



Belfast hosts 500 Salvation Army members for anniversary

Up to 500 members of the Salvation Army from around the world took part in a parade through Belfast on Sunday to mark 135 years since its formation.

The salvationists, including their global leader General André Cox, gathered in the city for three days of events – including an outreach event at

Victoria Square shopping centre on Saturday afternoon.

Later on Saturday, around 700 delegates attended a conference at the Spires assembly buildings in Fisherwick Place.

Weather permitting, Sunday's 'March of Witness' left Lower Garfield Street (opposite CastleCourt shopping centre) around 2.30pm.

The Salvation Army's presence in Ireland began in Belfast in 1880 when founder William Booth appointed Major Caroline Reynolds to begin recruitment.

Across its Irish division, the charitable organisation has 19 churches (corps) and seven social centres.

The weekend's celebrations were led by General Cox, who was only last week given the all-clear after a battle with lung cancer.

Thanking well-wishers from both sides of the Irish border for their support during his illness, General Cox said: "People have been writing to my wife Commissioner Silvia and I assuring us that we are the subject of daily prayer. And I can assure you we have sensed this.

“When faced with cancer I was told I’d mostly likely be dead in 18 months if I did nothing. At that point I was no longer the General of The Salvation Army but André Cox standing before his maker.”

He said it has been a “difficult journey,” and added: “I believe that recovery is attributable to prayer. It’ll be two months post-op this weekend and I am looking forward to thanking people there personally for their prayers.”

C of I group comments on Christian printer who has refused to print stationery for a civil partnership

Dr Richard O'Leary, Chair of the Church of Ireland group Changing Attitude Ireland has commented that *“he and many other people of faith were disappointed that other Christians were invoking their Christian beliefs as a reason for not serving gay customers”* and he noted that *“Conservative Christians are not invoking their Christian conscience against any other group except against the gay minority”*

Dr O'Leary said *“heterosexuals should not be indifferent to the fate of their gay fellow citizens. They could be next. What if a Bible believing*

Christian printer does not agree with mixed Protestant-Catholic marriage? Should he be allowed to refuse the business of a mixed faith couple?"

He concluded that *"the actions of conservative Christians in goods and services discrimination cases was doing great damage to the reputation of Christians among the rest of society "*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-31753375>

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/gay-man-considers-suing-firm-who-refused-to-print-wedding-invites-1-6619845>

McGuinness: Leaders' views must not be skewed by religious fundamentalism

Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness last Friday night outlined his vision of a more tolerant Ireland where political leaders' views are not "skewed by their own religious fundamentalism".

Irish News - The deputy first minister, long regarded as the one of the republican movement's more conservative figures, was speaking at his party's ard fheis, which was being held in his home city of Derry for the first time.

The Mid Ulster MLA told delegates gathered at the Millennium Forum how a new generation was not "interested in fighting old battles".

"They have no time for sectarianism, racism or prejudice - they want to see compassion in politics," he said.

With a DUP aiming to have conscience clause in equality law that would give businesses the right to refuse a service on moral grounds and proposed amendments to the north's abortion legislation in the offing, Mr McGuinness reiterated where Sinn Féin would stand on the two contentious issues. He advocated compassion for expectant mothers dealing with fatal foetal abnormality and rights for the LGBT community, along with ethnic and religious minorities.

"They don't want political leaders whose views on such issues are skewed by their own religious fundamentalism," he said of the post-Troubles generation.

"Society and young people in particular have moved far beyond this old politic, this out-dated version of society." More at -

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/mcguinness-leaders-views-must-not-be-skewed-by-fundamentalism-1417622>

Sinn Féin delegates support abortion for fatal foetal abnormalities

www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/sinn-féin-delegates-support-abortion-for-fatal-foetal-abnormalities-1.2130835?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Presbyterian cleric and Catholic priest address Sinn Féin

The Reverend Steve Stockman, Minister of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church Belfast, addressed the Sinn Féin annual conference with Fr Martin Magill. Mr Stockman commenced saying - Well this is the most interesting place I've ever preached. Thank you very much for this invitation. I am a Presbyterian from Ballymena. It is a long way from there to having a priest as one of your dearest friends and even further to be on a stage together at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis!

