



Image of the day

Identify competition for organ fans

Church leaders initial response to NI Centenary

The Church Leaders, meeting yesterday in Armagh (12 March) noted the announcement regarding a Church service being planned for later this year to mark the Centenary of the partition of the island of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland.

The Church Leaders are deeply mindful that the events of 100 years ago evoke a range of responses from communities across these islands. For this reason, this point of reflection will provide an opportunity to affirm our common commitment to peace, healing and reconciliation.

The service will therefore be at the initiative of the Church Leaders and the Church Leaders will be wholly responsible for its planning, organisation and design.

On St Patrick's Day, the Church Leaders, Rt Rev Dr David Bruce, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Most Rev John McDowell, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, Rev Dr Thomas McKnight, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Most Rev Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, and the Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, President of the Irish Council of Churches, will make a significant announcement together about their prayers and work throughout this year.

CENTENARY PRAYER

Sovereign, wise and gracious God, in whose hands lie the past, present and future, we acknowledge before you our failures, our divisions, and the hurt we have caused you and one another. Forgive, restore, and heal us. The events of partition and formation, which took place one hundred years ago on this island, changed,

March 13, 2021

shaped, and determined the outlook for this place which we all call home. As we reflect upon those times and bring to mind what happened then and in the years since, we acknowledge before you our different and often polarised interpretations of history. 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.

Volunteer tutors sought for schools in Shankill area



Bro David Jardine taking a one-to-one reading session at Forthriver Primary School in September 2019.

March 13, 2021

Volunteers are needed to help children in the Shankill area with homework and, in particular with their reading.

The Rev Canon Bro David Jardine, Director of Equipping for Life, a faith-based community organisation founded in 2018, said the charity is looking 50-70 volunteer tutors to add to an established team of 160 poised to help when permitted to return to schools.

The charity was founded on David's vision – to encourage church people to give their services free of charge to serve those living in areas which are disadvantaged.

David said volunteers began working on the Shankill Road in Belfast and have since moved to Rathcoole, Monkstown, Taughmonagh, Wheatfield, Ballyduff and East Belfast. Preparations are also well underway to move into eight provincial towns.

“The place where we are getting most opportunities is in schools, taking children for reading,” David said.

“Although we have not been able to go into schools during the pandemic, we have 160 volunteer tutors ready to go back in September. Each week they take two children for half an hour each.

“The children love this personal attention because everything we do is one-to-one. The spiritual dimension of the ministry is also very important. We pray a great deal in the background over every area of the ministry. Many would



An Equipping for Life volunteer reading with a pupil at Forthriver Primary School in September 2019.

say this is the real reason why we have grown so quickly in a short space of time.”

David said there has been much publicity about how children’s education has suffered during the pandemic, especially in the areas where Equipping for Life has been working.

“Recently we sent an email to 10 schools in the Shankill area, offering particular ways in which we could help when the schools are open to us in September. Inside five minutes seven of them were back to us saying they would like a Homework Club, and six requested an extra team of volunteers to go in every week.

March 13, 2021

“Certainly when we do go back the job will be a big one. To honour the opportunities being given to us, we need another 50 – 70 volunteers.

“Do you feel that you would like to help?” David appealed. “You could take children for reading one hour per week, become a prayer partner – a very important role – or make available particular talents that you have.”

For more information, visit the **Equipping for Life** website or ring Pat Hutchinson at **07788 9572800**.

Report by Kate Bushby, Connor Diocese

Archbishop Martin welcomes Pope’s recognition of Knock Shrine

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh in a statement responding to the Pope’s decision to recognise the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock as an International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine said -

As President of the Irish Episcopal Conference, I warmly welcome the announcement from the Holy See that the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock is to be recognised as an International Marian and Eucharistic Shrine from 19 March 2021, the feast of Saint Joseph.

Since my parents first brought me to Knock as a teenager, I have been drawn back there, many times, to praise God



and to find peace, encouragement and spiritual comfort in the shrine chapel.

