



**Image of the day -
Castlerock where even the dogs go to church**

News Reports

The Light of Hope shines brightly at Service of Reflection and Hope in Armagh

At a Service of Reflection and Hope to mark the centenary of the partition of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland a young high school student, accompanied by three primary school children from schools across County Armagh, carried a lantern through St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in the City of Armagh, symbolising 'The Light of Hope'.

The simple symbolic act took place during a Service of Reflection and Hope which has been organised and hosted by the Church Leaders' Group (Ireland).

The hour-long service, which began at 11 o'clock in Ireland's ecclesiastical capital, was attended by representatives of both governments and the Northern Ireland Executive and other elected representatives. They included, the UK's Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Boris Johnston MP, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD, and the First Minister of Northern Ireland, Paul Givan MLA.

Whilst guests at the Service had to be limited to enable appropriate social distancing, due to various Covid-19 mitigations, the service also brought together civic dignitaries, children and young people, and over 100



community leaders working in peace–building, community development, health, youth work, and various different aspects of church life, in an act of worship that is underpinned by a Christian vision of reconciliation.

The P7 children from local maintained, controlled and integrated schools accompanied Billy Smith, from Armagh High School, who carried the lantern, which had a living flame burning within, through the Cathedral to the Sanctuary, where they presented it to the Church Leaders. Throughout the service, children and young people had key roles to play.

With local schoolchildren forming a welcoming reception for the guests as they enter the Cathedral grounds, a choir of children from different backgrounds from the local area – in brightly coloured T–shirts to represent diversity and hope across the island – sang a ‘Song of Hope’ entitled, ‘We’re the future of tomorrow’.



In a part of the service, called ‘Voices of Hope’, three young people, Lucy Addis from the Royal School Armagh, Seán McCourt Kelly from St Patrick’s High School in Keady, and Andrea Andrews, from Le Chéile Secondary School in Tyrrelstown in Dublin, each shared their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the next generation.

Two of the three scripture readings (Isaiah 40:28b–31 and Matthew 5:1–14) were read by Rebecca Morris, from Belfast’s Methodist College, and Oisín Walsh, who works in the Catholic Communications Office in Maynooth. An ‘Act of Commitment’ was led by Rosa McCloskey from Lagan College in Belfast and James Chamberlain, from Markethill High School in County Armagh.

Broadcast live by the BBC and RTÉ, at the start of the Service of Reflection and Hope, the Dean of Armagh, the

Very Rev Shane Forster, welcomed guests and opened the service in prayer.

Having read 2 Corinthians 5:17–29, he prayed, “...Lord, we confess to you and to each other, that we have wounded each other and our communities in the past. We are sorry and ashamed and ask for your forgiveness, so that together we may move forward in faith, grow together in love, and faithfully serve you all our days...May Almighty God forgive us, heal us and help us and give us his peace now and in the days to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Prayer also formed an integral part of the service. Linda Ervine MBE and Seán Coll led the opening prayer in Irish. Professor May Hannon–Fletcher and Robert Barfoot, who were both injured in the conflict on this island, offered Intercessions. The Sierra Leone–born President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu, gave the sermon.

Before Dr Yambasu preached, his four colleagues in the Church Leaders’ Group (Ireland), the Most Rev John McDowell and the Most Rev Eamon Martin, Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Archbishops of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland respectively, the Rt Rev Dr David Bruce, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, President of the Irish Council of Churches, each shared some personal reflections. In a moment entitled ‘The Journey’, these reflections included some of the significant themes that have touched them in relation to this centenary year.

Music also played an important part in this Christian act of worship. Along with the children's 'Song of Hope', soloist Helena Hendron and the Cathedral Choir, under Director of Music, Dr Stephen Timpany, sang 'The Deer's Cry, during a 'Time of Reflection'. Three hymns were sung, accompanied by Assistant Organist, the Rev Dr Peter Thompson, and musicians from the Education Authority Music Service. The male clerks of the Cathedral Choir also sang an Irish Blessing.

Speaking in advance of the Service, the Church Leaders said, "We would like to extend our thanks to the Dean and Chapter of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, for the use of the Cathedral for our Service of Reflection and Hope, and everyone who has come today and will participate in it. We see this service as a moment in a much longer journey towards reconciliation, which will require the prayerful support and engagement of Christians across these islands."

