



**Image of the day - Cobh and Glanmire**

## **C of I launches worship resource for Northern Ireland Centenary**

**The Liturgical Advisory Committee (LAC) of the Church of Ireland has published a resource for use in parishes marking the Centenary of the Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, which will take place on 22nd June 2021.**

The published resource includes (in PDF and Word format):

- an introduction setting the historical context, written by the Revd Dr Stanley Gamble;
- a Service of the Word to mark the Centenary of the Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament;
- a wide selection of suggested Scripture readings; and
- a range of prayers in contemporary and traditional language.

While the resource has been compiled with particular reference to the Northern Ireland Centenary, it is also intended that the structure and much of the content of this Service can be used in the future to help congregations and individuals pray for those in authority and government.

Speaking about the Service on behalf of the LAC, the Committee's Chaplain, the Revd Adrian Dorrian, said: "Throughout the Decade of Centenaries, the LAC has been working in parallel with the Church of Ireland's Centenaries Working Group to provide worship leaders and parishes with resources to help mark and commemorate some of the most significant dates in our shared history. We hope that

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this Service of the Word will be useful to those preparing to mark the Centenary of the Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament in a liturgical setting.

“Prayers for those in authority have always been at the heart of our worship; of course they are built in to the Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. Many of the resources in this service are not specific to this particular centenary, and we believe that they will remain useful to the Church as we continue to hold those in authority before God in the years to come.”

The resource can be accessed on the Church of Ireland website - <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/prayer-worship/worship-resources/commemoration-liturgies/the-opening-of-the-northern-ireland-parliament>

## **Bishops' Appeal Releases Emergency Funds for Covid Response in India**

**The Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal has released €10,000 in emergency funding to support Covid relief efforts in India.**

Individuals and parishes are invited to contribute to support these efforts. Funds will be channelled to partner agencies working on the ground in communities in India providing vital support and supplies.

More than 200,000 lives have been lost to the pandemic in India. The pandemic has spread from large cities to smaller cities, towns and villages where its impact is largely under-





reported, and the peak of the outbreak may still be two to three weeks from now.

Bishops' Appeal's Diocesan Representative for Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, the Revd Albert Dawson, says: "As we look at the news bulletins over the last few weeks, the situation that has evolved with Covid-19 in India is very distressing to watch. We can only imagine the distress the doctors and nurses are working in to care, as best they can with extremely limited resources, for the sick and the dying in the hospitals.

"Let us remember the doctors and nurses who have travelled to our country from India and provided care for our citizens over the last year in the hospitals and nursing

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homes throughout Ireland. These are very valued members of our healthcare staff and it would be one way of showing them how much we value their contribution to our society.”

Donations can be made online or by post using the reference ‘CIBA India Covid Relief’ and all details about how to contribute can be found here:

[www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/give](http://www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/give)

## **Archbishop Jackson of Dublin welcomes reopening plan for church services**

**The Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, has welcomed the announcement that in-person church services can resume as part of the easing of restrictions on May 10. His full statement reads as follows:**

“We welcome the announcement from An Taoiseach Micheál Martin this evening that our churches can reopen for public worship from May 10, albeit with restricted numbers. We look forward to welcoming people back through the doors of our churches and will continue to work within the guidelines to ensure our places of worship are as safe as possible.

“We particularly welcome the increase in numbers permitted to attend funerals as this will bring enormous comfort to those grieving the loss of loved ones.

“Since Christmas we have reached out to people in their homes and we acknowledge the tremendous work carried



out by clergy and all who assist them in creating online services.

“An Taoiseach spoke this evening of finding hope for the future. In this season of Easter, a season of hope, we are thankful for the efforts of our population, from frontline and essential workers and the scientists who have worked on the creation of vaccines, to all of us who have made sacrifices to bring us to this stage of beginning to reopen society.”

## **Mount Merrion Church launches new creative project**

**Mount Merrion Church, Belfast, has launched a new project named ‘Gardens’ – which captures their creative expression of songwriting, birthed from the worship community and team of the church.**





“We have always felt a call to songwriting and to creativity,’ says Aaron Boyce, Mount Merrion’s Worship Pastor. “We’ve kept praying into this and dreaming about it for the last few years as a team, and within the last year of the pandemic, we saw more of a surge of creativity – it just felt right to press into this now.