Just as in 1879, when the Apparition at Knock brought hope to Irish people in distress, so also during these challenging days of the COVID-19 pandemic it reminds us that Jesus, Mary and Joseph remain close to us. As we continue to struggle in so many ways with restrictions and upheaval, the message of Knock offers the promise of hope. It calls us to hear afresh the Word of God, to be nourished by the Holy Eucharist, to entrust ourselves to the Maternal care of Our Lady, and to focus on the person and the role of Saint Joseph – especially in this year dedicated to him.

March 13, 2021

The Holy Father's announcement will be particularly welcome as we begin the "Year of the Family". I recall accompanying Pope Francis during his pilgrimage to Knock as part of his visit to the World Meeting of Families 2018. I heard him say that he had come to "the house of Our Lady" at Knock where he "lifted up to Our Lady's loving intercession all the families of the world". He recognised the fact that in the Apparition tableau, Our Lady appears with her family – Jesus, the Lamb of God, her husband Saint Joseph, and Saint John, the son given her by Jesus on the Cross. All being well, as the restrictions ease in the coming months, many Irish families will be able to follow the Holy Father's footsteps and pay a thanksgiving visit to Knock – now an internationally recognised Marian and Eucharistic Shrine!

I share the joy of Archbishop Michael Neary and thank him for all the work he has done in paving the way for this most welcome announcement. I also congratulate the Rector of the Shrine at Knock, Father Richard Gibbons, and all who collaborate with him in making Knock the special and welcoming place it is.

Professor Iain Torrance to lead Independent Review of Scottish Episcopal Church diocese

An Independent Review into difficulties within the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney in the Scottish Episcopal Church is to be led by Professor Iain Torrance, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, president emeritus of Princeton Theological Seminary,

