



CNI



Churches should turn off lights for Earth Hour today

Now in its tenth year, Earth Hour 2017 takes place today, Saturday, March 25 from 8.30-9.30pm. Earth Hour is the single largest symbolic mass participation event in the world.

Born of the hope that people could be mobilised to take action on climate change, Earth Hour now inspires a global community of millions of

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people in 7,001 cities and towns across 178 countries to switch off the lights for an hour. The event recognises our global responsibility for the climate change, which is already devastating lives and threatening the future of the planet.

Our actions today can change our tomorrows. We love and care about our beautiful, fragile planet – “our common home” (*Laudato Si*) and its people, especially the poor in the global south who suffer most from the effects of climate change.

Earth Hour is an opportunity for parishes and other faith groups to celebrate, pray and explore environmental concerns and how our faith calls us to address them. Did you know that your church’s Earth Hour activities can count towards your parish’s application for an Eco-Congregation Ireland (ECI) Award?

Eco-Congregation Ireland encourages churches of all denominations to take an eco approach to worship, lifestyle, property and finance management, community outreach and contact with the developing world. The Catholic Church, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches are involved as well as the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Vision

Our vision is to see churches of all denominations throughout Ireland celebrate the gift of God's creation, recognise the inter-dependence of all creation and care for it in their life and mission and through members' personal lifestyles.

We ask Christians everywhere to reflect on the beauty of God's world and to consider what practical steps can be taken to prevent further damage to the environment. Also, to pray for our wounded planet, for people in the developing world already affected by climate change and for future generations.

As a global campaign, Earth Hour neatly intersects with ECI's four award criteria - spiritual, practical, local community and global solidarity. Our current understanding of parish includes the whole bioregion with all that exists, lives and grows.)

Many parishes are already taking part around the world in different and creative ways:

- Arranging for any lights on or in your church to be turned off for an hour.
- Organising a candlelit holy hour with a climate change theme.

- Planning a torchlight wildlife or stargazing walk to make the most of the hour of darkness.
- Using the special prayer on the ECI website at Mass on Saturday evening and/or Sunday.
(www.ecocongregationireland.com)

If you live in Dublin you are welcome to join the Church of the Ascension, Balally, Dundrum, Dublin 16 for their candlelit hour of prayer and reflection from 8.30-9.30pm on Saturday, March 25.

Welsh Bishop forced to quit after backing gay cleric Jeffrey John in Church homophobia row

In an ongoing row over homophobia in the Church in Wales, an assistant bishop is resigning after a sustained campaign forcing him to quit.

David Wilbourne, a strong supporter of gay cleric Jeffrey John, is stepping down on Easter Sunday after 'considerable and increasing pressure to relinquish' his post for the past 18 months, he told the **Church Times**.

The assistant bishop has backed Dr John, currently Dean of St Albans Cathedral, in a feud with bishops after he was recently blocked from being appointed Bishop of Llandaff.

Dr John wrote to the senior bishop in Wales, Dr John Davies, saying the only reason he was barred from the post was his sexuality.

'Ever since I knew that Jeffrey was in the frame for Llandaff, I thought it would speak mountains about our policy of inclusion. Wales has led on that; so I can't understand why the bishops aren't of the same mind,' he told the **Church Times**.

Dr John won more than half the votes in the electoral body appointing a new bishop of Llandaff and unanimous support from local churchgoers on the panel. But he was blocked by bishops and homophobic comments were made about him during the process.

In an official statement announcing his resignation, Bishop Wilbourne made no mention of the campaign against him.

'I realise it is time to hand over the baton to the newly appointed Bishop of Llandaff, so he or she

can run free, enabling the Church which I have cherished these past years to flourish.

'I therefore intend to finish my time as assistant bishop on Easter Day 2017, just before the Sacred Synod approves our new bishop.

'I do so with the greatest gratitude for all the faithful parish priests and people here, whose marvellous ministry I am daily humbled by.

'I pray that you are given the bishop you so richly deserve, one who, in the words of Cardinal Basil Hume, simply comes to where people are and takes them to places they never dreamt of going.'

The Church in Wales declined to comment on the allegations of a campaign against him.

The Church's senior bishop, the Rt Revd John Davies, Bishop of Swansea and Brecon, who has current oversight of the Diocese of Llandaff, thanked Wilbourne for his work in the Church in Wales.

He said, 'Bishop David makes it clear in his own statement why he has made the decision to step down, and it is important that we respect that

decision and the prayerful manner in which he has reached it.'

