



Image of the day - Lincoln Cathedral

Churches unite in witnessing for peace



Clergy in the Shankill area of Belfast took to the streets last Thursday night to pray for peace in the midst of scenes of rioting.

The following day, a Prayer Vigil was attended by representatives of different denominations, among them the Bishops of Connor and Down and Dromore and Roman Catholic Bishop Noel Treanor, writes Kate Bushby of Connor diocese.

The Prayer Vigil, held at Forth Spring Community Centre in Springfield Road, was organised by the Rev Tracey McRoberts, rector of St Matthew's Parish, where much of the violence had been focused, and the Rev Martin Magill,

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Parish Priest in St John's, Falls Road, at the suggestion of their bishops.

Trouble on Wednesday night saw a bus being burned out just outside St Matthew's Parish Hall. Tracey said she had offered to go onto the streets that night, but was advised against it.

Walked

The following night the trouble was centred on the interface at Lanark Way, again in St Matthew's Parish. Tracey, accompanied by the Rev Canon Jim Carson, rector of nearby St Stephen and St Michael's Parish, and the Rev Colin Duncan, minister of Woodvale Methodist Church, walked from the Ardoyne Roundabout to Lanark Way.

"We were just a presence on the street and spoke to people who were spectating," Tracey said. "I didn't think about my own safety at the time. We wanted to show that we were there. We did not speak to those involved in the rioting. You are unlikely to get through to these young people when they are in that frame of mind. Sadly the Church holds little sway with them.

"The people who were watching said they could not sleep because of the noise and felt safer being outside knowing what was going on than staying in the house. I didn't come across anyone who was encouraging the violence, people were saying 'isn't this dreadful.'"

Jim Carson said the main focus of the walk on Thursday evening had been to pray for calm and peace, and wearing their clerical collars had provided opportunities for the clergy

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to interact with people. He said the experience of being out in the streets that night was “quite surreal.”

The Prayer Vigil on Friday April 9 was held indoors and met all Covid–19 regulations, with participants maintaining social distance and wearing masks. These were only removed for Press photographs.

Unity

Welcoming those present, the Rev Colin Duncan, of Shankill and Woodvale Methodist Church, said: “Here we are together and we’re here to give a show of unity that together we are making a stand and a voice against the violence that we’re seeing on the streets, a violence that serves no practical function or purpose at all.”

Readings and prayers were led by clergy of different denominations, including Father Tony Devlin from St Paul’s Church, Falls Road; Pastor Gordon McDade of Soul Space; Father Martin Graham of St Peter’s Cathedral, Falls Road; and the Rev Jack Lambe of Townsend Street Presbyterian Church.

The clergy walked together from Forth Spring Inter Community Group on the Springfield Road where earlier youths had been throwing petrol bombs, fireworks and missiles at the police, to the gates at Lanark Way, scene of violence two nights before. Poignantly the clergy had to make their way to the gates from both sides of the peace wall as they had been closed.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, said: “Churches on the ground in this part of the world and right

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throughout the province where there have been various situations, they are our communities.

“We simply want to encourage the local Christian communities to play their part and to seek to be what influence they can be.”

Roman Catholic Bishop Noel Treanor described the vigil as “a contribution on the part of us as church leaders to the local clergy who have been on the streets during these events.”

Postponed

Following the death of HRH Prince Phillip on Friday, notices were posted that protests would be postponed until after the period of mourning for the Duke as a mark of respect to the Queen and the Royal Family.

Tracey, whose rectory is close to Twaddell Avenue, a flashpoint in earlier Loyalist protests, said she will take each day as it comes in respect of further trouble. “When you live in this area you learn to take things as they come. There were times during the flags protest when the trouble felt much closer to home.

“Throughout the period of national mourning, after politicians talk and schools are back, we will have been praying against violence. Living in this area I have seen prayers answered many times.

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“Other times things have kicked off when you least expect it. When you cannot predict a situation I do not allow myself to worry about it.”

A camera crew from CNN visited St Matthew’s on Sunday morning to film parishioners paying their respects to His Royal Highness Prince Philip. “They wanted to come to the place where the trouble took place as they were already filming in the area.

