

CHURCH LEADERS' JOINT STATEMENT - 17 APRIL 2020

Church Leaders: 'For those caring for the community thank you'

Following their weekly video conference today (17 April), the leaders of Ireland's main Churches have expressed their deep appreciation and thanks for those working on the frontline during the current Coronavirus pandemic, commanding them for "their work, courage and compassion."

The leaders of the Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland, Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Irish Council of Churches, look forward to a time when the pandemic abates and is over saying that, "we will also have a renewed and strengthened sense of community on this island and a new understanding and deeper appreciation of one another."

The Church Leaders have also encouraged those taking part in the Thursday evening appreciation of the UK's health care workers to pray for them when the applause has ended and people go back into their homes.

Church Leaders' joint statement in full

"To be a community, in the real sense of the word, means that as individuals we acknowledge our interdependence and work together to achieve something for the greater good, which will benefit us all. In the last number of weeks, we have witnessed the vast majority of people on this island working together, in a way that has perhaps never been seen before, protecting one another from this terrible unseen enemy which is attacking our community. Deserted streets and roads are not signs of abandonment, but of love.

"We have the greatest admiration for our healthcare workers who are literally serving on the frontline in caring for the sick and dying. We offer our deepest thanks, commanding them for their work, courage and compassion as we continue to remember them in our prayers. We also remember the countless others who are serving the community in ways, which in other circumstances, we would consider everyday – those involved in providing and selling food and essential items, pharmacists, and everyone working with the public for our wellbeing. We owe them a huge debt of thanks and gratitude – thanks, which in many ways is also due to everyone, as we play our part in following the challenging, but necessary, restrictions on normal life, as we have come to know it. These are difficult times, but if we all work together for the common good, better days lie ahead.

"As we look forward to those days, we continue to show our collective appreciation as a grateful community for those who work in our health service across the UK, and for all who care for the community in various ways, by sharing in a round of applause at 8pm on Thursday evenings. This coming together is a wonderfully uplifting and meaningful act, which is greatly appreciated by those who serve on the frontline.

"When you go back into your homes each Thursday evening, may we encourage you to join with us in offering a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all those whom we have acknowledged in our round of applause. Please pray that they may know God's strength and courage, safety, and blessing in their work. Pray too for those for whom they are caring - the sick, vulnerable, dying and all in distress.

"God willing, once the pandemic is past, we will also have a renewed and strengthened sense of community on this island and a new understanding and deeper appreciation of one another."

Rt Rev Dr William Henry

Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Rt Rev John McDowell

Church of Ireland Archbishop-elect of Armagh

Rev Sam McGuffin

President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Most Rev Eamon Martin

Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of all Ireland

Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson

President of the Irish Council of Churches