



Image of the day

Belfast Zoo has announced a baby Rothschild's giraffe was born on May 12

Moderator welcomes Rol church return

As Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) congregations prepare to return to in-person worship in the Republic of Ireland this Sunday, (16 May) the Church's Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, has welcomed the return saying 'it will be a genuine time of joyful thanksgiving'.

“The permission from the Irish government to resume in-person services of worship from Monday 10 May onwards was long overdue. Together with other churches, PCI has been making the consistent case that the restrictions on public worship should have been removed long before that date.

“These past long months have been a deeply frustrating and a difficult period for our congregations. While online services have met a real need, and indeed created new opportunities, they have been no substitute for the corporate, in-person gathering for worship of God's people, which is at the very heart of what it is to be Church.”

Dr Bruce, who was minister of Clontarf, Ormond Quay and Scots Presbyterian Churches in Dublin for 5 years in the late 1980s, early 1990s, continued, “This coming Sunday, as many of our congregations across the Republic of Ireland resume in-person worship for the first time in almost 5 months, it will be a genuine time of joyful thanksgiving. While the implementation of the necessary precautions and mitigations will have its own challenges, it is a time to give thanks and to look forward.

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“In testing days, the Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth, that “we live by faith, not by sight”. This remains true, as we begin to emerge from lock-down, leaving behind the memory of these past difficult months. In faith we trust God to guide us as we cautiously move forward together. As we continue to engage with government ministers and officials, they can be assured of our prayers,” Dr Bruce said.

Mental health of young people in NI is a major concern, Stormont told

Children’s Commissioner calls for an overarching policy across all departments

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has warned there is a real danger of losing sight of what needs to be done to address the mental health issues experienced by young people unless there's a overarching policy across all government departments.

Addressing Stormont's Health Committee, Koulla Yiasouma said she has increasing concerns there have been too many different approaches.

“Over £31m has been spent recently on children's mental health and wellbeing across 93 services. If we're serious about outcomes we need to be serious about what those outcomes look like,” she said.

“In this last week we've had a number of announcements about additional monies for those services, particularly over the summer, which is fantastic.

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“But I'm really worried now that we have councils, the voluntary and community sector, youth services and the EA, and our schools all doing separate things. Where is the overarching mechanism?”

“In Northern Ireland we're really good at action plans and strategies. But that is less than 10% of the work. 90% is actually getting the job done.”

The Commissioner also told MLAs she was 'shocked’ at the impact of school exams and tests was having on pupils returning after closures.

“I hold my hands up and say I was not prepared for the level of testing,” she said.

“This all happened so quickly and I fear the levels of stress will mean a lot of appeals when final grades are issued.”

Also briefing the committee, Robin Swann told members that people in a mental health crisis are sleeping on chairs and sofas in hospital while waiting for a bed to become available on a ward. The Health Minister made the shocking statement as he outlined the multi-million pound funding gap facing mental health services, with no money identified to fund his draft mental health strategy.

And he issued a stark warning that the situation is likely to deteriorate further while warning he will be “limited” in what he can achieve without “sustained, recurrent funding”.

“Mental health services were under considerable pressure before the pandemic, and they are now experiencing unprecedented challenges,” he said.

“It is highly likely that these pressures will continue. Indeed, evidence from other countries indicates that we are only at the beginning of this surge.

“Trusts operate consistently above 100% bed occupancy levels in mental health inpatient units, and those patients who are admitted are often much more seriously ill than would usually be expected.

“People who need to be admitted to hospital, people who are in crisis, who are seriously ill, are being asked to sleep in armchairs and on sofas in hospital.”

According to the most recent Health & Social Care Board figures, at the end of January this year, 374 patients were waiting longer than nine weeks for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) compared to 242 at the end of December — a rise of 132 children.

And a mental health support charity, PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland, said parents have told them some children are waiting 18 months for a CAMHS appointment, while one health trust is only offering appointments to children who are suicidal.

