



**CHURCH LEADERS' GROUP (IRELAND)**  
***Service of Reflection & Hope***  
***Media Pack***

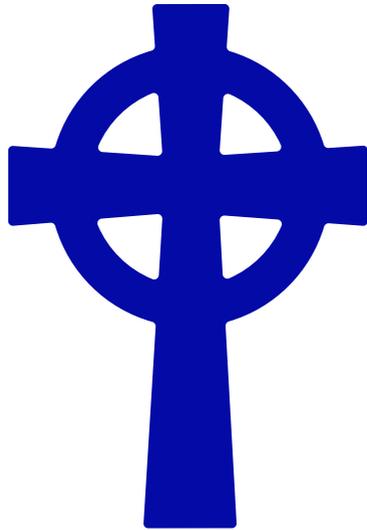


The Church Leaders' Group (Ireland) Service of Reflection & Hope to mark the centenary of the partition of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland took place in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Armagh on Thursday, 21 October 2021. Here you will find:

- The Order of Service
- News release
- The Sermon preached by Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu and
- 'The Journey', personal reflections spoken by four of the Church Leaders during the service. They include some of the significant themes that have touched each of them in relation to this centenary year.

ST PATRICK'S CHURCH OF IRELAND CATHEDRAL, ARMAGH

THE CHURCH LEADERS GROUP  
(IRELAND)



A SERVICE OF

REFLECTION & HOPE

*to mark the Centenary of the partition of Ireland  
& the formation of Northern Ireland*

THURSDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2021  
AT 11.00AM

THE CHURCH LEADERS GROUP  
(IRELAND)

*The Church Leaders Group (Ireland) comprises the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Primates of All Ireland, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the President of the Irish Council of Churches. All of these represent churches across the whole island of Ireland. The Group came into existence in the late 1960s when the Church Leaders recognised the value in working together in light of the urgency of political developments of the time. Since then, those holding these Offices have met frequently, united in their identity as disciples of Jesus and their shared commitment to work together for the common good.*

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## BEFORE THE SERVICE



**At 10.30 AM**

*The Assistant Organist, the Reverend Canon Dr Peter Thompson,  
will play*

**Irish Cantilena**

*Tim Knight (b. 1959)*

**Psalm Prelude Set 1, no. 1**

*Herbert Howells (1892-1983)*

**Prelude on an old Irish Church Melody**

*Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)*

**St Patrick's Breastplate, from 'Sonata Celtica'**

*Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)*

**Meditation on the Irish tune 'Slane'**

*Eric Thiman (1900-1975)*

**At 10.58 AM**

*the Cathedral bell will ring.*

**At 11.00 AM**

*upon the arrival of Her Majesty The Queen, members of the  
congregation are asked to stand as the assistant organist plays*

**Solemn March from Joshua**

*George Frederic Handel (1685-1750)*



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## HYMN

O Christ the same through all our story's pages,  
our loves and hopes, our failures and our fears;  
eternal Lord, the King of all the ages,  
unchanging still, amid the passing years -  
O living Word, the source of all creation,  
who spread the skies, and set the stars ablaze,  
O Christ the same, who wrought our whole salvation,  
we bring our thanks to you for all our yesterdays.

O Christ the same, the friend of sinners sharing  
our inmost thoughts, the secrets none can hide,  
still as of old upon your body bearing  
the marks of love, in triumph glorified -  
O Son of Man, who stooped for us from heaven,  
O Prince of life, in all your saving power,  
O Christ the same, to whom our hearts are given,  
we bring our thanks to you for this the present hour.

O Christ the same, secure within whose keeping  
our lives and loves, our days and years remain,  
our work and rest, our waking and our sleeping,  
our calm and storm, our pleasure and our pain -  
O Lord of love, for all our joys and sorrows,  
for all our hopes, when earth shall fade and flee,  
O Christ the same, for all our brief tomorrows,  
we bring our thanks to you for all that is to be.

*Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926) based on Hebrews 13:8*  
*Irish traditional melody: Londonderry Air*



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*The Dean of Armagh, the Very Reverend Shane Forster, says*

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

*2 Corinthians 5:17-19*

## THE GATHERING

We gather here today on this ancient hill of Armagh, where St Patrick established a faith community and church over fifteen hundred years ago, to reflect on the significance of this centenary year and the long road we have travelled which also stretches out before us. In this the ecclesiastical capital of this island, a centuries old place of learning and outreach, we meet together at this time, people from diverse backgrounds and traditions, with different beliefs and aspirations, to pray for the healing of past hurts and to seek God's guidance and hope for the future.

Our past has shaped us and scarred us, it has divided us, and yet it has also on occasion brought us together. As we lament our failures, sorrows and pain, and recognise our wounded yet living history, may we with a united voice commit ourselves to work together for the common good, in mutual respect and with shared hope for a light filled, prosperous and peaceful future.



