

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Update from Team Rwanda**

March 25, 2025

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## Image of the day



## Update from Team Rwanda

**We arrived safely on Wednesday morning and drove from the capital Kigali to the Shyogwe Diocesan compound an hour to the west.**

The scenery is stunning - hills as far as you can see, and as lush and green as can be. Bishop Jered welcomed us in his office on arrival, and is genuinely so thrilled that we're here.

We experienced our first church service, lasting three hours. It was a service of rededication of the church in Hakiri parish, as it now upgraded to government standards.



Bishop Jered thought he would throw in confirmation and Communion at the same time!

We've visited some

schools and clinics as well, and been both impressed by how much is being done in the diocese, as well as some shocking needs.

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Outside our guesthouse, tents have been set up to accommodate the 5000 guests attending the Bishop's thanksgiving service and consecration of Bishop-Elect Louis on Sunday. Rumour has it the President may appear! We are all happy and well and thinking of you all."

## News

### **Walled City Passion with fresh artistic vision returns at Easter**

**The Walled City Passion returns to Derry Londonderry this Easter with a contemporary retelling of the Easter Passion story. Running from Thursday 17th April to Saturday 19th April 2025, this year's production explores themes of transformation, the courage to change, and standing up for what is right.**

Through immersive street theatre, the Passion leads audiences on a journey from St Columb's Cathedral to the Guildhall Square, using the city's walls as a key part of the storytelling experience. Brought to life in a modern setting, this production challenges audiences to reflect on the timeless themes of love, faith, and sacrifice.

Ahead of the production's opening, director and writer, Jonathan Burgess, said: "The Walled City Passion has always been about engaging with the past and the present, using our city's rich history to tell a story that still resonates today. For 2025, we're focusing on the power of change, the bravery it takes to turn your life around and to speak out for

# WALLED CITY PASSION

**APRIL 2025**

THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup> SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

⌚ 12:30pm and 3:30pm



Church of Ireland Diocesan Office,  
24 London Street,  
BT48 6RQ

## HOW TO BOOK



Scan to book tickets via [millenniumforum.co.uk](https://millenniumforum.co.uk)

Tickets also available via the Millennium  
Forum Box Office



02871 264 455



[millenniumforum.co.uk](https://millenniumforum.co.uk)

Please arrive 20 minutes before the performance is due to start to allow time for each audience member to be given a headset.

what is right. Audiences will witness a reimagining of Jesus'

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journey from his arrest to his crucifixion in a way that speaks to a modern audience.”

The producer on the project, Archdeacon Robert Miller, highlighted the local importance of the production, saying: “Each year, the Walled City Passion continues to grow as a key event in the North West’s Easter calendar. This portrayal celebrates our unique heritage and platforms talented local performers. 2025’s performance promises to be an unforgettable experience that blends tradition with contemporary storytelling.”

The Walled City Passion has established itself as an unmissable Easter event in DerryLondonderry, attracting audiences across Ireland. With its dynamic cast, thought-provoking themes and unique setting, it is sure to be a memorable Easter experience.

Performances will take place at 12.30 and 15.30pm from Thursday 17th April to Saturday 19th April, 2025. Tickets are priced at £12.00, including development fee, and can be purchased at the Millennium Forum Box Office (02871 264455) or online at [www.millenniumforum.co.uk](http://www.millenniumforum.co.uk).

## **Presbyterians measure growth of their church through ‘Mission in Ireland’ evenings**

**With nine of this year’s Irish Presbyterian Church’s ‘Mission in Ireland evenings’ completed – and five to go - there is still time to get a flavour of the inspiring missional outreach that is taking place across the**



## Stranmillis Road, Belfast, c1955

**church and throughout the island of Ireland, Billy Kennedy writes in the News Letter.**

Organised by the church's 19 regional Presbyteries, the events, which began in early March, are supported by the Council for Mission in Ireland. Each has involved sharing stories of fresh growth, new church planting and recent missional development across the island, showing how PCI is active in mission on the home front. They have also been designed to encourage and inspire those attending, while reflecting on how they can be used in God's service.



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Encouraged by the numbers attending so far – with several meetings attracting in excess of 300 people – Mission in Ireland Council secretary, Rick Hill, explains the thinking behind the annual events. “As Christians, we are called to share the timeless message that Jesus loves us, has redeemed and saved us, and we need to find fresh ways that connect with the community and culture around us to share His message.”