Edinburgh church to hold memorial service commemorating famous World War Two battle

In 1952 the minister of Blackhall St Columba's brought to his new charge a cross made at the battle of Monte

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Cassino, which took place between January and May 1944 in Italy, where he had served as a military chaplain.

Rev R.J. Watson Mathewson was part of the Corps Reinforcement Unit, and a fellow soldier, in the Pioneer Corps, made the simple cross which is still central to worship in the church today.

The fighting centred around the strategically important 6th century abbey of Monte Cassino, which was the founding site of the Benedictine order of monks. The historic building was eventually reduced to rubble in February 1944. More than 75,000 people were killed or wounded across the allied and axis powers involved in the conflict along with more than 2,000 Italian civilians.

Speaking about the cross, which formed part of a makeshift church at the site of the conflict, Mr Mathewson later explained he was initially taken aback by its design. "When I first saw it, I was disappointed; the crossbar seemed too long and out of proportion," he said.

"Then I realised that this was the only kind of cross the Pioneers were accustomed to make; one to set over the grave of a soldier, the crossbar had to be long enough to accommodate his name, rank and number and unit.

"So, I left it as it was, a perfect symbol of the comprehensive love of God in Christ for the individual."

An article in the Church of Scotland's magazine Life & Work following last year's refurbishment of Blackhall St Columba's mentioned the cross and caught the attention of someone

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With the
Cassino
Cross, is
Rev
Fergus
Cook,
minister of
Blackhall
St
Columba's



whose
father had
fought in
the
campaign.

The
current
minister,
Rev
Fergus

Cook, was put in touch with the Monte Cassino Society, a group representing veterans of the battle and their families.

As a result of this new connection the church will hold an act of remembrance at 4pm on Saturday 15 May 2021, the weekend nearest to the anniversary of the end of the battle. The covid-compliant service will be attended by those who are able to pre-book a place but will also be livestreamed allowing participation by anyone who wishes.

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It is hoped that numerous communities and nationalities including Americans, Polish, Italian, and the Gurkhas will take part.

Rev Fergus Cook said: "It is amazing to think that some of those who may attend, or watch, this service may have worshipped and prayed to God in front of this very cross all those years ago in Italy.

"It helps us to see how eternal God is and how he can use the actions of everyday faithful people, such as the Pioneer who made the cross, to continue to comfort and offer peace to those who seek it."

Anyone wishing to watch the service online can do so through the [Blackhall St Columba's Church website](#) or via [Youtube](#) at 4pm on Saturday 15 May.

There were Irish regiments at Cassino including a battalion of the Royal Ulster Rifles and 38 Irish Brigade. The North Irish Horse was awarded a rare Canadian honour for their support of Canadian units.

[In Gaza, tiny Catholic community tries to stay in touch during airstrikes](#)

Since early May 11, Israeli bombs have been falling around the Rosary Sisters school in Gaza, which sustained light to moderate damage inside and outside the compound — including to the front door and solar panels used for electricity.

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“It is very terrible; from (today) 5 a.m. in the morning (there has been bombing) behind our school and in our school,” Sister Nabila Saleh, principal of the school, told Catholic News Service in a WhatsApp call May 12. Bombs could be heard exploding in the background and, audibly distraught, Sister Saleh was unable to continue with the interview. Because of COVID-19 and Ramadan, the school has been closed since mid-April, and only in early May was the COVID-19 lockdown lifted in Gaza.

Father Gabriel Romanelli of Holy Family Parish in Gaza told CNS May 12 that, in two days, 45 people, including 14 children and three women, had been killed in Gaza. Three hundred people have been wounded, he said.

Father Romanelli said he had left the parish compound early in the morning to make the 10-minute drive to the Rosary Sisters to assess the damage and celebrate Mass with them, but was unable to leave for eight hours because of the incessant bombing around the area, where many government buildings are located. As soon as he returned to the parish, the sisters told him bombing had begun again.

