



President Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina with representatives of the five denominations attending the service of prayer for climate justice.

President Higgins attends National Prayer Service ahead of Paris Climate Summit

A large congregation gathered in St Teresa's Carmelite Church on Clarendon Street in Dublin city centre on Wednesday evening (November

25) to pray for climate justice. The National Ecumenical Prayer Service in Preparation for the UN Climate Summit, which takes place in Paris from November 30 to December 11, was organised by Eco Congregation Ireland, Christian Aid and Trócaire. President Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina were in attendance and were joined by Church leaders from five denominations including Archbishop Michael Jackson.

The service was led by Archdeacon Andrew Orr, Chairperson of Eco Congregation Ireland. Following a welcome by the Prior of St Teresa's Church, the Archdeacon said that the COP21 talks represented the best and possibly the last chance to reach agreement on measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He said that Christians must take action as well as pray. "By joining prayer with action we become the cause of our own prayers," he stated.

Giving the reflection, Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM laid out the statistics behind the crisis on our planet. "At this time we stand together with billions of our companions, human and animal, as we look with hope and fear towards the global climate summit in Paris," she said.

Sr Nellie said the consequences of climate change reverberated around the planet and rendered millions of people and species poor, hungry and homeless, Our current model of living was unsustainable and increasingly humans were trying to live more responsibly, she added saying creative thinking was required to tackle the crisis.

During the service representatives of each denomination presented official documents pledging their commitment to care for creation. Archbishop Jackson brought forward the Church of Ireland's Environmental Charter which was passed by General Synod in May 2015.

Students from Loreto College, St Stephen's Green, Newpark Comprehensive School, the King's Hospital School and the Quaker tradition took part in the service and children from St Clare's Primary School in Harold's Cross presented a climate change animation. Poet John F Deane recited two of his poems, one of which – *A River Flows* – was written for the occasion.

The service concluded with a pledge to live responsibly and honour God's Creation. People

were also urged to join the People's Climate March this Sunday, November 29, at 2.00 pm from Custom House Quay in Dublin.

The Eco Congregation candle, which has been specially commissioned and will be brought to congregations all around Ireland over the coming year, started its journey. Archdeacon Orr presented it to the Pastor Martin Sauter of the Dublin Lutheran Congregation.

Moderator speaks out on planned refugee protest

With a the planed anti-refugee rally by the Protestant Coalition group next week, Presbyterian Moderator Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie has said in a statement that “the teaching of Scripture is absolutely clear – all Christians are called to welcome the stranger and to love our neighbour... And when such people come among us, they need to be welcomed with a generosity of spirit.”

“As someone with leadership responsibilities within the largest Protestant Church in Northern Ireland, I want to state unequivocally that the

teaching of Scripture is absolutely clear – all Christians are called to welcome the stranger and to love our neighbour.

“Out of heartfelt concern we need to pray for those living in troubled parts of our world and for those fleeing conflict. And when such people come among us, they need to be welcomed with a generosity of spirit that reflects the love that we ourselves have come to know in Jesus Christ. To do anything else dishonours the name of our Lord and Saviour.”

Church support for Irish prisoners overseas and their families

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO), a pastoral outreach established by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland in 1985, will host a conference celebrating its 30th anniversary on Tuesday 1 December 2015 entitled “Reaching Out – Supporting Irish Prisoners Overseas and their Families”. President Michael D. Higgins, Uachtarán na hÉireann, will address the conference which takes place in Dublin Castle.

Bishop John Kirby, Bishop of Clonfert and chair of the Bishops' Council of Emigrants, will open the conference which will be chaired by Mr Mark Hennessy, News Editor of the *Irish Times*. The conference will explore the practical, policy and pastoral issues which apply to this uniquely vulnerable category of Irish emigrant.

ICPO commissioned research to examine the resettlement needs of Irish people returning from prison overseas. The results of this research will be launched at the conference in a report entitled *A Step At A Time – The Resettlement Needs of Irish People Returning From Prison Overseas*.

The report considered the resettlement needs of ex-prisoners returning to Ireland in 5 key areas: Accommodation; Education, Training and Employment; Health and Addiction Issues, Finance; and, Family. The research incorporated the views of ex-prisoners and resettlement service providers thus providing a dual perspective from which to assess their needs.

