



Archbishop Welby's prayers for Theresa May on eve of Brexit vote

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, yesterday offered Theresa May and politicians across the political spectrum his prayers on the eve of today's vote on the government's proposed Brexit deal.

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Archbishop Welby, who last week spoke in in the House of Lords about his concerns around a no-deal Brexit has said that politicians have the "most extraordinarily difficult job".

In what is an increasingly fraught and divisive debate, many are predicting that the deal will be voted down, leaving the prospect of a no-deal Brexit as the March 29th deadline for leaving the European Union approaches.

In a wide ranging interview with Christian news agency Premier, Welby reiterated his concerns that a no-deal Brexit would impact the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

The head of the Church of England recently spoke of a no-deal outcome being "not only a political and practical failure, but a moral one" and in the interview he went further to say: "The burden of proof is on those that are arguing for no deal, to show that it will not harm the poorest and most vulnerable.

"They are close to the heart of God in Jesus Christ, so how we care about them and how our politics affects them is a deeply moral issue."

When asked what his prayer for the Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament would be, he stated: "Politicians have one of the hardest jobs in the world, it is deeply difficult, and we need to pray for them.

"When I pray for Theresa May and for all of our politicians, with genuine affection and respect, I pray for wisdom, courage and strength for them and their families.

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"I pray that they would be blessed. They are entrusted with more responsibility than any of us could cope with."

MPs will vote in Parliament today on Theresa May's plans.

The Prime Minister is warning that no Brexit is more likely than no-deal if they don't support her proposals.

Torn from home theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2019

"I didn't feel like I had a home after the genocide because everything was destroyed. I had no home at all. I had nothing."

Marie Chantal Uwamahoro, survivor of the Genocide in Rwanda

Torn from home encourages audiences to reflect on how the enforced loss of a safe place to call 'home' is part of the trauma faced by anyone experiencing persecution and genocide. 'Home' usually means a place of safety, comfort and security. On HMD 2019 we will reflect on what happens when individuals, families and communities are driven out of, or wrenched from their homes, because of persecution or the threat of genocide, alongside the continuing difficulties survivors face as they try to find and build new homes when the genocide is over.

HMD 2019 will include marking the 25th anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda, which began in April 1994 and the 40th anniversary of the end of the Genocide in Cambodia, which ended in 1979. HMD activity organisers may particularly want to acknowledge this milestone anniversary,



Holocaust Memorial Day 2019: **Torn from home**



and reflect on how this theme impacts on members of the Rwandan and Cambodian communities.

Scope of the theme

- **The meaning of home before genocide**
 - a) What makes a home?
 - b) Fleeing from home before genocide
- **Torn from home during genocide**
 - a) Forced from home
 - b) Finding an alternative home
 - c) Making a home a refuge
- **A home after genocide**
 - a) Returning home
 - b) No home to return to
 - c) An empty home
 - d) Making others feel at home

[Download a copy of the full theme vision here.](#)

[Download the Welsh/English version of the theme vision here.](#)

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From Blackburn to Cashel

A new rector, the Reverend Graham Sawyer, was instituted as incumbent of the

Church of Ireland parish of Kilcooley Union with Fertagh last Friday night, January 11th.

The preacher was a former diocesan colleague from Blackburn, the Reverend Anne Morris, vicar of Knuzden, who paid tribute to Graham's ministry as one of great integrity, courage and care.

Bishop of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory, the Right Reverend Michael Burrows said that the diocese was delighted to welcome Graham.

"He is bringing rich experience and fresh skills not least in communication and outreach," he said, "and we hope he will now have many happy years in Irish rural ministry amongst the always supportive and positive parishioners of Kilcooley / Fertagh."

Graham has been Vicar of Briarville in the Diocese of Blackburn in the UK and succeeds the Reverend Victor Fitzpatrick who is now rector of Clonenagh (Mountrath) parish.

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C of E Bishop apologises over transgender liturgy confusion

The Bishop of Blackburn has said sorry for putting his name to two contradictory statements on the introduction of liturgy affirming a gender transition.

The Church of England issued **advice in December** for parishes who wish to mark someone's gender change, advising that their new name should be used in a service where someone might affirm their baptismal faith, saying it would be a natural setting to recognise the person's gender through liturgy and a baptism certificate.

The guidance was approved by the House of Bishops, following a motion passed in General Synod 2017 that read: "This Synod, recognising the need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in their parish church, call on the House of Bishops to consider whether some nationally commended liturgical materials might be prepared to mark a person's gender transition."