The tiny Catholic community in Gaza consists of 133 people — including a baby born in early May. Fewer than 1,100 Christians live in Gaza among the 2 million Muslim Palestinians. Many of the students at the Rosary Sisters school are Muslim.

Father Romanelli said the priests and religious have been staying in close contact with their parishioners through phone calls, the internet and WhatsApp. Unfortunately, he said, they “are very used to war.”



Sister Nabila Saleh, principal at the Rosary Sisters School in Gaza, is pictured chatting with students in 2019. The school sustained moderate shrapnel damage in recent Israeli airstrikes.

“The situation is very bad. We try to give our parishioners encouragement and ask them to keep serene and in peace, to find joy in the sorrow. We send them uplifting messages to live with patience and charity in life,” the priest said.

“There are moments of anxiety ... people are closed in, night and day, with the bombings. The bombings affect everything — breathing, nerves, violence. There is a feeling of impotence and sometimes that brings on violence. But the people here are good and patient.”

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The apartment of one parish family was damaged; windows were blown out, debris was scattered throughout the apartment and a huge crater was in front of their building, Father Romanelli said.

He said the parish was organizing to see how it could help the family — a couple and their son — with any spiritual and material needs they might have. He said the priests offered to let the family sleep at the parish, but the family decided to stay in their home and cover their windows with plastic until they can be repaired.

Children are developing behavioral problems, Father Romanelli said.

“War is trauma, and if only one explosion can change a life, you can imagine this morning we had dozens of explosions. It is something that can break a wall; think of a child and how fragile they are,” he said. “It will affect their hearts, their nerves, their eyes. It affects human beings. It is not just the moment of the attack, but it is the consequences that remain.”

While prayer is important, Father Romanelli said there must be work toward justice for there to be real peace.

“The declaration of the patriarch was very clear and firm. The events of Jerusalem with Sheikh Jarrah are what gave occasion to this craziness,” he said.

The latest round of fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip began the evening of May 10, following a tense month of violence in Jerusalem. Israeli settlers threatened evictions of Palestinians from the East Jerusalem

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neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, and Israel imposed stiff gathering restrictions during Ramadan.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas launched missile attacks on Jerusalem following a confrontation at the Al-Aqsa Mosque as Israelis celebrated Jerusalem Day, which for them marks the reunification of Jerusalem following the 1967 war and for Palestinians marks the beginning of Israeli occupation. In response to the rocket attacks, Israel launched airstrikes, sent more troops to the border and called up military reservists.

The Israeli Defense Forces reported more than 1,050 rocket and mortar shells fired into both central and southern Israel from the Gaza Strip since May 10, but the majority were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system. In addition to those killed in Gaza, six Israelis have been reported killed, and dozens have been injured.

Report and photography courtesy CNS

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Presbyterian Digital Dispatches

This short clip gives a window into the work of the Humphries, PCI workers in Portugal, who are partnering with the Christian Presbyterian Church of Portugal.

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This clip is part of a series called 'Digital Dispatches' featuring all PCI's Global Workers which can be accessed at:

presbyterianireland.org/digitaldispatches

Church Army Free Webinar: How can your church connect with your community?

Tuesday 25 May 2pm & Thursday 27 May 7pm.

For more info and to sign-up

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

Divine Healing Ministries

Recording from the 6th May healing service at St. Patrick's:

<https://youtu.be/DL4tolefbHE>

Livestream Prayer Ministry continues every Monday at 7.30pm on the Divine Healing Ministries Facebook page and Youtube channel:

<https://www.facebook.com/DivineHealingMinistries>;

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyu3EKAiAz-
ipq1wgHGqbsQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyu3EKAiAz-
ipq1wgHGqbsQ)

Divine Healing Ministries contacts

e: divinehealing@live.co.uk

w: www.divinehealingministries.org

Derry Diocese - The Net online

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The May edition of The Net, sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese, is now available on the Diocesan website - <https://derrydiocese.org/news/the-net-m>