The Church Leaders continued, "In our 'Centenary Prayer', which is printed in the Order of Service, we acknowledge before God, our failures, our divisions, and the hurt that we have caused Him and one another. For this, we ask for forgiveness. The prayer concludes, 'As we travel onwards in our journey, may we learn from the experiences of the past and from those who trod these roads before us, so that the inheritance we pass on to the next generation is the gift of understanding, peace, and hope. In faith we pray, and humbly ask, in the name of Him who is the light of the world and giver of all hope, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.' May all of us on this island have the courage to embrace and pass on these gifts."

Religious leaders reject assisted dying law

Assisted suicide plans threaten the “precious gift of life” and must instead be replaced by better palliative care, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said in joint letter with religious leaders.

In a letter to peers, Archbishop Justin Welby, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who is president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, and the Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, have spoken out regarding their “profound disquiet” over the Assisted Dying Bill. The letter to peers warns that vulnerable people will be made more so and urges better palliative care

The Assisted Dying Bill, tabled by Baroness Meacher, would allow terminally ill adults to legally seek assistance to end their lives, and will have its second reading in Parliament tomorrow.

If passed, it will enable adults who are of sound mind and have six months or less to live to be provided with life-ending medication with the approval of two doctors and a High Court judge.

Campaigners against the proposed law change are worried that it could leave some patients vulnerable to coercion, while those in favour of the Bill say it will give the terminally ill greater control of how and when they die.

However, for the first time major faith leaders have come together to warn peers of the risk to “vulnerable people”, should the Bill be passed.

The letter said that the three religious leaders were writing “to express our profound disquiet” at the Bill, claiming there are “real-life” practical inadequacies regarding its proposed safeguards.

They appeal for people of all faiths, and none, to join with them through the “common bond of humanity” in caring for the most vulnerable in society.

“We acknowledge that Baroness Meacher is seeking the alleviation of suffering,” they said, adding: “This motivation we share wholeheartedly, but we disagree on the means advanced to address this very real concern.”

The letter continued: “By the faiths we profess, we hold every human life to be a precious gift of the Creator, to be upheld and protected. All people of faith, and those of none, can share our concern that the common good is not served by policies or actions that would place very many vulnerable people in more vulnerable positions.

“In contrast to the proposals in this Bill, we continue to call for measures to make high-quality palliative care available to all at the end of their lives.

“We believe that the aim of a compassionate society should be assisted living rather than an acceptance of assisted suicide.”

The open letter marks the first joint intervention of the three faith leaders as the Meacher Bill goes through the House of Lords.

In 2015 the trio came together, with more than 20 other religious leaders, to warn that “vulnerable people would be placed at risk” in an open letter to MPs as the Assisted Dying (No 2) Bill was set to be debated in the House of Commons.

The intervention comes after the British Medical Association, the biggest union of doctors, dropped its opposition to assisted dying last month and adopted a neutral stance.

Anglican Communion churches pledge to join in Anglican Communion Day of Prayer

More than half of the provinces in the Anglican Communion have pledged to join the Anglican Communion Day of Prayer on 30 November.

More than half of the provinces in the Anglican Communion have pledged to join the Anglican Communion Day of Prayer on 30 November. A 24-hour global wave of prayer has been organised by USPG, with the support of the Anglican Communion office and several Anglican agencies from around the world.

General Secretary of USPG, Duncan Dormor, has said: “We believe this is the first global day of prayer of its kind and are very excited about the response we are receiving from

around the world. We sense this is very timely. We believe God is calling us to join together to pray for our world – a world that is reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic, the increasingly alarming impact of climate change, and from injustice, exploitation and war.

Davidson Solanki, USPG’s regional manager for Asia and the Middle East, said: “We saw how churches around the world went online, using technology to keep in touch and we felt we could use this growth in the virtual church to unite everyone together and pray.”

The virtual gathering will take place over 24 consecutive hours, and will be divided into half-hour time slots, each of which will be led by one of the Anglican provinces or extra-provincial churches in the Anglican Communion. This means people will be able to join online prayer wherever they are in the world at whatever time suits them.

Regular updates on the Day of Prayer will be posted on USPG’s website and social media channels. Details of how to join in will be released in November.

