

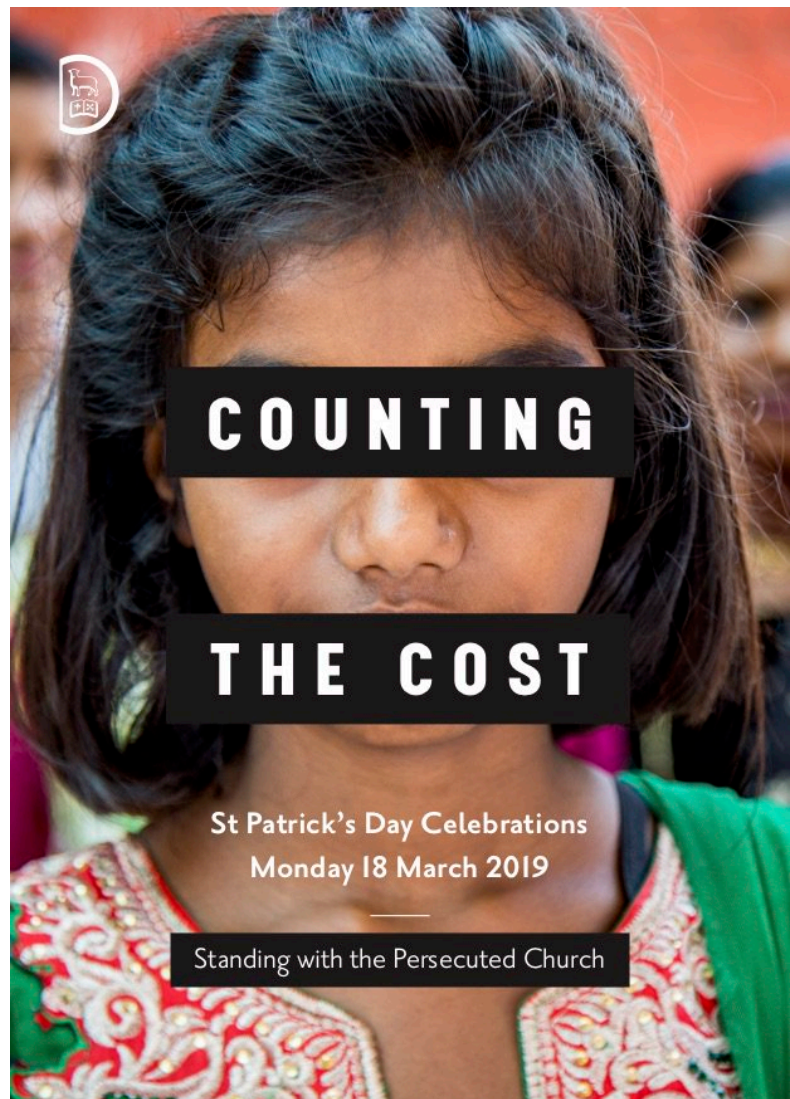
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Realities of persecution at Down St Patrick's Festival

'Michael Jones' an Egyptian Christian, will speak of the realities of persecution in Down Cathedral on Bank Holiday Monday, 18 March.

He is taking part in the Diocese of Down



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and Dromore's annual St Patrick's Day Festival.

The theme this year is "Counting the Cost – Standing with the Persecuted Church" and the President of Open Doors UK & Ireland, Eddie Lyle, will speak at the earlier service in Saul. Christians in Egypt face daily discrimination in education and the workplace, and some churches have been subjected to violent attacks.

'Michael', whose real identity must be protected, is working with ministry partners to strengthen the church and teach Egyptian Christians to stand through persecution and pressure.

He says: "In spite of the pressure and limitations from society and the authorities, the church in general is growing with a lot of ministry going on. The evangelical church is facing lot of opposition but is seeing a lot of joy and victory as well."

Michael will speak at the Festival Service in Down Cathedral (11.45 am) and Eddie Lyle will speak at the service of Holy Communion at Saul (9.15 am). The Prayer Pilgrimage from Saul to Downpatrick will also focus on the persecuted church. All are welcome.

