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## Churches around the world prepare for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



**Churches in Indonesia were invited by the WCC and the PCPCU to prepare resources for the week.**

From 18-25 January, Christians will embark on the largest prayer gathering in the world, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Whether praying together, exchanging

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preachers or planning ecumenical services, they will bear witness to Jesus's prayer for his disciples that "they may be one so that the world may believe."

The theme for the week of prayer in 2019, "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue ..." is inspired by Deuteronomy 16:18-20.

World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said that, as people around the world pray together, they will share a sense of joy, concern and accountability, a sharing that forms the heart of the ecumenical movement.

"As we celebrate a unity in diversity, we become more able to strongly pursue justice in our many contexts," he said. "In all cultures and continents, we can pray for each other and pray together as a living fellowship for justice and peace."

Each year, the Week of Prayer - a tradition that began more than 100 years ago - is jointly organized and led by the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). In 2019, the theme for the week is "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue," inspired by Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Churches in Indonesia were invited by the WCC and the PCPCU to prepare resources for the week.

As people around the world gather with this text in mind, no matter how they interpret it, their hearts can be touched together, reflected Odair Pedroso Mateus, director of the WCC Faith and Order Commission. "The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity deepens fellowship among Christians from different parts of the world who would otherwise hardly meet each other," he said. "The context of Indonesia, where

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fragile harmony today is threatened in new ways, is particularly moving."

## **Justin Welby: No-deal Brexit would be 'moral failure'**

The Archbishop of Canterbury has suggested a second referendum may be required on the Brexit debate.

Speaking in the House of Lords, Justin Welby also said it would be a moral failure should the UK leave the European Union without a deal.

The Anglican leader was taking part in a debate in the upper chamber as MPs continued talks in the Commons next door ahead of a vote on the Prime Minister's plan next Tuesday.

Welby said: "There has to be an agreement in which all accept the need to deliver the will of the people, which was expressed in the referendum. While also recognising that when it was expressed in such a close result there is a duty to build in compromise, an inevitability, albeit unwelcome to some.

"If not there will by default be a no-deal Brexit. That outcome would be not only be a political and practical failure but a moral one, equally as serious as ignoring the result of the referendum entirely.

"My Lords, a second referendum is not my preference, but if Parliament fails in the task entrusted to it, then regrettably it may be required. This is about more than Brexit, and Parliament must not show itself unfit for the job."

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The archbishop also encouraged MPs to work selflessly to ensure the UK thrives going forward.

He said: "As we embrace a challenge that I believe is hope-filled and exciting, of reimagining our country and its structures over the next few years and months, I hope politicians will take it upon themselves to make these crucial decisions not only with the grand vision, but also with 'the small picture' - the effect on local people, communities and businesses - in mind as well."

## **Irish Methodist Church departments relocate at Edgehill House**

President of the Methodist Church in Ireland Rev Billy Davison has commented on the significant change brought by the move of all the Church's Connexional Offices to Edgehill House, acknowledging that this is more than simply a change of venue.



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**The Methodist Church Connexional Offices met as a new community in the Worship Centre at Edgehill House. “We're so looking forward to gathering weekly together to pray for each other, the people, the churches & the ministries we're connected with, throughout Ireland!”**

The President said, “This move is more than simply a change of venue but rather a change in how our Connexional departments work as we move forward and progress as a Church.

“It was identified six years ago that all departments being together in one venue would enable employees to work better for the greater purpose of supporting the mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland, developing in ministry and