Mr Hill adds: “God declared that He is making all things new, a declaration that was also captured poignantly by the prophet Isaiah, when he wrote – ‘See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland’.”

“While society often caricatures the church as an old thing, we believe that God could be doing a new thing among us, in our time and in our land.”

With 14 ‘Mission in Ireland’ evening events in total, the most that have taken place in recent years, the meetings draw on Isaiah’s words in chapter 43:19, and have given the series their name and theme: ‘New Things’.

The final events will take place in Millisle/Ballycopeland church; Craigyhill church, Larne; Maze church outside Lisburn, and Smithborough church, Co Monaghan.

Times of the events vary and more information can be found at [www.presbyterianireland.org](http://www.presbyterianireland.org). The last event takes place in Glendermott church, Londonderry on May 18.

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## Belfast city centre c 1955

Rick Hill explains: “These evenings, with talks from a host of home mission ministers, church planters, chaplains, deaconesses, mission workers and our new mission pioneers, are wonderful opportunities to hear about their ongoing work as they tell the story of what God is doing through the church, while sharing the message of Jesus today.”

Over the years there has been much commentary that likes to highlight Christianity’s decline, or predicts the death of the church. While statistics offer a broad summary, they rarely reveal the whole story. Even though the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has seen some reduction of church members, it has become clear that, by God’s grace, there

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are also signs of growth and many ‘green shoots’ or ‘new things’ in various parts of our island.

“Often it is happening in the most surprising of places, and many of these stories form part of the Mission in Ireland Evenings.”

Mr Hill adds: “Statistics show that of our 19 presbyteries, there is only one where the total number of families in existing congregations has grown numerically in the last decade. That is the presbytery of Dublin and Munster. Congregations such as Mullingar, Drogheda and Kilkenny have had to build new church buildings in recent times as the old ones had become too small.”

“Last August our congregation in Maynooth officially opened their first purpose-built building. In places like Donabate, PCI’s youngest church is growing and thriving, and prayerfully in recent years another community of worshippers has begun in Balbriggan. Church plants in Northern Ireland are also taking place in Belfast and counties Armagh and Down and are at different stages of development, which is so encouraging. A great adage of church mission is that we don’t ask God to bless our efforts, but we look to find where God is at work and join Him there. That is what we are seeking to do, to bring the ‘Good News’ to people who need to hear it – at home.”

Courtesy the News Letter 22/03/2025.

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# Cathedral Calls



## Honour for former Armagh cathedral organist

**Former Organist and Master of the Choristers of St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh has been awarded The British Empire Medal (BEM) in the New Year's Honours. Niall Crozier writes in the Armagh Gazette**

Martin White, was just 26 when he arrived in Armagh from London in 1968 and he served in those capacities until 2002 when he retired from the Cathedral.

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Although the Troubles erupted shortly after his arrival in Northern Ireland, nevertheless he took to Armagh and its people quickly.

And in the past week, in an exclusive interview with the Gazette, he said, “I was struck by the friendliness and warmth of the people. I encountered so many lovely, generous folks - not just in the Cathedral but throughout the City.”

Born in Southgate, Middlesex on Boxing Day 1941 he drew deeply on the High Anglican faith of his parents and, in his own words, “have been sustained by sacramental catholic Anglicanism throughout my life”.

Both interested and talented in the fields of electrical engineering and music, he opted to pursue a career in the latter. Thus it was that in 1961 he entered The Royal College of Music in London from where he graduated GRSM in 1965 having gained his FRCO and CHM (John Brook Prizeman) the previous year. Then in 1982 he graduated MusB of the University of Dublin, Trinity College.

The Reverend Michael Thompson highlighted his masterful musicianship by telling the Gazette, “Martin’s singular gift for extemporisation and his love of Gregorian Chant informed one another as the modalities of his liturgical compositions bear witness.”

And stressing his credentials further he added, “Martin also assisted Michael Fleming at All Saints Margaret Street, London, was for many years Organist of The Gregorian

Association, and prior to going to Armagh he held organist posts at Acton, Ruislip, and St Mary's Harrow on the Hill."

That is the pedigree of the man to whom Michael Thompson accredits "his heroic work in maintaining the choral tradition of the Anglican Primatial Cathedral of Armagh throughout the challenges and dangers of the Troubles, the slender financial endowment and and the flight of many Church of Ireland families from the city to the surrounding villages," before proclaiming that to be "perhaps Martin's most celebrated work."