In preparing for tonight I reread the 'Uncomfortable Conversations' article we wrote

in An Phoblact last June. We mention an American student I met, who when I asked him for observations about Northern Ireland said, *“When you use violence, the healing is so much messier and takes so much longer.”*

Profound... and we all need to come to terms with that.

Wounds are deep. Pain is raw.

Standing here tonight I can't help but remember my Assistant Minister whose dad was shot dead when he was two, and my former intern who never met his dad, blown up in a bomb. And there are many Presbyterians in this very City who feel exiled from the City side. It has been a very painful and wounded road.

As we speak we are aware that most of us here tonight are dealing with are own wounds and pain. We pray that all of us find healing.

Yes, reconciliation is an uncomfortable conversation – thank you for inviting us in - We believe it is a God-honouring conversation and one we desperately need to have. More at -

<http://stocki.typepad.com/soulsurmise/2015/03/steve-stockman-and-fr-martin-magill-ard-fheis-speech-2015.html>

Stranmillis College has made requests to St Mary's for students to complete RC RE qualification

Dr Anne Heaslett, Principal, Stranmillis University College commented in the press recently on the issue of training teachers with qualifications for Catholic schools. She wrote -

Stranmillis Teacher Training College was opened in 1922 as a non-denominational college for both men and women. Its historic mission has been to educate teachers from all communities and traditions.

Throughout its history, it has educated students from Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds and also those who do not claim any faith position. It always has been - and remains - an inclusive institution.

The eligibility for teaching posts in Catholic maintained nursery and primary schools includes a requirement to possess a recognised religious education certificate.

In recent years, Stranmillis University College has made a number of requests to St Mary's

University College that its students should have [access](#) to the RE certificate offered by St Mary's.

It was only after the first formal request was rejected, in 2003, that the alternative arrangement of Stranmillis students having access to the RE certificate through a distance-learning programme provided by Glasgow University was introduced.

Students from all community backgrounds have the opportunity to enrol on the programme and the college provides tutorial support. Students who take this course are not asked to pay any fees.

Stranmillis University College is committed to adopting a more integrated, collaborative approach to the delivery of the RE certificate. In recent times, the governing body of Stranmillis University College has again discussed the issue and it has unanimously agreed that we should make a further approach to St Mary's in an effort to explore how the RE certificate might be offered on a collaborative arrangement.

In doing so we have pointed out to St Mary's that we are at a loss to understand why it can be provided at Coleraine, but not at Stranmillis.

World Day of Prayer celebrated

World Day of Prayer was celebrated around the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross on Friday, 6th March. The Junior Infants of St Mary's Church of Ireland National School in Carrigaline, with some help from 2nd Class, celebrated the World Day of Prayer at their Assembly that day. This year the service, prepared by the Women of the Bahamas, allowed the children to celebrate the wonderful variety and colour of these exotic islands with real Pineapples and (not so real) Flamingos, Iguanas and Fish.

Bishop of London sets out plan for 'Bishop for church-plants'

A new "bishop for church-plants" has been proposed by the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd Richard Chartres. The aim is to support the burgeoning movement as it spreads across the country.

Church Times - The plan, which involves reviving the see of Islington, vacant since 1923, will be given final consideration by the Dioceses Commission later this month.



Large scale: Bishop Chartres praising Holy Trinity Brompton church-plants to 6000 guests at the church's Focus conference in the summer of 2014

In a report presented to the London diocesan Bishop's Council last Wednesday, Bishop Chartres argues that there is an "urgent" need for church-planters to be given "knowledgeable support and mentoring in the early years". The Bishop of Islington's ministry would be "inherently episcopal but not territorial; thoroughly collegial but with an independent sphere of responsibility".

He or she would "open up new possibilities; provide reinforcement for the oversight which already exists for pioneer ministries; and

disseminate the learning gained from new ventures".

