



Holy Week Statement from British and Irish Church Leaders

God's world is in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. In the nations that make up Britain and Ireland the Covid-19 virus continues to affect people at an alarming rate, health services along with many of our institutions and organisations, both local and national, are under extreme pressure and people are getting used to living in a very different way, many in extreme isolation. As with all such crises, there is a danger that the most vulnerable in society will be most badly affected.

Christians the world over are entering an important time in the church year as we look to the events of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. At the centre of our common faith are both the depths of despair and the heights of joy. In the Bible and in the songs and liturgies of the Church, we see Jesus entering fully into human suffering. In His rising again, that suffering is redeemed and transformed into hope and joy. After Jesus' death his disciples were afraid and all seemed lost and hopeless, but the risen Christ met them in their despair and restored hope through his victory over death. We pray that the world today might know this hope in place of despair.

In the Book of Daniel we read about God's people being taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel could not pray in the Temple in Jerusalem, but he continued to pray in exile – opening his window to face Jerusalem. Though he was on his own he joined with the prayers of the people wherever they were. Now we too are separated from each other physically, but when we pray in our homes we join in with this ancient tradition of our home as a place of prayer. Wherever we are, whenever we pray, when we speak and think of Christ, there he is in the midst of us. We join our prayers with all those who pray in our own churches and communities and around the world.

As church leaders from across the many and varied churches of these Islands we urge all people to join us in prayer this Holy Week and Easter; to pray for those who suffer, those who face untimely death and all those who care for them; to celebrate our common faith at a difficult time; to help and support our neighbours in need; and to observe all the safeguards in place to slow the spread of disease.

Our Prayer

Loving God, in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for our salvation, cast out the darkness of our anxiety, fear and mourning, enfold us in your love and give us joy and hope this Easter. Amen.

Archbishop Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury

Very Rev Dr William Henry
Moderator General Assembly
Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Archbishop Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh

Revd Nigel Uden
Moderator of General Assembly
United Reformed Church

Bishop Hugh Gilbert
Bishop of Aberdeen

His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas
Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain

Bishop Mark Strange
Primus, Scottish Episcopal Church

His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos
Coptic Archbishop of London

Mr Rheinallt Thomas
President Free Church Council Wales

Revd Brian Anderson
President Irish Council of Churches

Gavin Calver
CEO Evangelical Alliance

Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

Rt. Revd Colin Sinclair
Moderator General Assembly
Church of Scotland

Commissioner Anthony Cotterill
The Salvation Army

Archbishop-elect John McDowell
Archbishop of Armagh

Revd Dr Barbara Glasson
President Methodist Church of Great
Britain

Revd Lynn Green
General Secretary Baptist Union of Great
Britain

Archbishop John Davies
Archbishop of Wales

Pastor Agu Irukwu
Redeemed Christian Church of God

Revd Hugh Osgood
Moderator Free Church Federal Council

Revd Sam McGuffin
President Methodist Church in Ireland

Paul Parker
Religious Society of Friends