Nor was his influence confined to Church circles for from 1974 to 2001 he was also a distinguished Director of the Music Centre and subsequently Head of Music Performance for The Southern Education and Library Board.

Upon retiring from the Cathedral in 2002 he was made a Lay Canon by the then-Archbishop Lord Eames OM. And he remains a Fellow of the Incorporated Guild of Church Musicians.

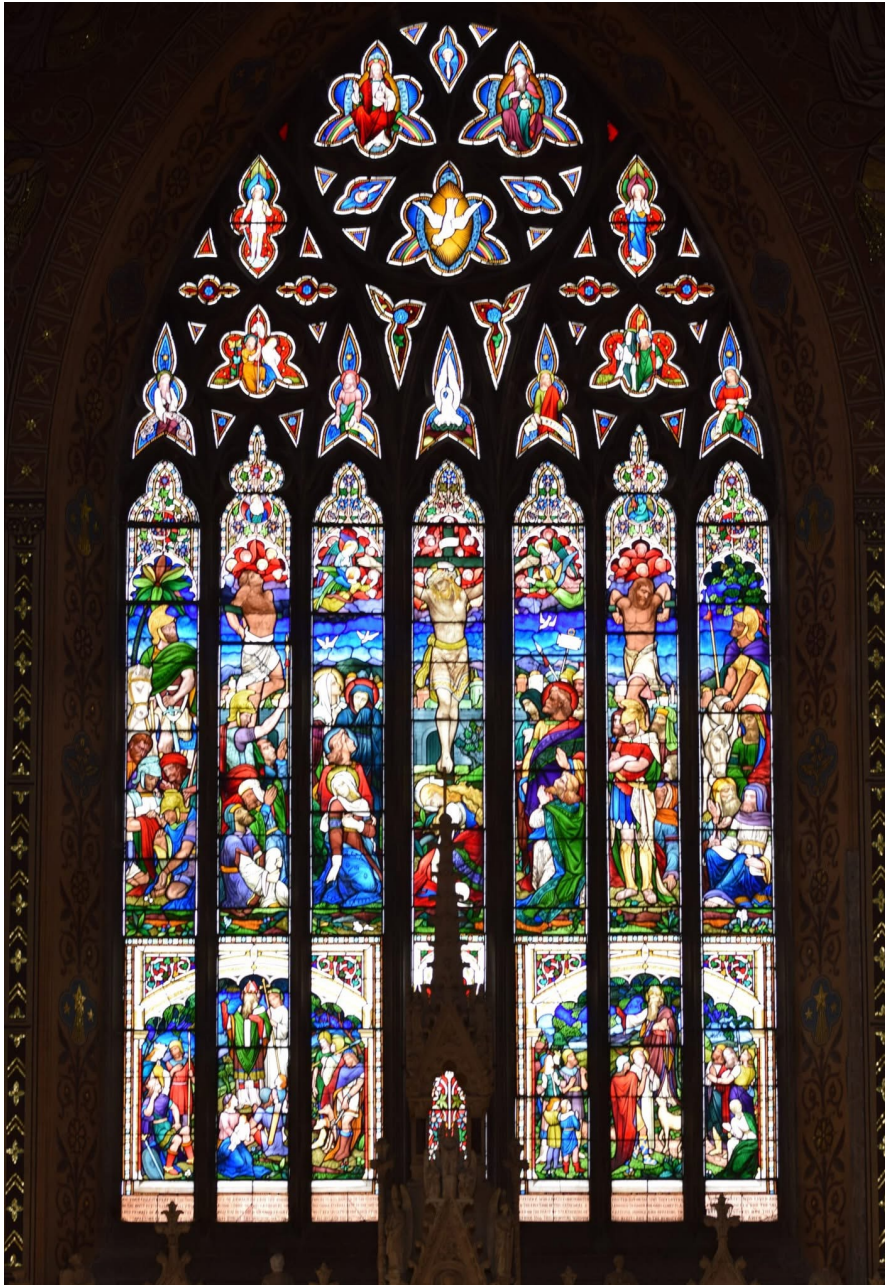
Invited to recall some of his most lasting memories of his time in the Cathedral, Martin said, "I recall the Enthronement Services of three Archbishops: the saintly George Otto Simms in 1969, John Ward Armstrong in the early 1980s, and Dr Robin Eames a few years later.

"These services were televised by both the BBC and RTE, and involved much challenging music for the Choir.

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“I fondly remember recording a substantial organ-duet piece by Liszt, with my great friend, the late Baron Georges Minne, Organist of Armagh’s Roman Catholic Cathedral.