“As we continued to pray, we felt strongly that God was calling us to be intentional in writing and releasing more songs, formed from the heart of a worship team and church who are passionate about encountering Jesus and worshipping Him with everything we have!

“With this intentionality, we wanted to create a project or ‘identity’ that we could release these songs under, one that matched the culture of what we were doing in church. After a lot of prayer and many conversations, we kept being drawn back to the imagery of Eden – there in the beginning Adam and Eve walked with God closely in the cool of the Garden. His presence was near, close and tangible. The creativity of the Father was on display; the space was free, open, full of life and the Spirit of God.

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“The heart of ‘Gardens’ as a project is to lead people to bold worship of Jesus through songs and creativity that give space for freedom and heartfelt encounter with the one who first loved us.”

Gardens are preparing to release their first single this Friday called ‘Spring Rain’. There was a live video release of the song on YouTube yesterday, Friday 30 April, and it will be available on major platforms such as Apple Music, Spotify and Youtube Music.

Follow the story of the release below.

Instagram: [@gardensworship](#)

Youtube: [Mount Merrion Church](#)

## **Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars**

### **Welby: Be Curious, Be Present, and Reimagine**

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby released a series of five short **films** about “Faith in a conflicted world” on April 27.

Drawing on his own experience as a pastor and church leader, the series focuses on three core practices, being present, being curious, and reimagining new possibilities in the places where we hope to see change.

In a promotional video for the series, Welby said, “I believe with all my heart that reconciliation is the call on every human being. We all know that we live in a world that is divided, conflicted, and hurting, and though many of us long for our faith to make a difference, it can be hard to know where to start. The world cries out for people committed to



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reconciliation whose actions and words show that a new and better way is possible.”

The series, filmed at Lambeth Palace, was created by the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Reconciliation Ministry team, and is part of the [Difference Course](#), a free five-session adult course that parishes can offer in digital or in-person formats. Course sessions include Bible study; testimonial videos focusing on issues like family conflict, racial divisions, and community transformation; and interactive group exercises. The stories of South African justice activist Craig Stewart and British rapper Guvna B, among others, are highlighted as models of reconciliation in action.

In one course video, Welby reflects on his 2019 [visit](#) to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre site in Amritsar, India, where he dramatically prostrated himself on the ground in an apology to the Indian people for one of the greatest atrocities of British colonial rule.

“As I went to the foot of the memorial, I really wanted to be anywhere else, because it was so shaming and so horrible. And I was a senior Brit in these circumstances and that was all focused on in on me as a symbol of that history. And so the only thing to do was to lie down, prostrate myself before the memorial, as a symbol of sorrow and grief, of being present with those hundreds who were killed,” he says on the video.

Kiera Phyo, director of the Reconciling Leaders Network, a movement the Difference Course is aiming to build, [said](#): “In a world which is hurting and fractured there is a need for divides to be crossed in new and reimagined ways, as we

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see in the life of Jesus. Both the film series and the recently launched Difference Course equip people to practically live this out in their everyday relationships and encounters, teaching three habits rooted in scripture: Be Curious, Be Present, and Reimagine.”

Register your interest at -

<https://difference.rln.global/register-your-interest>

## **Opinion - Reform of sex education in schools is long overdue - Fionola Meredith**

**Faith groups do not have a monopoly on morality, Fionola Meredith writes in the Belfast Telegraph**

Relationship and sex education (RSE) in Northern Ireland is not good enough. It requires a total overhaul, and has done for far too many years. There have been repeated calls for action. In 2019, the Gillen review said that the Department of Education should provide sex education on matters such as consent, boundaries, appropriate behaviour, fears of homophobia and transphobia, gender identity and sexuality. Last month, two separate expert advisory panels at Stormont severely criticised RSE provision in our schools, describing it as “inconsistent and insufficient”. They are right. It is. Yet so far, nothing has happened.