Light the Fire on Slane on Saint Patrick's Day

The Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal from Saint Anthony's Convent, Drogheda, have extended an invitation for people

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to join them on Saint Patrick's Day to 'Light the Fire' in Saint Patrick's Parish Church, Slane.

The event will be held on 18th March at the very spot Saint Patrick lit the Easter Fire, and prayers will be offered for Ireland.

The Hill of Slane has huge significance in Irish Christian tradition. It has been the venue for many large gatherings over the years. In 1932 between 50 and 60 thousand people assembled on the hill to celebrate the fifteenth centenary of the coming of Saint Patrick in 432 AD, who, according to tradition, lit the Paschal fire there on Easter Saturday – a symbol of the light of Faith in God and the banishment of darkness and evil.

The 'Light the Fire' event will begin at 5.00pm and Bishop Tom Deenihan, Bishop of Meath will celebrate Mass followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Directions: Slane Village – N2 between Navan and Drogheda. For more information please contact the Franciscan Sisters on (041) 983 0441.

Brexit process creating utter confusion and bewilderment say C of E clergy

Frustration, despair, and a sense of being abandoned by Westminster are the primary emotions in both Leave and Remain areas across the UK, clergy in these communities

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have said, in the wake of Parliament's inability so far to resolve the Brexit impasse, the Church Times reports



On Wednesday, MPs defeated the Government by voting to reject no-deal in any scenario, after the Prime Minister's deal was defeated in the Commons by 149 votes for a second time on Tuesday evening.

Mrs May confirmed during PMQs on Wednesday that she would be voting to block a no-deal Brexit. Assuming a defeat for the no-deal option, MPs were due to vote yesterday on seeking an extension to Article 50 from the 27 members of the EU, for how long, and for what purpose.

In the Lincolnshire town of Boston, where three-quarters of voters voted Leave, the largest majority in the country, frustration was coupled with bewilderment in the wake of Tuesday's vote.

The Team Rector of Boston, the Revd Alyson Buxton, who was serving breakfast at St Botolph's to more than 40 homeless people in the town, which has a significant

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eastern European population, said on Wednesday:

“Everybody is going about their day job of caring for people regardless of the political situation; but there is a huge sense of complete and utter frustration and bewilderment.

“There is no consensus about anything, everybody has their own little ideas. The benefit of the nation is almost coming second in this discussion. The people’s vote would be so divisive, especially if it went the other way. We don’t need that kind of polarised division now.”

She had voted Remain, and would personally like a second referendum, but fears the consequences in a town that had “been through so much” in the past three years.

“People in the town thought that [Brexit] would just happen overnight, and that the population [from the EU] would go home. But we have children in schools who have been born in this country. It wasn’t about where people had come from; it was the fact that our population grew so fast so quickly.”

Brexit in Belfast Cathedral

A series of Lent Talks at Belfast Cathedral focusing on Brexit and the Book of Ruth drew a large number of people for its opening session on Wednesday March 13.

The series, facilitated by Glenn Jordan from Corrymeela, continues every Wednesday lunchtime during Lent, and is entitled ‘Theology in the City – Brexit, Borders and the Book of Ruth.’

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“Wednesdays in Lent” is a collaboration between the Cathedral and the Corrymeela Community.

Each talk and discussion runs from

1.05pm-1.50pm. Attendees are also invited for Holy Communion (12pm-12.30pm) and refreshments from 12.30pm, or are welcome to bring their own lunch.



The topic of the first talk was Ruth and the Law. Future sessions are as follows:

- ** March 20 - Crossroads Decisions
- ** March 27 - The Challenge of the Migrant
- ** April 3 - Who is Family?
- ** April 10 - The Political importance of Compassion

The series provides the opportunity for discussion as well as listening.

Benburb to celebrate restoration of 1680 King James Bible

Benburb Priory Library and Museum will be the focus for a special event on 26 March at 7.30pm to celebrate the return of its 1680 King James Bible after a dedicated conservation programme which has restored it to its former glory. The

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Bible's restoration is part of the Library and Museum's ongoing conservation programme which has rescued many rare books and unique artefacts from being lost to future generations.

