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Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury to lead spiritual retreat for South Sudan's leaders

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Political and Christian leaders from South Sudan will gather in the Vatican this week for an unprecedented spiritual retreat led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Pope Francis.

The retreat was described by Vatican spokesman Alessandro Gisotti as a “propitious occasion for reflection and prayer, as well as an occasion for encounter and reconciliation, in a spirit of respect and trust, to those who in this moment have the mission and the responsibility to work for a future of peace and prosperity for the South Sudanese people.”

South Sudan – the world’s youngest country – has spent most of its eight years in a state of civil war. A peace deal brokered last year by the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the nation’s Churches is fragile. Organisers of this week’s retreat hope it will bring the parties together and aid efforts at reconciliation.

Mr Gisotti said today that plans for the retreat were proposed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and approved by Pope Francis. It will take place in the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* – the official Vatican guest house within the walls of Vatican City – on Wednesday and Thursday. The Vatican spokesman said that “the highest civil and ecclesiastical authorities of South Sudan will participate.”

A spokesperson for the Archbishop of Canterbury said that the joint initiative “could be a step on a journey”, adding: “It is hoped that a retreat will build confidence and trust between parties and give them spiritual nourishment.”

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The retreat will bring together a number of political leaders who, under the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan, a number of people “will assume positions of great national responsibility this coming 12 May”, the Vatican spokesman said. These include President Salva Kiir Mayardit and four of the five designated Vice Presidents: Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon, James Wani Igga, Taban Deng Gai and Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior.

Eight members of the South Sudan Council of Church will take part in the retreat, including the Catholic Archbishop Gulu, John Baptist Odama.

The retreat will end at 5 pm CET (3 pm GMT) on Thursday (11 April) when Pope Francis will make a speech.

Participants will be given a Bible signed by Pope Francis, Archbishop Justin Welby, and the former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, John Chalmers. It will include the message “*Seek that which unites. Overcome that which divides*”.

Newry - born former diplomat to head University of Notre Dame Australia

The Northern Ireland head of Britain’s leading Catholic college is to step down from his role next year to take up a new post in Australia.

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Prof. Francis Campbell, Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's University, Twickenham

Prof. Francis Campbell, Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's University, Twickenham, will step down from the role in the first quarter of 2020 to become Vice-Chancellor at the University of Notre Dame Australia.

The Newry-born Vice-Chancellor who served as the UK's first Catholic ambassador to the Holy See between 2005 and 2011, has headed the London university since 2013, during which time St Mary's has risen dramatically in academic and student satisfaction league tables.

Prof. Campbell described his time working at the university as having been "a privilege and a pleasure".

"St Mary's is such a special community to be part of and the journey we have undertaken, at a time of significant change and flux in the sector with its challenges and opportunities, has been hugely encouraging," he said in a statement.

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“I have no doubt that St Mary’s will continue to develop and grow stronger and to raise its profile at home and abroad. There are so many outstanding examples of excellence and commitment across the University which will ensure St Mary’s continued development in the decades ahead.”

Bishop Richard Moth, the chair of the university’s board of governors praised Prof. Campbell for having “led the transformation of the University on numerous fronts”.

Presbyterian Church responds to Queen’s University’s decision to stop theology degrees

Having been notified yesterday (9 April) by Queen’s University, Belfast of their ruling Senate’s decision to stop awarding degrees in the subject of Theology and end its relationship with the four Theological Colleges that make up its Institute of Theology, which includes Union Theological College, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland issued the following statement.

Rev Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which has responsibility for Union Theological College said, “After a long and mutually beneficial academic relationship that has lasted for nearly a century, we are naturally disappointed and deeply regret today’s decision by the Senate of Queen’s University, Belfast (QUB).

“We recognise that the University authorities have the right to make their own decisions about their Institute of

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Union Theological College

Theology, which is currently made up of four different local theological colleges. Queen's has now concluded that the Institute is no longer viable with just one of those colleges, Union Theological College, teaching undergraduate degrees. Nevertheless, we regret that other options were not more fully explored and a different solution found.

“It is important that we acknowledge that this has been a difficult and unsettling period for both institutions - especially in the context of last summer's intense reporting and speculation around the relationship between Queen's and Union College. It was during this time that the senior leadership at Queen's first informed their counter parts at Union College that, “the university is taking active steps to review the nature of the relationship with Union Theological

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The Lanyon Building at Queen's University Belfast

College.” This was formalised several weeks later and the Senate announced the results of that review today.

“Union continues to maintain the high academic standards for which it is known, and remains committed to active engagement in teaching and research that extends our theological understanding of important issues in contemporary life. This also includes exploring the hard questions that relate to religious faith and belief.

