



***Christians have been increasingly targeted in Egypt following the overthrow of former Islamist president Mohammed Morsi in 2013. December's attack was followed by increasing attacks on Coptic Christians in the Sinai Peninsula, causing some 250 Christians to flee the northern Sinai town of Arish.***

## **Church leaders unite after 44 die in Sunday massacre in Egypt**

Church leaders around the world have condemned the vicious attacks on innocent worshippers in St George (Mar Girgis) Coptic church in Tanta and in front of St Mark's church in Alexandria, Egypt, on Sunday last. At least 44 people have been killed after terrorists linked to Daesh detonated bombs at the two Coptic churches in Egypt. The blasts took place on Sunday last – a day when both eastern and western Christian traditions celebrated Palm Sunday.

Security footage appeared to show a security officer direct a man who was seeking entry into the cathedral to go through a metal detector. The man took a step under the detector then backed up a step, followed by a huge explosion that cut off the camera feed.

Earlier, a bomb exploded 70 miles away inside the Church of St George in Tanta, 50 miles north of Cairo, during its Palm Sunday service. Estimates say at least 44 people were killed and more than 100 injured in the two attacks, making it one of the deadliest against the nation's Christians in decades.

It was the single deadliest day for Christians in decades and the worst since a bombing at Cairo's largest Coptic cathedral killed at least 25

people and wounded 49 in December, many of them women and children, in the deadliest attack on Egypt's Christian minority in years. Coptic Christians make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's population of 91 million.

The first bomb was detonated inside St George's Coptic Church in Tanta, north of Cairo. It caused 27 deaths and 78 injuries. CCTV footage and photos taken after the attack shows pools of blood on the floors and pillars of the church.

Hours later, a second terrorist attempted to gain access to St Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria; the seat of the Coptic Pope Tawadros II, who was inside the building having completed the Mass. The Alexandria terrorist was prevented from entering the church by security forces. He detonated his bomb outside the cathedral, killing 17 and injuring 48. The victims of this attack included at least three police officers.

The terrorist group Daesh has claimed responsibility for the attacks, the Reuters news agency said, quoting a statement which warned of further attacks to come: "Crusaders and their apostate allies should know the bill between us and them is very big and they will pay it with rivers of blood from their children, god willing. Wait for us, for we will wait for you."



***Pope Tawadros II had just concluded the Mass at St Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria when a terrorist detonated a bomb outside the building, killing 17 and injuring 48.***

Reaction to the attack was swift. Pope Tawadros said that “sinful acts will not undermine the unity and coherence of the Egyptian people in the face of terrorism.”

Pope Francis, who is due to visit Egypt later this month, was leading a Palm Sunday Mass in St Peter's Square in the Vatican when news of the attacks in Egypt emerged. “I pray for the dead and the victims,” he said at the end of the service. “May the Lord convert the hearts of people who sow terror, violence and death and

even the hearts of those who produce and traffic in weapons.”

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, Tweeted his support for the victims and a message of solidarity with the Coptic church. He said: “As we come to Easter pray for victims, the justice of the cross, hope & healing of resurrection.”

### **Archbishop of Dublin**

The Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, has expressed solidarity with Coptic Christians in Egypt following the attacks. He said, “We pray for Christians in Egypt who show such courage and resilience in continuing to witness to Christ despite increasing danger and rising attacks on their communities. We pray for their leaders as they continue to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of their people.

“Representing the Archbishop of Canterbury, I attended the consecration of Pope Tawadros II in the Cathedral of St Mark. I have been received by him as a Member of the Anglican Oriental Orthodox Commission. He was attending Mass in St Mark’s in Alexandria at the time of the second explosion. My thoughts and prayers are with him and all those affected by such atrocities

on what was a day of solemnity and celebration in the Christian Year. Sunday's Epistle reminded us from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians: Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2.6) We pray for solidarity in suffering, compassion in sorrow and stability in government in Egypt today.

"In Dublin the Egyptian Copts are members of the Dublin Council of Churches. In October I will welcome to Dublin members of the Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission which includes representatives of the Copts, Armenians, Syrians, Indian Orthodox and Ethiopians. Three years ago we met in Egypt."

## **WCC General Secretary**

The WCC General Secretary, the Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit expressed profound sorrow and offered condolences and prayers for the families of the victims, for the wounded and for all the people of Egypt. He encouraged Egyptians to stand firm and united through the many trials and tribulations that continue to threaten.

Tveit said, "In the face of this brutality, the human family, all people of faith and of good will, must stand together to recommit to respecting and caring for one another, to protecting one

another, and to preventing such violence.” The World Council of Churches appealed to President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, to religious leaders and to governments across the region “ to act swiftly and boldly to safeguard the fundamental religious rights of worshippers of all faiths, to ensure security in the face of violence and to guarantee justice for all people. Places of worship representing many different faith traditions have been targets of violence by extremists.”

