



Anglican Communion to play active role in next week's Commonwealth leaders' meeting

Preparations are almost complete for the biennial meeting of leaders from 53 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations, which will take place next week in the grounds of Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Lancaster House, the Commonwealth's international headquarters.

The

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is one of



The heads of government from 53 countries in the Commonwealth of Nations will gather in The Queen's favourite home, Windsor Castle, next week for a private retreat.

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the world's largest international summits, bringing together representatives from small and large nations across the globe.

Representatives from a number of Anglican provinces within the Commonwealth will be taking part; and in a parallel event, the Archbishop of Canterbury will host a High-Level Roundtable on Freedom of Religion or Belief at Lambeth Palace, his official London residence.



The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby delivered a video message ahead of next week's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London and Windsor Castle. He spoke of his hopes that the Commonwealth heads of government will have "the courage to dream big"

The Commonwealth of Nations – originally called the British Commonwealth – is mainly made up of countries that used to be part of the British Empire. It is a voluntary association of 53 independent nations of equal status. Commonwealth countries are present in 26 Anglican provinces from the Americas to Oceania.

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Next week's summit is expected to attract around 5,000 participants from government, business, and civil society under the theme "Towards a Common Future". Ahead of the meetings, the Archbishop of Canterbury will preach at an eve-of-Summit evensong service at Westminster Abbey.

On Monday, three days of forums begin, covering youth, women, business and civil society – and a number of the participants are women and young people from the Anglican Communion. The formal summit business begins with a meeting of Commonwealth Foreign ministers on Wednesday before the heads of government assemble at Buckingham Palace for the formal opening on Thursday. On Friday, the leaders will head to Windsor Castle for a private retreat, where they will discuss collaboration on global and Commonwealth priorities and consider reform and renewal of the Commonwealth.

"CHOGM 2018 promises to deliver transformational change for the people of the Commonwealth," Secretary-General Patricia Scotland said. "The presidents and prime ministers and other high-level government representatives from one quarter of the countries of the world are assembling. Through consensus they will reach agreement on collective action, with the impact of their decisions likely to extend far beyond the boundaries of the Commonwealth.

"Agreement among our culturally diverse and geographically widespread member countries to collaborate and innovate often provides the basis for broader progress regionally and internationally. Immediate impact combined with wider influence make the Commonwealth an unparalleled force for building understanding and cooperation towards realising global goals for social and political progress, inclusive prosperity, and sustainable development."

At their meeting next week, the leaders will consider a "Commonwealth Blue Charter" on ocean governance, a connectivity agenda for trade and investment, a declaration on cybercrime and revised Commonwealth guidelines on election observation in member countries.

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The Women's Forum will explore the Commonwealth's role in achieving gender equality in line with UN aspirations and the crucial role women have to play in politics, business and peace building; while the Youth Forum will bring 500 young people together to engage in planning, capacity-building and a general assembly where they will finalise their priorities on youth-led action in development.

The women's, youth and business forums will also meet together, to discuss ways in which their shared agendas can support each other's aims.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby – who appointed a special representative to the Commonwealth, Flora Winfield, last October – has published a prayer for the Commonwealth (see below), and will take an active role in a number of CHOGM-related events.

“The Commonwealth summit can be a major step in educating, supporting and inspiring us in the UK, to be outward looking, part

YOUTH NIGHT

SUNDAY 29TH APRIL
BANBRIDGE ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
7:00-8:30 PM

PRAISE / STILL WATERS
TESTIMONY
IRELAND'S GRAND SLAM HERO
JACOB STOCKDALE
SPEAKER / PHILIP KENNEDY
YOUTH WORKER

FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT
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BANBRIDGE ROAD, DROMORE, CO.DOWN BT25 1AD / PARKING AVAILABLE /

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of a family, a Commonwealth with whom we trade, in material goods and cultural and moral good,” the archbishop said.

“The majority of the 39 provinces of the Anglican Communion are part of the Commonwealth, and we in the Church of England learn much from them to our mutual benefit.

“Hosting the summit in London gives us the opportunity throughout the country to learn and celebrate the heritage of those in our communities whose family roots are in the countries of the commonwealth. They are a dynamic and integral part of who we are. We are a richer, diverse society through what they bring. Let us celebrate their gift of culture, faith and entrepreneurial spirit in our national life.”

Next week’s meeting will be the second time that the UK has hosted a CHOGM summit. The first was in Edinburgh in 1997. The host country of the next CHOGM meeting, in 2020, will be decided at next week’s summit.

A Prayer for the Commonwealth

Almighty Father

Who has made us stewards of your glorious creation, and a wonderful family of diverse nations,

Grant to people everywhere, and especially to the peoples of the Commonwealth,

A spirit of reverence and responsibility for all that you have made,

A spirit of peace and reconciliation in the affairs of the world

*And a spirit of justice and cooperation in the sharing of your bounty,
That all may flourish and give you glory.*

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Another string to bow of Limerick school choir

A popular Limerick school choir are set to be under starters orders at one of Ireland’s top racing venues. The Corpus Christi School Choir, who have gained fame in recent weeks, [after performing in Thomond Park during Munster’s game against Scarlets](#), are to add



Students from Corpus Christi School perform during half-time in the recent Munster Scarlets game at Thomond Park

another top sporting stadium to their repertoire when they perform at a race meeting in Leopardstown in Dublin.

