



**Image of the day -  
St Columba's Ennis recording RTE Service for Sept 5**

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## People and places

### **‘Those who glorify terrorist killers repeatedly terrorise their victims’: Rev Alan Irwin**



**Five families bereaved by Troubles violence have been speaking out against new government legislation that will protect the killers from prosecution, Mark Rainey reports in the News Letter.**

Co Fermanagh-based clergyman Rev Alan Irwin (above), whose father and uncle were both murdered by the IRA, is

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one of those featured in a documentary broadcast on UTV last night.

Rev Irwin's father Thomas was a part-time UDR soldier who was shot dead at his Omagh workplace in 1986. His uncle Fred Irwin, also a part-time UDR member, was murdered in 1979.

The documentary investigates the highly controversial proposals to halt all criminal investigations into Troubles-related crimes, as well as ending the legacy inquest process and any civil actions.

While some military veterans, victims and politicians are in favour of an all-encompassing amnesty to “draw a line” under the past – which would be applicable to former terrorists as well as members of the security forces – news of the proposals provoked a widespread backlash across the political spectrum.

Announcing the government's intention to bring forward the necessary legislation, last month Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the Commons that the new bill would allow Northern Ireland to “draw a line under the Troubles”.

NI Secretary Brandon Lewis told Parliament the decision to create a ‘statute of limitations’ had not been taken lightly.

However, the five main political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish government have also rejected the idea of a blanket ban on prosecutions.

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During the 'Justice in Jeopardy?' programme last night, Rev Irwin questioned the wisdom of an effective amnesty that effectively equates, in some respects, the lawful actions of the security forces with terrorist attacks.

"As victims we are continuously terrorised every day by a different form of terrorism, when we have those apologists who stand up and eulogise terrorists, who glorify terrorists – that is terrorising their victims over and over again," he said.

"What are we trying to reconcile? Good with evil, without repentance and remorse and retribution? It can't be done," Rev Irwin added.

Courtesy the News Letter, August 31, 2021

## **Archbishop publishes pastoral letter on climate crisis**

**Archbishop Dermot Farrell, Archbishop of Dublin, has published a 64 page pastoral letter : The Cry of the Earth, the Cry of the Poor.**

The Archbishop writes: "Faith and science are not opponents; in a truly Christian view, faith and reason - fides et ratio - go hand in hand....

"We are living on the edge of huge historical change. Our common home, indeed our only home - this planet - is under threat. Our lifestyles, and the economies which support them are contributing significantly to climate change, and to the crisis it is causing: the many wildfires raging in these





days, the melting of the polar caps, the rise of sea levels, the loss of biodiversity, and the depletion of the soil on which life depends. The future of life on this earth, which God created and which "he saw was good" (Genesis 1:21, 25), hangs in the balance. Humans are unequivocally driving global warming. It is beyond doubt that climate change is being caused by what we have done - and continue to do - in upsetting nature's equilibrium and balance.

"Over the past eighteen months, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought home to us in frightening and tragic ways the fragility of our lives, and how fleeting are many of the networks on which we have come to depend. Our planet and its social organisation are as fragile as they are complex. What we need to realise is that, over the coming decades, the issues currently arising from climate change will impact far more on us than those from the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, the havoc of the pandemic will pale when compared to that of climate change.

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"This pastoral letter, which I have titled, The Cry of the Earth, the Cry of the Poor, approaches the climate catastrophe from the perspective of faith. That is not to say, it excludes the insights and contribution of the natural sciences. On the contrary, healthy faith takes on board what God says through creation (see Dei Verbum 3). Faith and science are not opponents; in a truly Christian view, faith and reason - fides et ratio - go hand in hand. God reveals himself through the world. That is the heart of our Catholic faith. Scientists have issued a "code red" not just for the environment, but for humanity itself. God now calls us, individually and collectively, to work for the good of the planet and the good of all. Let us not fool ourselves: there can be no enduring response to the cry of the earth without responding to the need for justice and dignity.