The report finds that Irish prisoners overseas, seeking or being compelled to resettle in Ireland face additional challenges *vis á vis* those being released from an Irish prison in terms of their

resettlement. In view of this, the report has sought to clarify these particular challenges and identify future steps which may be taken to address them.

Once published at the conference the research will be available on www.icpo.ie.

Meath and Kildare diocese to 'Paws For Advent'

Members of Meath and Kildare diocese are discovering that walking their dogs can be a way of looking after the feet of those with leprosy. The Church of Ireland diocese is running 'Paws For Advent' during Advent (29 Nov until Christmas Day).

Members are encouraged to put €2 in a savings tin every time they take their dog for a walk. The money will go towards their diocesan Good For The Soul project. Something as simple as a pair of sandals can help protect families from poverty and despair. The diocese aims to buy 10,000 pairs of sandals in Karigiri in Tamil Nadu, India. The diocesan project, in partnership with

The Leprosy Mission Ireland and Bishops' Appeal.

One of the effects of leprosy is often damage to a person's feet. The disease causes them to lose sensitivity in this area, making the individual more prone to injury. The Leprosy Mission has been involved in developing a cost-effective sandal that can protect the wearer from such harm. One pair of sandals can be manufactured and distributed at a cost of €2.50.

Potentially every dog lover could have €54 to add to our Good For The Sole project. If this was replicated throughout the dioceses, with every dog owner, it would be a significant step towards reaching the diocesan target of €25,000 by Easter 2016.

Bishop Pat Storey is a dog lover herself. She says, "It's not just feet that Meath and Kildare are working together to protect. Sandals can protect whole families from poverty – that is why we are doing this. Even if you are not a dog-lover why not sponsor one of your friends to walk their dogs. After all, it's good for more than just the paws!"

A flyer is available [here](#).

Wee buns by the Baking Bishop

It was tea and buns all round as Bishop Harold Miller of Down and Dromore, and former Great British Bake Off contestant, Martha Collison hosted bakers from around N.Ireland who had raised £20,000 to protect vulnerable children through Tearfund's No Child Taken campaign.

During the evening Martha and Bishop Harold baked funnel cakes, which Martha had made with young women who were vulnerable to trafficking in Cambodia. During her visit, Martha took part in bakery workshops which enable girls to develop new skills to earn enough money to avoid being trafficked. Martha was impressed: "Tearfund's No Child Taken project is bringing hope and it shows God can heal broken lives'.

Tearfund Vice President Bishop Harold visited the same project in Cambodia in 2010. 'In the middle of a town where trafficking is rife, the Cambodia Hope team are bringing Christ's love to hundreds of women through their bakery, T Shirt factory and Christian support groups'.

Hilary McClay and Tracy Seawright attended the reception before hosting a Big Bake for over 200



women at Willowfield Parish Church which raised £1,300. 'I hope that this event will help us encourage our friends, families and churches to stand up and say – No Child Taken. No more. Not in my day' says Hilary.

You can host your own Big Bake for friends, family or at your local church and help protect more vulnerable children. Phone Jane Robertson at the Tearfund NI office on 028 90 730060.

Public sex abuse inquiry to focus first on Anglican and Catholic churches

An unprecedented public inquiry into child sex abuse in Britain is to focus first on the Anglican and Catholic churches, its chairman said.

Justice Lowell Goddard said the five-year inquiry is the most wide-ranging ever of its kind in England and Wales and will consist of 12 separate investigations that will also focus early on local authorities such as Lambeth, Nottinghamshire and Rochdale.

It will also look into public institutions and people of "public prominence".

She said: "To run 12 investigations in parallel represents an organisational challenge that is unprecedented in a public inquiry in the United Kingdom. We are determined to succeed." She said she was confident her inquiry will "give a voice to victims and survivors."

She and her team will investigate Medomsley Youth Detention Centre in County Durham,



Justice Lowell Goddard, of New Zealand

Cambridge House boys' home and Knowl View in Rochdale and examine allegations made against the late Liberal MP Cyril Smith. Goddard added that the inquiry would investigate high-profile allegations of a child sex abuse ring operating in Westminster, and abuse cover-ups.

Regional truth centres for victims will be set up next year.