The youngsters, who had already won the hearts of the nation by performing on RTE's Miriam O'Callaghan show, were sounded out by Pat Keogh, the chief executive of Leopardstown, who wanted them to perform there.

Principal Tiernan O'Neill said: "It was a fantastic opportunity for the kids to showcase their talent. They are remarkable ambassadors not alone for the community of Moyross, but I think the city. It's great to see their talents showcased yet again on a national stage."

Tiernan added that the racecourse boss already has a good relationship with the Moyross community, arranging work placements for teenagers there.

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“It’s a fantastic opportunity to give these kids a platform to showcase their talents. Thomond Park is an iconic Irish stadium, and Leopardstown is another one of those Irish landmarks. It’s synonymous with Irish horse racing so to have the opportunity to perform there is phenomenal. If they get half the positive feedback they got from Thomond Park, they will be happy,” Mr O’Neill added.

“It’s great to see [Moyross in the headlines](#) for all the right reasons, getting national media attention at this stage. They are phenomenal kids,” he said. Report courtesy the Limerick Leader

Belfast March of Life to show solidarity with Jewish people and Israel



This year’s March of Life will take place on Sunday the 15th of April. Last year there was a turn out of nearly 400 participants at the March; and the organisers feel it would be great if we could increase this number at this year’s event, especially after the nations reaction to the announcement by President Trump acknowledging that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

ISRAEL @70

This year the Jewish people will celebrate the wonderful victory of the 70th Anniversary of their homeland. “It would be super if we in Northern Ireland could not only show our local Jewish community a sign of solidarity but also the Nation of Israel”, said one of the organisers.

The walk will enable participants to remember, honour and make a stand together against modern day anti-Semitism.

The march begins at 3.00 pm at the Jaffe Fountain at the Victoria Centre and finish at the City Hall. The organisers would be grateful if you could RSVP to marchoflifeuk@outlook.com or telephone +44 (0) 2890998952 to confirm attendance to help with planning.

Methodist President to visit Lurgan

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Rev. Dr. Laurence Graham will be in Portadown this Sunday evening when he will be the preacher at a United Methodist Circuit service in Epworth Methodist Church.

The service will begin at 7pm. Supper will be served in the Church Hall after the service. Everyone welcome

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Rejection by C of E has driven LGBT people to suicide, bishop says

Church moving ‘glacially slowly’ on changing its attitudes, say Paul Bayes, bishop of Liverpool

[Harriet Sherwood](#) writes in The Guardian

A senior Church of England bishop has said some LGBT people have been driven to harm or even to kill themselves as a result of “pain and rejection” caused by the church.

Paul Bayes, the bishop of Liverpool, also likened the struggle to persuade the Church of England to be truly welcoming and inclusive to LGBT people to the fight against slavery.

Speaking at the launch of the [Ozanne Foundation](#), a Christian charity aimed at eliminating discrimination based on sexuality or gender, Bayes said the C of E was clear in its public statements opposing homophobia and that it welcomed all people.

“Yet at the same time we know that many LGBTI+ people have suffered pain and rejection from Christians, personally and institutionally, to the extent that many have left the churches or in some cases have felt compelled to self-harm or even to take their own lives. And this goes on today. We need to do better.”
The church needed to “love people as God made them”, he said..

“That will have implications for our policies and stances as churches. If we are to do better, we need to change.”
There had been “other times in the history of communities of faith when people have found it difficult to accept change, and sometimes difficult to see God’s hand in it”, Bayes said.

“A classic example is the struggle for the abolition of slavery, and the ceaseless advocacy that was needed on the part of Christians

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to persuade their friends that God's love for all human beings had social consequences which demanded justice."

The Ozanne Foundation, which Bayes is chairing, would advocate courteously but "consistently and without apology" for change in C of E policy and culture, he said. "It's work which demands patience, but which also calls for a holy impatience ... While we are talking, people are suffering."

Bayes is the most senior member of the C of E hierarchy to press publicly for far-reaching change in the church's attitudes to LGBT people and a meaningful welcome to Christians in same-sex relationships.

As a senior bishop associated with the church's evangelical wing, he has [previously acknowledged that he has been "profoundly changed"](#) by encounters with lesbian and gay Christians, including within his own family.

The C of E is moving "glacially slowly" on changing its attitudes, he said.

The church has been wrestling with attitudes to gay clergy and congregants in same-sex relationships for at least two decades, but campaigners for LGBT equality believe the current of opinion is in their favour.

Although the church still formally adheres to traditional biblical teaching that marriage can only be a union between a man and a woman, in practice many churches offer informal blessings to gay couples who have gone through civil wedding ceremonies.

The Ozanne Foundation is named after Jayne Ozanne, a prominent campaigner for equality within the church. Its three-pronged strategy is to "encounter, educate and empower", and it will work with organisations around the world to advocate for equality and diversity.

- *In the UK, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123. In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255).*