Walk4Burundi

Diary Update on the Reverend Tony Murphy's Walk for the Cork, Cloyne and Ross Burundi Project: Walk4Burundi 10 Days in May May 1 : Féile na Bealtaine (May Festival) in this year of Covid was marked, not by a weekend of festivals, but a... <https://churchofirelandcork.com/2021/05/14/dia>

Mission to Seafarers

Mission to Seafarers are a supporting organisation for the upcoming Ship Crew Management Resilience virtual conference. The event is aimed at both seafarers and their employers. It will be a platform to discuss experiences, as well as solutions for challenges. <https://bit.ly/3em3hXT>

Media review

NI Protocol 'unlawful' on number of grounds, court challenge told

Irish News

A judicial review on the protocol, part of the Brexit deal which creates a trade border between Northern Ireland and Britain, is being taken in the name of unionists including

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DUP leader Arlene Foster, UUP leader Steve Aiken, TUV leader Jim Allister and David Trimble

See also BBC News -

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57108347>

Belfast News Letter

Sam McBride - Irish Sea border prevents approval in Northern Ireland of life-saving cancer treatment now allowed in Great Britain. A new cancer treatment has been approved for patients in Great Britain – but has not been approved for Northern Ireland because of the Irish Sea border.

NI Protocol: Consensus from Brussels, Dublin and London that changes are needed on Irish Sea Border

Belfast News Letter

A consensus has emerged from Brussels, Dublin and London that significant change is needed regarding the NI Protocol.

Daily Telegraph

‘This is the biggest threat to peace in Northern Ireland there’s ever been’

<http://digitaleditions.telegraph.co.uk/data/601/reader/reader.html?social#!preferred/0/package/601/pub/601/page/41/article/173542>

Edwin Poots has been elected as the new leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, party chair Lord Morrow has announced.

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Mr Poots won the contest with Sir Jeffrey Donaldson by 19 votes to 17.

Coronavirus NI: No further Covid-19 related deaths in Northern Ireland

Belfast News Letter

There have been no further deaths of patients who had previously tested positive for coronavirus in Northern Ireland.



Pointers for prayer

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,

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redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbors.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it.

... *Petitions*...

Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul - To Be the Body

A Reading from Romans 15:1-13

1 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. 3 For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6 so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,
“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,
and sing praises to your name”;
10 and again he says,
“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;
11 and again,

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“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him”;

12 and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in
believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of
the Holy Spirit.

Meditation

As a priest’s wife, I don’t fit in a category. Clergy see me as a lay person, but lay people treat me like clergy. For all its disadvantages, my position lets me observe the goings-on of the church from a perspective that’s as much “both” as “neither.”

From my perch, I’ve come to more and more appreciate the wisdom of Paul — apostle, yes, but mostly pastor, church-founder, teacher of the faith to new converts. I used to be one of the many who had difficulty with Paul. He’s often abrasive, uncompromising — flat out angry. But to allow our difficulty with a few verses here and there to eclipse the rest? Then we miss passages like the one we have this morning.

“Bear with the failings of the weak,” he writes. Not just differences, but actual failings! The tactless gossip at coffee hour, the parishioner who’s always angry about something, the priest who struggles to be patient with them and often fails. Real sins that do real damage to them and to those

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around them, but Paul asks us to bear with them even as Christ who died for them.

Elsewhere, Paul writes about how to deal with those who refuse to repent of serious sin in the Church — and even cut them off — but everyone has habitual sins, and we're often simply unaware of them. We may look to Christ as a model, but the truth is that we ought to bear one another's failings because we expect them to bear with ours. And Paul asks us to engage this pattern of forbearance, not just to be Christlike, but that we might be in such harmony with one another that we can truly act as Christ's one body, glorifying God with one voice. The Church — even our little churches with few resources — is called to nothing less.