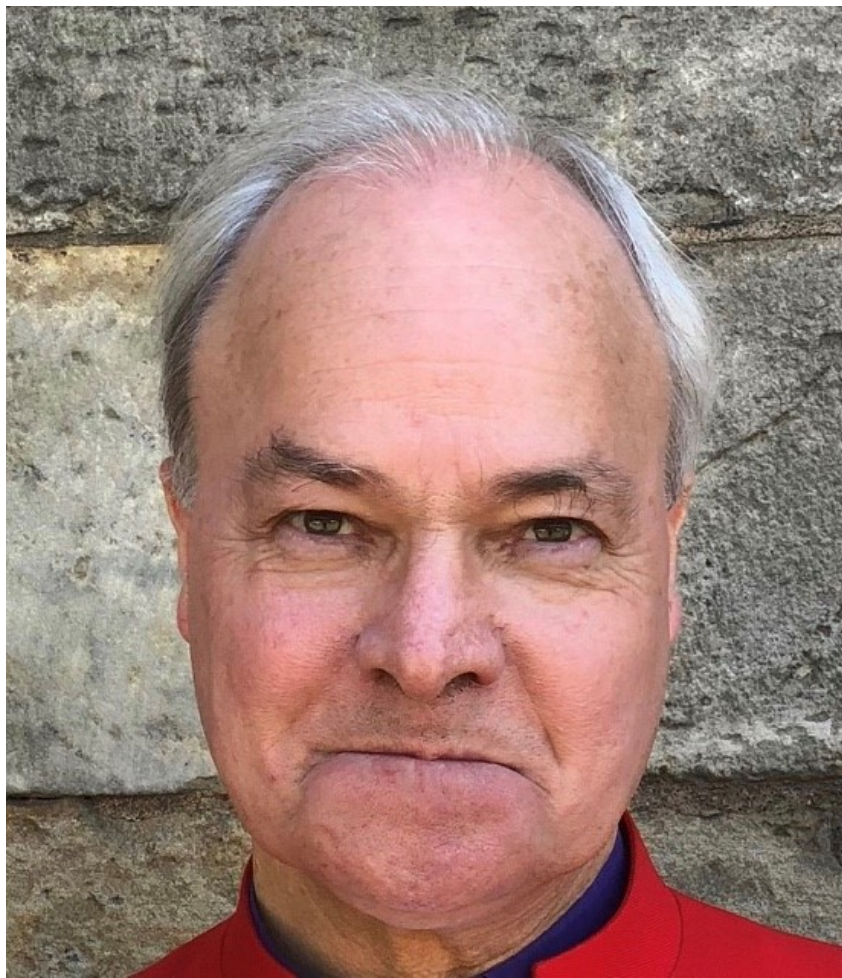
churchnewsireland@gmail.org

March 13, 2021

**and a former
Moderator of the
Church of
Scotland.**

Professor Iain Torrance

The review will cover a four-year period up to the present day, and submissions will be accepted in confidence from respondents in the Diocese.



It is expected that the review will take several months to conduct and it is hoped that it will be complete by the end of the year. At its conclusion, Professor Torrance (pictured below) will submit a report to the College of Bishops. The report will also be made public to ensure transparency of the process.

The review, which was announced last month, is a fully independent process which will be conducted outside the formal structures of the Scottish Episcopal Church. It was commissioned by the College of Bishops after the Bishop of Aberdeen & Orkney, the Rt Rev Anne Dyer, was subject to unsubstantiated and anonymous allegations in the national media, and it will provide an opportunity for all relevant parties to make submissions about issues referred to within, churchnewsireland@gmail.org

March 13, 2021

leading up to, and arising from recent media coverage, as well as any other related issues.

It is hoped that the report will provide an opportunity for any findings to be considered for potential province-wide application.

The Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Bishop Mark Strange, said: “I am very pleased that Professor Iain Torrance has agreed to lead the review of the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney. As a former Moderator of the General Assembly and Pro Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, Professor Torrance has a respected place in both Aberdeen and across Scotland. His thoughtful response on being asked to take on this review is a mark of someone who will listen and offer support for all involved.”

Professor Torrance said: “In any disagreement between people, recollections vary. I will do my best to listen to as many as choose to make their perspective known to me, and to produce a synoptic account reflecting those various dimensions.”

The review will start from Monday 5 April and written submissions can be made during a one-month period from that date, with a deadline of 5pm on Wednesday 5 May. Submissions should be sent directly to Professor Torrance, no earlier than from Monday 5 April, via the dedicated and confidential e-mail address iaintorrance410@gmail.com

Links to Torrance biography and terms of review at -
[[<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/professor-iain-torrance-to-lead-independent-review/>]

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

Archbishop Williams inspires study day discussions

The year 2020 brought two contemporary challenges to the fore: the pressing issues of the COVID pandemic and racial injustice.

What does the Church's faithful theological response to these issues look like? In the rush to respond compassionately to urgent questions, we run the risk of coming at them from an insufficiently Christian perspective.

In a recent virtual study day hosted by the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies at Duke Divinity School, Archbishop Rowan Williams cast a vision for theology that springs from the life of the Church and its experience of prayer, the sacraments, and Scripture. The virtual nature of this event enabled almost 800 people from 25 countries to participate online.

After his address, a panel discussion followed among Christopher Beeley, director of the Anglican Episcopal House of Studies; Michael Battle of General Theological Seminary; Katherine Sonderegger of Virginia Theological Seminary; Jeremy Begbie of Duke Divinity School and Cambridge University; and Hans Boersma of Nashotah House Theological Seminary, who touched on some of the salient points and implications of the lecture.

When current events exert pressure on the Church for a response, our call is to return to the gifts God has given to

March 13, 2021

the Church that sustain its life, Williams said. In this lecture, Williams focused on Scripture as the center of where we find “the grammar of the central difference that is made when God’s work enters human life.”

Williams examined how 1 Corinthians and Ephesians 1 reorient us toward the two central questions of the New Testament: how is humanity different in light of Christ? and what does that difference tell us about the character of God? Both passages highlight the Church’s utter dependence on the free action of God, who did not choose the members on the basis of their merit or success but on his gracious gift.

Scripture shows us that “what’s different, because of Christ, is that the freedom of God’s welcome and absolution and renewal has become real here and now.” Through the Holy Spirit, God gives each member gifts to be shared in a community marked by mutuality and interdependence, rather than competition and hierarchy.