She said: "The investigation will focus on high-profile allegations of child sexual abuse involving current or former members of parliament, senior

civil servants, government advisers and members of intelligence and security agencies.

"It will consider allegations of cover-up and conspiracy and review the adequacy of law enforcement responses to these allegations."

Catholic Benedictine congregations and the Church of England's Chichester diocese are among the religious organisations that she will investigate.

Goddard will take in the case of jailed Anglican bishop Peter Ball, who abused 18 young men over 20 years, to see whether anyone tried to save him from justice. She will look at the armed forces, Foreign Office, the British Council and other institutions. Each of the 12 inquiry strands will have public hearings.

The Catholic Church, which has also had two earlier independent inquiries into child sex abuse, welcomed the inquiry and announced that it had set up a special council of its own to help, to be chaired by Baroness Nuala O'Loan. She said: "The role of the council is to facilitate and ensure the proper response to the inquiry, which has the Church's full support. We look forward to

hearing their specific requests and will ensure full co-operation with their deliberations."

The Church of England also welcomed the inquiry.

Religious education is outdated and needs overhaul, says GB study

Religious education in schools is "outdated" and needs a massive overhaul to end a "policy muddle" and better reflect modern Britain, according to researchers at Goldsmiths, University of London.

The [RE For REal](#) study says that RE is currently a "20th century settlement for a 21st century reality".

It calls for a statutory "national framework for religion and belief learning" and says it should be a compulsory part of the curriculum up to the age of 16 at least.

Researchers [Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw](#) questioned more than 300 pupils, teachers and employers for the project, funded by [Culham St Gabriel's Trust](#).



The report comes a few days after a landmark judgment in the High Court when a judge ruled in favour of the three humanist parents and their children who challenged the Government's relegation of non-religious worldviews in the latest subject content for GCSE Religious Studies.

In his decision, Mr Justice Warby said that the Government had made an "error of law" in leaving non-religious worldviews such as humanism out of the GCSE curriculum, amounting to "a breach of the duty to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in a pluralistic manner."

The [British Humanist Association](#), which was responsible for bringing the case, welcomed the decision.

Church of England appoints its eighth woman bishop

Karen Gorham, Archdeacon of Buckingham, is to be the next woman bishop in the Church of England. She is to be the suffragan bishop of Sherborne, in the Salisbury diocese, where she will oversee parishes in Dorset.

Archdeacon Gorham, who is a much-loved leader with an active interest in Celtic spirituality, [blogs regularly about her ministry](#) and in her sermons quotes poets such as the Welsh Christian RS Thomas. Her first service in the Church was as a child, sharpening pencils at Sunday School.

Archdeacon Gorham succeeds Dr Graham Kings who this summer was appointed mission theologian in the Anglican Communion. She will be the Church's eighth woman bishop and sixth woman suffragan. The Church of England has been appointing women bishops at the rate of



Archdeacon of Buckingham, Karen Gorham.

about two in every three months since the measure to consecrate women was enacted by General Synod a year ago.

If the current rate continues, female bishops will outnumber male bishops in the established church in under a decade. There will certainly be several strong female contenders among their

number to succeed the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

Archdeacon Gorham, who will be consecrated in February, was introduced to the diocese by Bishop of Salisbury Nicholas Holtam at Salisbury Cathedral's *Walking Madonna*, Elizabeth Frink's 1981 statue of a woman going out from the Cathedral into the world. She then attended eucharist at Sherborne Abbey and visited a school.

She said: "Dorset is a place of story, from Enid Blyton to Thomas Hardy, whose poetry I particularly enjoy, and we all have a unique story to tell, as individuals and as Christian Communities, of God's love and grace. That's our witness to the world, and our biggest challenge is to have the confidence to share it.

"My own story began at the age of twelve, when, having grown up in a Christian home, I volunteered to sharpen pencils for the junior Sunday School at Christ Church, Billericay. It was something I could do, and God honoured that by gradually giving me the ability to do all sorts of other things I never thought possible. These varied from teaching and eventually leading the

Sunday School to ministry in the North of England; from leaving school at 18 with some typing skills to becoming an administrator; and from being someone who picked up various responsibilities in a parish to becoming an Archdeacon.

"Though I almost always felt inadequate for the task before me, I always found God in Christ there too. It's with that same trepidation that I prepare for the next task as Bishop of Sherborne, confident that the God of the past and present will have exciting things in store for the future."