“Georges and I worked together on numerous occasions, and I was honoured to be asked to play at his Funeral Mass, two years ago.



“And I remember vividly the Opening Recital on the restored [Col] Cathedral Organ, which was given by Dr. Gerard Gillen, who at that time was Organist of St. Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, and Professor of Music at the National University, Maynooth.

“The organ had been rebuilt, to my specification,

by Wells-Kennedy Partnership, Lisburn, and is considered by many to be one of the most outstanding instruments in the country.”

Although he retired from the Cathedral in 2002, the now 82-year-old has continued to be actively involved in the music world.

Explaining his post-Cathedral life he said, “I continued to do music-examining for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) until 2016. And I did much international examining, visiting Hong Kong 22 times, Singapore, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, mainland China, Turkey, Cyprus, Germany and the Netherlands.”

In fact, this interview with the Ulster Gazette was conducted with him while he was in Hong Kong!

He continued, “I still give occasional Organ Recitals, and also play each Saturday evening for the Vigil Mass at St. John the Baptist Church, Portadown, where Noreen, my wife, conducts the choir.”

His Anglican roots run deeper, however, for as he explained, “My wife and I usually attend the 10am Eucharist on Sundays, and meet many ‘cathedral’ people regularly.

“We live near Armagh, and regularly see Dr. Stephen Timpany, the present Cathedral Organist, various choir-members and clergy of the Diocese, both presently serving and several now retired.”

Asked about things in and around Armagh's Cathedral ‘on the hill’ his enthusiastic reply was, “It is good to see the Cathedral Choir progressing well under Stephen Timpany’s leadership. And Dean Shane Forster has done so much to



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build up the congregation and to make the Cathedral available for numerous events to the wider community.”

And as for that New Year’s Honours award by His Majesty The King. Martin's modest response was, “I am deeply honoured to be granted the BEM, and am most grateful to the many clergy, choir-members, choirboys’ parents and others who made possible whatever I may have achieved during my 34 years as the Cathedral Organist.

“I was 26 when I arrived in Armagh in 1968. I am now 82 years of age and in very good health, so I have so much for which to be thankful!”

## Clergy and ministry

### New Director at Governors of the Anglican Centre in Rome meeting

**The Governors of the Anglican Centre in Rome met last week at the Anglican Communion Office. It was also the first Board Meeting for the new Director of the ACR, The Right Reverend Anthony Ball.**

Marked by a spirit of openness and shared purpose, the gathering explored fresh possibilities for the Centre’s future and affirmed strong support for Bishop Anthony’s ministry.

The Anglican Centre in Rome serves as the Anglican Communion’s permanent presence in the city and plays a



vital role in promoting dialogue and unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Founded in 1966, it is a place of hospitality, education, and ecumenical encounter.

The current chairman is Bishop Michael Burrows of Tuam.

Reflecting on the gathering, Bishop Anthony said:

"It has been rewarding to get to know and spend time with the Governors of the Anglican Centre – albeit some of them online – and to learn about their commitment to and vision for the Centre. I was hugely encouraged by the breadth of discussion, excited by the possibilities that were explored, and grateful for the support expressed as my ministry as Director begins."

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For more information about the Anglican Centre in Rome:  
[anglicancentreinrome.org](http://anglicancentreinrome.org)

## **Suicide awareness in youth ministry**

**The Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD) latest Connect Day training last week in Newry, Co Down was around the issue of suicide awareness - a vital and pertinent topic in youth ministry.**

The Irish Methodist Youth & Children's Team also took part. In a Facebook post they commented - "We were grateful to partner with the Church of Ireland "Mind Matters" programme for this training run by Action Mental Health.

"This was a serious and sobering training day but so valuable and important to those who completed the training and our thanks to Action Mental Health for their superb and sensitive delivery and facilitation".

<https://www.facebook.com/474829761344038/posts/1064657045694637>

## **Events**

### **Organ recital Londonderry**

**Join All Saints' Clooney Director of Music, Stewart Smith, for an organ recital on Friday 28th March at 7.30pm.**

# ORGAN RECITAL



All Saints' Clooney,  
Londonderry

Friday 28th March  
7.30pm

Stewart Smith

In Aid of Scripture Union



Enjoy an inspiring selection of music and a time of reflection in the beautiful surroundings of All Saints' Church.