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*Let us pray*

God of time and eternity we worship you.  
In Christ you have given us the light of your incarnate Word  
and shown us the fullness of your love.  
Help us to walk in that light and serve together in that love  
that the fullness of Christ's presence may be seen in us.

Lord, we confess to you and to each other, that we have  
wounded each other and our communities in the past. We  
are sorry and ashamed and ask for your forgiveness, so that  
together we may move forward in faith, grow together in love,  
and faithfully serve you all our days. We ask this through our  
Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

May Almighty God forgive us, heal us and help us and give us  
his peace now and in the days to come, through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. Amen.



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## TIME OF REFLECTION

*'The Deer's Cry'*

*Soloist: Helena Hendron*

*with the gentlemen of the Cathedral Choir*

I arise today through the strength of heaven.  
Light of sun, radiance of moon,  
splendour of fire, speed of lightning,  
swiftness of wind, depth of the sea,  
stability of earth, firmness of rock.

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me.  
God's eye to look before me, God's wisdom to guide me,  
God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me  
from all who shall wish me ill afar and anear,  
alone and in a multitude.  
Against every cruel merciless power  
that may oppose my body and soul.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me.  
I arise today.

*Words from an old Irish text, 'St Patrick's Breastplate'*

*translated into English by Kuno Meyer*

*Music: Shaun Davey*



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## OLD TESTAMENT READING

*Isaiah 40:28-31, Read by Rebecca Morris*

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*All remain seated.*

## SONG OF HOPE

*'We're the Future of Tomorrow'*

*Words and Music by Patsy Ford Simms*

*Sung by a children's choir drawn from the local area.*



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## NEW TESTAMENT READING

*St Matthew 5:1-9, Read by Oisín Walsh*

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

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

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks to be to God.**

*All remain seated.*

## VOICES OF HOPE

*The hope, dreams and aspirations of the next generation.*

*Lucy Addis*

*Sean McCourt-Kelly*

*Andrea Andrews*



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## PRAYERS

*The opening prayer in Irish will be led by  
Linda Ervine and Seán Coll.*

*Intercessions will be offered by Professor Mary Hannon-Fletcher  
and Robert Barfoot, both of whom were injured in the conflict on this  
island.*

*Let us pray.*

A Dhia uilechumhachtaigh, thaispeáin tú bealach an  
mhaithiúnais agus an ghrá dúinn trí do mhac, ár slánaitheoir,  
Íosa Críost: Cuidigh linn ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar achan  
rud maith agus dílis inár saolta féin. Beannaigh an obair a  
dhéanann iad siúd atá ag iarraidh scoilteanna ón am a chuaigh  
thart a réiteach, agus gach duine a chaitheann a saol ar  
mhaithe leis an chothromas agus an tsíocháin. Impímid seo in  
ainm Íosa Críost ár dTiarna. **Áiméan.**

*Almighty God, in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ you have shown  
us the way of forgiveness and love: Help us to celebrate all that is  
good and true in our common life. Bless the work of all who seek to  
reconcile past divisions and all who dedicate themselves to the causes  
of justice and peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our  
Lord. Amen.*

Let us give thanks to God, our Creator, Redeemer  
and Sustainer:

For all your blessings of love, peace and joy in this world and  
for the work of peacemakers, negotiators and arbitrators,  
**We give you thanks, O Lord.**

For all agencies of reconciliation and those who heal divided  
communities and nations. For opportunities in our own lives  
to bring an end to hatred and division,  
**We give you thanks, O Lord.**



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For all peace accords, treaties and peaceful ends to conflict.  
For the richness of diversity. For all that opens our hearts  
towards our neighbour and enables us to work together for  
the common good,  
**We give you thanks, O Lord.**

For all that brings release to those with memories of hurt and  
injury, for the healing of those memories and the restoration  
to wholeness of life, and for the comfort, strength and courage  
which you bring to those suffering the pain of bereavement  
and loss,  
**We give you thanks, O Lord.**

For the commandment to love one another as you love us  
and for your call to the world to live in peace and harmony.  
For the justice, freedom and peace we enjoy today and for  
opportunities to share them with others,  
**We give you thanks, O Lord.**

For our ability to give refuge to those who are displaced, to  
bind up the broken-hearted and to share with those who are  
in need. For all the blessings of this life, for the gift of peace,  
the joy of harmony, and the strength and resolve which we  
know when hope is rooted in our hearts,  
**We give you thanks, O Lord. Amen.**

Let us pray for one another in the words of the grace.  
**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and  
evermore. Amen.**



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## THE JOURNEY

*Reflections by the Church Leaders*

**The Most Reverend Eamon Martin**  
*Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh &  
Primate of All Ireland*

**The Right Reverend Dr David Bruce**  
*Moderator of the General Assembly of the  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland*

**The Very Reverend Dr Ivan Patterson**  
*President of the Irish Council of Churches*

**The Most Reverend John McDowell**  
*Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh &  
Primate of All Ireland*