Tveit said, “Government action must be matched by solidarity among Muslims, Christians and people of all faiths as they interact at the local level and together denounce any violent attack.”

“In these difficult and challenging times”, Tveit added, “ the WCC calls particularly on religious and national leaders to support the people in Egypt as they affirm life and engage in countering negative trends through peaceful means, such as proactive engagement in dialogue and partnership between Christians and Muslims in Egypt and throughout the world.”

## **Sunni Islamic response**

Meanwhile, Egypt's Al-Azhar, the highest Sunni Islamic authority in Egypt, issued a strongly worded statement condemning the attack: "Coptic churches and homes have been set on fire, members of the Coptic minority have been physically attacked, and their property has been looted", the human rights group Amnesty International reported in March.

### **Pope's visit to Egypt to go ahead**

Despite recent and repeated terrorist attacks against Egypt's minority Christian communities, Pope Francis will not cancel his visit to Egypt.

"The Pope's trip to Egypt proceeds as scheduled," Greg Burke, Vatican spokesman, told Catholic News Service by email on April 10. The Pope is scheduled to meet governmental and interfaith leaders during an April 28-29 visit to Cairo.

"Egyptians are looking forward to Pope Francis's visit, although the atmosphere at present is heavy," Fr Rafic Grieche, spokesman for the Egyptian bishops, told CNS on April 10, the day after the attacks.

"The Pope's mission is to be beside his brothers at the time of difficulty. Now is the real time that



he can bring peace and hope to the Egyptian people as a whole and to the Christians of the East, in particular,” Fr Grieche added.

He said people were uneasy entering churches with metal detectors and other security measures.

“It’s not like going to a normal church. But we need these measures to keep people safe,” he said.

He said after the attack, he celebrated a Mass with 2,000 people.

## **Walk of Witness by members of Douglas Churches**

Palm Sunday in south Cork was marked, for the ninth year in a row, by a Walk of Witness by members of Douglas Churches Together in the southern suburbs of Cork City.

Clergy and representatives of the three member churches, met on Palm Sunday afternoon. Beginning in Douglas Community Park, the group processed, singing hymns, listening to readings and offering prayers, to the entrance to Saint Columba’s Roman Catholic Church, and



on to the churchyard at St Luke's Church of Ireland Church. The final destinations were the two shopping centres in Douglas village – Douglas Village Shopping Centre and Douglas Court Shopping Centre – where Douglas Churches Together opened stalls which will remain open throughout Holy Week.

Douglas Churches together is an organisation consisting of members of Douglas Union of Parishes, St Columba's and St Patrick's Roman Catholic Churches, and Cork Methodist Church, all of which have parishes and congregations

based in this southern part of the suburbs of Cork City.



## **Derry and Ballyclare school choirs get to semi-finals in Radio Ulster's SCOTY**

Lumen Christi College's choir from Derry and Fairview Primary school from Ballyclare have won places in the semi-finals of the BBC Radio Ulster School Choir Of The Year.

Over the course of eight weeks, 60 choirs from across Northern Ireland are singing to impress as they battle it out for a place in the final of the competition.

Presented by John Toal and Kerry McLean, the series was recorded at seven venues across

Northern Ireland, with the sixth programme broadcast on Sunday last on BBC Radio Ulster.

The series, part of BBC Music NI, will culminate in a live final from the Ulster Hall, Belfast, on Sunday 30 April.

Competing for a place in the final in the sixth round recorded at St Mary's College, Derry, with presenter John Toal, were: Holy Family Primary School and Eglinton Primary School, Derry; DH Christie Memorial Primary School, Coleraine; Fairview Primary School, Ballyclare and Hazelbank Primary School, Broughshane.

In the Senior category, the schools competing for a place in the grand final were: Lumen Christi College, Derry; St Cecilia's College, Derry; Loreto College, Coleraine; St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt and Coleraine Grammar School.

It was Fairview Primary School, Ballyclare (junior category) and Lumen Christi College (senior category - pictured above) who impressed the judging panel, made up of Richard Yarr, Senior Producer Classical Music, BBC Radio Ulster; Ciaran Scullion, Head of Music, Arts Council for Northern Ireland and Rebekah Coffey, soprano and vocal coach.

Now in its third year, the BBC Radio Ulster School Choir of the Year is produced in association with the Ulster Youth Choir, and supported by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland (ACNI). The winning choirs will feature across a range of BBC Radio Ulster's programming and events during this year.