It comes after the Chapter of Southwark Cathedral became the latest to back Dr John in the increasingly bitter row,' a statement on Thursday read.

'Southwark Cathedral has a long and proud reputation of standing up for diversity and inclusion within the church. It was therefore with deep sadness that we read the reports of the failed appointment process for the vacant see of the Diocese of Llandaff and especially of the way in which it affected the Dean of St Albans, the Very Revd Dr Jeffrey John.'

In a strongly worded statement the Chapter called 'for a future in which discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, gender or ethnicity will cease'. The statement described Dr John as 'a person of deep wisdom, the highest integrity and startling honesty.

'His willingness to live within the requirements laid down by the House of Bishops of the Church of England, and the public assurances that he does so, has not stopped him being rejected as a candidate for episcopal ministry.

We believe that the church, through its lack of similar integrity, wisdom and honesty, is failing to recognise the God-given abilities from which we as a community benefited.'

Bishop of Sheffield: Joint statement by Archbishops of Canterbury and York

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York made this joint statement yesterday on the recent events surrounding the nomination of Bishop Philip North as Bishop of Sheffield.

"The recent events surrounding the nomination of Bishop Philip North as Bishop of Sheffield, including his withdrawal from the process, have understandably raised great concern amongst many in the Church of England. The status of the House of Bishops Declaration of June 2014 has been questioned by some and its meaning has also been challenged.

"We have therefore written to Sir Philip Mawer, the Independent Reviewer under the Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests, (Resolution of Disputes Procedure Regulations) 2014, to address the concerns that have arisen

in the Church following these recent events. We attach our letter to Sir Philip, in which we reaffirm clearly our commitment, and the commitment of the House of Bishops, to its Declaration, to the principles contained in it, and to the overriding principle of mutual flourishing.

"Finally, in this period of Lent, as part of our preparation for the glorious celebration of the extraordinary grace of God in the events of Holy Week and Easter, we call on all those in the Church to pray openly for the flourishing of those with whom they disagree, to demonstrate the mutual love which we are called to share and to proclaim confidently in word and deed that in Christ we find our true identities, and the overcoming of those things which in ourselves we find so divisive."

+ *Justin Cantuar:* +*Sentamu Eboracensis*

Lots of tears at Westminster inter-church prayer services after terror attack

The Catholic chaplain to Parliament said people were weeping at prayer services the day after the Westminster terror attack.



The priest, Fr Pat Browne, said he arrived at Parliament about two minutes after Wednesday's attack and was sent home by police.

He returned yesterday for three prayer services for those killed and injured when an assailant mowed down people on Westminster Bridge, crashed, and killed a police officer near Parliament before being killed.

Fr Browne conducted the services in Parliament's Chapel of St Mary's Undercroft with the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the Speaker's chaplain and an Anglican.

“There were lots of tears,” Fr Browne told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview. “There were a lot of staff there, members of Parliament, peers. People were very shaken.

“For some it was the first time they could sit down and reflect on what had happened. They didn’t feel, until they got home last night, what had really happened,” he said. “They are very shaken people.”

The priest told CNS that everyone had a different story.

“I spoke to some MPs who were on their way to vote at the time. They heard the gunshots.

“One was walking through from Portcullis House [opposite Parliament] to the chamber when he heard this awful thud. Though he couldn’t see it, it was the car hitting the railings,” he said. “He went on and then the next minute he saw the prime minister being bottled out, then two police officers with guns charging to the gate. Lots of people have stories like that.”

Reverend Hudson-Wilkin preached at the first of the three services, he said, and she reminded the congregation to respond with compassion

and solidarity to the evil that had entered their lives “in a very dramatic way”.

“Westminster Parliament is like a village and, when something like this happens, everyone comes together,” Fr Browne said. “It doesn’t matter if you work in the kitchen or you are a cleaner or a member of Parliament, everyone rallies together.”

Giving Syrians full refugee status Is the right thing to do, Says Christian Aid

Christian Aid welcomes The Home Office announcement to grant Syrians resettling in the UK refugee status, saying Britain should be proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and conflict.

Thousands of people who have fled Syria and resettled in the UK under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) will now have access to rights, including higher education and overseas travel documents, promoting dignity and stability among people who have experienced violence and trauma.

Syrian refugees have previously been granted Humanitarian Protection, a special form of leave to remain, which prevented them from accessing some services.

Tom Viita, Head of Advocacy at Christian Aid, said: “It may take many years for peace to return to Syria and the many millions who have fled to return home and help rebuild their country.

“Today the Home Office has done the right thing for the few thousand Syrians resettled in the UK by granting full refugee status so they can move on with their lives with some stability after such trauma.