“We wanted to show them that the Shankill Road is filled with lots of good people who are more than welcoming and the vast majority don’t want to go back to the days of violence on our streets,” Tracey said.

Church Leaders call for unified political response to address violence and community tensions

Following recent disturbances in Northern Ireland, the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) has written an open letter to political leaders in Northern Ireland, the Governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and the European Union. In the letter Church Leaders:

- Echo the appeal from local Church and community leaders for political leaders to treat Northern Ireland’s fragile peace with care
- Emphasise the importance of the three strands of the Good Friday Agreement and the consequent

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responsibility to respect all identities and foster good relations within Northern Ireland, on the island of Ireland and between the UK and Ireland;

- Call on the Northern Ireland Executive to make a joint approach to the UK Government and the European Union in relation to the challenges posed by the Northern Ireland/Ireland Protocol; and,
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- Express their support for the PSNI and underline the importance of ensuring that any concerns about policing are addressed in a way that supports and strengthens democratic institutions and processes.

The full letter reads as follows:

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God’

As Christian Church Leaders from across the island of Ireland we appeal to our political leaders to come together in a *unified* response to the heartbreaking scenes witnessed on our streets last week and renew their commitment to peace, reconciliation and the protection of the most vulnerable.

The causes of this most recent outbreak of violence are complex and, in some respects, deep-rooted. Church representatives and other community leaders working on the ground in affected communities have spoken to us of their frustration at seeing another generation of young people risk their lives and their futures because repeated



warnings about the need to treat our fragile peace with care went unheeded.

The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement has rightly been held up as a beacon of hope for societies in conflict around the world. The significant reduction in violence since 1998 is a major achievement that serves to remind us that the problems we face at present are not insuperable. But that experience also teaches us that these challenges can only be addressed by political leaders coming together with a genuine desire to find solutions and accommodations which meet the legitimate concerns of others as well as their own. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, and the subsequent agreements that built on its foundations, recognised our interdependence on these islands and the consequent responsibility to respect all identities and foster good relations within Northern Ireland, on the island of Ireland and between the UK and Ireland.

We have previously advocated for the need to protect all these relationships in the context of Brexit. The Northern Ireland/Ireland Protocol presents many challenges to the flow of trade and also the flow of goodwill across and

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between these islands. Some of the challenges were foreseeable and have been planned for and mitigated (at least in part). The political outcomes of the Protocol are more difficult to address because they are tied in with very big issues of world trade and sovereignty. The only way in which these will be constructively handled, from a Northern Ireland point of view, and with a good chance of a successful outcome, is if the European Union (including the Irish Government) and the Government of the United Kingdom are approached jointly by the *entire Northern Ireland Executive* advocating for the protection of the common good across the whole of Northern Ireland. Such a joint approach would be difficult to turn down, but to develop it will require a renewed generosity of spirit from political leaders on all sides of our community.

Leaders, organisations and communities make mistakes. As Christian leaders we are conscious of the need to acknowledge the failings of leadership from the churches in our ministry to divided communities. In such circumstances there is nothing ignoble in showing genuine sorrow. It is hardly surprising, given the complexities of our relationships at home and abroad, that politicians, political parties and others in leadership make miscalculations. Learning from the consequences of miscalculations is much better than an endless scramble to paper over the cracks.

We also have to face the difficult questions about who pays the price for our failings. In the past week we have seen people afraid to leave their homes, others at risk of violence as they go about their work and young people feeling that they have no stake in society or hope for the future. Much good work on the ground has been undermined as tension

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has risen and confidence has plummeted. It has been horrific to witness the intensity of the violence directed against the PSNI and the extent of the injuries sustained by officers. All of us in Northern Ireland have created a society in which even-handed policing requires the wisdom of Solomon combined with the patience of Job. The PSNI is relentlessly scrutinised by the Policing Board, and other organs of accountability. In that sense the PSNI has a political legitimacy across this community which is enjoyed by few other institutions. It is vital that we address concerns in a way that strengthens our democratic processes rather than undermining them.