Friday 28th March. 7.30pm. All Saints' Clooney Church Collection in aid of Scripture Union. Please do come along, invite others and lend your support to this event.

## Hear Our Voices - designed by young people for young people

**This is an event designed by young people for young people to make lasting changes and share ideas to tackle climate breakdown.**

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Check out what to expect at Hear Our Voices on Saturday 29 March at Greenmount College, Antrim.

This is an event designed by young people for young people to make lasting changes and share ideas to tackle climate breakdown.

Book your place on Eventbrite - search Hear Our Voices.

Tickets -

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hear-our-voices-tickets-1235915670039>

## **Christian Aid's 'Tea With Rosamund' in Laghey**

**Christian Aid are hosting an inaugural 'Tea With Rosamund' event in Laghey Parish Hall just south of Donegal Town (F94 X6PE) on Saturday 29th of March 2025.**

# Tea with Rosamond



**Date:** 29th March 2025

**Time:** 2 pm-4 pm

**Where:** Laghey Parish Hall F94 X6PE



Join Christian Aid CEO, Rosamund Bennett as she talks about CAI's work over the last 80 years!



Contact [hgraham@christian-aid.org](mailto:hgraham@christian-aid.org) to register or for more details!

They invite you and members of your congregation to join them for some tea, coffee, biscuits and cake on arrival at 2pm. The afternoon will continue until 4pm.

The CEO of Christian Aid, Rosamund Bennett, will be there to share about Christian Aid's work over the last 80 years and explain what they want to achieve in the future. It is an excellent opportunity to learn more about Christian Aid's work, and to understand the challenges our world is facing and what Christian Aid is doing to bring hope and support to many families and communities throughout our world. There will also be a chance to chat with Rosamund and other

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members of the Church and Community team, and to ask any questions you might have about anything to do with Christian Aid.

If you'd like to register for this event, please email Hope at [hgraham@christian-aid.org](mailto:hgraham@christian-aid.org)

There's parking available at the hall. If you've any accessibility requirements, please let the organisers know so they can support you. Likewise, if you've any dietary requirements, please alert them.

<https://www.facebook.com/528414856142420/posts/974544251529476>

## **North Belfast Youth Choir partnered by Belfast Phil at next concert**

**We are looking forward to working with a new partner for our next concert on April 12th, the North Belfast Youth Choir.**

Led by acclaimed choral director Dónal Doherty, the choir is a powerful symbol of consensus and cooperation which brings together young people from schools across North Belfast.

The concert on April 12th will feature Carmina Burana and other music in The Belfast Boys' Model School where NBYC rehearse. Visit our website for more details

<https://www.facebook.com/BelfastPhilharmonic>

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## **M.E Support's 12 Days of M.E. Awareness – Special Zoom Event**

**Dr. Charles Shepherd, Honorary Medical Adviser to the ME Association. Dr. Shepherd will be discussing the latest developments in the world of M.E., ME/CFS, Post-Viral Fatigue Syndromes, and Long Covid.**

He will also be answering questions from attendees. On Tuesday May 6th at 7PM. To register for the event, please click the link below or email us at:

<https://forms.office.com/e/DwdgCeAu4N>  
[info@mesupportni.com](mailto:info@mesupportni.com)

## **In the media**

### **European church leaders call out Trump over Putin talks - Church Times**

**Church leaders have voiced concern at geopolitical uncertainties in Europe, as the US President, Donald Trump, held new talks with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, to broker a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine, Jonathan Luxmoore writes.**

“The signals sent by the American government to its allies in Europe have given the justified impression that we could be left to our own devices against foreign aggression,” the German RC Bishops’ Conference said in a statement after their spring plenary.



“Of course, we welcome a path to negotiations, ceasefire, and peace. But we consider it unacceptable when the aggressor and victim are placed on the same level in moral judgement and practical politics, and when military and civilian aid for an attacked country is used to impose one’s will ruthlessly and blackmail it over access to raw materials. . .

“A short-term peace agreement with Russia, with no reliable security guarantees for Ukraine, will not mean long-term peace in Europe. A dictated peace will rather increase threats to stability.”

The statement was published before the Bundestag’s approval on Tuesday of a massive increase in military spending, as part of a record 11.7-per-cent rise in defence expenditure across Europe.

The bishops expressed the fear that Ukraine was being forced into unjustified and “previously unthinkable” concessions, as President Trump abandoned an “80-year model of international liberal order” by withdrawing from multilateral commitments and overhauling US trade policy “with the help of drastic tariffs tailored exclusively to American interests”.