Williams demonstrated the dynamic relationship between these two questions; the answer to the first shapes the answer to the second, which then casts new light back upon the first question. As Scripture reveals to us how God’s love in Christ has transformed us, we come to see God’s power, wisdom, and love with greater clarity. That, in turn, influences “our storytelling, our worshiping, our growth to maturity as Christian persons and praying persons,” as well as our engagement with and witness to a broken world.

The members of the panel discussion highlighted the archbishop’s emphasis on Scripture and prayer as the

March 13, 2021

wellspring of the Church's life in Christ, from which we must drink deeply before addressing the issues of our day. The panel members also considered how to apply this theological approach to today's pressing questions. For instance, both the problems of racial injustice and the pandemic have highlighted the suffering of the marginalized, those who, like the Corinthians, lack the social status and success deemed valuable in our society.

Yet when we turn to the New Testament, we see that God chooses to identify himself with the weak and powerless, for it is Jesus, "this humiliated, rejected, executed human



being," whom God chooses to be "the vehicle of God's invitation to this kind of community," one marked by humility and interdependence.

Theology must first send down deep roots into Scripture and prayer before responding to the needs and questions of the world; only from that vantage point can we cast a

March 13, 2021

faithful vision of what redeemed and forgiven humanity looks like to the world around us.

“We must always remember that we are in the context of a world that has been renewed by God in Christ,” Williams said. “It is that perspective which nourishes our vision, which kindles our outrage, and energizes our engagement.”

Sarah Puryear in The Living Church 08.03.2021

Early retirement on medical grounds for Bishop of Bath and Wells

The Bishop of Bath and Wells has announced he will be taking early retirement on medical grounds as he continues his recovery from treatment for acute myeloid leukaemia.

Bishop Peter Hancock, 65, has been the diocesan bishop since 2014.

During this time, he also spent four years as the Church of England's lead bishop for safeguarding, a challenging role that saw him represent the Church at three hearings by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse into historic abuse.

He has been receiving treatment for leukaemia since last August and had been hoping to return to work soon, but was advised by doctors that his recovery still had some way to go and that at least initially, he would be required to shield.

March 13, 2021

"So after much prayer and reflection, I believe this means that I need to take early retirement on medical grounds," he said in a letter to his diocese.

Distinguished Christian scientist John Polkinghorne dies aged 90

John Polkinghorne, Anglican priest and respected theoretical physicist, has passed away at the age of 90.

The news of his death was shared by Queens' College, Cambridge, where he served as president from 1988 to 1996.

He remained an Honorary Fellow of the college until his death in Cambridge on 10 March.

Dr Polkinghorne enjoyed a distinguished career at Cambridge University, having previously been Professor of Mathematical Physics from 1968 until 1979, when he resigned to study for the priesthood.

He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1982, serving first as a curate in south Bristol before becoming a vicar in Blean, Kent. In 1986, he returned to Cambridge University as Dean of Chapel at Trinity Hall and President of Queens' College.

From 1994 to 2005, he served as canon theologian of Liverpool Cathedral.

March 13, 2021

During his lifetime, he authored dozens of books, many of them on the relationship between religion and science. Polkinghorne's talents were recognised with a knighthood i

In 1997 and the prestigious Templeton Prize in 2002, donating the £1m prize money to endow college positions. Current President of Queens' College, Dr Mohamed El-Erian, spoke of his "great sadness" at Dr Polkinghorne's death, but also his "gratitude for all that John did for Queens' and beyond."

"To say John had an exceptional life would be an understatement," he said.

"Born in 1930, he touched many lives as a highly respected physicist, theologian, and priest. The author of a number of influential books, he was admired for his important research and insights on religion and science."

A private family-only funeral is to be held due to Covid restrictions, but the family plans to hold a public memorial service to celebrate his life once restrictions have been lifted.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

SU Ireland Video series on Easter for 9 to 14 year olds

SU Ireland and SU Scotland have teamed up once again to produce a free three part video series that provides a

March 13, 2021

fresh perspective on Easter and why it matters for us today.

