton shared a message this time last year asking people not to gather for public worship in response to the Covid-19 pandemic with church buildings closing for the first time, a decision which he said was taken in light of the unfolding situation at the time.

He acknowledged how “painful” and “cathartic” the current situation is but said he could not let the milestone pass without thanking the people of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

“You, as part of the worldwide Church, here, in this most southern diocese of the Church of Ireland, in the midst of all the burdens and challenges, personal and communal, that this pandemic has caused, have shown resolve, determination, creativity, and adaptability.



The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross

“You have been faithful in your calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. You have found ways - traditional and contemporary - to do what needed to be done. You have cared for your neighbour and taken part voluntarily in the common cause of our society’s practical responses to these times, for the well-being of those around us.

“You have maintained your solidarity with those beyond our shores. You have dug deeply in uncertain and vulnerable economic and commercial times to continue to support the ministry, mission and work of the Church here and elsewhere,” he said.

He said that schools, parishes and homes have done more than the best they can and that they have gone the extra distance in adapting by learning new skills, harnessing social media and using online technologies.

March 24, 2021

He also mentioned those whose wedding day plans have been disrupted and especially those who have been unable to give their loved ones the funeral services they would have wished to give them.

“All our hearts have gone out to you. Our prayers and sympathy have been in solidarity with you in these far from normal times. What you have been through is most distressing.

“We do not know what the future will bring. We know that the way things are now is not normal, and let us not dignify it by calling it the new normal,” he said.

Courtesy Echolive.ie. Report by Breda Graham

‘Transforming Lives for Good’ in north Belfast

Connor’s North Belfast Centre of Mission has issued an appeal for volunteers to come forward to be trained as Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) mentors.

Sister Karen Webb, Church Army Evangelist at the Connect Base centre in Shankill Road, said that many children in the area will be struggling with emotional issues and will have fallen behind in learning due to the long closure of schools.

And she urged people to consider signing up for training as a coach.

March 24, 2021

“TLG is a mentoring programme for upper primary aged children who are in danger of being excluded from school,” Karen explained.



“Our coaches meet with a child for one hour a week for a year, helping the child, through craft projects and other resources, to emotionally mature and be able to cope with the learning environment. Simply to be a safe adult for them.

Karen said that TLG in the Greater Shankill area started in 2017 with just six coaches, and within a year this had increased to 15.

“We had been working in two different schools in the Greater Shankill area before Covid-19 restrictions meant we could no longer go into the schools,” she said. “Going forward, we are so aware that many more children in this area will be struggling with anxiety and emotional distress and will have fallen behind in learning.

“The TLG training for coaches/mentors is exceptional and no coach feels ill-prepared going into a session with a child. Each session is one hour long and takes place in the school during the school day.”

March 24, 2021

Feedback has been very positive. “TLG mentoring really is one of the best programmes I’ve seen implemented in a [primary] school,” said Genevieve McSorley, principal of Malvern Primary School, Lower Shankill.

“The pupils look forward to their weekly sessions and I’ve noticed a difference in confidence, behaviour and readiness to engage in building good relationships with those around them.

“The more TLG mentors we have in school, the more children will benefit from this excellent initiative.”

Karen said she would love to take the TLG programme into more schools, but needs people prepared to train as TLG mentors.



[Durham Cathedral](#)

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

Page 11

March 24, 2021

“The training is fun, straightforward and currently in the comfort of your own home,” she said. “You don’t need any experience or teaching qualifications – just a heart for Jesus, and a willingness to support a child.”

For more information, please contact Karen at karen.webb@churcharmy.org. If you would like more information about the TLG programme, please visit: www.TLG.org.uk.

Report by Kate Bushby, Connor diocese

Importance of in-person events cannot be underestimated, Bishop of London

Dame Sarah Mullally, who chairs the Church of England’s Covid Recovery Group, said: “I think one of the great sorrows of the pandemic is that we haven’t been able to mark those rites of passage that we would normally have done.

“Whilst weddings and funerals have taken place, people have not been able to be physically at them and we know, particularly around funerals that has left a huge hole of grief, and I think one of my sorrows is that people thought ‘Well, at least we’ll be able to mark the one year after somebody’s death’.

“Well, actually, we’re getting to the point where we’re still in lockdown and can’t mark those events.”

She added that while streaming is a way for people from afar to join in with important rites of passage, the



Bishop of London Dame Sarah Mullally said the importance of in-person events cannot be underestimated

significance of in-person worship and celebration should not be underestimated.

She said: “We will welcome the opportunity to go back to celebrating weddings and funerals as we used to do, however I think our use of going online means that we will also stream them so there may well be people who couldn’t get to funerals at short notice, or weddings because they live a long way away.

“I do think we will continue to see live streaming of those events, however don’t underestimate our need to celebrate those events in person.”

March 24, 2021

Devon vicar designs an app for churches to create their own Holy week trail



A vicar in Plymouth has come up with a creative and covid-safe way to share the Easter story.

Father Simon Rundell has designed an app that allows churches across the country to create their own Holy Week trail.

Biblical Stations will guide families along a route made up of 15 different QR codes located around their local area which, when scanned, load videos containing readings, images and music.

“By moving through the biblical stations, we are able to visit each of the parts from the four gospels that tell us the story of the Passion of Christ. And of course, finished with his entombment. And then his glorious resurrection. Because you can't tell the story of the stations, I think, without having the resurrection at the end,” Father Simon told Premier.