The Acting Chair of the council of Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the Rt Revd Kirsten Fehrs, said that Russia’s “war of aggression against Ukraine” rightly dominated “current perceptions”, but should not crowd out other pressing issues.

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“We are at an extremely critical and vulnerable moment, especially after these foreign-policy shifts,” she said, after a visit to church communities in Poland last week. “As Churches, it is our mission to send out hope and strength in difficult times.”

Anxieties also continued over the combat readiness of NATO, as European heads of government continued discussing a possible peacekeeping mission. Earlier this month, the European Commission pledged €800 billion for a “ReArm Europe Plan”.

In Italy, Roman Catholic bishops called on governments to avoid “warlike rhetoric” and to rediscover “the value of diplomacy”. Spending on war was “contrary to reason”, they said, and diverted resources from families, healthcare, and education. Current concerns over security and defence should not “become the drumbeats of war”.

The Pope said that peace required “reflection, inner calm, and sense of complexity”. Religions could serve as peacemakers by “drawing on the spirituality of peoples” and rekindling “the desire for fraternity and justice”.

“Words are never just words: they are facts that shape human environments,” the Pope wrote in a letter from hospital, published on Tuesday in the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*. “They can connect or divide, serve truth or exploit it. . . We must disarm words to disarm minds and disarm the earth.”

Russia has continued to attack Ukrainian cities with missiles, while making slow battlefield gains across the 600-

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mile front line. A temporary suspension of US military and intelligence aid for Kyiv came about after President Trump's meeting with President Zelensky on 28 February.

The Archbishop of Uppsala, Dr Martin Modéus, who is the Primate of the Church of Sweden, said that he had been moved when he saw how the Christian faith assisted "spiritual and existential stability" on a visit to Swedish peacekeeping troops in Latvia on their first-ever NATO deployment.

The Church of Sweden shared responsibility for preparing local populations "for crisis or war", but, he said, peace would always remain the Church's "fundamental task".

The editor of the agency Independent Catholic News, Josephine Siedlecka, regretted that Anglican and Roman Catholic leaders in Britain were yet to issue statements on the current crisis. She said that many Christians awaited "pastoral guidance".

"Besides a massive increase in defence spending, there's talk, here and abroad, of bringing back military conscription," Ms Siedlecka told the Church Times.

"With Europe rearming and preparing for war, our bishops should be speaking out — not aggressively, just reflecting on what Jesus would say."

## Heritage

## **We remember Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop and Martyr**

**Thomas was the son of Thomas and Agnes (Hatfield) and was educated at Cambridge, receiving his Masters in 1515 prior to his ordination.**

Thomas entered royal service in 1527 serving on diplomatic missions. He was married at a time when the marriage of priests was still illegal. His second wife Margaret and he had at least one daughter Margaret, who married Thomas Norton, and a son called Thomas.

In 1533 he was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury after working with the team of people supporting Henry VIII's divorce of Catherine of Aragon. Godfather to the future Elizabeth I, he was a learned scholar and one of the primary architects of the Protestant English Reformation, particularly through his reform of worship. His work on the 1549 and 1551 Books of Common Prayer laid the foundation for much of Anglican worship today. Many of the collects (or short prayers for each Sunday and major feast day) which we still read today were written by Cranmer or those working with him. When Mary I came to the throne, he was imprisoned for supporting her cousin's claim to the throne, and was later charged with heresy. Although he recanted his Protestant beliefs six times, his final public recantation deviated from his approved script, and he recanted his recantations, saying that the hand which signed them should be consigned to the flames first. He was burnt at the stake in Oxford on 21st March 1556, following fellow martyrs

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Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicolas Ridley just a few months earlier. The Martyrs' Memorial in Oxford commemorates Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley.

The early 16th century hexagonal pulpit with linenfold panelling in the nave of Westminster Abbey is by tradition that in which Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer preached at the coronation of King Edward VI. A small plaque on the pulpit reads: 'Thomas Cranmer 1489-1556 Archbishop of Canterbury is traditionally said to have preached from this pulpit'.

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop and Martyr

Father of all mercies, who through the work of your servant Thomas Cranmer renewed the worship of your Church and through his death revealed your strength in human weakness: by your grace strengthen us to worship you in spirit and in truth and so to come to the joys of your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

## Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at [houstonmckelvey@mac.com](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

# Church News Ireland

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

**Link in Monday through Saturday from early morning**

**Please recommend to your friends**

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