NUA Easter is available now. There are three episodes (and a bonus video) aimed at 9 to 14 year olds for church and parish ministry. The series is suitable for youth groups, classroom delivery and home learning.

Join Sarah Campbell, Darren Bourke and Mark Murray on a unique and entertaining journey that highlights the meaning of the incredible events of Easter.

Alongside the videos is a downloadable resource pack with quizzes and reflection activities formatted for youth groups, classroom delivery and home learning.

The series is free. [All you need to do is register here to access it.](#)

Episode One: The Origins of Easter – When we think about Easter, our minds turn to bunnies, eggs and lots of chocolate. But Easter is really a worldwide Christian festival, as important to Christians as Christmas. So what is it Christians are actually celebrating? This episode explores the origins of Easter by going back to the very beginning and discovering Jesus' mission in coming to Earth.

However, the rescue mission takes a strange turn when Jesus is arrested by Roman soldiers. Surely that wasn't part of the plan.

Episode Two: The Story of Good Friday – "It's not fair!" are words we're all familiar with. We want fairness, justice. But possibly the most unfair thing ever to have happened took place on the very first Easter. Jesus was innocent; his



friends, and even his opponents, knew that full well. And yet Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion – a terrible punishment. This episode explores the trial of Jesus for crimes he hadn't committed. What was to become of his mission? Had his amazing rescue plan failed?

Episode Three: The Meaning of the Resurrection –

Jesus is dead, and buried in a tomb. An enormous stone and Roman soldiers guard the entrance. But when some of his followers visit the tomb one early morning, something astonishing unfolds. The stone is rolled away, the soldiers gone; an earthquake, angels, and an amazing message. We don't all like surprises, but for Christians, **this** surprise at the heart of Easter, is the best news the world has ever heard. This final episode explores the resurrection of Jesus and what it means for Christians today.

Media review

March 13, 2021

NI 100: Northern Ireland centenary commemorations revealed

BBC News NI

Plans to celebrate NI's centenary include a concert, a special post-mark and a church service.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56368091>

Council of Europe to reopen investigation into Pat Finucane murder

RTE

Europe's leading human rights body is to re-open its examination of the case of murdered Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

<http://www.rte.ie/news/ulster/2021/0312/1203623-finucane-inquiry/>

Simon Coveney welcomes Council of Europe decision to reopen case of Pat Finucane's murder

[Journal.ie](http://www.thejournal.ie)

<https://www.thejournal.ie/pat-finucane-council-of-europe-5379350-Mar2021/>

Extra Northern Ireland port checks could cost local council £5 million

Belfast Telegraph

It could cost a local authority almost £5 million to deliver post-Brexit food standards checks at a Northern Irish harbour once full regulation is introduced.

March 13, 2021

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/extra-northern-ireland-port-checks-could-cost-local-council-5-million-40188866.html>

Michelle O'Neill declines to meet with Boris Johnson during NI visit

[Journal.ie](https://www.thejournal.ie)

The NI deputy First Minister refused to welcome the British Prime Minister to Belfast today in her Stormont role.

<https://www.thejournal.ie/michelle-o-neill-boris-johnson-northern-ireland-meeting-5379733-Mar2021/>

BBC NI news

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56373901>

Salmond report should be published before Holyrood election, demand Tories

The Scottish Tories have called for the report into whether Nicola Sturgeon broke the Ministerial code to be published before polling day.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/salmond-report-should-be-published-before-holyrood-election-demand-tories-40189673.html>

Vatican admits cash troubles as it moves to cover budget deficits

Irish Independent

The Vatican warned that it has nearly depleted its financial reserves from past donations to cover budget deficits over recent years, as it urged continued giving from the faithful to keep the Holy See afloat and Pope Francis' ministry going

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

<https://www.independent.ie/world-news/vatican-admits-cash-troubles-as-it-moves-to-cover-budget-deficits-40189736.html>

Feature - Intention can turn any lockdown walk into pilgrimage, urges Pilgrimage Trust