## **RSCM Millennium Youth Choir audition day & evensong**

The RSCM Millennium Youth Choir is a vibrant, young chamber choir, for singers up to age 23. It was founded at the instigation of Lord Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, and offers special opportunities to young singers to sing the widest and most exciting range of sacred music to the highest standards.

The Millennium Youth Choir's annual programme includes training days, cathedral visits and a week-long residential course during school and

university holidays, alongside individual musical and vocal tuition, and regular opportunities to record and broadcast.

The next opportunity to audition will be on 29 April in Bristol, when candidates are invited to sing with the choir for the day, with a £10 fee to attend.

Contact the choir in advance to book a place:

[myc@rscm.com](mailto:myc@rscm.com) or 01722 424843.

For further information including choir recordings see - <https://www.rscm.com/myc/>

## **Castlecaufield's historic Wilkinson organ restored**

On Wednesday 29th March a large crowd gathered in St Michael & All Angels' Church, Castlecaulfield, for a Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication.

The service marked the completion of the rebuilding of the historic Wilkinson organ, which has served the church week by week for 124 years. The organ was installed in 1893 in memory of the Revd Benjamin White-Spunner, and the original cost was £229. After almost a

century and a quarter of continuous use, it was in need of a major refurbishment, and the cost today was quite different - approximately £35,000 + VAT! Work began in July 2016, by Wells Kennedy partnership, Lisburn.



Part of the organ was playable just before Christmas in time for a broadcast on RTE radio,



and the final pipes installed earlier in March, just in time for the dedication.

The organ is unique in that it is the only instrument by Wilkinson (a firm based in Kendal, England) ever built in Northern Ireland. During the service gifts were presented and dedicated in memory of the late Glennis Allen, a lifelong and faithful member of the choir, by her husband and family.



***The Rector (right), Archbishop, Preacher, Parish Readers and members of the Allen family***



The service was conducted by the rector, the Revd Dr Peter Thompson, the dedication was performed by the Primate, Archbishop Dr Richard Clarke, and the preacher was the Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, the Very Revd Dr William Morton.

Following the service there was a short organ recital to display the versatility of the wonderfully restored instrument by the Rector, culminating with a thrilling performance of Widor's famous Toccata by the parish choir and organ. A series of musical events are planned for the coming year, beginning on Sunday 7 May with an evening of Gospel Hymns and Organ Recital.

## **Three former MLA's get posts on the Education Authority**

Four unionists and four nationalists or republicans have been appointed to the Education Authority for Northern Ireland which is responsible for running the school system.

The political background of the eight new members of the Education Authority has been determined based on the size of the parties to which they are affiliated.

The DUP nominations are as follows: David Cargo of Newtownards (a former Chief Officer of the Belfast Education and Library Board), who was a previous board member. He has provided advice in recent years to the DUP. David Craig of Hillsborough, another previous board member and ex-MLA. Brenda Hale, also of Hillsborough, also ex- MLA.

The Sinn Fein nominees are Nuala Toman of Lurgan (a researcher for the party and former board member), Monica Culbert of Belfast (a previous board member, who has canvassed on behalf of Sinn Fein at elections), and Oliver McMullan, the former MLA.

The SDLP nomination is Giovanni Doran of Londonderry, a lay Magistrate who is chairman of the SDLP's district executive for the region.

The UUP nomination is Andy McMorran of Belfast, who was previously a member of the board (and former head of Ashfield Boys School). He has declared that he has not undertaken any political activity during the last five years and he does not currently hold any other public appointments.

Annual pay for the posts is £8,800 plus travel and subsistence allowances.

## **C of E Cathedrals review body announced**

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have set up a Cathedrals Working Group, CWG, in response to a request made by the Bishop of Peterborough in his January 2017 [Visitation Charge](#) on Peterborough Cathedral for a revision to be carried out of the adequacy of the current Cathedrals Measure.

The CWG will review aspects of cathedral management and governance and produce recommendations for the Archbishops on the implications of these responsibilities with regards to the current Cathedrals Measure. It will be chaired by the Bishop of Stepney, Adrian Newman, the former Dean of Rochester Cathedral, and the Dean of York, Vivienne Faull, will be the vice chair.

The Working Group will look at a number of different areas of Cathedral governance, including training and development for cathedral deans and chapters, financial management issues, the procedure for Visitations, safeguarding matters, buildings and heritage and the role of Cathedrals in contributing to evangelism within their dioceses.