This was not about "Byronic young Evangelical pastors establishing smoothie bars uninvited," Bishop Chartres said on Monday.

Those planting churches are "tender shoots", he said. "They really do need mentoring, oversight, and really close involvement of a sort which it is very unrealistic to expect area bishops to concentrate on."

Another aspect of the Bishop of Islington's work would be to disseminate lessons learnt in London to those outside the capital. The principle was "to aim high, give it away, look for allies, and keep humble", Bishop Chartres said. More at -

www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/6-march/news/uk/chartres-sets-out-plan-for-bishop-for-church-plants

Welby: Evangelism a Gospel imperative, not Church survival strategy

Evangelism is not simply a "survival strategy" for the Church of England, but a fundamental imperative for all those who know Christ, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said.

Church Times - Telling others the Good News should not be motivated by a desire to fill pews, but to share the light of the gospel in a "dark world", Archbishop Welby said. "Our motive driving this priority for the Church is not, not, not - never, never, never - that numbers are looking fairly low, and the future is looking fairly bleak. Never.

"Of course, we want to see full churches, [but] the Church which is concerned primarily for its own life or survival . . . is signing its own death warrant."

Archbishop Welby was speaking at Lambeth Palace on Wednesday, at the first in a new series of Lambeth Lectures. He told the audience that both an apathetic approach to mission and too much "frantic action" masked a lack of confidence in God.

Instead, "the love that has found us in Christ compels . . . us to speak," he said. "Having received the goodness of God in Jesus Christ, it obviously becomes a priority for us, as his Church, to let others know of what God has done for them."

Evangelism is one of Archbishop Welby's three priorities as Archbishop of Canterbury; but he said that he suspected that some in the Church

felt their hearts sink when he announced a new focus on witness. But it is a priority for him, because it is a priority of the "Church of Jesus Christ", he said.

Witnessing to an often disinterested world is not done by trying to force people into preconceptions of what it means to be a Christian, he said. "So often we want to fit people who are not Christians into our Church, not make the Church fit for new Christians. Anything manipulative or coercive, anything disrespectful or controlling, is ruled out because of who Jesus is."

But he also cautioned against passivity, urging his listeners to reject the saying attributed to St Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel at all times; where necessary, use words."

"Don't even think about it - mainly for the reasons that he almost certainly didn't say it, and, even if he did, he was wrong," he said. Speaking the Good News to people was unavoidable, he continued, although it should always be accompanied with listening, and living it out, too.

He quoted the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who once asked why Christians often resembled celebrities endorsing products they

would never use themselves. He also endorsed Pope Francis's "wonderful" encyclical on evangelism, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

"Why should people believe what we say about forgiveness and grace, reconciliation and sacrifice, love and commitment, welcome and acceptance, if, when they look at the life of the Church, they see something so diametrically opposed to it?" he asked.

Archbishop Welby closed with a reference to the 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians murdered by Islamic State in Libya last month. The Coptic Bishop in England, Bishop Angaelos, said that each of the 21 men shouted "Jesus Christ is Lord" as they were killed.

"Their last words were witness," Archbishop Welby said. "The question is not whether we want to be witnesses, it is whether we are faithful witnesses. We are all witnesses; it's just whether we live that out."

www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/13-march/news/uk/welby-evangelism-a-gospel-imperative-not-church-survival-strategy

#washday15: Anglican global Lenten movement

A new global movement – #washday15 – provides a means for participating in a worldwide Lenten discipline through social media postings on Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and Facebook.

Initiated by the Diocese of Oxford in England, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church is joining with the Church of England and other provinces throughout the Anglican Communion in #washday15.

The effort was inspired by the video [Laundry Love](#), in which an Episcopal congregation in Santa Monica, CA (Diocese of Los Angeles) meets at a laundromat once a month to do laundry with the homeless. The goal of #washday15 is to engage people in a Lenten practice, culminating on Holy Thursday, the traditional day for foot washing.