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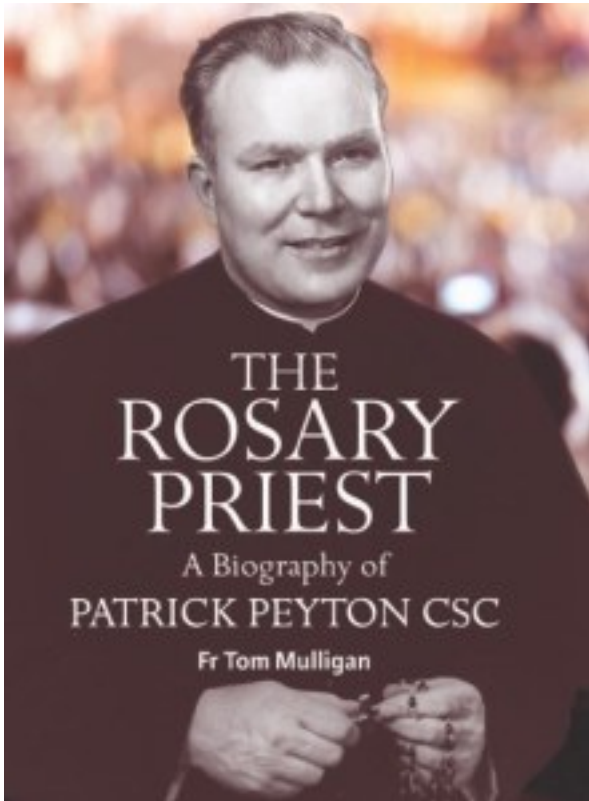
equipping the wider Connexion down to local church level. This change has taken precedent to many years of prayer and vision casting for how we move forward as a Church and we have since been taking the necessary steps to make it happen.

“We hope that this move will achieve better collaboration between offices, working stronger together to further support the Methodist churches throughout Ireland and resource them in their various missions.

“The new venue of our Connexional Offices is now named Edgehill House, which was formally the building of Edgehill Theological College. Edgehill House is now home to the Trustees Office (including Finance, Gift Aid, Communications, Human Resources and Estates Management), Irish Methodist World Mission Partnership and Methodist World Development and Relief, Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department, Edgehill Theological College, Methodist Home Mission Ireland, Play It By Ear and The Methodist Historical Society.

“It is my hope and prayer that by making these changes now, God’s work will be furthered as we face the future together and that the resources needed for all aspects of our work will be easily accessible to all within our Connexion.

“It’s good for us to recall the promise God made through the prophet Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon, and prayerfully hear it as a word from God for ourselves at this time. ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ (*Jeremiah 29:11*)”



## Story of the Rosary Priest Father Patrick Peyton brought to life for a new generation

There was a wonderful gathering on Wednesday 9 January in the Father Peyton Centre, Attymass where Father Tom Mulligan, a priest of the diocese of Achonry, saw the launch of his biography on the

life of The Rosary Priest, Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C. The book was launched by the Diocesan Administrator, Father Dermot Meehan.

Father Peyton, born 110 years ago, in the parish of Attymass, Ballina, Co Mayo, is undoubtedly its most famous son. Emigrating to the United States in the footsteps of other family members he felt called to the priesthood and entered the seminary, as did his brother Tom. During his studies, Patrick became quite ill and begged Our Lady to cure him. Being cured, he attributed his recovery to her and committed to dedicating his ministry to promoting devotion to Our Lady. He was ordained along with his brother and kept his promise.

Enlisting the help of many of Hollywood's most famous stars "Of various faiths and none" as Father Meehan put it,

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Father Peyton reached out to people with a call to pray and, more especially to pray as family. “The Family that prays together, stays together” and “A world at



prayer is a world at peace” were two of his most famous phrases.

The author of the book Father Tom Mulligan ministered in Attymass parish for many years and, following his retirement last year, decided to dedicate study and time to a man he had come to know and admire through his contact with the people of Attymass. Commenting on this at the launch, Dara Calleary, T.D., said he knew that Father Mulligan’s energy would not allow him to become a full time golfer!! He said, “It is a blessing to us all that his energy was devoted to the research and publishing of this book *The Rosary Priest*. Senator Michelle Mulherin spoke too of the wonderful work done in Attymass through the Father Peyton Centre and congratulated Father Mulligan on the great work he had done in bringing this story a-fresh to a new wave of readers.

Father Meehan said that while Rosary priest Father Peyton is well known to an older generation, he believes this new book will bring his story to life for a new generation.



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Pope Francis declared Father Peyton “Venerable” last year, a significant step on the road to Canonisation. Fr Meehan had commented on this saying “It would be wonderful for our Diocese of Achonry to have a recognised Saint among its numbers”.

Speaking at the launch Father Mulligan highlighted the humility of Father Peyton and his total dedication to the promise he made God and Our Lady. In writing this book he said he wanted to help bring Father Peyton’s story to our time.

The book, simply entitled *The Rosary Priest* is published by Veritas and is the first Biography of Father Peyton to be written in Ireland and, indeed, outside the United States. It is available in all major bookshops.