People and places

Superb Anglican Communion Fund Annual Review 2020-21

When vulnerable families in Peru faced food scarcity, a grant from the Anglican Communion Fund meant the Church



in Peru could implement 'parish communal kitchens' to help people survive. To learn more about the work of the ACF, read their annual review. 12 full colour informative pages. It may be difficult to connect - but keep trying, it is well worth it! CNI found it by Googling - Anglican Communion Fund Annual Review 2020-21

[https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sites/abc/files/2021-09/ACF-annual-review_2020_21.pdf]

Ahoghill and Portglenone turn out for Muddy Church and picnic

The folk in the Parish of Ahoghill and Portglenone donned their wellies on Sunday October 17 for a Harvest Picnic, with Muddy Church for the kids.

Held at Portglenone Forest Park, more than 100 people from St Colmanell's, Ahoghill, and Portglenone Parich Church attended, enjoying food and fellowship together.

The parish has been very encouraging by the great turn out of all age groups from both churches.

Call to take part in NI State Care Monuments survey

***We want to hear from you!* Restoring our History -**

The Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division (HED) launched a public survey yesterday, to get feedback on and hear the thoughts about the management of historic monuments and sites in State Care across Northern Ireland.

There are currently 190 State Care Monuments, which HED restores and maintains including ancient tombs, medieval mottes, iconic castles and rural heritage buildings from Dunluce Castle, Ballycopeland Windmill to Derry's City Walls.

We would like as many people as possible to take part in the survey so that we can build a comprehensive understanding of what is important to you.

Please take a few minutes to complete this short survey at:
[<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/state-care-monuments-survey>]

“Things are moving again” in Braniel Community Church

After many months of not being able to use their building due to COVID restrictions, it's with some relief and excitement that Braniel Community Church, Belfast, are getting back to where they want to be.

“This hall was always known as a place for the community and we're hoping to get back to that now we can use the building,” says the Braniel's leader, James Crockett.

Achieving that goal will be easier with the recent alterations to St Brigid's Hall on the Lower Braniel Road, home to BCC since its launch in 2014. Thanks to some external funding, the hall has new toilets with disabled access and a patio area at the front where the community can gather, and kids and youth work can take place. James is hoping to get funding to put up an awning. “We'll be future-proofed against another lockdown!” he says.

The church in the Diocese of Down & Dromore has also received funding from Belfast City Council to buy new kitchen appliances which will make it more practical to offer hospitality on the premises.

The volunteer team has also been boosted with the arrival in September of a three-strong PAIS Team shared with St Clement's in Templemore Avenue. Liana, Hannah and Dorit are from Germany and run the Braniel's youth and children's



work on Wednesday and Thursday. Liana also helps out on Sundays.

James says the team is already making a difference. “We re–opened our Kids’ Club (P1–P5) and Youth Club (P6 and above) about three weeks ago. It’s been a slow burn, but we’ve seen some new faces come along which is encouraging. We’re also back into Braniel Primary. The PAIS team started an After–School Bible Club last week and it’s going well. It’s starting to look like things are moving again and we’re getting the opportunity as a church to actually help people and do what we want to do.”

This includes being involved with food bank donations and referrals around the area and the church has a mental health first aider who can respond to anyone in turmoil. The team have a plan to reach Braniel as a whole with the good news of Jesus over the next two years through community days, kids and youth work, Alpha, Fresh Start and the possibility of a football camp.

James concludes: “Fundamentally we are thankful that we can worship God more freely again, with the ability to offer

personal prayer ministry during and after our services, in which we have seen God move. Sundays are exciting again!”

Perspective - On the journey by the Irish church leaders

At the Service of Reflection & Hope in St Patrick’s Cathedral, Armagh, yesterday the church leaders gave these personal reflections include some of the significant themes that have touched each of them in relation to this centenary year.

The Most Reverend Eamon Martin Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland

‘So then let us pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another’ Romans 14:19

When I look back on what happened on this island in 1921, like many others in my community and tradition, I do so with a deep sense of loss; and also sadness. Because for the past 100 years partition has polarised people on this island. It has institutionalised difference, and it remains a symbol of cultural, political and religious division between our communities.

I grew up in Derry, just a few miles on the northern side of the border. As a young boy I remember we often crossed the border to visit my granny and other relatives in Inishowen. At first we did so through customs, and then, in later years, through heavily fortified checkpoints. It was as if

my home city had been cut off in 1921 from its natural hinterland in beautiful Donegal.