“#Washday15 is all about loving service to others, an ancient Lenten discipline like fasting and prayer that could not be more relevant to the soul of the Church today,” noted Alexander D. Baumgarten, Director of Public Engagement and Mission Communication for the Domestic and

Foreign Missionary Society. “In loving service to others, we experience a kind of repentance and conversion — a pivot to a new manner of being — that prepares us to walk in the abundant life of Easter.”

According to the website: “#washday15 is a way of encouraging people to make a difference to their communities this Lent through some kind of washing-related activity. The washing element is a way of re-enacting Jesus’s washing of the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper.”

“Wash something with someone and make a difference in their day-to-day life or in your community. Then share your photos, tweets and posts.” noted Anne Rudig, Director of Communication. “#washday15, like Laundry Love, is modern-day foot washing.”

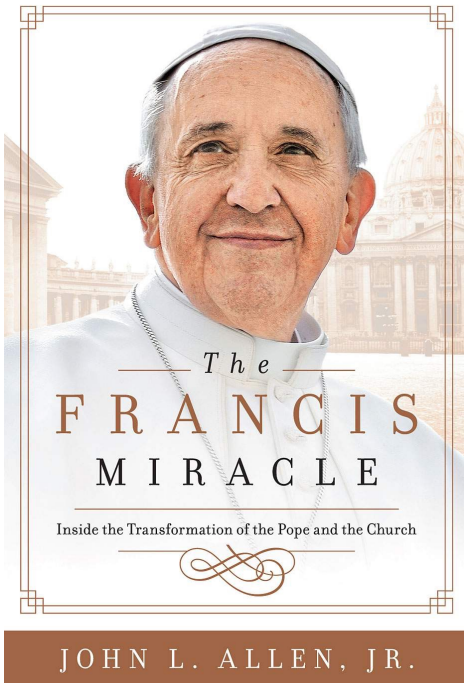
Links

#washday15 website – www.washday.org

#washday15 school resources here <http://washday.org/resources/schools-resources.pdf>

Twitter – #washday15

Laundry Love <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/video-programming>



Pope Francis's Report Card

An extract from a new book “The Francis Miracle - Inside the Transformation of the Pope and The Church” published by Time books. John L Allen, Jr., a veteran Vatican watcher sizes up Pope Francis

Since his surprise election two years ago, Pope Francis has electrified and baffled the world in roughly equal measure. He's launched Roman Catholicism on a reform path—though without

altering its traditional teaching—and he’s tried to put a more compassionate and attractive face on its message. He has moved to address scandals and meltdowns that plagued the church under his predecessor and has done so in such a far-reaching and unexpected fashion that some of the Cardinals who elected him may be getting more than they bargained for. But on some fronts, the ultimate impact remains unclear. Here’s where Pope Francis’ reform campaign stands on five key issues.

1. Inequality: A TOUGH STAND ON BEHALF OF THE POOR

Before he became Pope Francis, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina was known for his commitment to the *villas miserias*, or “villages of misery”—the vast slums that ring Buenos Aires. As Pope, he has said his dream is to lead a “poor church for the poor.”

Which makes Francis’ November 2014 text *Evangelii Gaudium*, or “Joy of the Gospel,” the Magna Carta of his papacy. In it, the Pope blasts the inequities of free-market capitalism. “We have to say, ‘Thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills,” Francis wrote. “Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market,

will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness. This opinion ... expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the ... prevailing economic system.”

The rhetoric is pointed, and controversial to some, like Rush Limbaugh, who has accused the Pope of dishing up “pure Marxism.” While it may be impossible to show that Francis has actually reduced poverty and inequality around the world, many observers credit him for putting the poor front and center.

2. Women in the church: PROGRESS WITH A CEILING

Francis is the first Pope ever to have worked for a woman—his Paraguayan communist boss at an Argentine chemical lab in the 1950s. Perhaps that’s part of the reason he has appeared passionate about giving greater attention to women’s voices.

So far, Francis has named a handful of women to powerful Vatican positions, including Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard law professor and former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, as a member of the supervisory board for the Vatican bank.