"This pastoral is an extended engagement with the vast and complex reality of climate. A long document, it seeks to dialogue with the varied views and voices, both religious and cultural, which seek to cast light on the crisis. All too often 'religion' appears as if it is no more than an intellectual failure of nerve. However, true religion is not a flight from the world: faith that is alive provides a framework for people to make decisions and take action. As a Church, and as a society, we need to reflect with greater depth, urgency, and seriousness about what we must do. This extensive pastoral is in the service of that deeper reflection. If not for your own sake, then for the sake of your children, and for the world's children, consider dedicating some time to the issues raised in its pages.

"One possible next step for communities and parishes might be to consider signing the 'Healthy Planet - Healthy People'

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petition. Endorsed by the Holy See, this petition, aimed at the UN Climate Conference (Cop 26), advocates for an agreement that limits warming to 1.5 degrees, while protecting and supporting those most affected by the climate crisis. The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor go hand in hand.

For the Holy See the 'Healthy Planet - Healthy People' petition is a key advocacy action for this year's Season of Creation.

Communities, people in parishes and dioceses, as well as religious congregations, are encouraged to sign the petition by going to <https://thecatholicpetition.org/>

Another step might be to engage with the Laudato Sì Prize, an initiative of the Archdiocese of Dublin to incentivise imaginative and bold responses in the face of the climate catastrophe, and the vision for which is laid out in the pastoral.

It is important to be clear: there is a cost in addressing the climate crisis. As well as financial cost, we will have to embrace lifestyle change. It requires many perspective shifts-political, social, economic and ecclesial. The challenge is to discover how we can live more sustainably, more responsibly, and more humanly in our common home. Christ came not only to call us to a new way of living, but He came to empower us to live in that new way. Christ has not left us; our Lord has not abandoned us, for, in the words of Pope Francis:

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Christ has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. (LS 245)

May Christ's faith and courage, give us the hope and strength to embrace what we now have to do, in the face of what has become humanity's defining challenge.

## **Irish Presbyterians urged to pray for Afghanistan**

**With the conclusion of the airlifts from Kabul's airport, which saw the United States and the UK, who were joined by members of the Irish Defence Forces and others, in evacuating nationals, diplomats and 'vulnerable' Afghans, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has urged its members across the island to pray for the country and its people, especially its small Christian community there, and consider responding to the emergency relief effort, as the Taliban take control of the country.**

Speaking about the situation, the convener of the Council for Global Mission, Rev Dr Liz Hughes said, "As the country's provincial capitals fell to the Taliban in such quick succession and the ultimate fall of the government, half a million people have now been internally displaced, adding to the three million already displaced due to decades of conflict.

"Aside from the desperate, chaotic and tragic scenes we saw at the airport last week, we understand that hospitals



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continue to be stretched by the Covid 19 pandemic and the country is experiencing one of its worst droughts in decades with the threat of famine in some regions. Many social, religious and ethnic minorities are now already experiencing violence, oppression and loss of freedom, and are facing a very uncertain future in the re-established Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It is therefore important that we pray and contribute to the international aid effort where we can,” Dr Hughes said.

Speaking about the situation and the Christian population of Afghanistan, the Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, said that at this time, it could be as many as 12,000. “While there are no visible church buildings, believers meet in secret, constantly having to change the venue and time of meetings. Just now, it is too dangerous for Christians to be out of doors.

“We understand that the Taliban are stopping and searching suspected Christians in the street, checking phones to look for evidence of someone’s Christian faith. It has also been reported that one man was shot for having a Bible downloaded on his phone. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are terrified, on their knees, and crying out to God.”

Reminding the Church of Jesus’ promise in Matthew 16:18 “...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”, the Moderator and Dr Hughes encouraged the church to pray for Afghanistan:

- That the hand of the Taliban would be stayed from killing, violence, and oppression, and that religious tolerance would prevail

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- For well-coordinated and effective international emergency relief initiatives that will provide food, water, clothing, shelter and medical supplies for the fleeing and displaced
- For the protection of human rights, of social, religious and ethnic minorities being singled out and targeted, especially for women and children
- For our brothers and sisters in Christ in Afghanistan to be salt and light; for the church to be strengthened in the face of persecution.

