



## **Don't let stats distract from reality of homelessness – Primate**

The archbishops of Armagh have pleaded with parishioners not to allow increasingly depressing statistics about homelessness “dull the reality that behind each of these numbers lies a personal story of distress and hardship”.

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In a joint message due to be released this weekend, Archbishop Eamon Martin and his Church of Ireland counterpart Richard Clarke combine to highlight the pressing needs of homeless people, particularly families.

“Think,” they write, “for a moment of what it would be like this Christmas to be without a home. To be without a place of shelter.

“Sadly, that is the reality for many people in Ireland today who are homeless. The endless repetition of statistics about housing and homelessness, particularly at this time of the year, should not dull the reality that behind each of these numbers lies a personal story of distress and hardship,” the prelates state.

## **Comfort**

“Jesus readily identified with the homeless. He said, ‘foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ (Luke 9:58). For much of his ministry he was a wandering preacher, travelling here and there without a permanent home, healing, teaching and bringing comfort to others. Even at the beginning of his life – in the story retold in the Christmas Gospel – he was born and laid in a manger, not within the warmth of a human home.

“Jesus said that when you and I reach out the hand of friendship to those in need, it is the same as reaching out to him, as much as reaching out for him,” the archbishops write highlighting the visit of Pope Francis to a homeless centre in Dublin during the World Meeting of Families.

“During the summer, speaking to those who avail of the services of the Capuchin Day Centre for homeless people in

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Dublin, Pope Francis said: ‘Do you know why you come here with trust? Because they help you without detracting from your dignity. For them, each of you is Jesus Christ.’”

## **Lurgan Minister offers to meet those who desecrated his church**

A minister at a Co Armagh church where Remembrance Day Crosses were destroyed has offered to meet the criminals involved. The crosses appeared to have been trampled into the ground at First Lurgan Presbyterian Church in what police are treating as a hate crime.

Rev David Henry said that it seemed a piece of kerbing was used to smash a window in the front door. However despite the outcry and disgust at the crime,

Rev Henry said he is keen to speak to those who carried out the attack. “I am happy to meet with them and talk to them. At the end of the day, you don’t resolve anything without talking.

“If the same person goes away and if they have an issue or a problem with the church or some other issue, then it is never resolved.

“I want to meet with them and resolve the issue. Other people will want to judge and issue criminal proceedings but I think it’s sad that a wanton act of criminal damage is done and certainly it has desecrated those who put crosses there in November for their friends and family.

“I feel sad about that. They have their own memories and for someone to desecrate that is not very good.”

Rev Henry said the church is open to everyone especially at this time of year.

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Chief Inspector Jon Burrows said: “A report was received that a brick had been thrown at the front door of the church, breaking a pane of glass, and that damage had been caused to a number of wooden Remembrance Day crosses, sometime between midday on Tuesday and 1pm on Wednesday afternoon. We are treating this as a hate crime and an investigation is underway.

“I would appeal to anyone with any information or any drivers who were passing First Lurgan Presbyterian Church and who may have captured footage on dashcam that may be of assistance to our investigation, to contact officers in Lurgan on 101 quoting reference number 687 12/12/18. Alternatively, information can also be provided to the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 which is 100% anonymous and gives people the power to speak up and stop crime.”

DUP Upper Bann MLA Carla Lockhart has condemned an attack and said:

“Causing criminal damage to any premises is wrong and a gutless crime. To do it to a place of worship where people go as a place of sanctuary, worship and reflection is beyond contempt.” Report courtesy News Letter

## **Archbishop Eamon Martin visits displaced families in Iraq**

Archbishop Eamon Martin is currently in Iraq meeting families who are suffering displacement as a result of conflict in the region.

Speaking from northern Iraq, the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland said, “Conflict in Iraq and the wider Middle East has seen millions of people lose their homes and livelihoods. They are forced to flee and take

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refuge where they can find it. It is humbling to spend time with these families, and heartening to learn how the generosity of people in Ireland is helping them to survive.