Yet he has also firmly excluded the idea of female priests, and critics say he can be tone-

deaf in talking to or about women, using terms like old maid, for instance. He has ducked questions about when a woman might be named to head a Vatican department, and in general he has been vague about what his pledge of “greater roles” for women in Catholicism means. He has also urged a “deeper theology” of women without explaining what that would look like in practice.

3. Sex Abuse: PROMISING BUT INCOMPLETE

Pope Benedict XVI left behind a mixed legacy on Catholicism’s child-sexual-abuse scandals. He was the first Pope to meet victims and the first to embrace a zero-tolerance policy. He moved aggressively to weed abusers out of the priesthood, removing more than 400 in his final two years alone. Yet critics say Benedict fell short of holding bishops around the world accountable for failing to deal with the scandals.

Francis has taken steps to try to complete Benedict’s unfinished business, including the creation of a Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, which is led by Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley of Boston and includes two survivors of clerical abuse as members.

He has also launched a Vatican criminal trial for a former papal diplomat charged with abuse in the Dominican Republic, insisting that there will be no special privileges on his watch. In early February he dispatched a letter to all bishops saying “everything possible must be done to rid the church of the scourge of the sexual abuse of minors.”

Critics nevertheless charge that progress under Francis has been halfhearted and slow. In 2014 he approved an investigation of Bishop Robert Finn in Kansas City—to date the only American bishop found guilty of a crime for failure to report a charge of child abuse. Until victims see a prelate like Finn disciplined, many will argue that the Pope’s efforts deserve a grade of incomplete.

4. Vatican Finances: THE NUMBERS WILL TELL

Over the years, money has been a recurrent source of Vatican scandal. The roll call runs through the Vatican bank crises of the 1970s and '80s all the way up to the arrest in summer 2013 of “Monsignor 500 Euro”—a onetime Vatican accountant indicted by Italian authorities as part of a cash-smuggling scheme.

Francis began his reform by creating an ambitious three-part structure: a Secretariat for the Economy with power to impose fiscal discipline and accountability; a Council for the Economy composed of heavy-hitter Cardinals as well as business professionals to oversee operations; and an independent auditor general to keep everyone honest.

To run it all, Francis brought in a tough-as-nails Australian prelate named George Pell. In mid-February, Pell reported to all Cardinals that his team had discovered \$1.5 billion in hidden assets and a shortfall of almost \$1 billion in the pension fund.

Pell and his team have their critics. Some members of the Vatican's old guard believe it's a reform in the spirit of the classic Italian novel // *Gattopardo*: "Everything must change so that everything can stay the same." More will become clear when the secretariat submits its first audited financial statement later this year.

5. Diplomacy: A RETURN TO RELEVANCE

Late in Benedict XVI's tenure, one of Italy's best-known political writers compared the Vatican to the Republic of Venice in the late 18th century—a nation-state with a proud history, reduced to

diplomatic and political irrelevance and standing on the brink of extinction.

Nobody's making that comparison today. Francis has restored the papacy and the Vatican to a level of political relevance not seen since the 1970s and '80s, with the role John Paul II played in the collapse of communism. A few examples: On Feb. 16, Francis condemned the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya by ISIS-affiliated militants and called the slain hostages martyrs. Both U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban leader Raúl Castro credited Francis with paving the way for a deal to end tensions between their nations. And in 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Francis for helping to slow a rush to war in Syria by the Western powers.

While few doubt Francis' political punch, some question how he exercises it. His line on Ukraine, for instance, has been faulted by many Ukrainians, including members of the Pontiff's own Eastern Catholic flock there, for being overly deferential to Moscow and the Russian Orthodox Church. And hawks on Syria wonder if the Pope's main accomplishment there has been propping up a thug. That's the problem with acquiring political capital: everyone now has an opinion on how Francis ought to spend it.

Allen, a former senior correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter, covers the Vatican for the Boston Globe and its website devoted to Catholic coverage, Crux. This article is adapted from his new book [THE FRANCIS MIRACLE: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church](#), published by Time Books.