We are conscious too that Churches are only a small part of the wider civic leadership in our society, and that all civic leaders have a responsibility to support our elected representatives as they seek to negotiate difficult compromises and find new accommodations for the common good. At the same time, we have a responsibility to hold them to account, and the persistent levels of socio-economic inequality in the areas worst impacted by violence, over two decades after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, demand more sustained attention and meaningful intervention by political leaders. The Agreement provided for regular and transparent engagement of civic leaders in policy development, but in practice this has been implemented only in a very limited way, and all too often as an emergency response rather than a preventative measure. Churches, together with other civic leaders, are keen to play our part in addressing the root causes of violence and working to ensure all communities here can enjoy the benefits of peace into the future.

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Please be assured of our continued prayerful support for your leadership at this critical time.

Yours sincerely,

The Most Revd John McDowell

Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

The Most Revd Eamon Martin

Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

The Rt Revd Dr David Bruce

Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

The Revd Dr Tom McKnight

President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

The Very Revd Dr Ivan Patterson

President of the Irish Council of Churches

The Church Leaders' open letter has been sent to the following persons:

- The Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive
- The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- The Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
- Mr Micheál Martin TD, An Taoiseach
- Mr Leo Varadkar TD, An Tánaiste
- Mr Simon Coveney TD, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Ireland
- Dr Ursula van der Leyen, President of the European Commission
- Mr Charles Michel, President of the European Council

Clogher parish farewell to its next bishop



Revd Canon Dr. Ian Ellis and his wife Heather at the farewell in Rossorry Parish Church.

The parishioners of Rossorry Parish Church in Clogher Diocese and representatives of the many organisations within it have paid tribute to their Rector, Revd Canon Dr. Ian Ellis and his wife, Heather, at a farewell during the Easter Sunday service.

Canon Ellis is to be consecrated as the next Bishop of Clogher later this month.

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Towards the end of the in-church Service of Holy Communion for Easter Sunday, Mr. Nigel Irvine, a member of the Select Vestry and choir member, gave the farewell address on behalf of the parish, extending their heartfelt appreciation for all that Canon Ellis had given as the 25th Rector of Rossorry.

He recalled that when a new bishop had been elected, it was greeted overwhelmingly with joy and some relief by the various parishes across the Diocese. However, for Rossorry the news was taken onboard with very mixed emotions, thrilled that Canon Ellis would become their next Bishop but with a deep sense of sadness in their hearts that they would be losing both him and Heather from the day-to-day life of their Parish.

Canon Ellis has been rector since March 2015 and has made an enormous contribution not only to their Parish and local community but to the wider Diocese in general.

He has served as Clerk of the Cathedral Chapter, a member of Diocesan Council, serving as its Clerical Honorary Secretary, member of the Diocesan Board of Education, a Diocesan Nominator and a member of General Synod, a clerical representative on the General Synod Safeguarding Board and the Clogher representative Canon on the chapter of St Patrick's Cathedral, in Dublin. He has also served as Vice-chairman of the Board of Governors of Enniskillen Royal Grammar School, chairman of its Education Committee and as a governor of Jones Memorial Primary School.

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Mr Irvine said that Canon Ellis had performed 79 Christenings, 27 marriages and 103 funerals, prepared and performed over 600 services including sermons during his incumbency which he said were without exception, completed with humility, dignity and with grace.

“You have generously and consistently afforded us all with open fellowship, warmth and sincerity, with a listening ear, a quiet and gentle nature, a genuine concern for those in times of trouble, pain or grief. A soft word, a calming prayer, an endearing eulogy ... each bringing peace and comfort to many in their time of need,” Mr Irvine told the congregation.

He also praised the role of Heather, known for her uplifting enthusiasm, outgoing and friendly nature, tireless support within the Church community, the Mothers’ Union, the Wednesday Club, with Rotary and countless other organisations in the wider community, across the province and also nationally.

He reminded those present of the hugely successful Christmas Tree festival, a truly remarkable event and certainly a high point for their Church community.

Gifts were presented on behalf of the Select Vestry, Sunday school, Choir, Mothers’ Union, Prayer Group, Wednesday Club, Guide and Scout organisations, Parent and Toddler Group, Bowling Club, Parish Readers and Rossorry Parishioners.