“Along with QUB, Union College is also committed to ensure the very best education provision for existing Queen’s undergraduate students as they complete the remainder of their theological studies. The College will be working constructively with Queen’s to achieve this.

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“After such a long and fruitful relationship this is indeed a sad day. It is our hope and prayer, however, that these long-established institutions, which are literally side-by-side, will continue to prosper, working to further understanding as communities of learning and attracting students from home and overseas to study here.”

Irish Independence and its aftermath - C of I Historical Centenaries reading list

The Church of Ireland’s Historical Centenaries Working Group has published a reading list on the current phase of the decade of centenaries to encourage a greater understanding of this era in Irish history.

Divided States: Irish Independence and its Aftermath, 1918-1923 is introduced with an essay by the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

The Convenor of the Historical Centenaries Working Group, Bishop Paul Colton, says: ‘In producing this introductory reading list, the group is seeking to equip members of the Church of Ireland, those already familiar with our history and those new to it, alike, for the current period of centenary commemorations. As Convenor of the group I wish to acknowledge the work of all those who have been involved in drawing up this bibliography, and most especially George Woodman. The group is also very indebted to the

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Archbishop of Armagh, for writing the introduction and, thereby, setting the scene for our reading.'

The reading list covers the wider context of Irish history, the development of nationalism and unionism, events in Ireland from 1913 to 1923, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Civil War, partition and the development of Northern Ireland, the Southern Protestant community, and

the role of women in the revolutionary era. The resource is available online at <http://bit.ly/2OXsslF>

SVP to hold 175th anniversary gathering in Dublin Convention Centre next Saturday

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is holding a day of thanksgiving, celebration and reflection next Saturday in the Convention Centre Dublin to mark the 175th anniversary of its foundation in Ireland.

Guest speakers will include Uachtarán na hÉireann Michael D Higgins, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

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Protection Regina Doherty and legendary Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody.

SVP National President Kieran Stafford said the organisation would like as many of the society's members to attend as possible.

“It is important that we mark our place in history as those before us have done. Indeed, many great Irish leaders were once members of the St Vincent de Paul – Eamon De Valera, Sean T O Ceallaigh, Mary McAleese and Brendan O Regan,” Mr Stafford wrote in a reflection on [the organisation's website](#).

“We hold a very esteemed place amongst our peers in Ireland because as with our founders, we are people of action making a difference to so many lives every day.”

And in a message to our politicians, Mr Stafford wrote: “Despite the constant commentary that ‘the economy is booming’ we know that the rising tide is not lifting all the boats, in fact, we see that many we visit are sunk and if it were not for our support would also be bereft of hope.”

Founded in Paris by Frédéric Ozanam in 1833, the Society of St Vincent de Paul became active in Ireland in 1844. Looking over the years since then, Mr Stafford said: “Even though times have changed fundamentally since then, the core need still continues to be much the same. Members of SVP continue to go out every night throughout Ireland helping people with food, fuel, and shelter. On the one hand, it is something that we as members can be justly proud of but, as a nation ashamed that in 2019 there is still a growing need to help so many with these basics.

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“The recent *Irish Times* story about a toddler stealing food to bring home is one that belongs more to Dickensian times than 2019, but sadly it’s true. The horror stories of those in poverty seem to get worse.

“The tenacity of SVP members is evident in the years we have spent fighting poverty in Ireland through the famine, a war of independence, a civil war, two world wars and countless recessions, in fact, the first conference St Michan’s formed in Halston St, Dublin is still active today. We are as committed to helping people in need today in our communities as the first members who set up the Society nearly two centuries ago.

“We have not only proved ourselves true to our founder’s ethos but also true to the ideals of St Vincent de Paul himself.”

Tributes pour in for former Trócaire worker Sally O’Neill

Tributes have been pouring in for former Trócaire worker Sally O’Neill who was killed in a car crash on Monday in Guatemala.

President Michael D. Higgins, who personally knew the former aid worker, said in a statement, “To have known Sally O’Neill Sanchez was a privilege. To have been with her in some of the places of conflict, distress and human suffering was to see the brilliance, compassion, and limitless courage she brought to her engagement with the poor, the oppressed, and the displaced.”

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Trócaire's CEO, Caoimhe de Barra, reflected the shock within the Catholic bishops' development agency, tweeting: "There are no words to express our grief. Sally was and will always be our hero, our inspiration and our light in the work for justice."



Climate campaigner Lorna Gold described it as "an incredibly sad day".