Media digest

Independent - Gay ref shown red card by GAA over rainbow wristband

www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/gay-ref-shown-red-card-over-rainbow-wristband-31049508.html

GAA response

www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/gaa-defends-decision-not-to-allow-referee-to-wear-gay-symbol-1.2130953?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

Minister honoured at LGBT awards

www.independent.ie/irish-news/minister-honoured-at-lgbt-awards-31048167.html

Irish Times - Sinn Féin delegates support abortion for fatal foetal abnormalities

[\[churchnewsireland@gmail.com\]\(mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com\)](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/sinn-féin-delegates-support-abortion-for-fatal-foetal-
<u>support-abortion-for-fatal-foetal-</u></p></div><div data-bbox=)

[abnormalities-1.2130835?
utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter](http://www.independent.ie/life/family/family-features/fear-of-abduction-and-being-bitten-by-dogs-are-irish-childrens-biggest-fears-31045578.html)

Independent - Fear of abduction and being bitten by dogs are Irish children's biggest fears

<http://www.independent.ie/life/family/family-features/fear-of-abduction-and-being-bitten-by-dogs-are-irish-childrens-biggest-fears-31045578.html>

Tel & Mail

Reports on a hit and run accident, which killed 10-year-old Samuel Crocker in Devon. It states a police worker who rushed to the scene found the young victim was her nephew. The Bishop of Crediton, Nick McKinnel is quoted and hundreds of people attended a candle lit vigil at Holy Cross Church on Monday. The Rector of Crediton Rev Nigel Guthrie said it had been a huge shock to the community.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/11451928/PCso-called-to-the-scene-of-her-10-year-old-nephews-hit-and-run-death.html>

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2980782/PCSO-raced-scene-fatal-crash-discover-schoolboy-victim-nephew.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2980782/PCSO-raced-scene-fatal-crash-discover-schoolboy-victim-nephew.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2980782/PCSO-raced-scene-fatal-crash-discover-schoolboy-victim-nephew.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

Tel

Article on how Isil are trying to wipe out both Assyrians and all traces of Assyrian culture from the country in what it describes as 'an attempt to wipe out an entire civilisation'. It states beginning last Monday, Islamic State fighters raided 33 Assyrian villages, and are reported to have taken as many as 300 Christians hostage. The militants, speaking on their radios, exulted in the capture of "crusaders".

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11452080/Islamic-States-thugs-are-trying-to-wipe-an-entire-civilisation-from-the-face-of-the-earth.html>

BBC/Guard/Mail/Express/Times

Reports that the body of a man was cremated by mistake at the funeral of an MEP with an almost identical name. Philip Bradbourn, a Conservative MEP, died at Good Hope Hospital, Sutton Coldfield, Philip Bradburn died at University Hospital Birmingham - both before Christmas. It is understood both bodies were taken to the same mortuary, but the wrong body was released. The funeral directors and two hospitals are investigating the claims. More than 200 people attended a memorial service in his honour at St Peter's Collegiate Church in Wolverhampton in March.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-31748802>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/05/hospital-mixup-bodies-cremation-midlands-mep-funeral-philip-bradbourn>
[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2981459/Investigation-launched-mortuary-cremates-WRONG-BODY-funeral-Tory-MEP-Philip-Bradburn-dead-man-s-Bradburn.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2981459/Investigation-launched-mortuary-cremates-WRONG-BODY-funeral-Tory-MEP-Philip-Bradburn-dead-man-s-Bradburn.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)
<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/562178/Hospital-apologies-wrong-body-cremated-funeral-Philip-Bradburn>
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article4373700.ece>

BBC

Report that the relatives of people who died during the "forgotten" bombing of Coventry are to get a memorial for their loved ones - 76 years after the attack. It states five people died in an IRA explosion in the city centre in 1939, yet few people in Coventry remember the tragedy. It is hoped a memorial will be erected in the cathedral grounds. The Reverend Canon Dr David Stone is quoted.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-31753570>