The Bishop of Stepney and the Dean of York said:

"Cathedrals contribute uniquely to the ecology of the Church of England, and we are a healthier, stronger church when they flourish. We are pleased to have this opportunity to review the structures that support their ministry, in order to enhance their role in church and society. Cathedrals are one of the success stories of the Church of England, with rising numbers of worshippers. They are a vital part of our heritage and make an incalculable contribution to the life of the communities that they serve. This is an exciting opportunity for the Working Group to look at the different aspects of how Cathedrals work, and to ensure that the legislation and procedures they use are fit for purpose for their mission in the 21st century."

The Group will report back initially to the Archbishops' Council, Church Commissioners and House of Bishops in December 2017.

The Chair is Rt Revd Adrian Newman, Bishop of Stepney, and Vice-Chair is Very Revd Vivienne Faull, Dean of York. Rt Hon Jack Straw MP is one of seven other members which includes Carl Hughes, Member of the General Synod and the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee. He

led the Visitation of Peterborough Cathedral on behalf of the Bishop of Peterborough. He is also vice chairman of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Finance

## **News briefs & Upcoming events**

### **+++ Archbishop's sorrow at Glasnevin**

**vandalism** - The Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, has expressed sorrow at the news that the Necrology Wall in Glasnevin Cemetery has been vandalised. "I was invited to take part in the Inter Faith Act of Worship for the dedication of the wall erected during the centenary of 1916. It is a historic record of all those who died in the rebellion from whatever perspective they came – we remembered them all. The families involved in this initiative showed great courage and I express sadness and distress for them at this time."

**+++ European Churches where to? -** Dr Kenneth Milne, representing the Irish Council of Churches as Chair of ICC's European Affairs Committee, has just returned from a conference in Edinburgh which was held under the auspices of the Scottish Churches, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and the Conference of European Churches. 'Europe—where now?' looked at how the Churches can address the

context in which they – and not least the Irish Churches – find themselves. Brexit, of course, was on the agenda and the conference is yet another example of how the churches are actively engaged with this issue.

**+++ Rector for Drung** - The Revd Nick Jones has been appointed as Rector of the Drung Group of Parishes in the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh. He has been the Minister-in-Charge of the Drung Group ([www.drungchurches.com](http://www.drungchurches.com)) consisting of Drung, Castleterra (Ballyhaise), Larah & Lavey and Killoughter (Redhills) since January 2016. He is married to Dorothy, they have two children and they have enjoyed getting to know many people in the local area and look forward to getting to know more people still and to deepening friendships. Some of the highlights of the last year have been BBQs, Messy Church, Songs of Praise, Christianity Explored, a new weekly Bible Study group and, of course, the Abaana New Life Choir. The Institution will take place at in Drung Parish Church on Friday 28th April 2017 at 8pm. All very welcome.

**+++ Pastoral studies celebration** - Northridge House Education and Research Centre, at Saint Luke's Charity, Cork, hosted a celebration for the completion of its recent Clinical Pastoral

Education (CPE) Programme on Wednesday 5th April. Six students, from Cavan, Wicklow, Dublin, Kerry, Wexford and Cork, completed the 12 week programme. The programme was accredited by AICAB on St. Valentine's Day – an internationally based process in tandem with a number of Irish professional bodies. The Centre was delighted to welcome Ms Pauline O'Dowd as Supervisor in Training. The certificates were presented by Dr Paul Colton, Chairman of the Board of Directors of St Luke's Charity, Cork. The Charity has supported CPE as part of its Outreach Programme for the last 9 years. Also in attendance were David O'Brien (CEO of St Luke's Charity), staff of St Luke's Home, course mentors and family members. Northridge House was delighted also to welcome Mr JA McNamara, CEO of Cork University Hospital Group; the Centres at Cork University Hospital and Northridge House work closely together in training students for pastoral ministry.

**+++ The Priests in concert** - 9 May, St John the Baptist Church, Dublin - for tickets pls call 01 288 2104 ! <https://t.co/Z4IMRxlxVL>

## **Today in Church History**

**April 11, 1079:** Stanislaus, Polish bishop of Krakow, is martyred. Whether or not he

attempted to overthrow King Boleslaw II (called Boleslaw the Cruel) is debatable; he certainly excommunicated the evil king. In return, Boleslaw deemed him a traitor and had Stanislaus murdered.

**April 11, 1506:** Pope Julius II lays the foundation for the new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Builders delayed its completion until 1626 due to its immense cost, size, and other factors. Indulgences sold to fund the construction drew criticism from Protestant reformers, most memorably Martin Luther.

**April 11, 1836:** George Mueller, leader of the Plymouth Brethren movement, opens his famous orphanage on Wilson Street in Bristol. By 1875, Mueller's orphanage provided care for over 2,000 children, a work sustained not by regular fundraising but by thousands of "answers to prayer."

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