In **a press release** on this advice, the Bishop of Blackburn, Julian Henderson, Chair of the House of Bishops Delegation Committee, which oversaw work to produce the guidance said: "We are absolutely clear that everyone is made in the image of God and that all should find a welcome in their parish Church."

However, a recent **response to this guidance** from the Church of England Evangelical Council, also signed by the

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bishop, stated that the advice was ambiguous and could cause problems for clergy who refuse to do such a service.

The response, also signed by Rev Hugh Palmer of All Souls Langham Place, read: "The Church of England would be declaring liturgically on behalf of God its acceptance of the claim that someone who is biologically male is in fact female or that someone who is biologically female is in fact male."

They add that there is no mention of support for clergy who "conscientiously refuse to conduct such a service" and take issue with the 'unconditional affirmation' encouraged, saying "Affirmation of baptismal faith, like both the gospel and dying and rising with Christ in baptism, is never simply about 'unconditional affirmation' of anyone."

To clear up the matter, **a statement** has been released on the CEEC website, stating: "He clarified that the word 'we' in the press release refers to the Delegation Committee and that the CEEC response reflects his own position."

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Bishop Julian said: "'I continue to be sorry for the confusion that my different roles and statements have created and am very grateful for the trust my re-election as President of CEEC expresses."

He added that the title of the press release ('Guidance for gender transition services published'), suggests the creation of a service solely to mark a gender transition, something he has never supported in General Synod votes.

The statement on his behalf says: "in his view the only transition marked in an Affirmation of Baptismal Faith is commitment to Christ, which all people, including those who identify as transgender, are invited to make".

Albany bishop William Love appeals against Presiding Bishop's restriction of ministry

Bishop William Love, the Bishop of Albany in the US-state of New York, has told his diocese that he will appeal against a temporary restriction on his ministry. Presiding [Bishop Michael Curry imposed the restriction last week](#) in response to Bishop Love's refusal to accept a General Convention resolution – Resolution B012 – that required all bishops to permit churches in their diocese to conduct same-sex marriage where it was legal under the relevant civil law. The Presiding Bishop's restriction was designed to prevent Bishop William taking disciplinary action against any clergy that carried out same-sex marriages.

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In a message to his diocese, Bishop William said that in challenging the restriction, he will also “be challenging the authority and legality of Resolution B012”.

He said: “While I obviously would rather not have had disciplinary action taken against me, and hope to see it overturned in the near future, I will abide by the restrictions placed on me by the Presiding Bishop during the appeal process.”

The right of appeal is laid down in the Canons of the US-based Episcopal Church.

Down & Dromore Pastoral Carers course

The diocese is once more commending an accredited Pastoral Carers Training Course which has been well received by our churches in previous years.

The course will enable participants to develop their understanding of pastoral care from a Christian perspective and to become more effective in relating to and caring for the people and communities around them. It is run by ACC and Pastoral Care NI.

Who is the course for?

- those who see themselves helping others informally in their daily relationships and who desire to learn more about pastoral care generally without being part of a pastoral care team.

Training

Knowledge
professional development
teaching of vocation
skills provi

- those who may be members of a pastoral care team and who desire to learn more about pastoral care in order to help others both informally and formally.
- those in church leadership or who have specific church roles and who desire to develop their awareness of pastoral care in order to support those for whom they have responsibility.
- those who wish to help others in specific community and workplace settings and desire to learn more about pastoral care in outreach and mission.
- those who desire to explore a call to pastoral care.

Starting date: Tuesday 26 February 2019. Venue: Christian Fellowship Church, 10 Belmont Road, Belfast BT4 2AN.
Cost: £80 (non-refundable)

How to apply - To find out more and to apply please [download the leaflet here](#). *Note that you should discuss your application with your rector as they will need to recommend you by letter or email.* The diocese offers Down and Dromore participants subsidies from £80–£50 (please notify the tutor on application).

Closing date for applications: Friday 15 February 2019

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Faith is transmitted at home, Pope Francis tells parents at baptism



Speaking to parents in his homily on Sunday, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Holy Father reflected on the parental duty of transmitting the faith to the next generation.

“You have asked the Church for faith for your children, and today they will receive the Holy Spirit and the gift of faith in each one’s heart and soul.”

But, Pope Francis said, “this faith must be developed; it must grow.”

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Before children study the faith in catechism classes, he said, their parents must transmit it at home, “because the faith is always transmitted ‘in dialect’,” that is, the native language spoken in the environs of the home.