“This will allow them to make a full contribution to this country while they are here. Britain should be proud to do our bit to offer sanctuary to these Syrians.”

Currently at least 5 million Syrians are refugees, mostly in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, which hosts more than 1 million refugees in a country with a population of around 4 million. The UK scheme has resettled less than 6,000 out of a planned 20,000 by 2020.

However, following Donald Trump’s moves to stop America’s refugee resettlement programme,

the charity called on the UK to expand the British scheme beyond the planned 20,000 it has committed to resettle by 2020.

Mr Viita added: “Donald Trump’s U-turn on America’s commitment to resettle refugees means the UK and other countries need to step up and do more for the millions of people who have been forced to flee Syria, especially those in need of permanent resettlement.

“The British scheme of 20,000 is low by international standards and suggests the UK is not doing all it can to help those who have fled for their lives. The Government should extend the scheme and speed up the transfer of people from the region.”

Pope Francis wants Romero sites to be places of pilgrimage

While documentation regarding an alleged miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Oscar Romero is being studied at the Vatican, there is no date scheduled for his canonisation, the Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador, has said.

“I must say, in all sincerity, that there is no date. And we understand it well because it involves a process.

“Blessed Romero’s cause is at a decisive phase that is necessary for his canonisation,” Archbishop Jose Luis Escobar Alas said yesterday during a memorial Mass for Blessed Romero in Rome.

Archbishop Escobar, along with the other bishops of El Salvador were making their “ad limina” visits to Rome and the Vatican and anticipated the 37th anniversary of Blessed Romero’s death with Mass at Rome’s Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

Blessed Romero, former Archbishop of San Salvador, was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass in the chapel of a local hospital one day after calling on the government to end its violation of human rights against the population.

During the nearly two hours Pope Francis spent with the bishops of El Salvador on Monday, the Pontiff expressed “his warmth and affection” for Blessed Romero, Archbishop Escobar told Catholic News Service after the Mass.

“He told us that it would be very good if the places associated with Romero – his relics, the place where he was killed and where he was

born – would become places of pilgrimage,” the archbishop said.

During his homily, Archbishop Escobar thanked Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life and the official promoter of Blessed Romero’s Cause, for his work throughout the canonical process.

The alleged miracle involves a pregnant woman in El Salvador who was in danger of dying, Archbishop Paglia told CNS. “Several friends of this family prayed to Blessed Oscar Romero. And in a short time, the baby was born and the mother is well.”

News briefs & Upcoming events

+++ Canon of Christ Church Dublin -

The Revd Kevin Brew is to become a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral. Kevin is Rector of St Mary’s Parish in Howth and has been appointed to the cathedral Chapter following the resignation of Canon Patrick Comerford who took up a post in the Dioceses of Limerick and Killaloe in January. He becomes the 12th Canon. Kevin was ordained in Christ Church by

Archbishop McAdoo to serve in Raheny & Coolock as curate assistant to the Revd Cecil Wilson. He was appointed Bishop's Curate in the Parish of Finglas and Chaplain to the Rotunda Hospital in 1980. He subsequently served as Rector in the Mountmellick Group of Parishes in Kildare Diocese from 1983 until 1989, when he was appointed Rector of Ahoghill & Portglenone in the Diocese of Connor where he remained until 2005. He then returned to Dublin and Glendalough having been appointed Rector of Howth.

+++ Fr Bernard Bryson - The death has taken place of Fr Bernard Bryson, a native of Maghera (Derry diocese). Fr Bryson was born on 15th June 1929. He studied at St Columb's College, Derry and St Patrick's College, Maynooth. He was ordained a priest on 19th June 1955. He was appointed to Long Tower and served as Chaplain to the Nazareth House. The following year he was appointed to Carndonagh. He went on to serve as Curate in Coleraine from 1957-1960; Cranagh 1960-1964; Newtownstewart 1964-1971; Killygordon 1971-1976 and Ballinascreen 1976-1987. In 1987 he was appointed Parish Priest of Sion Mills

where he served until moving to Ballykelly as a Curate in 2004 until his retirement in 2006.

+++ Kevin Butler, husband of MU Diocesan President - Posting on Down & Dromore diocesan web site states : “We are very sorry to learn of the sudden death earlier this week of Kevin Butler, husband of June Butler our Mothers’ Union Diocesan President and former Diocesan Secretary. There will be a Service of Thanksgiving for Kevin’s life in Saintfield tomorrow (Saturday) at 1.30 pm. Please hold June and her family in prayer.”