*All stand to sing*

## HYMN

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
he is my light, my strength, my song;  
this Cornerstone, this solid ground,  
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my all in all,  
here in the love of Christ I stand



In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,  
fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
scorned by the ones he came to save:  
'till on that cross as Jesus died,  
the wrath of God was satisfied -  
for every sin on Him was laid;  
here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay,  
light of the world by darkness slain:  
then bursting forth in glorious day  
up from the grave he rose again!  
And as he stands in victory,  
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
for I am his and he is mine -  
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
this is the power of Christ in me;  
from life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
can ever pluck me from his hand;  
'till he returns or calls me home,  
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

*Text and music: Stuart Townend (b.1963) and Keith Getty (b.1974)*

*All sit.*



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## SERMON

The Reverend Dr Sahr Yambasu  
*President of the Methodist Church in Ireland*

*All remain seated.*

## ACT OF COMMITMENT

*Led by Rosa McCloskey and James Chamberlain*

Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service.

Will we strive for all that makes for peace in our communities, towns and cities on this island and beyond?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Will we seek to heal the wounds of the past, and work for a hopeful and peaceful future?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Will we work for a just future for all humanity?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us that have not yet been cast out by love. May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people, and live lives of justice, light and mercy; through Jesus Christ our risen Redeemer. **Amen**



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We have chosen to walk in the light of Christ's forgiveness and healing. As children of the light we pray together in the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### THE LIGHT OF HOPE

*Two young people will carry a lantern, symbolising the light of hope, through the Cathedral where it will be received in the sanctuary by the Church Leaders.*

In the light of hope may we set aside divisions of the past, celebrate our shared present and re-commit ourselves to working for a future of common understanding, respect and peace in this land, in these islands and throughout the world.

*All remain seated.*



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## IRISH BLESSING

*Sung by the gentlemen of the Cathedral Choir*

May the road rise to meet you,  
may the wind be ever at your back,  
may the sun shine warm upon your face,  
and the rain fall soft upon your fields,  
and until we meet again,  
may God hold you ever in the palm of his hand.

*Traditional words*

*Music: Bob Chilcott*

## THE BLESSING

*The Church Leaders*

May the strength of God pilot us.  
May the wisdom of God instruct us.  
May the hand of God protect us.  
May the Word of God direct us.  
May your salvation, O Lord, be always ours.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, now and for evermore. **Amen.**

*Based on words attributed to St Patrick*

*All stand to sing*



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## HYMN

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;  
thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
I ever with thee, and thou with me, Lord;  
thou my great Father, and I thy true heir;  
thou in me dwelling, and I in thy care.

Be thou my breast-plate, my sword for the fight;  
be thou my armour, and be thou my might;  
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower,  
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance through all my days;  
thou, and thou only, the first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art!

High King of heaven, when the battle is done,  
grant heaven's joy to me, O bright heaven's sun,  
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Words: Early Irish*  
*tr. Mary Byrne (1880-1931)*  
*versified Eleanor Hull (1860-1935) altd.*  
*Irish traditional melody: Slane*  
*harm. George H.P. Hewson (1881-1972)*

*Members of the Congregation are requested to remain in their places until invited by the Cathedral Stewards to leave the Cathedral via the West door.*



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## 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, 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.

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## CENTENARY

*by Francis John McDowell*



The past is the dead time we have held above our future.  
A hundred years of yesterdays, in which we lived  
In parallel lines; deep dug, and comfortably divided.  
Enclosing no space; too far apart to use a suture,  
Too near to wholly separate.

We failed to seek one common object of love.  
Not one. Petty difference our favourite parlour game.  
Men built upon our dividedness, leading people, lame,  
Up never-ending hills - imaginary summits clear above:  
Too high ever to be reached; too close ever to yield.

But, here and now, on Ard Mhacha, we'll not divide  
The indivisible God. Nor can we hide from his searching eyes  
Our petty hatreds and the kindnesses we so casually despised.  
We will not make large promises which tomorrow could deride.  
Lame people cannot run. There is no shame in limping.

With each sore step we'll strengthen the wasted muscles  
that kept us  
In this pattern of small comfort, this weary maze.  
Straightening our stride, we will see the many other ways  
Of facing the road before; we'll lean forward against fear for the  
Climbs that lie ahead. Almost together.



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## CHURCH LEADERS ST PATRICK'S DAY MESSAGE 2021

As disciples of Jesus Christ, sharing in the grace of his redemption, and in the Father's unshakeable love for his creation, we have been reflecting together on the events of 1921 on this island. We wish to share some of our thoughts as we continue these conversations and as we journey together through the year.

Every generation of leaders, civil and political, is called to make choices about the structures that govern our life in community, now and in the future, in circumstances that will always be less than ideal. Significant anniversaries provide an opportunity to reflect on our trajectory, exploring what can be learned for today through a re-examination of the contrasting and intertwined narratives of conflict and compromise that surround these pivotal points in our history.