Like so many vital issues, the woefully inadequate state of RSE has consistently been shoved off the political agenda. There's always something more important going on, some

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squalid sectarian stand-off or internecine hoo-hah to obsess about.

Meanwhile, our children are being denied a fully-rounded education.

But now the pressure for reform has changed up a gear. A campaign group called Raise Your Voice has sent an open letter, signed by over 50 civil society organisations, to the education minister, Peter Weir, reminding him of his legal and moral duty to meet young people's needs.

They want RSE in schools that is “inclusive, evidence-based and for everybody” and they're seeking support from the general public.

If children were shown to be consistently failed in the teaching of maths or English, the signatories say, the education minister would have a moral and legal duty to intervene. So why should it be any different with RSE?

This is not just about teaching teenagers to put a condom on a cucumber. It's far more essential to society than that. As the letter states, it's about equipping young people with a robust understanding of consent and the tools they need to forge healthy relationships.

RSE provision here has long been dominated by a conservative Christian group called Love for Life, which has provided programmes to at least 70% of post-primary schools here.

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When my two children were at secondary school, I withdrew them from all Love for Life classes because I was deeply uncomfortable with the anti-abortion, abstinence-before-marriage ethos.

Sure, I didn't want them to rush into relationships too early, but neither did I want them to get the impression that sex outside marriage was dirty or dangerous or disease-ridden, or that being straight was the only proper option.

It's easier for schools to hand over the sensitive topic of RSE to an outside agency. Parents, too, may be relieved to think that somebody else is taking on that awkward job. But they need to ask: what are the youngsters being taught?

The Love for Life teaching materials are clearly designed to appeal to teenagers, with cute cartoon characters and attempts at teen-friendly language like “totally fancying” someone. There are lots of fun quizzes and class facilitators are often youthful, bouncy people.

But the underlying message is deeply serious. This is about “educating for sexual virtue”. That's the title of a book by Olwyn Mark, head of research and strategic partnerships at Love for Life.

In an article called “A Moral Vision for RSE”, Dr Mark provides a fascinating insight into Christian sex education. She questions the “informed choice” approach to RSE which “says that we are to educate children towards independence and self-sufficiency where young people are perceived to make free autonomous choices.”



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Remarkably, she also questions the idea “that sexual activity is a normal and inevitable stage in the development of young people”. Hmm. What would Freud have made of that?

Instead, Dr Mark argues that young people needed to be “presented with a moral vision for their sexual lives that is not derived from experience or instinct”. She promotes “a Christian understanding of sex... expressed in the context of a lifelong and exclusive marriage.”

I find this to be a narrow, impoverished understanding of sex and relationships, devoid of any sense of pleasure or joy. How could freedom, autonomy and choice derive from such a rigidly moralistic starting point?

Indeed, I believe it is morally wrong to promote such a prescriptive viewpoint to young people who are only starting out on the wonderful adventure of their lives.

But that's the whole problem with outsourcing RSE to faith-based groups. Whether covertly or overtly, of course they will seek to instil their own beliefs, visions and values in the young people they encounter.

Organisations such as Love for Life do not have a monopoly on morality. Our children deserve so much better than this repressive approach to life and love.

Belfast Telegraph 30.04.2021

## Media review

### Churches in Ireland to reopen for worship

The Tablet

A woman collects an envelope of ashes at Carlow Cathedral in Co Carlow in February this year, when Ash Wednesday was marked at home.

[[] <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14099/churches-in-ireland-to-reopen-for-worship> ]

### A season of hope': Church leaders welcome return of religious services

The Irish Times

Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson of Dublin:

'We particularly welcome the increase in numbers permitted to attend funerals as this will ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/a-season-of-hope-church-leaders-welcome-return-of-religious-services-1.4552060> ]

### 50 people to be allowed at religious services from 10 May - but no communions or confirmations

thejournal.ie

Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Michael Jackson, welcomed today's announcement, particularly the increase in numbers permitted to ...