That little boy has now grown up. Today I reflect as a Church Leader on the last 100 years. I have to face the difficult truth that perhaps we in the churches could have done more to deepen our understanding of each other and to bring healing and peace to our divided and wounded communities. Jesus grew up in the midst of political and cultural division and of deep-seated historic difference. But he taught his disciples to build bridges of love and forgiveness. When he was asked, “Who is my neighbour?” he pointed to the Good Samaritan who crossed social and historic barriers to show love and mercy to the one who was on ‘the other side’.

That is why I stand here today, as a disciple of Jesus, with my brothers and sisters in faith, hopeful and committed to doing what we can to build a better future for all, a future in which mistrust and division can become things of the past.

The Right Reverend Dr David Bruce
Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

My family came from the same part of the country as Eamon’s. My father was born on a small county Derry farm 99 years ago, into a family with deep roots in Scottish Presbyterianism. At various points in his life, my father considered leaving Northern Ireland but despite the huge challenges of this century, including the great depression of the 1930s, the upheaval of the second world war, and of course the Troubles, he chose this as his home. He chose to stay and worked to make it better.

I look back over these 100 years with mixed feelings. Northern Ireland is my home too, and I love it. But I lament the physical and emotional pain which has been caused over this last century to so many people by violence and the words which lead to violence. Sadly such things remain, and not only on this island. In hope, we long for a day when, as the Apostle John describes it, God will wipe every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain.

For now, I grieve the times when fear has held us back from building relationships with those with whom we differ. If we are to build a better future then we must recognise our own woundedness and our responsibility to care for the wounds of one another.

As we build that better future, relationships of all sorts; personal, community, religious and political, must mature and strengthen across this island and between these islands.

As we meet as Church Leaders, I find myself around a table with others who have different national identities and political aspirations and yet with whom I share the same identity as a disciple of Jesus. I find myself at home. With my brothers and sisters I commit myself to building the mature strong relationships which we need as peace is built, so that we become a community in which each can know they belong.

The Very Reverend Dr Ivan Patterson
President of the Irish Council of Churches

I think we can sometimes underestimate the contribution of friendship to the work of building peace. In a divided society simple moments of human connection and hospitality can have a profound impact. Friendships with clergy from other churches has greatly enriched both my ministry and my personal life.

For me, the starting point was inter–church youth work. There I saw the value of setting an example, through our friendship and collaboration, for young people who were willing to take risks to build space in which they could listen respectfully to each other.

Today, the religious landscape of this island has changed. In an increasingly multicultural society, Church and community are enriched by different cultures, ethnicities and traditions. We need to hear their voices too.

While it is important that we continue to show leadership to our young people by coming together as Church Leaders, we recognise that our failure, even to talk well together about the ways in which the past continues to affect us all, hampers them in addressing that unfinished work of peace so important for the future.

We have heard their voices clearly and powerfully today, we need to learn from their example. They are a generation who want to build peace, a generation who respect and care for this planet in solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable here and around the world.

As a disciple of Jesus with my brothers and sisters I commit myself to supporting that generation, even where that means that we must sacrifice some things which were important in the past for the sake of those generations who are to come.

The Most Reverend John McDowell **Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland**

I was born in 1956 in working class East Belfast. It was an immensely rich culture to grow up in. So I have very warm memories of growing up, and in a slightly more integrated housing estate than would be the case now.

My family would definitely have thought of themselves as Unionist, although my mother in particular also had a strong sense of Irish identity, oddly enough centring round a Welsh Briton, St Patrick. However, that integration I spoke about didn't run very deep; there was always a sense of them and us not far below the surface. Friendship was plentiful. Trust was in short supply.

Now, as a church leader I am sorry that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we didn't do more to become peacemakers, or at least to speak peace into the situation. Too often we allowed the attitudes around us to shape our faith, rather than the other way round. That's certainly what I mean when I say we have too often been captive churches.

We obsessed about some things: especially borders. One way or another, we're obsessing about them again, and being distracted from really thinking about what a good society would look like. There are still far too many people

who live with poverty of many kinds—educational, economic, emotional. Far from creating a society with a common purpose, the pandemic and some recent political developments have exposed just how fractured a society we've become.

But I am hopeful. Hopeful in a new generation who know that the big problems we've landed them with, especially climate change and economic inequality, can only be tackled together. I think there are already signs that the next generation will see the things that we obsessed about as secondary, and place their priorities elsewhere.

And as his disciples, I think our role is to imitate Our Lord, in acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God.

Hebrews 10:23 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

Poem for today

Among the Rocks by Robert Browning

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.

If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

+Speaking to the Soul

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