“The work Trócaire does here in Iraq, as well as around the world, eases people’s suffering and allows them to dream of brighter days ahead. It is incredibly powerful to see this work in action. Trócaire’s Christmas Appeal focuses on bringing aid and relief to people trapped in conflict around the world. Whether that is in Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan or elsewhere, these people need and deserve our love and compassion.

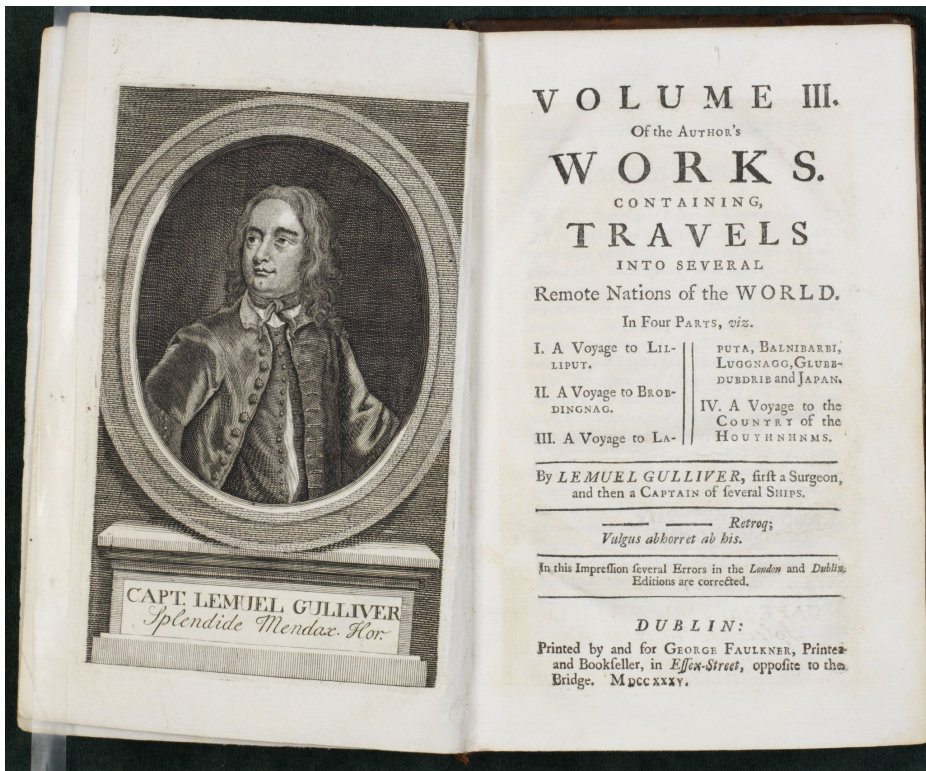
“I would encourage people in Ireland to support Trócaire’s Christmas Appeal. Even small donations can make a big difference to people whose lives have been shattered by conflict.”

Please see the following short interview with Archbishop Eamon Martin speaking from the decimated town of Batnaya on the Nineveh Plains of northern Iraq: <https://youtu.be/r0W8Dk0JLEU>

Trócaire’s Christmas 2018 Appeal can be supported on: <http://www.trocaire.org/christmas>

## **Belfast lecture on Jonathan Swift and the Ulster Presbyterians**

Union Theological College is hosting a public lecture by Prof Ian McBride at Union College on Tuesday 15 January 2019 at 7.30pm. The topic will be the attitudes of the famous Anglo-Irish Anglican clergyman, author, and satirist,



Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), towards the Presbyterians of Ulster. The lecture will be entitled 'The Making of the Hibernian Patriot: Jonathan Swift and the Ulster Presbyterians'.

Ian McBride,

who grew up in County Armagh, is the Foster Professor of Irish History at the University of Oxford and a fellow of Hertford College. His research interests include the history of Ireland in the Long Eighteenth Century and the history of Northern Ireland since 1920. He is a recipient of a Leverhulme Major Research Award to study the reshaping of Irish social and political life under the penal laws in the eighteenth century. His publications include *The Siege of Derry in Ulster Protestant Mythology* (1997) and *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (1998), both short-listed for the Christopher Ewart-Biggs Literary Prize; and *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves* (2009). His most recent book *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (2016), edited with Richard Bourke, was selected by both RTÉ Radio and *The Irish Times* as one of their best books of 2016. Prof McBride is currently completing a volume on Swift's Irish



Political Writings for the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift*.