The Pope said parents transmit the faith through their example and words, and by teaching their children to make the Sign of the Cross.

He said the faith must be transmitted “with your faith-filled lives”, so children see married love and peace within the family home. “May they see Jesus there.”

Then Pope Francis gave parents a word of advice.

“Never fight in front of your children,” he said. “It’s normal that parents should argue; the opposite would be strange. Do it, but without letting them hear or see.”

“You have no idea the anguish it causes a child to see his or her parents fight.”

He said this was a word of advice “that will help you to transmit the faith.”

Finally, Pope Francis invited the parents present at the ceremony to make their children comfortable, and to breastfeed them if they were hungry.

“To you mothers I say: Breastfeed your children, don’t worry. The Lord wants this.”

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Crematorium plans approved, but confusion over legislation holding up progress

Despite the approval of plans for several other crematoria in Northern Ireland, Roselawn remains the Province's only such facility. In recent years planning permission has been granted for crematorium proposals in Moira, Newtownabbey and Omagh, but so far none of the projects have come to fruition.

One major hold-up is the existing legislation, which precludes private sector companies from operating crematoria here – something that is commonplace in the rest of the UK.

There is also confusion over whether the current rules permit any local authority, other than Belfast City Council, to operate a crematorium.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council spent around £200,000 developing its plans for a crematorium at Ballyearl, just a few hundred yards from its Mossley Mill headquarters. The £5 million facility was to be developed and run through a public-private partnership.

In May 2016 the local authority said it was close to concluding its search for a private sector partner to build and operate the new facility and was hopeful that it would be operational within a year. However, those plans were scuppered when it was discovered that a private sector firm wouldn't be permitted to operate the facility. And any hopes

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of getting the legislation updated ended when the Assembly collapsed in January 2017.

In August last year the council revealed that it was “in discussions with Belfast City Council regarding options for



The President of the Methodist Church was welcomed to Seymour Street MC on Sunday last by the Rev Mervyn Ewing and the congregation. The President and his wife joined the congregation after service for lunch

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collaboration” in a bid to progress the long-awaited project. It has stressed that the money already spent – much of it used for design, planning and legal costs – won’t be wasted as it intends to proceed with the project.

The Department for Communities insists that 1985 legislation permits any council to “provide and maintain a crematorium”. However, Antrim and Newtownabbey Council insists it was advised to the contrary and has said it is still “seeking clarity” on the matter.

A spokesperson for the council said: “The council has outline planning permission for a crematorium and ancillary services at a council-owned site at Doagh Road, Newtownabbey.

“It had initially been proposed to deliver this scheme as a public-private partnership. However, the Department for Communities advised the council that there was no legislation in place for the regulation of private sector or council-run crematoria, other than Roselawn, which is provided and maintained by Belfast City Council. The council will continue to seek clarity on this matter.

“The council is also exploring the option of entering into a collaborative arrangement with Belfast City Council in relation to the proposed crematorium.”

Three other Northern Ireland councils are working on a joint plan for a crematorium to serve the “wider western region” of the Province. A spokesperson for Derry City and Strabane District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council confirmed that they have

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“procured a consultant team to prepare an outline business case with regard to jointly developing a single crematorium facility at a suitable location within the three council areas”.

“Cogent Management Consulting LLP have been tasked with preparing the Outline Business Case and work is currently progressing in adherence to the terms of reference which includes a review of the legislative requirements should the project progress,” the spokesperson said.

A full report on the matter is to be brought before the relevant committee of each council in due course. Report courtesy the News Letter

January 15 in Christian History

January 15, 345 (traditional date): Paul of Thebes, traditionally considered the first Christian hermit and an inspiration for Antony of Egypt and later Christian monasticism, dies (see issue 64: Antony and the Desert Fathers).

January 15, 1535: Henry VIII declares himself head of English Church.

January 15, 1697: Massachusetts citizens observe a day of fasting and repentance for the Salem witch trials of 1692, in which 19 suspected witches were hanged and more than 150 imprisoned. The day was declared "That so all of God's people may offer up fervent supplications unto him, that all iniquity may be put away, which hath stirred God's holy jealousy against this land; that he would show us what we

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know not, and help us, wherein we have done amiss, to do so no more".

January 15, 1844: The University of Notre Dame, America's premiere Roman Catholic institution of higher learning, is chartered in South Bend, Indiana.

January 15, 1929: Baptist minister Martin Luther King, Jr., America's most visible civil rights leader from 1955 until his assassination in 1968, is born in Atlanta.

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