The centrepiece of the event will be talks by two distinguished scholars, the Very Rev Gregory Dunstan, Dean of St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh, and Professor Séamus MacMathúna MRJA, a Celticist and lexicographer, who will explain the significance of the King James Bible in the development of Anglicanism, and the importance of words and language in our interpretation and understanding of historic materials.

The event is open to all. Viewing of the restored King James Bible with insights from the Conservator, Sean Madden, will take place from 6.30pm.

The event is being organized with the support of the Executive Office, as part of 2018/2019 Central Good Relations Funding (Good Relations Capacity Building Pilot), and contributes towards the delivery of one of the /Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC)/strategy's key priorities, managed by the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council.

Same sex bishop accuses conservative Primates of homophobia

One of the bishops who were told that they could not bring their same-sex spouse to next year's Lambeth Conference

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has accused conservative Primates of homophobia in their opposition to his presence.

The Area Bishop of York-Scarborough, the Rt Revd Kevin Robertson, a suffragan in the diocese of Toronto, said that he was not convinced that archbishops from the global South who had insisted that his husband, Mohan Sharma, could not attend the Conference were motivated solely by theological conviction.

Bishop Robertson was told in person by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace earlier this year that Mr Sharma, unlike the husbands and wives of all other bishops, would not be invited to the Lambeth Conference in 2020.



“It was disappointing, absolutely, and I expressed that to the Archbishop,” Bishop Robertson said. He had been at Lambeth Palace for an induction event for new bishops from across the Anglican Communion.

“It was disappointing not only for me and my spouse, Mohan, but I also asked him what message does this send

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to more progressive Anglicans, not only in the UK and North America, but to gay and lesbian Anglicans in places in the Communion where it's very difficult to come out."

When asked if he believed the fierce opposition to his presence, let alone Mr Sharma's invitation, from GAFCON-aligned Primates was driven by homophobia, he replied "I do."

"Because it appears there's an inconsistency," he said, pointing to a blog by the Secretary-General of the Communion, the Rt Revd Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon, which announced the policy of barring gay spouses.

Dr Idowu-Fearon wrote that it was because same-sex marriages were inconsistent with a resolution on marriage from the 1998 Lambeth Conference which defined marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

"I know as we approach 2020 that there are bishops who have been divorced and remarried, in some cases more than once, who are being invited, and their spouses are also being invited," Bishop Robertson said.

Methodist President's visit to Lisburn

The Reverend Billy Davison has shared aspects of his visit this week to Lisburn. "I was delighted to join Rev Mervyn Ewing, Seymour Street Methodist Church, Lisburn in congratulating a recent centenarian from his congregation,

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Mrs Eileen May Wiseman. She celebrated her 100th birthday last Thursday, 7th March. Originally from Cullybackey, she attended Buick Memorial Primary School; I was amazed when she said that she was in the same class as my late mother, Marjorie, and late uncle Rev Richard Greenwood. We had a lovely chat before a moment of prayer giving thanks for her long life and asking for God's continual blessing upon her.

The President visited Massey Catering Company based in Maghaberry, Lisburn. "We were shown around the extensive catering equipment which when sold involves installation and maintenance throughout all kinds of business premises in Ireland, England and Scotland. We had an interesting conversation with Mr Sydney Massey, son Philip and gave thanks for the employment they provide in the community," he reports.

With clerical colleagues and leaders he visited PRM Group at their Lisburn site. PRM offer a fresh approach to distribution & operate a highly successful business. The company employ 250 people at the Lisburn site. "It was a pleasure to meet company owner Mr Philip Morrow and his wife Lynn to hear how their business has grown over the years. Mr Morrow spoke with great passion about the business, Brexit and future development. It was a delight to pray with them and give thanks for what their company contributes to the local economy", said the President.

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Bishop Ken Good on the PPS's Bloody Sunday decision

“The decision of the Public Prosecution Service to prosecute one former soldier over the events of Bloody Sunday has satisfied neither the families who lost loved ones nor those who advocate on behalf of military veterans.