Although Swift is perhaps best known for his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), this is only a small part of his writings in verse and prose across a period of over fifty years during which time he served as a priest in the Church of Ireland, most notably, as Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin. Swift is a man of contradictions: his publisher, George Faulkner, described this Englishman born in Ireland as 'The Hibernian Patriot'. Swift had a lifelong hostility towards both Roman Catholicism and Presbyterianism. This was already established when, as a young clergyman, Swift had been appointed to the living of Kilroot where he found himself ministering to a small congregation in a dilapidated building surrounded by a strong Presbyterian community. Swift's consuming antipathy towards Presbyterians would only increase, something exemplified in his satirical works such as *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) which poured scorn on 'Jack Presbyter' of the North. Given that Swift is an author skilled in employing shock, sarcasm and comedy this is sure to be

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an interesting and stimulating evening. This is a public lecture, open to all, and booking is not required.

## **Exhibition to explore Orange textile culture**

The rich material culture of Orangeism will be the focus of a new exhibition in the new year. A variety of sashes, collarettes, tablecloths and handkerchiefs will be among the many items on public display at the Museum of Orange Heritage in Belfast from next month.



**Museum curator Jonathan Mattison (left) and Sam Wilson view the 1674 damask linen tablecloth which will feature in the new exhibition, along with a diverse range of early Orange regalia**



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Orangeism has a material culture tradition dating back to before the formal creation of the Orange Institution in September 1795. Regalia, banners, keepsakes and flags have long been a feature of this tradition, with many early items embodying the message and symbolism of the Glorious Revolution.

One of the exhibition centre pieces will be a damask linen tablecloth, owned by King William III, which has been on display in the museum since it opened in the summer of 2015. Presented to William, this remarkable item was made to commemorate William's victory at the city of Grave in 1674 and helps reveal the story of the European power struggle that set the background context for the Williamite Wars.

Through its latest temporary exhibition, the museum aims to highlight aspects of the tradition it holds in its collection, allowing visitors to see for themselves how such materials were made and used in the past.

Museum of Orange Heritage curator, Jonathan Mattison, said: "We want to highlight the diverse nature of early Orange regalia, explain how it was made and the symbolism that is on display.

"We have a wide variety of textile items in our collection from sashes to banners, and everything in between. We want to use this exhibition and the associated workshops to help people explore this aspect of the Orange tradition."

The exhibition will run from Tuesday, January 15, to Wednesday, February 13. Two textile-based craft workshops

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will be held on Saturday January 19 and February 2. To pre-book your place, call 028 9070 1122.

## **'If the Eskimos have 50 words for snow, does Northern Ireland need 50 words for forgive?'**

**Forgiveness is the theme of next month's 4 Corners Festival in Belfast. Co-chairs Rev Steve Stockman and Fr Martin Magill explain why it is central to the transformation of the country. They write in the Belfast Telegraph...**

Scandalous Forgiveness - that is the name of 2019's 4 Corners Festival. We believe it is a vital theme for our city and country in our current political inertia and any possible vision we might conjure for a peaceful future.

Forgiveness has been a recurring word from the contributors and audience at our last few festivals. Last year, at a panel event, it came as a question from the floor: "Do we have to forgive people who have wronged us?" Fr Brian Lennon was on the panel and in his answer, he threw up another question: "Forgiveness? What does that look like?"

It was a fascinating question. Here was a word that we hear weekly in churches across Northern Ireland, no matter what denomination. It is at the very centre of the Christian faith. And yet we were asking what it looked like.

Surely, that question should have a quick and confident answer? In the context of Northern Ireland, forgiveness is

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**Rev Steve Stockman of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church and Fr Martin Magill of St John's Parish**

complex. But surely it is vital if we are ever going to be able to deal with our past?