Mr Irvine concluded; “With the last gift presented, all that remains to be said is, Canon Ian, you have proved to be a great servant to Rossorry, a man of dedication, scholarship,

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and spirituality, you have a lively mind and wise counsel, a loving nature and a warm heart.

“Thank you for your sincere and generous friendship, for your gracious ministry and exceptional pastoral care for us in Rossorry. God’s blessings to you, to Heather and to your extending family circle for whatever the God’s will has in store for you all.

The presentation ceremony ended with Andrew Irwin, a parishioner and Tenor, singing, “Time To Say Goodbye.”

Replying, Canon Ellis said he and Heather greatly appreciated the friendship and support from the people of the parish and it was his great privilege to have served in the parish.

He said it was people, not buildings that made the church and ended with a quotation from Psalms, “Commit your way unto the Lord and He will direct your paths.”

C of I Youth Officer contributes to European conference

Christina Baillie, Youth Officer for Connor Diocese, gave a presentation on research she did for a recent Masters’ Degree at the International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry (IASYM) Regional European Conference on April 8.

This was due to take place in Helsinki, Finland, in April 2020, but due to Covid-19 was rescheduled to an online conference in April 2021.



Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie

IASYM works to ‘further the international study, research and teaching of ministry and work with youth, rooted in the Christian theological tradition.’ The IASYM hosts conferences regularly both internationally and regionally.

All presentations at the European conference were given in English, with a huge range of contributors from across the world. Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Georgia, USA, Canada, Norway and Australia were all represented, as well as participants like Christina from the UK.

“It was encouraging and challenging to hear a variety of presentations, including examining the connection between confirmation and youth camps in Norway, analysing the impact of young people who self-injure on the family system,

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and seeing the benefit of a leadership programme arising from a partnership between the Diocese of Manchester and the Diocese of Tampere,” Christina said.

“The IASYM academic community are marked by their encouragement and welcome. It truly did resemble the values of youth ministry!”

Christina’s presentation summarised the research she had completed as part of her Masters at Belfast Bible College.

“The research involved focus groups with young people from across Connor Diocese. My research focused on how young people connected their faith and understanding to God, to the difficulty they faced in life,” Christina said.

“Engaging in the research and discussing the topic with



[Connemarra](#)

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those young people was a true highlight of my study.

“The conference was a great opportunity to present my research, having academics from across Europe give feedback and discuss my findings. I am considered whether to continue this research as I would greatly enjoy hearing further from young people and letting their views inform my practice.”

Anyone interested in hearing more about Christina’s research is welcome to contact her at christinabaillie@connnordiocese.org.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Methodist Church Ordination

You are invited to join online this Friday (16th) for the Ordination Service livestream on the church’s website @ 7:30 pm. Due to restrictions the service was postponed last year. It is now going ahead in Assembly Buildings, Belfast. irishmethodist.org/ordination-ser

Morning Worship on Radio Ulster on Sunday April 18

From St John’s Parish Church, Ballyclare, in the Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston. The service, led by the rector, the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, will be pre-recorded with no parishioners attending. It will be broadcast at 10.15am and will be available afterwards on this link.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000v7wv>

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Thought for the Day - Michael Wardlow

Sunday 11th April 2021 - Still online at BBC Sounds
[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09d77z4>]

Irish Methodist World Development

Join IMWD on Thurs 22 April for an evening in conversation with Angie Pape, Director of their partner at OpenSchoolsWW. OSWW work with vulnerable children across Africa, training volunteers to teach numeracy and literacy.

Media review

Pan-unionist challenge to NI Protocol to be heard in court

UTV | ITV News.

[[] <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2021-04-13/pan-unionist-challenge-to-ni-protocol-to-be-heard-in-court>]

Northern Ireland Protocol ‘has led to this very, very great escalation of tension’ says DUP’s Lord Dodds

Channel 4 News

[[] <https://www.channel4.com/news/northern-ireland-protocol-has-led-to-this-very-very-great-escalation-of-tension-says-dups-lord-dodds>]

NI riots: Church leaders plead for unified political response.