They also encouraged church members to consider responding to the emergency relief effort through the work of PCI's development partners, Christian Aid Ireland [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie) and Tearfund [www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org). Opportunities to pray for and advocate on behalf of the Afghan people can also be found on their websites. For more detailed news and prayer updates focusing on the church and other persecuted minorities in Afghanistan, information can be found on the website of SAT 7 who deliver Christian satellite television for the Middle East and North Africa [www.sat7.org](http://www.sat7.org).

In conclusion, Dr Bruce said, "As we search our hearts to know how to respond in the midst of such pain, hopelessness and despair, it is good that we hear the voices of other Christians in the region, those who are all too familiar with persecution. One Iranian pastor reminds us that despite the Islamic revolution some 40 years ago, today, through much suffering and martyrdom, there now stands in Iran the fastest growing church in the world.

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“May we be encouraged to ‘see the unseen’, to trust that right now Christ is standing with his followers in Afghanistan, and we should pray that they be salt and light, strengthened in faith, and experience the abiding presence of Christ with them in the furnace, in the unifying and purifying fire of persecution. At this time we remember God’s Word, ‘...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze’ (Isaiah 43:1-2),” Dr Bruce said.

## **News briefs**

### **Taliban’s victory will embolden Islamists, warns ACN Ireland**

The Islamist terror group’s return to power in Afghanistan will embolden extremists worldwide, the director of Aid to the Church in Need Ireland has said, putting vulnerable Christians at even more risk. The failure of the US and its allies in Afghanistan “validates” the ambitions of Islamists worldwide, Dr Michael Kinsella said.

### **Senator concerned over Maynooth collaboration with pro-abortion lobbyists**

Senator Rónán Mullen sent a letter to Maynooth’s president, questioning the ethics of their collaboration on a survey about “anti-choice protests”. The university is collaborating with Together for Safety, a pro-abortion lobby group who are

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gathering information on “protests” outside abortion facilities. Mr Mullen called the group’s survey the “antithesis of objective academic research”.

## **Church of Ireland Gazette September**

The September issue is online now- the cover a stark reminder of the beauty of God’s creation. Inside, Lydia Monds of Bishops Appeal writes about how now is the time to take real action on Climate Change.

## **Campaign hopes to overcome negative reactions to pregnancy**

A leading support organisation for pregnant women has launched a campaign to promote more positive reactions around pregnancy after clients reported experiencing negative reactions. Crisis pregnancy organisation Gianna Care decided to launch the initiative following reports from clients of off-putting and derogatory comments from family members, friends and work colleagues.

## **Quotes**

Joe Biden’s promise to Afghanistan last April -  
‘We will not conduct a hasty rush to the exit. We’ll do it responsibly, deliberately and safely. And we will do it in full co-ordination with our allies and partners.’”



## Reports

### US Churches Assessing Damage from Hurricane Ida

**On the 16th anniversary of the devastating Hurricane Katrina, the same Gulf Coast region was hit with Hurricane Ida, a Category 4 storm at the time it made landfall, Neva Rae Fox reports in Living Church.**

CNN reported on Monday, August 30, Ida weakened to a tropical storm, but life-threatening flash flooding is feared. “At least one person is dead and nearly half the state of Louisiana is without power including the entire city of New Orleans,” CNN reported.

“We have a long recovery ahead of us,” said Karen Mackey, Diocese of Louisiana communications director. “This is where we are the morning after the storm. The roads are impassable. We will survey the church property as soon as possible. We are currently checking in with clergy and clergy with their parishioners today. We are working closely with Episcopal Relief & Development. They are an invaluable resource and partner.”

Well in advance of the approaching hurricane, the Diocese of Louisiana issued resources, statements, prayers, and advice along with posting links to the Disaster Preparedness Guide, the Episcopal Asset Map Hurricane Tracker, and Church Insurance. Advice on the website was, “Be sure that you secure personal and church property. This includes parish registers, sacred vessels, important documents, and



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keys. It is also advisable to make a video inventory of your space, if possible.”

Before the storm hit, Louisiana Bishop Morris Thompson wrote, “Please remember to make preparations, evacuate if needed, heed to warnings of local officials and forecasters, and make sure that you are connected with others who can help you in time of greatest need. In addition, we as the diocese will draw together to support one another. It is what we do best.”

Hurricane Ida prompted the rescheduling of the diocese’s listening sessions in its new bishop search.