"One of the leading lights in the fight for human rights development has suddenly been taken from us. We are in shock in the big Trócaire family. Sally was fearless woman with a huge heart. A role model who leaves an enduring legacy."

The head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh described news of Sally O'Neill's death as "very sad" and said his thoughts and prayers were with her family and friends at Trócaire.

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He described the Co Tyrone-born aid worker, who worked for Trócaire for 37 years, as “a true missionary of mercy and justice”.

She is survived by her husband Roger Sanchez and their children, Roger, Rhona and Xiao.

The chair of Trócaire, Bishop William Crean said, “Sally’s untimely death has shocked so many people who loved her dearly. Sally’s passing has led to an outpouring of grief amongst all who knew her. As chair of Trócaire, I know the profound impact Sally has had on the lives of the most marginalised of our sisters and brothers.”

He echoed the tribute of Archbishop Eamon Martin who described Sally as “a true missionary of mercy and justice”.

“Through Sally’s work with marginalised and vulnerable communities around the world, and particularly in her beloved Latin America, Sally has left an enormous legacy. Sally was driven by an irrepressible passion for human rights and justice – a passion that never waned. This was exemplified in that, despite having retired from Trócaire four years ago, Sally continued working with communities in Central America to improve their lives.”

“At this heart-breaking time, I know that I speak for all the bishops of Ireland when I express my deepest sympathies to Sally’s family, friends and former colleagues at Trócaire. *Ár dheis Dé go raibh a h-Anam uasal.*”

In his statement, President Higgins recalled that Sally O’Neill joined Trócaire in 1978. “[She] distinguished herself for four decades through her commitment and unstinting belief in the dignity and inherent equality of all human

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beings. Her work placed her at the front line during some of the most significant global humanitarian crises.”

The President described her early work in Central America as ground-breaking and he highlighted how she had acted as translator for Archbishop St Oscar Romero just six weeks before he was brutally slain.

“She would go on to engage with all those suffering in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.”

“I was with her in El Salvador in 1982 when the news of the massacre of the citizens of El Mozote was breaking. Many years later when I visited Central America as President of Ireland in October 2013 she was present to hear the massacre, long denied, recognised as genocide. She was pleased to see the names of the dead remembered, and to meet the relatives of those killed.”

President Higgins also recalled her work during the famine in Somalia which he witnessed at first hand. A decade earlier she had worked on the famine in Ethiopia.

“Sally understood the importance of combining tangible assistance and practical compassion with the pursuit of long-term solutions to the root causes of poverty, marginalisation and oppression. Through her work she empowered countless people and she was relentless in calling on those with power to bring their influence to bear on the policies and politics that affected those most vulnerable.

“With the same professionalism, ease and conviction as Sally O’Neill Sanchez led delegations of politicians and bishops to witness the suffering of marginalised

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communities throughout Central America, she was able to bring those previously without a voice to the corridors of power at international conferences.”

President Higgins said he was privileged to have her as a friend and that he would never forget the brilliant guidance and assistance she provided on so many occasions and in so many places.



“I thank her for her work, in most recent years, as a member of the High-Level Panel for the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad.”

Expressing Trócaire’s shock and devastation at the news, CEO Caoimhe de Barra said, “We are heartbroken by this news. Sally was the heartbeat of Trócaire for almost 40 years. She was a truly remarkable person. Trócaire was only five years old when Sally joined. Sally built the foundations of the organisation. She embodied our values

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and through her courage and commitment to human rights touched the lives of so many people.”

Ms De Barra had met up with Ms O’Neill only last week while she was visiting some of Trócaire’s projects in Guatemala.

“Despite having officially retired, she remained a driving force for human rights in Central America. Her drive, passion and commitment was as strong as ever. Sally was much beloved by communities and human rights activists throughout Central America. She dedicated her life to improving the lives of others. Her legacy will live on through the thousands of people whose lives she helped to improve,” Ms de Barra said.

“Our hearts go out to Sally’s family, particularly her children Roger, Rhona and Xio, and her husband, Roger. Although we still cannot believe she is gone, we know that she left an incredible footprint on the world.”

From Dungannon, Co Tyrone, Sally O’Neill joined Trócaire in 1978 and dedicated her life to working with the poor, the marginalised and victims of human rights abuses. She retired from Trócaire in April 2015 after 37 years of service.

Prior to her retirement, Sally was Trócaire’s head of region for Latin America, based in Honduras.

Throughout her career, Sally worked on the frontline during some of the most significant global humanitarian crises.