“I understand that it will be met with disbelief, disappointment and even anger in some quarters, and with relief in others.

“The Public Prosecution Service faced a difficult task reinvestigating the events of January 30th, 1972, almost half a century later. I would urge people to study the PPS's decisions and the rationale for those decisions very carefully, and to react in a measured way.

“Bloody Sunday was one of many dark days in our history. I offer my sympathy to those who were bereaved that day and to those bereaved by the many other individual tragedies which occurred during the Troubles and which blight our history.”

News briefs

+++Hanging the Dean - It has been the tradition that every Dean of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, has an official portrait painted. Dean Morton's portrait has recently been completed by Kilkenny painter, Blaise Smith. The portrait will be on display in the Royal Hibernian Academy for a period

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of time, after which it will be afforded its place in the deanery.



+++Advance notice of the PW Annual Conference - on 9th May with guest speaker Helen Warnock, Principal of Belfast Bible College. Annual Meeting 2-3.45pm. Evening Celebration 7.30-9.00pm. Praise led by Erin McBride and Emma Smyth

+++Reboot for young members - REBOOT 2019 is on the 23rd of March. It's a great space for young people to ask whatever questions they have about God, faith and Christianity. Get tickets at: <https://www.rebootglobal.org>

+++New canon of St Patrick's, Dublin - the Reverend David Oxley has been elected to the Chapter as Prebendary of St Audoen's, in succession to Canon Jonathan Barry. Canon-elect Oxley was a chorister, and a pupil of the Cathedral Choir School and the Cathedral Grammar School, where he now Chaplain. He was appointed Succentor in 2007 and he will continue to serve in this office. Canon-elect Oxley is Rector of Santry, Glasnevin and Finglas. He is married to Amalia; their son Victor is following his father's foot-steps as a boy chorister. Canon-elect Oxley will be

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installed at Evensong on Sunday 24 March. All are welcome to attend.

+++ Methodist Roadshows - The church's Connexional Structures are changing to further mission in the local church. Members are being invited to attend a roadshow in their area to find out how the changes will impact locally and to meet their new District Superintendent. The first roadshow was held at Jennymount Methodist. For more information on when and where the roadshows are taking place see <https://www.facebook.com/events/2089232104501174/>

+++Choral services in Derry - Sunday at 11.00am Choral Eucharist with music by John Ireland (Communion service in F) and Henry Coleman (The King of love). 4.00pm Choral Evensong with music by Charles Wood (Evening Canticles in D) and Samuel Sebastian Wesley (The Lord hath been mindful of us). Wednesday evening, the lenten series continues with a service of compline at 7.30pm, sung by the Gentlemen of the Choir. The Lenten mid-week address with hymns and music also continues on Thursday at 1.05pm. All are welcome.

+++Appetite for republican and pro-life party - The leader of Ireland's newest and fastest-growing political party has said he is convinced there is an appetite for a new movement that is both republican and pro-life. Peadar Kirby – founder of Aontú – told The Irish Catholic that his party envisions a united Ireland which also includes constitutional provisions that protect the unborn.

+++Food for thought - "Progress means getting nearer to the place you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong

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turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road."

CS Lewis in Mere Christianity

March 15 in Christian history

March 15, 1517: Needing money to rebuild St. Peter's basilica, Pope Leo X announces a special sale of indulgences. A Dominican named Johann Tetzel led the way in promoting the sale in Germany and erroneously declared that indulgences would cover future sins (Leo's forgave all past sins). The teaching angered monk Martin Luther, who soon posted his 95 Theses in response.

March 15, 1672: Charles II issues his first declaration of indulgence, suspending Parliament's legislation against Catholic and Protestant dissenters. He was soon forced to rescind the declaration, however, and the following year issued the Test Act, which drove Catholics out of public office.

March 15, 1953: Billy Graham holds his first integrated revival in Chattanooga, TN. Up to this point Graham accommodated southern whites by holding segregated revivals when in the South.

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