March 24, 2021

Prior to being ordained, Father Simon, from the parishes of Bickleigh and Shaugh, worked in app development and has always had a passion to use technology as a means to spread the gospel.

“I recently finished a master's in digital theology, which was an opportunity to look at faith and mission through the lens of digital culture and the internet. And that really is where I believe the next frontier, the next area for evangelism is to come. That's why we have to be skilled in these techniques in order to be able to reach the people who are still yearning for the good news of Jesus.”

Having originally come up with the idea in the context of a Christmas carol-themed walk, Father Simon said he realised the idea was easy to convert and wanted to make it available for other churches to use.

“I'm now encouraging other parishes to choose their 15 locations to send me those locations, and I will build them into the app. Then they can put their QR codes around their own localities. People can experience this wherever they are,” Father Simon said.

The app is now available to download on Google play.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Daily Prayer: Common Worship Morning and Evening Prayer

The Church of England

March 24, 2021

[<https://cofe-daily-prayer.captivate.fm/>]

Canterbury Cathedral Easter Day

Millions of viewers will be able to join the Archbishop of Canterbury live for the Easter Day service thanks to a collaboration between the Cathedral, BBC One, BBC Radio 4, BBC local radio, and The Church of England 🏛️

Keep an eye on broadcast listings, and the Cathedral's social media, for further details.

Spring Harvest Home online



Tickets for Spring Harvest Home this Easter are available now for access to all the content online, both live and on demand. The event is from 4th to 8th Apr.

March 24, 2021

Spring Harvest Home states, "We will bring you some of the world's best worship leaders and Bible teachers, as well as brilliant kids and youth speakers.

"We're using a new platform to create the first Christian event of its kind in the UK. It's exciting, engaging, interactive, family-friendly and a brilliant shared experience! We're hopeful it will encourage you to worship, learn and laugh with fellow guests, ask questions and join discussions.

"Don't miss out! As a special offer to Keep The Faith subscribers, quote the code FAITH21 when booking online and you will receive 10% off the full event price."

Find out more and book here.

[<https://springharvest.org/springharvesthome21>]

Media review

Retired judge criticises 'slow' pace of sex crime reform

BBC News

The Department of Justice (DoJ) has been too slow to implement proposed reform of how NI handles sex offence cases, a retired judge has said.

Sir John Gillen said the department had "taken too long" to implement recommendations made in a report into how sexual offences are dealt with in Northern Ireland.

Sir John said the "justice system has much to change".

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56490953>]

Fourth wave over border could hit lockdown plans

Belfast Telegraph

There are fears a fourth wave of Covid-19 cases in the Republic could spread north of the border, slowing down our lockdown exit strategy.

Concern was expressed as the UK Government announced Northern Ireland will get £220m of additional funding to help combat the disease.

Professor Martin Cormican of the Republic's Health Service Executive described case numbers as “stuck” and possibly rising.

The Irish Times view on the Vatican and same-sex couples.

Already under attack from the Catholic right, Pope Francis has now also alienated staunch supporters among Church liberals

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorial/the-irish-times-view-on-the-vatican-and-same-sex-couples-1.4516301>]

Church apologises over ‘naked beatings’ vicar

Daily Telegraph

A former leading evangelical vicar subjected almost 30 victims to ice baths, naked beatings and sex acts, because his church created a culture where he was “untouchable”, it has admitted.

[<http://digitaleditions.telegraph.co.uk/data/546/reader/reader.html?social#!preferred/0/package/546/pub/546/page/39/article/154524>]

March 24, 2021

Feature and Question and Answer with the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Community of St Anselm.

Tablet

[<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/19594/the-community-of-st-anselm-a-year-for-god>]

[<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/19595/justin-welby-on-the-power-of-renewal>]

Further coverage speculating on publication of C of E anti-racism taskforce report next month

Daily Telegraph

[<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/03/19/church-england-introduce-quota-bame-clergy-leaked-report-reveals/>]



Pointers for prayer

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ

March 24, 2021

delivered and saved the world:
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.

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

Page 20

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

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?"

Luke 16:10-12 NLT

March 24, 2021

We all tend to be impressed by competent people. People who get things done. But competence isn't everything. A person's character is of far greater significance than their competence. Indeed, a person who has enormous competence but who has a bad character is very dangerous, and their activity is likely to lead to disaster sooner or later.

Jesus' words are wise ones and we need to listen to them carefully. Faithfulness is a key quality and if someone has proved unable to be faithful in one area of life, it wouldn't be surprising if they were unfaithful in other areas as well. And if someone shows dishonesty in a trivial matter it should come as no surprise if they are dishonest on a bigger scale as well. The point is clear. Our core character will determine the way in which we live our lives, whether the issue is large or small or involves our family, business or church.

This all emphasises the importance of continually growing our Christian character. As we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives, our character will gradually change so that his fruit becomes increasingly evident in our lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. This fruit is amazing because it will last. It isn't like normal fruit which has a very short shelf life. Impressed as we may be by competent people, we all need to long for this amazing fruit which God loves to grow in our lives.

QUESTION

In what ways are you seeking to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

March 24, 2021

PRAYER

Loving God, help me grow closer to you every day and to welcome the changes that you are bringing about in my life by your Holy Spirit. Amen.