Bishop Jake Owensby, Diocese of Western Louisiana, posted on Facebook, “The storm crashed into Louisiana and only brushed against Western Louisiana. We are working with the state VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) and Episcopal Relief & Development in order to respond most effectively. At the moment we are seeking to aid those who fled the storm into our region. Central LA hotels are full and people have gone to shelters. Our recovery work from last year’s hurricanes (Laura and Delta) continues with the help of ER&D. Being actively involved in that work has prepared us to assist with emergency relief for our sister diocese.”

In the Diocese of Mississippi the Rev. Scott Lenoir is the disaster preparedness and response team coordinator, and editor of The MS Episcopalian. He shared, “All Episcopal Churches in south Mississippi are okay or sustained minor damage. The Mississippi Coast, in general, fared better than expected. Full assessments will take place as soon as

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possible. All volunteers are asked to wait for an all clear from the MS Emergency Management Agency before going to a disaster area with supplies or debris removal work. [Southwest Mississippi] has sustained a lot of damage ... especially in the McComb/Magnolia area. 100,000 homes and businesses did not have power as of 5 a.m. Monday. According to the Sun-Herald in Biloxi, only 20% of Coast had power outages.”

Episcopal Relief & Development is appealing for funds for hurricane relief.

Courtesy Living Church, August 30, 2021

## **Nationwide digital churchyard mapping project begins**

**The first of 19,000 churchyards will be surveyed as part of a Church of England project to create a free digital map of every grave and feature in every churchyard in the country.**

The ancient church of St Bega on the shores of lake Bassenthwaite in the Diocese of Carlisle is the first churchyard to be scanned by surveyors using sophisticated laser equipment, as part of the national programme.

A new website will go online next year giving free access to the map which is expected to be of special interest to local community groups, conservationists, and those researching family history. The website will also enable the charting of biodiversity and green technology.



The Church of England has partnered with Cumbrian-based surveying company Atlantic Geomatics who will use backpack mounted laser scanners to quickly and accurately map churchyards. They will also photograph all the visible headstones.

There are around 19,000 Anglican burial grounds in England, and the ambitious scheme will aim to digitally survey the majority over the coming seven years. Data on burials will be combined with other information, such as the National Biodiversity Network Atlas, to present the most complete picture of churchyards to date.

The project will come at no cost to parishes or dioceses in the Church of England and parishes will have free access to the map through a new web-based record system which





is set to launch in Spring 2022. There will also be the option to subscribe to additional services.

Substantial funding for the programme has been given by Historic England, with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Caring for God's Acre supporting the pilot phase, as well as support from genealogy research websites, all of which has allowed the basic service to be made available to parishes free of charge.

Use of the latest surveying equipment and bespoke software built by Atlantic Geomatics has made the national-scale survey a possibility for the first time. Operatives will aim to survey around nine or ten sites a day using backpack mounted laser scanning equipment, GPS and cameras. Taking tens of thousands measurements every

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second the surveyors will then process the data to create accurate maps of each churchyard.

Bishop Andrew Rumsey, who is a lead Bishop for church buildings said: “This impressive national project will make a huge difference to those researching family history, as well as easing the administrative burden on parishes.

“It will improve management of burial grounds, and make information more fully accessible than ever before, supported by additional services by subscription for those wishing to go further.

“It will soon be possible to visit almost any Anglican burial ground in the country and see in real time the location of burial plots. For those researching at distance in the UK or overseas, the digital records will place detailed information from churchyards at their fingertips.”

Church by church, and diocese by diocese, it is hoped that the all Anglican churchyards will be surveyed over the next seven years. As well as capturing details of burials, the online interactive map will detail biodiversity in churchyards, including ancient trees and plant-life, as well as green technology such as solar panels.

Church of England, August 30, 2021







## **Books, Broadcasts, Resources, and Webinars**

### **St Columba's Church in Ennis on RTÉ One**

The West Clare Church of Ireland Parishes of St Columba's, Ennis, with Christ Church Spanish Point and Kilnasoolagh will be featured in the RTÉ One Sunday Service on 5th September at 11am.