Fr Brian's words fired the direction of the 2019 festival. Professor John Brewer, from the Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University, has for some years challenged us in the Church to keep words like forgiveness in the public conversation. That is what we will be doing in the 2019 festival.

The festival planning committee took time over adding the word 'scandalous'. We believe that Jesus was constantly doing scandalous acts; whether it was the forgiveness he showed to a woman caught in the act of adultery, or having dinner with a tax collector, sharing a drink at a well with a Samaritan woman, or telling a Roman Centurion that he had never seen such faith in all of Israel. In Jewish culture, these were all scandalous acts and forgiveness is somewhere in the mix.

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In Northern Ireland many will see it as scandalous if someone forgives the person who killed their husband, or wife, or son, or daughter. It could easily be seen as a scandal if a paramilitary murderer was forgiven. Some might suggest that that isn't justice.

Yet, it might also be scandalous if those of us who talk so much about God's forgiveness are not acting in forgiving ways; if forgiveness is not at the forefront of all that we do.

There was a scene in a television documentary where a woman, whose mother had been murdered many years before, was being told how miserable her mother's murderer was in prison. She was so pleased to hear that. He deserved that.

We have sympathy with her thoughts, but at the same time on the wall in front of her was a big cross with another small cross by its side. The cross is a symbol of forgiveness and seemed to be a major symbol in her own life. Yet, it was not at all in evidence as she spoke.

Have we concentrated ourselves on God's forgiveness to us, but somehow blocked out and ignored that Jesus asks us to follow him by forgiving others the way he forgives us?

We are both convinced that forgiveness is a key contributor to peace-building. We believe that it can contribute to personal peace, as well as societal peace. To forgive someone who has caused us deep pain is not so much for the good of the one forgiven as much as it is for the one who forgives. The bitterness that we hold can damage us even more. Forgiving can let go some of the hurt and, indeed, control that the perpetrator holds over us.

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It has been said that the Eskimos have 50 words for snow. Should we in Northern Ireland have 50 words for forgiveness?

We often hear from friends at Stormont that, never mind not getting into the chamber together, some politicians hold such resentment that they won't even share a greeting when they meet certain others on the stairs.

The name that we call a city can cause all kinds of bitterness of heart.

Wearing the wrong football shirt in the wrong place can be a dangerous thing. Self-forgiveness might be something that we don't find easy either. These all call for different shades and weights of forgiveness. Then there is the heavier forgiveness that will be necessary if we, as a society, truly seek a way to deal with our bloodied past.

We need to be able to find forgiveness for what our communities have done to one another for hundreds of years: the hurt, the pain, the prejudice, the killing.

We believe that forgiveness is a resource, maybe the most powerful resource in delivering a better future. The Bible has the hope of "Shalom" at the heart of God's dream for the world. We believe forgiveness between human and human, community and community, as well as God and humanity, are intrinsic to God's intentions for redeeming the world.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem that first Christmas and angels sang "Peace on Earth", they were already looking ahead to Easter, when God reconciled himself to the world in Jesus's death on the cross.

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Jesus uttered the words "Father forgive them for they know not what they do". Interesting!

We encourage the city of Belfast and beyond to use the events planned for 4 Corners Festival 2019 to look at forgiveness from a whole range of angles.

We will look at how CS Lewis portrayed forgiveness in a family-friendly event, The Gospel According To... Narnia; how Seamus Heaney took up Greek myth to speak into our modern dilemma in a reading of The Cure At Troy, with public figures playing the parts; a new documentary, Guardians Of The Flame, in which people impacted by the Troubles share their different takes on forgiving; Belfast songwriter Brian Houston will share themes of forgiveness in his body of work; and David Porter, along with Nicola Brady, will inspire us to live as a forgiving city moving forward.

We are delighted to have Fr Greg Boyle, whose idea of bringing boundless compassion to the violent gang members of Los Angeles has deeply impacted lives and communities.

We want to use poetry, song, drama, as well as personal story, practical teaching as well as theological wrestling to open up and highlight the pearl of forgiveness.