BBC News:

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56725048>]

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NHS principle of free treatment for all in ‘grave danger’ in Northern Ireland, warns NI Health Minister Robin Swann

News Letter

Northern Ireland’s Health Minister has said the fundamental principle underpinning the NHS — that services are available to all and free at the point of access — is in “grave danger” because of the dire waiting lists for treatment there.

‘Off message’ Sinn Fein councillor deletes offensive Duke of Edinburgh post

News Letter

On a day when the Sinn Fein leadership surprised many with courteous tributes to the late Duke of Edinburgh, one party councillor was slammed by Sammy Wilson over a “disgusting” social media post.

Problems with Irish Sea border yet to be resolved, says London

News Letter

Significant differences remain between the UK government and the European Union over the operation of the Brexit deal in Northern Ireland, No 10 has said.

Church leaders fearful of further trouble as 'issues still unresolved'

Belfast Newsletter

Rev Bruce said such a possible crisis summit involving both the UK and Irish governments, as suggested in The Observer newspaper, “may be the ...

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/crime/church-leaders-fearful-of-further-trouble-as-issues-still-unresolved-3196534>]

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Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for Northern Ireland. Last week, violence broke out on consecutive nights in parts of Northern Ireland, as issues around Brexit have caused concern around peace in the country. God, we pray for your peace in Northern Ireland, and an end to divisions.

God, We reflect on and give praise for the life lived by Prince Philip.

We thank you for his faith in Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Comfort the Queen at this time and strengthen her Christian faith.

Amen.

A prayer from the Church of Scotland...

Almighty and everlasting God, 'the life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.'

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But You are forever, from everlasting to everlasting, and we put our trust in You for You have promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

Loving Lord, in this last year, through the worst of a global pandemic, we've been face to face with our fragility and vulnerability, perhaps for some of us as never before.

Against that backdrop of hurt and loss, we give you thanks for the life and service of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Some are called to the front of the stage, others to supporting roles and we rejoice in the way he supported Her Majesty the Queen through all of the years of her reign.

We remember, too, his work supporting charities and, perhaps most memorably for young people for over sixty years, his patronage of The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

In this hour of loss, we offer our heartfelt prayers for Her Majesty and her family. Comfort them in their loss, bind up their wounds and grant them the consolation of a store of treasured memories. Grant Her Majesty the peace that comes from knowing you and which passes all understanding.

These and all our prayers we ask in the name of Jesus, who through his life, death and resurrection offers us hope instead of despair, life instead of death.
Amen.

Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;

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they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.

Speaking to the Soul

A third time Jesus asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.”

John 21:17 NLT

We cannot be sure why Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved him. Many people have suggested that it mirrored Peter's three denials before Jesus' crucifixion. It is suggested that this was Jesus' way of helping Peter to find

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cleansing from that time of abject failure. There is great encouragement for us all in the fact that Jesus was willing to forgive someone who had let him down so comprehensively. Peter had a hugely significant ministry ahead of him, but it couldn't begin until he knew that he had been released from the burden of his failure.

Every time Peter affirmed his love, Jesus told him that he was giving him a job. Peter was instructed to take care of Jesus' sheep and feed them. Whenever someone follows Jesus, they are also given responsibilities within the church. The idea of Christian faith being a private matter that simply gives a person a warm relationship with God and a secure future for all eternity is foreign to the New Testament. Every follower of Christ becomes a part of the body of Christ and has the responsibility to support and care for the other members. We will all do that differently according to our gifts, abilities and opportunities but no one can dodge the privileged responsibility of supporting our Christian brothers and sisters.

Peter is then informed how tough it will be to be a follower of Jesus. He is told that his obedience to Christ will lead to his death. Having informed him of this, Jesus challenges him, "Follow me." In this Gospel we learn that following Jesus is the path to life in all its fulness. But he never disguised the cost of following him. He promised his followers that they would be hated by the world and rejected. And it is this same risen Lord Jesus Christ who comes to us today and says, "Follow me."

QUESTION

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In what ways does this story of Jesus commissioning Peter encourage and challenge you?

PRAYER

Loving Lord, help us as we seek to follow you and to support our Christian brothers and sisters. Amen