## **New series of monthly organ recitals in Belfast**

Belfast Cathedral’s monthly Organ Recitals return on January 20, with ‘Preludes and Fugues’ played by Master of the Choristers David Stevens.

In February Organ Scholar Jack Wilson gives the recital. Visiting organist Derek Collins joins us for March, and David Stevens returns in April.

The recitals begin at 3pm, and will finish before Choral Evensong at 3.30pm. They are free to attend and we invite visitors and tourists to join with us for the recitals and for Evensong.

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The full Organ Recital programme is below.

January 20 - David Stevens - Preludes and Fugues

- *Dubois* Prelude et Fugue
- *Müller-Zürich* Präludium und Fuge
- *J.S. Bach* Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543
- 

February 17 - Jack Wilson

- *J.S. Bach* Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542
- *Whitlock* Plymouth Suite

I Allegro risoluto

II Lantana

III Chanty

IV Salix

V Toccata

March 24 - Derek Collins

- *Mendelssohn* Sonata No. 3 in A major
- *Franck* Chorale No. 3 in A minor

April 14 - David Stevens

- *Ridout* Stations of the Cross

## **News briefs**

### **'God wanted me to be afraid', England rugby star speaks of comeback**

Billy Vunipola has spoken about how his faith is helping him get back to fitness after a long term injury.

The rugby player, regarded as one of England's best, made his return to the sport over the weekend after suffering three arm breaks in just over a year.

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Despite scoring a try he was unable to prevent his club side, Saracens, losing to Sale.

Vunipola says on previous returns from injury his confidence was counter-productive and often saw him injured straight away.

Speaking to the Telegraph, he said this time it was different:

"I was a bit tentative and anxious - I readily admit that now.

"Before I was a bit naive that I could fall straight into it, whereas now I am a bit more prepared. And scared as well. Not of being injured, but the process of coming back is the hardest thing. Hopefully this weekend I can be better, then next weekend, then see when you go from there.

"That is probably my faith. I think God wanted me to be afraid. Before I was so confident I would be all right. I guess a bit too confident to the point that 'I'm invincible'. That's why I got injured again. So I'm trying to find my feet."

Vunipola's return to rugby is timely for the national team as they head into the Six Nations tournament in February.

### **Bishop of Hereford announces retirement**

Rt Rev Richard Frith says he will retire this autumn after five years serving as the 105th Bishop of Hereford.

The end of his public ministry shall be marked during a service inside Hereford Cathedral at 11am on 23rd November. His successor is yet to be decided.

Bishop Richard said: "I thank God daily for the privilege of being Bishop of Hereford.

### **Christian professor facing calls to quit over homosexuality comments**

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A Roman Catholic academic at the University of Oxford has denied authoring homophobic writings after students started a petition demanding he be removed from his post.

More than 350 people have signed a petition which accuses Prof John Finnis of "a long record of extremely discriminatory views against many groups of disadvantaged people".

The emeritus professor of law and legal philosophy told The Oxford Student newspaper: "The petition travesties my position, and my testimony in American constitutional litigation.

### **Smartphones risk paving way for Antichrist, head of Russian church warns**

The widespread use of smartphones risks paving the way for the arrival of the

Antichrist, the head of the Russia Orthodox Church has claimed.

Patriarch Kirill said the Church does not oppose

technological advancements but the internet-connected devices created the possibility for "universal control over humanity".



**Patriarch Kirill has warned of the danger of a centralised global information system.**



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During an interview on Russian state television, he said the gadgets allow someone to know "exactly where you are, know exactly what you are interested in, know exactly what you are afraid of".

He continued: "Such control from one place forebodes the coming of the Antichrist.

"The Antichrist is the person that will be at the head of the world wide web controlling all of humanity. That means that the structure itself poses a danger.

## **January 11 in Christian history**

**January 11, 1759:** The first American life insurance company is incorporated in Philadelphia—the "Corporation of Poor and Distressed Presbyterian Ministers and of the Poor and Distressed Widows and Children of Presbyterian Ministers."

**January 11, 1875:** The "Scandal of the Century" goes public as journalist Theodore Tilton sues prominent liberal pastor Henry Ward Beecher for alienating his wife's affections (i.e. having an affair with her). The trial, which became a national sensation, finally ended with a hung jury.

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