She worked in Central America at a time when civil wars were being fought in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. She oversaw humanitarian aid to more than two

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million refugees in the Central American region during those conflicts years.

Sally led delegations of politicians and bishops to Central America, where they saw the suffering of people first-hand.

In 1982, Sally and Michael D Higgins, who was then a TD, visited El Salvador to investigate reports of a massacre in the village of El Mozote. They were initially refused entry into the country but were eventually granted access. They uncovered evidence of a massacre of civilians and their report from El Mozote made its way onto the pages of the international media, including the New York Times and Washington Post.

She also worked in Ethiopia during the famine in the mid-eighties and played a central role in Trócaire's response to the famine in Somalia in the early 1990s, establishing its programme in Gedo, which still operates today.

Sally O'Neill was appointed by the President of Ireland as a member of the High Level Panel for the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad in 2012 and awarded the Hugh O'Flaherty Humanitarian Award in 2011.

In July 2017 she was conferred with an honorary Doctor of Law degree by the University of Ulster.

Following her retirement, Sally continued to work in a voluntary capacity as a facilitator with prisoners and migrants in Honduras, where she lived. As well as her ongoing work with human rights organisations in Central America, she lectured in Development Studies in the

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Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras in Tegucigalpa.

News briefs

+++Easter prayers over Belfast - The Rev Colin Duncan of Woodvale Methodist Church invites people to join him in praying over the City of Belfast from the top of Black Mountain on Easter Saturday, April 20. Participants should meet at the National Trust Car Park on Divis Road at 10am. There is a two mile walk from the car park to the top of the hill, all on tracks and paths but mainly uphill. The total time will be about three hours. Anyone planning on coming along is asked to contact Colin on [07912 787572](tel: 07912%20787572) . Lifts can be arranged from the manse on Ballygomartin Road.

+++31st anniversary of bishop - Yesterday Bishop John Kirby celebrated his 31st Anniversary as Bishop of Clonfert. He is the senior serving bishop in Ireland, the third longest serving bishop of Clonfert since the Reformation. The priests gathered to celebrate and thank him for his leadership and kindness

+++Palm Sunday radio broadcast service - Holy Week at Belfast Cathedral begins with the Palm Sunday Service on April 14 which will be broadcast live on Radio Ulster at *10.15am* (the congregation must be seated by 9.50am). Dean Forde said: "In a service specially prepared for radio, we shall share our Palm Sunday procession through the Cathedral. We shall then explore what the day meant for all

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those present on the first Palm Sunday, including the disciples of Jesus, the Passover crowds in Jerusalem, the ill-at-ease Roman authorities and the unsettled religious leaders. What did it mean when Jesus dared to ride into Jerusalem astride a donkey to make clear his Messianic kingship and his total obedience to the will and way of God?" Dean Forde added: "And we shall do so within the convulsions of our own nation trying to understand what is happening with Brexit."



+++Stainer at Knock, Belfast - St Columba's Parish Church, Knock, hosted a performance of Stainer's Crucifixion on Sunday evening 7 April. "It was a memorable occasion as we focused on the Passion of Christ," writes the rector, Revd Canon John Auchmuty. "The Parish Choir was conducted by Dr Joe McKee, with soloists Fr. Martin

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O'Hagan (tenor), Mr Eric Hinds (bass) and Mr Jack Wilson (organ). There was great hymn singing from the large congregation which included many members from local churches and the wider community. It was a timely opportunity for St Columba's and the community to come together at the beginning of Passiontide as we prepare for our forthcoming Holy Week Services."

+++New Director for Communications for the Anglican Communion - The editor of the Anglican Communion News Service, Gavin Drake, is to be the next Director for Communications for the Anglican Communion. Gavin Drake, who has a long track record as a respected journalist, also has extensive experience in communications and public relations, having previously worked as Senior Communications Officer for the Evangelical Alliance in the UK and Director of Communications for the Church of England's Diocese of Lichfield. He will succeed Adrian Butcher when he [stands down next month](#). Gavin Drake's experience in journalism began with the contemporary Christian music magazine Cross Rhythms. He moved on to cover Devon and Cornwall as a news journalist for many of Britain's national newspapers, television and radio stations before moving into public relations. After 15 years in PR, including several years as a consultant for political groups and Christian charities, he returned to journalism in 2011. During this time he provided occasional cover as editor of the Anglican Communion Service, including 16 months as interim editor, from October 2015 to January 2017. [He was appointed full time editor](#) of ACNS in December 2017.