The programme was recorded partly in the RTÉ studios with the numbers restricted to 10 because of social distancing. The Rector, the Revd Kevin O'Brien, also filmed part of the programme in the parishes featuring local musicians performing in St Columba's making a total of 28

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parishioners taking part in Dublin or from their homes or the church. Mr O'Brien also included footage of the beautiful West Clare scenery found in his parishes.

Mr O'Brien has been honing his video skills during the pandemic and each week posts services and reflections on the parish website:

[ [www.clareanglicans.ie](http://www.clareanglicans.ie) ]

The Sunday Service can be seen on RTÉ One at 11am on Sunday 5th September.

## Ignite online

CMSI supporters and staff are really looking forward to this year's Ignite conference - which is online again this year. It's on the morning of Saturday 18th September.

Register at <https://www.cmsireland.org/ignite>



The graphic features a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blazer and a gold necklace, smiling against a blue background. To her left, there is a dark blue banner with the text 'CUPPA WITH A KEY WORKER' in white. Below the banner are icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and a globe. The date and time '8 September 2021 7pm' are listed. At the bottom left are the logos for 'CHURCH ARMY .ORG' and 'The Sanctuary Marglebone Project'.

## Cuppa with a Key Worker

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Join Ruhamah Sonson, Centre Manager at Church Army's Marylebone Project

in London, for the first ever public glimpse at the brand new 24/7 Drop-In at Cuppa with a Key Worker live! Wednesday 8 September 7pm

<http://facebook.com/churcharmyuki>

A promotional graphic for the Belfast Visitor Pass. The background is pink. At the top left is the Belfast logo. The main text reads 'Belfast Visitor Pass' with the tagline 'Unlimited travel, discounted tours, attractions and so much more.' A green circle says 'updated August 2021'. A purple circle says 'FROM £6.00 ADULT ONE DAY PASS'. There are images of the pass cards for 'Adult' (yellow) and 'Child' (green), and two hanging tags labeled 'VP BELFAST VISITOR PASS'. A collage of photos shows people enjoying various activities in Belfast. The website 'visitbelfast.com' is mentioned in several places. Social media icons for Facebook and Twitter with the hashtag #visitbelfast are at the bottom right.

## Translink Metro Belfast Visitor Pass

The Belfast Visitor Pass is just the ticket to explore Belfast with unlimited travel, discounted tours & attractions plus shopping and hospitality offers.

Buy online here

<https://bit.ly/3IYFX6J>



# **The Padre was a Hooker**

## **Autobiography and Memoir by Stephen A. Blakey**

The commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” would seem to make it unlikely that a committed Christian would ever choose to pursue a career in the armed forces, where killing the enemy is, at the very least, a real possibility.

Becoming an army chaplain might well be seen as an even more astonishing choice for someone seeking to serve God.

And yet, the British armed forces have had chaplains since the beginning of warfare itself. Men and women from the traditional established churches who accompany the troops into the very face of the foe, seeking to care for the spiritual and moral welfare of the troops.

Despite all the changes in the society and warfare, the decrease in church attendance and the weakening of the spiritual profile of our nation, military leaders still want a padre to accompany them into action.

For 40 years, Stephen Blakey was one of these padres. With humour and insight, he shares the joys and the struggles of being the ‘man of God’ amongst what is sometime a pretty ungodly community.

Stephen A. Blakey was born in the house where the Scottish poet Robert Burns died, and it seems that he might have inherited some character traits from Bard himself.



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Blakey's love for Rugby Union may have interfered with his academic studies but in due course it provided an invaluable point of contact with his military parish. The longest serving chaplain in the British Army, with over 40-year service, he ministered to every element of what is now the Royal Regiment of Scotland...at home and overseas, in war and in peace, on the rugby park and in church.

[<https://www.austinmacauley.com/book/padre-was-hooker>]

## Poem for today

### September 1913 by William Butler Yeats

What need you, being come to sense,  
But fumble in a greasy till  
And add the halfpence to the pence  
And prayer to shivering prayer, until  
You have dried the marrow from the bone;  
For men were born to pray and save:  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind,  
The names that stilled your childish play,  
They have gone about the world like wind,  
But little time had they to pray  
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,  
And what, God help us, could they save?  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread



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The grey wing upon every tide;  
For this that all that blood was shed,  
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,  
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,  
All that delirium of the brave?  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,  
And call those exiles as they were  
In all their loneliness and pain,  
You'd cry, 'Some woman's yellow hair  
Has maddened every mother's son':  
They weighed so lightly what they gave.  
But let them be, they're dead and gone,  
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

## Pointers for prayer

### World cycle of prayer - Liberia, Sierra Leone

The mothers from the Mothers clubs of Buchanan, Liberia, created a song about washing hands as part of the fight against Ebola.