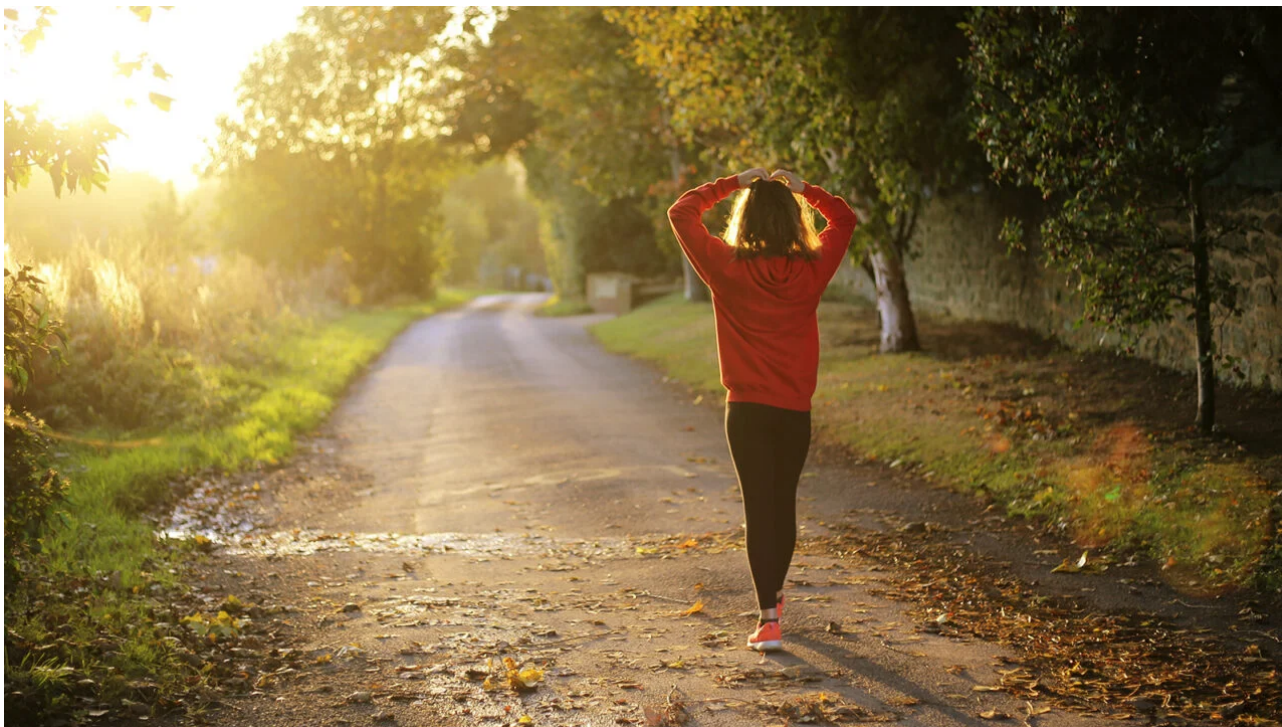
Pilgrimage is about traveling, about being a stranger in a strange land, according to the director. The pandemic flips that on its head, Emily McFarlan Miller writes.

You may be able to point to the exact moment this week or the next when the COVID-19 pandemic upended your everyday life. Put more succinctly: when taking a daily walk became for many of us a great escape, a way to get some fresh air and movement.

Some have made lockdown walks an institution: “walktail” parties in which neighbours, “quarantini” in hand, meet for outdoor, distanced social hours. Or artistic moments: looking for beauty and joy in the little things with camera in hand.

For people of faith — or even no faith — looking for something more spiritual, Guy Hayward, director of the British Pilgrimage Trust, has a new idea: Turn those walks into a pilgrimage.

“In this time of introversion and quietness and winter, maybe it’s a time to go inward a bit more and find an intention now,



just to slightly make the walks feel more purposeful and less of a chore,” Hayward told Religion News Service.

When it comes to pilgrimage, Hayward wrote on the trust’s website, “It’s not about the how long, but the how.”