Some may struggle with the concept of a shared history when it comes to the centenary of the partition of Ireland, the establishment of Northern Ireland and the resulting reconfiguration of British-Irish relationships. What is undeniable, however, is the reality that we have to live in a shared space on these islands, and to make them a place of belonging and welcome for all. In our approach to the past we have a moral responsibility to acknowledge the corrosive impact of violence and words that can lead to violence, and a duty of care to those still living with the trauma of its aftermath.



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There are insights from Christian social ethics that may offer a helpful perspective, alongside others, as we seek to navigate our contested past in a way that will contribute to healing of relationships in the present and a hopeful vision for the future. Christ's teaching, ministry and sacrifice were offered in the context of a society that was politically divided, wounded by conflict and injustice. His call to 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things of God' (Mark 12:17) conveyed the reassurance that beneath these societal fractures lay a deeper source of connection because all things belong to God.

Jesus lived out this message of hope by repeatedly and intentionally crossing social boundaries to affirm the dignity of those who had been marginalised or excluded by his own people and by society. In these encounters, as exemplified in the meeting with the Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42), we see that Christ does not seek to minimise differences, but rather to establish connection through gracious listening, replacing exclusion and shame with the hope of new beginnings.

We have an opportunity, in marking these events from our past, to be intentional in creating the spaces for encounter with those who are different from us, and those who may feel marginalised in the narratives that have shaped our community identity. This will require us to face difficult truths about failings in our own leadership in the work of peace and reconciliation.



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As Christian churches we acknowledge and lament the times that we failed to bring to a fearful and divided society that message of the deeper connection that binds us, despite our different identities, as children of God, made in His image and likeness. We have often been captive churches; not captive to the Word of God, but to the idols of state and nation.

We find inspiration and encouragement in the progress that has been made through our peace process in building relationships of mutual respect and trust across these islands. These relationships are often tested, and will at times be found wanting, but our communities have also demonstrated great resilience, solidarity and compassion, evident most recently in the response to Covid-19.

There has been considerable progress too in addressing unjust structures that excluded people and unfairly limited their life chances. The power of institutions has diminished, leading to greater accountability for those in leadership. This helps create an environment where we can value our different identities in a pluralist public square, conscious of both our rights and responsibilities. Yet there is much work still to do. With so much of our lives now being lived in the digital space there can be a temptation to retreat into spaces where our definition of community is limited to those who agree with us. This leads to an increasingly fragmented society in which too many people fall through the cracks.



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Churches, alongside other civic leaders, have a role to play in providing spaces outside political structures that give expression to our inter-connectedness and shared concern for the common good. It is our hope that shared reflection on our past will support and strengthen this engagement, inspiring us to renew our commitment to the work of building peace for the future. As the Apostle Paul said, “So then let us pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another”

*Romans 14:19*

**The Most Reverend Eamon Martin**  
*Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh &  
Primate of All Ireland*

**The Most Reverend John McDowell**  
*Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh &  
Primate of All Ireland*

**The Right Reverend Dr David Bruce**  
*Moderator of the General Assembly of the  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland*

**The Reverend Dr Thomas McKnight**  
*President of the Methodist Church in Ireland  
(June 2020 - June 2021)*

**The Very Reverend Dr Ivan Patterson**  
*President of the Irish Council of Churches*



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## ST PATRICK'S CHURCH OF IRELAND CATHEDRAL, ARMAGH

In the fifth century St Patrick came to Armagh, and the local chieftain, Daire, gave him this hilltop, where we gather today, on which to build a Church. Completed in 445AD that Church became known as Damhliag Mór or Great Stone Church. It was this Church that was mentioned in the Annals of Ireland in the ninth century, yet by the seventh century, Armagh was already recognized as St Patrick's see and the pre-eminent church in Ireland.

The first biographies of Patrick by Muirchú and Tírechán, written at that time, supported this claim. Subsequently Brian Boroimhe (Boru), the High King of Ireland, confirmed Armagh's supremacy when in 1005 he laid a gift of gold on the High Altar of the church and, on his death in the battlefield at Clontarf, his remains were brought to the hill of Armagh for interment in a spot indicated today by a stone inscription on the exterior west wall of the north transept of the Cathedral.

The story of the hill of Armagh and the church buildings upon it is one of recurring destruction and restoration across the centuries. The Irish Annals record constant plunderings and burnings. The Danish incursions of the ninth and tenth centuries brought repeated destruction and during the Anglo-Norman conquest in the twelfth century the Church was twice burned by crown forces.