Media Digest

Concerns over anti-refugee parade in Belfast

the Irish News

Justin Kouame, chairperson of the Northern Ireland Community of ... In response senior Presbyterian and Church of Ireland figures both spoke out on ...

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/2015/11/27/news/concerns-over-anti-refugee-parade-in-belfast-335114/>

Shades of Dingle at unique Bundoran Col concert

Donegal Now

Eurovision winner Charlie McGettigan is set to take top billing at a unique concert in Bundoran's **Church of Ireland** on Friday, December 11. It is a rare ...

<http://www.donegalnow.com/news/shades-of-dingle-at-unique-bundoran-coi-concert/59832>

Mayo events to mark need for action on climate change

Mayo News

Then on Sunday, November 29 at 12.45pm on The Mall, Westport, participants are meeting outside St Mary's Church and the **Church of Ireland**, and ...

<http://www.mayonews.ie/news/26857-mayo-events-to-mark-need-for-action-on-climate-change>

Church hosts exhibition and sale

Lurgan Mail

The exhibition takes place in the **Parish** Hall, New Forge Road, Magheralin and is open for a "Gala Evening" from 7pm to 9pm on Thursday then from ...

<http://www.lurganmail.co.uk/news/features/church-hosts-exhibition-and-sale-1-7086901>

Tel

Reports the comments of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords debate on the Prime Minister's statement on Syria (see above). Archbishop Justin is quoted as saying: "For the first time in almost 300 years we are facing a conflict that has a distinct theological and religious element."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/12017887/david-cameron-syria-air-strikes-plan-live.html>

Tel/Mail/ITV

Reports that a Government health minister has been criticised for saying that it is "strange" people are using food banks when parts of the country are suffering an obesity crisis. Lord Prior of Brampton claimed there was no link between Government benefits reforms and people turning to food banks. The CofE is involved with hundred of foodbanks across the country. The Archbishop of Canterbury is quoted.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/12019893/Why-do-we-have-an-obesity-crisis-and-yet-need-foodbanks-asks-Government-health-minister.html>

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3335242/Tory-minister-fire-saying-strange-people-hungry-food-banks-obesity-crisis.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3335242/Tory-minister-fire-saying-strange-people-hungry-food-banks-obesity-crisis.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

<http://www.itv.com/news/2015-11-26/conservative-minister-causes-outrage-over-food-bank-comments/>

BBC

Religious education in England's schools needs a total overhaul to bring the subject into the 21st Century, argues a report. Religious belief has changed sharply in recent years but religious education has not kept pace, says the Goldsmiths, University of London, RE for REal report. "Content should reflect the real religious landscape," said co-author Adam Dinham. The government says its approach promotes knowledge of all religions.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-34934693>

Exp

Further coverage of the High Court ruling against the Education Secretary for taking "non-religious world views"

out of the new Religious Studies GCSE. Changes will be made to the subject after three families, with the backing of the British Humanist Association, took Nicky Morgan to the High Court. The families, who have children in years seven and eight, argued Mrs Morgan's had taken a "skewed" approach to Religious Studies.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/622442/High-Court-ruling-means-ATHEISM-will-now-be-taught-in-school>

BBC/Mail

Reports that St Wulfram's Grantham has installed an ice rink to bring a bit of early festive cheer to the Lincolnshire town. There are also more than 100 decorated Christmas trees adorning the 14th Century building.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-34934845>

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3334979/The-moment-vicar-shows-ice-rink-built-inside-church-Christmas-lose-balance-fall-head-heels.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3334979/The-moment-vicar-shows-ice-rink-built-inside-church-Christmas-lose-balance-fall-head-heels.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3334979/The-moment-vicar-shows-ice-rink-built-inside-church-Christmas-lose-balance-fall-head-heels.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

Even Stand

A man has been arrested after the headstones of First World War soldiers from Australia and New Zealand were sprayed with blue paint at a cemetery in west London. Police in Hillingdon said a 29-year-old was quizzed on Wednesday on suspicion of causing criminal damage to the Anzac graves at St Mary's church, Harefield.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/man-arrested-after-first-world-war-anzac-headstones-desecrated-in-west-london-churchyard-a3124026.html>

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