### INTERCESSIONS

We are thankful for:

the natural resources in these countries, that they might benefit the peace and welfare of all



You bid us to come;  
You call us to confess;  
You wait till we bow down;  
You expect our penitence.  
And then You say, stand up, my friend.  
Come closer.  
You are forgiven.  
You need fear no more.

the diverse ethnic and religious groups who long have lived together in peace and harmony, especially the Muslims and Christians in Sierra Leone

democratic election of leaders who have brought political stability and accountability

how diseases such as Ebola have been brought under control.

**We pray for:**

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the churches in these countries, for their evangelism and social outreach, faithful witness and action in times of conflict, and for interfaith cooperation with others

the majority of the people who are still impoverished, that adequate services and policies will be provided that enable them to live with dignity and good health

more just governance, free of corruption, accountable to the people, and that manages resources in ways that benefit all.

## PRAYERS

A prayer for the survivors (John 1: 1-14)

Living word, who became flesh  
through whom all have life,  
thank you for your light  
in the darkness of the Ebola crisis.

Thank you for those who have overcome,  
for those who have survived.

We pray for them as they return  
to live among their families and communities.

We pray for the enlightenment needed  
so that stigma around Ebola will not spread,  
so that livelihoods and homes would not be destroyed,  
so that those who survive can be a light of comfort and hope  
among those who are afraid.

Thank you for your incarnation, living word,  
full of the grace and truth that blesses all flesh.

Amen.

## Prayer for Afghanistan

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Eternal God, we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, for Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

We know that in our part of the world some people are getting carried away by hatred – people who are unable to think clearly, and turn furiously on the people whom you have placed in this part of the world to enjoy your creation and witness to you. We pray for girls and boys, women and men, children and adults, and the elderly, for you to grant them peace, your peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, Lord, change the hearts of all those who are carried away by hatred, that they may find in you the Hope of Salvation, and that they may become messengers of peace for ever.

We thank you, Lord, for you are faithful to your promise. Glory and praise be given to you for ever and ever. Amen

## Speaking to the Soul

**For the entire twelve years that I was governor of Judah —from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of the reign of King Artaxerxes—neither I nor my officials drew on our official food allowance.**

Nehemiah 5:14 NLT

I once heard about a military officer who took his men on an arduous training exercise. They were all carrying heavy rucksacks which pushed them to their limits. At one point, they had to climb over a gate and the officer's rucksack split



open to reveal that, although it appeared to be full, it was in fact empty! It had no weight at all. In that moment, the officer completely lost the respect of his men and rightly so. He didn't deserve it. It is impossible for leaders to command respect unless they live up to the highest standards and it was crucial that Nehemiah did so. In today's verse he points out that, during the twelve years that he was governor of Judah, he had lived in an exemplary way. The previous governors had been so very different, laying heavy burdens on the people and demanding not only a daily ration of food and wine but also forty pieces of silver. Nehemiah's credibility as a leader was founded on the fact that he had never taken advantage of the people.

If you have the honour of being a church leader then you need to reflect frequently and carefully on the example that you set. Nobody is expecting you to be perfect, but people can rightly expect that you set a good example. That is to say, people should be able to look at you and get a good idea what it means to follow Jesus. If you are not a church leader then it's important that you pray for your leaders and encourage them. Just like you, leaders are sinners, and they



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are subject to the same temptations as everyone else. Pray that God will keep them strong so that their example will be a blessing to all who know them. Nehemiah's leadership depended upon his credibility and integrity – and nothing has changed for leaders today.

## QUESTION

In what way are you able to support the church leaders you know?

## PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for the gift of leadership. I pray for your blessing on all the church leaders that I know. May they stay so close to you that they will always set a really good example. Amen