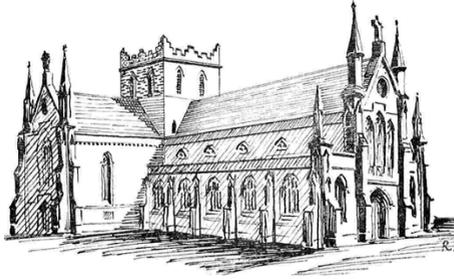


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In 1268 Archbishop O'Scannell built the Cathedral in its present form. His ground plan remains unchanged, but little of his actual building survives. This building survives, because in 1566 it was burned by Shane O'Neill in his rebellion against Queen Elizabeth I. It suffered the same fate in the rebellion of 1641 by Sir Phelim O'Neill. These burnings were particularly deplorable inasmuch as all medieval archives, documents and plate perished in them leaving little to show of anything earlier than 1661 - the year of its restoration.

A further restoration of the Cathedral was carried out between 1834 and 1840 when Archbishop John George Beresford engaged the architect, Lewis Nockalls Cottingham. More alterations were made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries including the moving of the choir screen to the south transept, the raising of the tower arches between the nave and the choir and the installation of the reredos in 1913. The most recent renovation was completed in 2004.

The skyline in Armagh is dominated by two Cathedrals as across the valley and on another hill sits the great French Gothic twin-spired St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral. Over the years, a spirit of shared witness between the cathedrals has developed and along with the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and others of many different traditions, the proclamation of the Gospel today in Armagh is as strong as it was in the days when St Patrick first walked here.



THANKS ARE EXTENDED TO

*The Dean and Chapter of St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral,  
Armagh, for the use of the Cathedral*

*The Director of Music, Dr Stephen Timpany, and the gentlemen of  
the Cathedral Choir*

*The Assistant Organist, the Reverend Canon Dr Peter Thompson*

*The musicians from the Education Authority Music Service*

*All who participated in this service of Reflection and Hope.*

*Material in this service*  
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THE CHURCH LEADERS GROUP  
*(IRELAND)*



**CHURCH LEADERS' GROUP (IRELAND)**  
***A service of Reflection & Hope***  
***to mark***  
***the Centenary of the partition of Ireland***  
***and the formation of Northern Ireland***  
***St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral***

## **News Release**

### **21 October 2021**

### **Service of Reflection & Hope takes place**

At a unique gathering to mark a deeply significant time in the history of these islands, a young high school student, accompanied by three primary school children from schools across County Armagh, will carry a lantern through St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in the City of Armagh today (21 October), symbolising 'The Light of Hope'. The simple symbolic act takes place during a Service of Reflection and Hope to mark the centenary of the partition of Ireland and the formation of Northern Ireland, which has been organised and hosted by the Church Leaders' Group (Ireland).

The hour-long service, which began at 11 o'clock in Ireland's ecclesiastical capital, is being attended by representatives of both governments and the Northern Ireland Executive and other elected representatives. They include, the UK's Prime Minister, Rt Hon Boris Johnston MP, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD, and the First Minister of Northern Ireland, Paul Givan MLA. While guests at the Service have had to be limited to enable appropriate social distancing, due to various Covid19 mitigations, the service also brings together civic dignitaries, children and young people, and over 100 community leaders working in peace-building, community development, health, youth work, and various different aspects of church life, in an act of worship that is underpinned by a Christian vision of reconciliation.

The P7 children from local maintained, controlled and integrated schools will accompany Billy Smith, from Armagh High School, who will carry the lantern, which has a living flame burning within, through the Cathedral to the Sanctuary, where they will present it to Church Leaders. Throughout the service, children and young people will have key roles to play.

With local schoolchildren forming a welcoming reception for the guests as they enter the Cathedral grounds, a choir of children from different backgrounds from the local area - in brightly coloured T-shirts to represent diversity and hope across the island - will sing a 'Song of Hope' entitled, 'We're the future of tomorrow'.

In a part of the service, called 'Voices of Hope', three young people, Lucy Addis from the Royal School Armagh, Seán McCourt Kelly from St Patrick's High School in Keady, and Andrea Andrews, from Le Chéile Secondary School in Tyrrelstown in Dublin, will each share their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the next generation.

Two of the three scripture readings (Isaiah 40:28b-31 and Matthew 5:1-14) will be read by Rebecca Morris, from Belfast's Methodist College, and Oisín Walsh, who works in the Catholic Communications Office in Maynooth. An 'Act of Commitment' will be led by Rosa McCloskey from Lagan College in Belfast and James Chamberlain, from Markethill High School in County Armagh.

Broadcast live by the BBC and RTÉ, at the start of the Service of Reflection and Hope, the Dean of Armagh, Very Rev Shane Forster, will welcome guests and lead the service in prayer. Having read 2 Corinthians 5:17-29, he will pray, "...Lord, we confess to you and to each other, that we have wounded each other and our communities in the past. We are sorry and ashamed and ask for your forgiveness, so that together we may move forward in faith, grow together in love, and faithfully serve you all our days...May Almighty God forgive us, heal us and help us and give us his peace now and in the days to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Prayer also forms an integral part of the service. Linda Ervine MBE and Seán Coll, will lead the opening prayer in Irish. Professor May Hannon-Fletcher and Robert Barfoot, who were both injured in the conflict on this island, will offer Intercessions. The Sierra Leone-born President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu, will give the sermon.