Pilgrimage is about traveling, about being a stranger in a strange land, according to the director. The pandemic flips that on its head.

“Staying still is actually even more of a strange experience,” he said. “It’s like, how do you make yourself be a stranger in a place you know really, really well? How do you make yourself see it fresh and see it in a new way?”

Travel to famous sites such as Spain’s ancient Christian pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago, or the hajj to Mecca may not be possible at the moment, but Hayward suggested “micro-pilgrimages,” an idea, he pointed out, that dates at least to the 15th century: Margery Kempe, a British mystic

March 13, 2021

from that era, described pilgrimages of a couple miles or less.

A quick Google search can turn up nearby holy places such as shrines or nature paths. For those in Great Britain, the British Pilgrimage Trust's book "Britain's Pilgrim Places" lists more than 600 such sites.

Apps with names like Camino for Good or Walking 4 Fun also can overlay a walk anywhere onto a more famous pilgrimage route virtually, providing maps, photos and videos of what the journey would look like along the way.

And it's all about intention, which can be a question or "something we want to bring into our lives, or let go of," Hayward wrote.

"Choose one intention from your many options, dedicate your daily walk to that purpose, and perhaps the world around you will start to resonate with it," he added.

That can turn any walk, even a spin around the block, into a pilgrimage.

Lisa Deam, a North Carolina-based historian and author of the new book "3000 Miles to Jesus: Pilgrimage as a Way of Life for Spiritual Seekers," agrees.

The idea of pilgrimage resonates at the moment, perhaps counterintuitively when travel is impossible for many, Deam said. But for pilgrims, both the journey and the destination are important.

March 13, 2021

And sometimes that destination is spiritual.

“Even though we kind of feel grounded, we’re still moving forward in our spiritual life,” she said. “As frustrated as we feel, we’re not really standing still, and I think that can be an encouragement.”

Pointers to Prayer



God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the place where we are And transform us by the presence of your Son. In this place, may we encounter the One who embodies your love. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

March 13, 2021

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us at the break of day And be with us in all that lies before us. In the place in which we live, may we see life renewed. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the place of suffering And bring your healing presence among us. In the place of suffering, enable us to reach out to those beside us. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the place of sorrow And bring your light into our darkness. In the place of sorrow, may we become bearers of your light. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the rhythm of life And renew hope within us. In the community in which we live, may we bear witness to the God of hope. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us at the close of day And be with us through the night. Keep us safe and bring us to the dawn of a new day. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

Speaking to the Soul

Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills.



Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places. Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together”.

Isaiah 40:3-5 NLT

I’m no lover of airports, but I do love flying. Having flown to many parts of the world, I have always been amazed at the huge expanse of mountainous areas and was not surprised to discover that mountains form nearly a quarter of the earth’s land surface. Very often I have flown over them for hours on end and as I peer out of the window I imagine the way of life for the people who live there. Mountains are beautiful but they must make travel incredibly complicated for the people who have them as their home.

March 13, 2021

In today's dramatic reading we hear that our mighty God can flatten the mountains and fill in the valleys. What Isaiah is telling us is that we should never put a limit on what God can do. However mountainous our problems may be, God can blast a path through them. That should come as a great encouragement to all of us because we are probably all confronting some situations which we feel could never be solved. Humanly speaking we cannot imagine a way of overcoming them. But God looks at things in a very different way.

Today's verses are probably most familiar to us from the New Testament where we hear them in connection with John the Baptist. He fulfilled this prophecy when he came as a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the coming of Jesus, the Saviour of the World. Jesus' life, death and resurrection brought a complete transformation to human history. Only by God becoming man in Jesus could the mountainous challenges of sin and death be overcome. The problems were humanly speaking insurmountable, but Jesus won the greatest victory of all time through his death upon the Cross. Truly we should never put a limit on what God can do.

QUESTION

What mountainous problems have you seen God overcome in your life?

PRAYER

Dear Father God, help my confidence in you to grow day by day. Amen.

March 13, 2021