It will be messy and difficult. We will struggle with it, find complications in its outworking. At times, it will get scandalous, but maybe, as we surmise it over the 10 days of the festival, and beyond, we will journey to the very heart of God and towards our own salvation and the transformation of our country.

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Rev Steve Stockman is minister of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church and Fr Martin Magill is parish priest of St John's parish, both in Belfast. They are co-founders and co-chairs of the 4 Corners Festival, now in its seventh year, which runs from January 30 to February 11, 2019. For further details see [4cornersfestival.com](http://4cornersfestival.com)

## **News links**

### **Scouting Ireland future in doubt overabuse scandal costs**

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/scouting-ireland-future-in-doubt-over-abuse-scandal-costs-1.3728151>

### **MBE honour could be stripped from Boys' Brigade leader David Morrow who stole £34k**

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/mbe-honour-could-be-stripped-from-boys-brigade-leader-david-morrow-who-stole-34k-37620969.html>

### **'Despicable behaviour': DUP MLA slams hate attack on on Lurgan church**

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/despicable-behaviour-dup-mla-slams-hate-attack-on-on-lurgan-church-37622851.html>

### **31,000 domestic abuse cases in Northern Ireland in a year**

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/31000-domestic-abuse-cases-in-northern-ireland-in-a-year-37621225.html>

### **Muckamore Abbey report reveals shocking level of abuse**

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/muckamore-abbey-report-reveals-shocking-level-of-abuse-charities-demand-reform-37617810.html>

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## **Aborted unborn feeling pain is an inconvenient truth, Rite and Reason**

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/aborted-unborn-feeling-pain-is-an-inconvenient-truth-1.3726451>

## **We woof you a Merry Christmas**

<https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2018/12/11/we-woof-you-a-merry>

## **Castlebar librarian nearly brought down government**

<https://www.con-telegraph.ie/news/roundup/articles/2018/12/11/4166383-castlebar-librarian-nearly-brought-down-government/>

## **Faith and sexuality survey**

<https://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/faith-and-sexuality-survey/>

## **In work poverty increasing**

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/7-december/news/uk/in-work-poverty-is-rising-says-joseph-rowntree-foundation>

## **It's time to be ancient and modern again**

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/7-december/comment/opinion/it-s-time-to-be-ancient-and-modern-again>

## **UK political chaos over Brexit leaves Europeans bemused**

Church Times

In a letter to the Church Times this week, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Michael Jackson, pledges that the **Church of Ireland** would continue to function ..

## **High and mighty**

[Spectator.co.uk](http://Spectator.co.uk)

She eventually married a **Church of Ireland** rector of her own, William Alexander, who later became a bishop, and they lived a long, happy life of ...

## **'I'll be taking that, gentlemen' - two volunteers robbed of €10k in donations outside Dublin church**

[Independent.ie](http://Independent.ie)



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GARDAI are on the hunt for a man who made off with nearly €10,000 worth of donations after robbing two volunteers at knife-point outside a **church**.

## **Snow Patrol's Nathan Connolly: From gospel choir to guitarist with Northern Ireland's biggest band**

Belfast Newsletter

"We toured **Ireland** in support of Ash and Snow Patrol. ... Maura and Don Henry (centre) who won a recent **News** Letter competition that saw them win ...

## **Tails wag as canine choir hits high notes at charity's dog carol service**

Belfast Telegraph

Tails wag as canine **choir** hits high notes at charity's dog carol service ... Tails were wagging as a special canine **choir** took over one of Dublin's most ...

## **Trans people invited to mark sex change in Church of England**

BBC News

The **Church of England** has issued new advice about how to help ... She told **BBC News**: "For me the most important thing was actually having this ...

[Church of England issues transgender advice for clergy](#) - The Guardian

[Church of England brings in transgender celebration services](#) - Premier

[Church of England to offer baptism-style services to transgender people to celebrate their new ...](#) - [Telegraph.co.uk](http://Telegraph.co.uk)

Full Coverage

## **Royston churches unite after arson attack on Church of England parish church**

Anglicannews

Christians from many of the **churches** in Royston, Hertfordshire, will gather in the local Roman Catholic parish **church** on Friday for a united time of ...

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