Before Dr Yambasu preaches, his four colleagues in the Church Leaders' Group (Ireland), the Most Rev John McDowell and the Most Rev Eamon Martin, Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Archbishops of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland respectively, Rt Rev Dr David Bruce, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, President of the Irish Council of Churches, will each share some personal reflections. In a moment entitled 'The Journey', these reflections include some of the significant themes that have touched them in relation to this centenary year.

Music also plays an important part in this Christian act of worship. Along with the children's 'Song of Hope', soloist Helena Hendron and the Cathedral Choir, under Director of Music, Dr Stephen Timpany, will sing 'The Deer's Cry, during a 'Time of Reflection'. Three hymns will also be sung, accompanied by Assistant Organist, Rev Dr Peter Thompson, and musicians from the Education Authority Music Service. The Cathedral Choir will also sing an Irish Blessing.

Speaking in advance of the Service, the Church Leaders said, “We would like to extend our thanks to the Dean and Chapter of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, Armagh, for the use of the Cathedral for our Service of Reflection and Hope, and everyone who has come today and will participate in it. We see this service as a moment in a much longer journey towards reconciliation, which will require the prayerful support and engagement of Christians across these islands.”

The Church Leaders continued, “In our ‘Centenary Prayer’, which is printed in the Order of Service, we acknowledge before God, our failures, our divisions, and the hurt that we have caused Him and one another. For this, we ask for forgiveness. The prayer concludes, ‘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.’ May all of us on this island have the courage to embrace and pass on these gifts.”

**Ends.**

**Issued on behalf of the Church Leaders’ Group (Ireland) by Mark Smith, Presbyterian Church in Ireland press officer. For further information +44 (0) 7802 264 354 or Email: [msmith@presbyterianireland.org](mailto:msmith@presbyterianireland.org)**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **Hymns sung at the Service of Reflection & Hope**

During the Service, the following hymns were sung:

- O Christ the same through all our story’s pages
- In Christ alone my hope is found
- Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

### **The Light of Hope**

The P7 children accompanying the Light of Hope carried by Billy Smith will be:

- Libby Harrison, Saints and Scholars Primary School
- Erika Stancuice, Mount St Catherine’s Primary School and
- Alfie Cummings, Armstrong Primary School.

### **Church Leaders’ Group (Ireland)**

The Church Leaders Group (Ireland) comprises the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Primate of all Ireland, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the President of the Irish Council of Churches. All of these represent all-Ireland denominations with churches across the whole of the island of Ireland.

The Group came into existence in the late 1960s when the Church Leaders recognised the value in working together in light of the urgency of political developments of the time. Since then, those holding

these offices have met frequently, united in their identity as disciples of Jesus and their shared commitment to work together for the common good.



**CHURCH LEADERS' GROUP (IRELAND)**  
*A service of Reflection & Hope*  
*to mark*  
*the Centenary of the partition of Ireland*  
*and the formation of Northern Ireland*



***St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral***  
***Thursday, 21 October 2021***

***CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY***

**Sermon by Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu**  
**President of the Methodist Church in Ireland**

May I preach faithfully in the name of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

I. I bring you good news!

We meet on the hill and in the Cathedral of St. Patrick's. This is a place where the name of Christ and the values of love, acceptance and embrace were preached, the seeds of hope for enemies becoming friends were sown, and reconciliation not just talked about but enacted.

Lest we forget, before he became Patron Saint of Ireland, Patrick was a slave here. Here, he suffered an intentional act of violence. And, here, he was made to feel a little less human than those who enslaved him. And yet it is to this place, land, and people he returned to spend the rest of his life enabling the Irish to find an alternative way of living in solidarity one with the other.

Patrick had every reason to hate the Irish and seek for vengeance. But he didn't. Instead, he forgave and was forgiven. Consequently, the history of this place could be summarised in one word: GRACE - unmerited concern for the good of the other.

For us Christians, grace is a gift. That gift is a person. Jesus Christ is his name. He is the gift of God to St. Patrick. It is that gift that made him return to Ireland not to hold the past against the people of Ireland, but to hold before them the possibility of a mutually enhanced future: a future devoid of recriminations and unjust relationships; and a future imbued with and infused by grace.

I tell you the truth. Grace alone can set free the people of this Island from enslavement by the past. The result of the outworking of grace is forgiveness. And forgiveness is releasing others and oneself from a corroding past into a liberating future. This is the good news I bring you: that the grace of Jesus is available to you, to me, to all of us, today.