+++Editor of C of I Gazette to step down - The Board of Church of Ireland Press Ltd. expresses its thanks to the Revd Earl Storey, who has successfully led the re-launch of churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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the Church of Ireland Gazette over the past year. Earl will shortly be retiring from the role to continue his project-based work, but he leaves a fine legacy in the new format monthly magazine. The Gazette, under Earl's editorship, has maintained its role to record and report matters of current interest in the Church with a fresh emphasis on balanced and in-depth articles. Earl also introduced new items and information of general interest to the widest possible spectrum of members of the Church and enhanced the all-island appeal of its content. The Chairman of the Board, Adrian Clements, said: "We are most grateful to Earl for undertaking the task of re-inventing the Gazette for a modern age. The success of the new magazine is testament to his and the team's hard work and dedication." Earl will hand over to a new editor in coming months and will continue to support the Gazette in a voluntary capacity.

+++Food for thought - "A Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man is enabled to repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him all the time." CSLewis - Mere Christianity

Today in Christian history

April 10, 428: Nestorius is consecrated bishop of Constantinople. Almost immediately, Nestorius began attacking the term "Theotokos" (God-bearer) to describe the Virgin Mary. "It is impossible that God should be born of a woman," he said, suggesting Christotokos (Christ-bearer) instead. He did not deny Jesus' nature as God but simply felt that the term challenged the reality of Christ's human

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nature. Though the church denounced Nestorius as a heretic, modern theologians think the label may have been too harsh.

April 10, 1829: English evangelist William Booth, founder and first general of the Salvation Army, is born in Nottingham. In 1865, Booth and his wife, Catherine, set out to reach the desperate poor and unchurched by conducting open-air meetings with lively music; preaching in theaters, bars, and jails; and creating large-scale plans to relieve poverty. His organization launched what became one of the most successful religious revivals in the modern era.

News Links

['Sad day' as Queen's University ends relationship with Presbyterian college](#)

Belfast Newsletter

The Presbyterian **Church** in **Ireland** was today notified by QUB of the university ... The **News** Letter has contacted Queen's University for comment.

[Longtime Irish Trocaire worker dies in road accident in Guatemala](#)

Crux: Covering all things Catholic

DUBLIN, **Ireland** - **Church** and government officials paid tribute to an aid ... President Michael Higgins said he was “greatly saddened” by the **news**.

[Should an institution that presided over child abuse control most schools?](#)

Irish Times

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From birth to death the **Church** was an integral part of our lives. ... Rome: "As a monarchy, the Vatican had reviled the notion of a republic" in **Ireland**.

[End of one era and start of another as new Bishop of Cork announced](#)

Echo Live

Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo and Fr. ... Dr Paul Colton, **Church of Ireland** Bishop of Cork also wished his "good friend ...

[New Cork bishop says Church must look for new ways to connect with young people](#)

Irish Examiner

Paul Colton, the **Church of Ireland** Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, who also offered his congratulations, said he has worked with Bishop-elect Gavin ...

[Two Derry schools win BBC choir competition](#)

Derry Journal

The **choirs** of Ebrington Primary School and Thornhill College cemented Derry's reputation as the 'city of song' as they were named N. **Ireland** School ...

[Choirs to join voices at First Derry for NW Cancer Centre](#)

Derry Journal

The Thornhill Chamber **Choir** claimed the N. **Ireland** Senior School **Choir** of the year last weekend having already won the Feis Dublin competition.

[New Rhythm of the Bann Festival launch](#)

Belfast Newsletter

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Adoro has performed at many prestigious events in Northern **Ireland** ... Local **choir** Cantemus sing a mixture of ancient and modern repertoire, from ...

[The Guinness Choir \(Conductor: David Milne\) presents: Easter Oratorio and Ascension Oratorio by ...](#)

The Journal of Music

Join the Guinness **Choir**, orchestra and soloists and let Bach carry you ... in 2017 by another of **Ireland's** preeminent songwriters, Eleanor McEvoy and ...

[Thy Kingdom Come: Archbishops invite global Church to pray for people to come faith](#)

Anglicannews

The invitation was initially given to clergy of the **Church of England** in 2016, but ... to shine their light on a global map and share it across social **media**.

[Bishop Mark Edington consecrated & installed as leader of The Episcopal Church in Europe](#)

Anglicannews

The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe has congregations in Italy, ... works in partnership with the **Church of England's** Diocese in Europe, which also ... The Archbishop of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, ... Find out how to embed Anglican **News** on your website here.

[More than 900 cases of modern slavery recorded through Safe Car Wash app](#)

The Tablet

The “Safe Car Wash” app, launched last June by The Clewer Initiative, the **Church of England's** campaign against modern slavery, and the Santa ...

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