[[] <https://www.thejournal.ie/weddings-funerals-may-june-2021-ireland-5423710-Apr2021/> ]

### Netflix's 'The School for Good and Evil' Is Now Filming in the UK

Backstage

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Filming has now begun in Northern Ireland, originally at Belfast Harbour Studios and now at St Peter's Church of Ireland on Antrim Road, where ...

[[] <https://www.backstage.com/uk/magazine/article/netflix-school-good-evil-charlize-theron-now-filming-uk-73166/> ]

## **Leo Varadkar says LGBTI+ relationships must be included in sex education programmes**

Extra.ie

... around the country, accounting for 90% of all primary schools in Ireland. ... 'Last month, incredibly, the Vatican reaffirmed that the Catholic Church ...

[[] <https://extra.ie/2021/04/30/news/irish-news/leo-varadkar-sex-education> ]

## **New Catholic school sex education programme not in line with Government policy, says Tánaiste**

thejournal.ie

The RSE developed by the Irish Bishops Conference states that the Church's teaching that marriage is between man and woman cannot be omitted ...

[[] <https://www.thejournal.ie/varadkar-shortall-sex-education-5423557-Apr2021/> ]

## **John Stott's legacy celebrated on his centenary**

Church Times

Dr Stott was the Rector of All Souls' from 1950 to 1975, and an honorary curate until his death in 2011 (News, 22 July 2011; Obituary, 5 August 2011).

[[] <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/30-april/news/uk/john-stott-s-legacy-celebrated-on-his-centenary> ]



## Pointers for prayer

Mighty God,  
in whom we know the power of redemption,  
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.  
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,  
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning  
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,  
we will share in his resurrection,  
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life  
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,  
long ago, faithful women  
proclaimed the good news  
of Jesus' resurrection,  
and the world was changed forever.  
Teach us to keep faith with them,  
that our witness may be as bold,  
our love as deep,  
and our faith as true. Amen.



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Creator of the universe,  
you made the world in beauty,  
and restore all things in glory  
through the victory of Jesus Christ.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured  
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,  
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,  
and peace, to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his  
resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours.  
As his disciples in this age,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe  
in which we are privileged to live  
and our neighbours with whom we share it...

...Intercessions ....

Open our hearts to your power moving  
around us and between us and within us,  
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and  
enemy,  
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,  
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,  
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,  
and to care for those who are our companions,  
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.  
Seeking to be true friends of all,  
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the  
world....

...Intercessions ....

Guide us in the path of discipleship,  
so that, as you have blessed us,

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we may be a blessing for others,  
bringing the promise of the kingdom near  
by our words and deeds. Amen.

## Speaking to the Soul

**When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling.**

1 Corinthians 2:1-3 NLT

I once heard about a church that regularly visited the houses nearby. They sent out people two by two and many people got involved. A young girl nervously agreed to join in. She came to one house and a large man came to the door asking in a gruff voice what she wanted. She struggled to speak and then, in a quivering voice, she blurted out, "I've come to tell you that Jesus loves you." The man didn't know what to do and slammed the door in her face. He went inside and slumped into a chair weeping like a baby. His wife asked what was wrong and he told her that a young girl had just come to their front door and told him that Jesus loved him. He had never had an experience like this before and he was amazed by her bravery. He couldn't get over it. The more he thought about the experience the more curious he became and after a while he plucked up courage and went to the church and made a commitment to follow Christ.

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I love that story because God often speaks through our weakness more easily than through our strength. That was certainly Paul's experience. He remembers how he was when he first arrived in Corinth. It was a busy and noisy city, famous for its immorality. It's not surprising that Paul felt overwhelmed by his weakness. But Paul knew that what mattered was that people should hear that Jesus died on the cross for them. It didn't matter that he was timid and trembling. What mattered was that they heard the truth.

Most of us feel unsure of ourselves when we are given the opportunity to speak about our faith. But the truth is that we are often at our most powerful when we are feeling nervous and weak.

## QUESTION

Can you think of a time when God used you particularly powerfully in a time of weakness?

## PRAYER

Lord help me to be willing to speak up for you, even when I am feeling weak and tongue-tied. Amen



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