II. I bring you good news!

Today, we are marking a point in our history. We have come a long way – not just a century but centuries. During that time people have cared for one another and made efforts to build community. For this we give thanks. But we have also been blighted by sectarian divisions, terrible injustices, destructive violence, and by win-lose political attitudes. And for this, we have cause to lament. So, this service provides us with an opportunity to give thanks and, also, lament; to imagine what could be, and to choose the way forward that can be mutually beneficial.

It was only recently that I learnt that the first antislavery voice out of Ireland is that of Patrick. Patrick's letter to the powerful chief Coroticus was an anguished cry for the equal rights of every person to a life of dignity, worth, and respect. Patrick saw no future for reconciliation without such justice.

My friends, human rights abuses start with seeing other people as things, rather than as human beings like ourselves. Once we cross that line, we can treat them as obstacles to get rid of, or as merchandise to sell for profit, or as bargaining chips to barter, or as tools to use for our benefit.

Born and raised in Sierra Leone - on the continent of Africa - I speak as one whose people were bought, sold, and used for profit; whose continent was partitioned without

any reference to or consultation with its inhabitants and owners; and whose colour is seen as sufficient excuse to ignore their equal humanity with others. Consequently, I have spent the last 26 years on this island negotiating my acceptance as of equal value with Irish people.

In standing against slavery and the violence to human dignity it represents, Patrick leaves us with a legacy of including others in our humanity, regardless of who they are. That is what Paul's text on reconciliation in 2Corinthians is about. Reconciliation refuses to see people through any other lens other than how God sees them – as made in His image. That is why Paul says that 'From now on, we regard no one from a worldly perspective'. (2Cor.5:16) And this from a man who confessed that, before he was a Christian, he was extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers and won't tolerate others who were different. (Galatians 1:14)

My friends, how we see others is important. There is a short story in Mark's Gospel of Jesus healing a blind man by rubbing saliva on his eyes. The first time Jesus does this, he asks the man to tell him the result. 'I see people, but they look like trees walking', the man says to Jesus. (Mark 8:24) Jesus repeats his action on the man's eyes. And then the man sees clearly – that is, he sees people as people.

How we see people is the springboard of justice or injustice. If we see them as human beings like ourselves, we will treat them like we want to be treated. If we see them like trees walking, we will treat them as such.

I bring you good news! By the grace of Jesus, we can see and treat different others as people like ourselves. Hope for a better future must be rooted in that possibility.

III. Finally, I bring you good news!

Our Gospel reading is from what has been traditionally known as Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount'. That sermon has inspired justice and peace movements in recent history including decolonisation, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and Martin Luther King's struggle for racial justice. The core values of that sermon are mercy, compassion, solidarity, justice, and peace. This was what Jesus taught and practised as a way towards just and peaceful society. It was a vision for the real world he experienced under Roman Imperialism with its systems of conquest, domination, and exploitation. So, Jesus' alternative vision was for this world you and I live in here and now, not another world. It is that vision that led to his execution by an unjust and oppressive political and military system.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, building an equal and just future is costly. It is a moral imperative needing moral courage to fulfil. Failing that, hope for a just and peaceful co-existence of different peoples and traditions on this island, as anywhere else, will remain just that – hope. A moral imperative, courage, and hope are intertwined. Perhaps a most concrete way to embrace them is to seek to make space in our lives for even those we believe have wronged us.

Let me finish with a story Greg Myre tells about Nelson Mandela of South Africa. He says that six times Mandela was offered conditional release from prison by the then apartheid government. Six times he refused. And one of the six times, he said this to his detainers, 'I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson Mandela and the Virtue of Compromise, December 8, 2013

Embracing different others is not about promoting oneself. It is about creating space for each other to flourish. It is not about assimilating them into ourselves. It is about recognizing that there is something of us in the ones we embrace. It is not about ignoring justice. It is about creating space within ourselves for the perceived wrongdoer in hope of reconciliation. That is what GRACE is. It is choosing relationship over being right. That is what Christianity is and should be about. That is what Christian practice is.

So, I offer you Jesus Christ. With His Spirit working in and through us, just living, undeserved generosity of embrace, forgiveness, and acceptance are possible.

I bring you good news, in the name of Christ. Amen.

**Ends.**



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***to mark***  
***the Centenary of the partition of Ireland***  
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***St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral***  
***Thursday, 21 October 2021***

***CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY***

***In Christ we journey together***

The following text was spoken by four of the church leaders at the Service of Reflection & Hope during a part of the service called 'The Journey'. These personal reflections include some of the significant themes that have touched each of them in relation to this centenary year.

**The Most Reverend Eamon Martin**  
**Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland**

'So then let us pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another' Romans 14:19

When I look back on what happened on this island in 1921, like many others in my community and tradition, I do so with a deep sense of loss; and also sadness. Because for the past 100 years partition has polarised people on this island. It has institutionalised difference, and it remains a symbol of cultural, political and religious division between our communities.

I grew up in Derry, just a few miles on the northern side of the border. As a young boy I remember we often crossed the border to visit my granny and other relatives in Inishowen. At first we did so through customs, and then, in later years, through heavily fortified checkpoints. It was as if my home city had been cut off in 1921 from its natural hinterland in beautiful Donegal.

That little boy has now grown up. Today I reflect as a Church Leader on the last 100 years. I have to face the difficult truth that perhaps we in the churches could have done more to deepen our understanding of each other and to bring healing and peace to our divided and wounded communities.

Jesus grew up in the midst of political and cultural division and of deep-seated historic difference. But he taught his disciples to build bridges of love and forgiveness. When he was asked, "Who is my neighbour?" he pointed to the Good Samaritan who crossed social and historic barriers to show love and mercy to the one who was on 'the other side'.

That is why I stand here today, as a disciple of Jesus, with my brothers and sisters in faith, hopeful and committed to doing what we can to build a better future for all, a future in which mistrust and division can become things of the past.

**The Right Reverend Dr David Bruce**  
**Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

My family came from the same part of the country as Eamon's. My father was born on a small county Derry farm 99 years ago, into a family with deep roots in Scottish Presbyterianism. At various points in his life, my father considered leaving Northern Ireland but despite the huge challenges of this century, including the great depression of the 1930s, the upheaval of the second world war, and of course the Troubles, he chose this as his home. He chose to stay and worked to make it better.

I look back over these 100 years with mixed feelings. Northern Ireland is my home too, and I love it. But I lament the physical and emotional pain which has been caused over this last century to so many people by violence and the words which lead to violence. Sadly such things remain, and not only on this island. In hope, we long for a day when, as the Apostle John describes it, God will wipe every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain.

For now, I grieve the times when fear has held us back from building relationships with those with whom we differ. If we are to build a better future then we must recognise our own woundedness and our responsibility to care for the wounds of one another.

As we build that better future, relationships of all sorts; personal, community, religious and political, must mature and strengthen across this island and between these islands.

As we meet as Church Leaders, I find myself around a table with others who have different national identities and political aspirations and yet with whom I share the same identity as a disciple of Jesus. I find myself at home. With my brothers and sisters I commit myself to building the mature strong relationships which we need as peace is built, so that we become a community in which each can know they belong.

**Very Reverend Dr Ivan Patterson**  
**President of the Irish Council of Churches**

I think we can sometimes underestimate the contribution of friendship to the work of building peace. In a divided society simple moments of human connection and hospitality can have a profound impact. Friendships with clergy from other churches has greatly enriched both my ministry and my personal life.

For me, the starting point was inter-church youth work. There I saw the value of setting an example, through our friendship and collaboration, for young people who were willing to take risks to build space in which they could listen respectfully to each other.

Today, the religious landscape of this island has changed. In an increasingly multicultural society, Church and community are enriched by different cultures, ethnicities and traditions. We need to hear their voices too.

While it is important that we continue to show leadership to our young people by coming together as Church Leaders, we recognise that our failure, even to talk well together about the ways in which the past continues to affect us all, hampers them in addressing that unfinished work of peace so important for the future.

We have heard their voices clearly and powerfully today, we need to learn from their example. They are a generation who want to build peace, a generation who respect and care for this planet in solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable here and around the world.

As a disciple of Jesus with my brothers and sisters I commit myself to supporting that generation, even where that means that we must sacrifice some things which were important in the past for the sake of those generations who are to come.

### **The Most Reverend John McDowell Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland**

I was born in 1956 in working class East Belfast. It was an immensely rich culture to grow up in. So I have very warm memories of growing up, and in a slightly more integrated housing estate than would be the case now.

My family would definitely have thought of themselves as Unionist, although my mother in particular also had a strong sense of Irish identity, oddly enough centring round a Welsh Briton, St Patrick. However, that integration I spoke about didn't run very deep; there was always a sense of *them and us* not far below the surface. Friendship was plentiful. Trust was in short supply.

Now, as a church leader I am sorry that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we didn't do more to become peacemakers, or at least to speak peace into the situation. Too often we allowed the attitudes around us to shape our faith, rather than the other way round. That's certainly what I mean when I say we have too often been captive churches.

We obsessed about some things: especially borders. One way or another, we're obsessing about them again, and being distracted from really thinking about what a good society would look like. There are still far too many people who live with poverty of many kinds-educational, economic, emotional. Far from creating a society with a common purpose, the pandemic and some recent political developments have exposed just how fractured a society we've become.

But I am hopeful. Hopeful in a new generation who know that the big problems we've landed them with, especially climate change and economic inequality, can only be tackled together. I think there are already signs that the next generation will see the things that we obsessed about as secondary, and place their priorities elsewhere.

And as his disciples, I think our role is to imitate Our Lord, in acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God.

Hebrews 10:23 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful"

**Ends.**