



**Image of the day -  
St Finn  
Barre's,  
Cork**

## **History made as Presbyterian Moderator is nominated to serve a second term**

Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) are formally elected annually by the Assembly at its opening meeting, the nominee having been selected by PCI's 19 regional presbyteries earlier that year. By convention they serve for one year, however, for the first time since 1894, the Church announced yesterday (11 February) that its current Moderator, Rt Rev Dr David Bruce, will be nominated to the General Assembly to serve for a second term of office.

Rev Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland explained that following normal practice, towards the end of 2020, PCI's presbyteries forwarded to him the names of ministers who they would like to see considered as the denomination's next Moderator. As Clerk of Assembly he then wrote individually to each minister to see if they would be willing to permit their name go forward to the next stage - the selection of the Moderator-Designate by voting in presbyteries meeting separately across Ireland in February.

"When I heard back from each colleague, only one minister, David Bruce, our current Moderator, consented to his name going before presbyteries for consideration, which by convention should have taken place on the first Tuesday in February," Mr Gribben said.

"Taking an overview of the current situation, with our presbyteries not being able to meet physically, due to Dr





current restrictions in both jurisdictions, and the fact that only one name was under consideration, the General Council's Standing Committee, acting with delegated authority, unanimously agreed that Dr Bruce's name be forwarded to the General Assembly for appointment as Moderator for the 2021-2022 church year."

Mr Gribben concluded by saying, "As we have journeyed through these last 11 months, the rhythm of church life, and life in general, has changed dramatically for us all. We have learned what it means to walk by faith, and not by sight, and we have experienced the amazing grace of our faithful God as he led us on that journey. The nomination of our current Moderator to serve a second term is a significant change. Since our General Assembly came into being in 1840, this has only happened on six previous occasions, the last time being in 1894, 127 years ago. However, the outcome of this

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year's nomination process is a further demonstration not only of the unprecedented times that we are living through, but also of leading of the Lord, as we have prayerfully sought his guidance for the days ahead.”

Speaking about the decision, Dr Bruce said, “I am of course, deeply honoured to be asked by our Church to be its next Moderator. To be considered for a second time is also truly humbling. When I was first nominated a year ago, no one could have possibly anticipated the challenges that we would face the following month, let alone a year on. The whole of our society – indeed the entire world – has had to face a pandemic which has devastated economies, destabilised governments and led to the deaths of millions of people. Perhaps the world will never know the full cost of the spread of Covid-19 and its variants.

“In addition, and in Ireland, north and south, 2020 began and ended with Brexit, the complex implications of which are being played out before us right now. The Church currently finds itself unable to meet face-to-face for worship, and with its normal programme of activities heavily curtailed. Ministers, pastors and priests of all traditions are re-inventing their patterns of life, while doing their utmost to act in support of families, many of which are in crisis. These are difficult days for us all.

Dr Bruce continued, “But in the midst of this, there is hope – just as the dawn comes after a dark night, and spring arrives after a long winter, for the Christian, resurrection bursts upon us after the devastation of the Crucifixion. As Moderator I will aim to bring a message of hope in the coming year, with the prayer that when the restrictions begin

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to lift and the amazing vaccines, which have been offered to us all, begin to have their effect, we will emerge again, ready to serve and love and worship as God's people. This is not a time for grand promises and detailed plans. This is a time for careful reflection and faithful trust that God will see us through. There is Hope.

The Moderator concluded by saying, "My wife Zoe and I hope that, regulations permitting, we may be able to travel across Ireland to visit and encourage congregations, and presbyteries during the year. We pray for our overseas partners in some of the poorest regions of the world, and hope that we might be able to offer encouragement to them by standing with them in solidarity as they seek to bear witness to Christ in face of unimaginable challenges. In short, we hope to serve the Church in this year, and by doing so, to honour Christ who has loved us and called us."

## **Special YouTube mass from Cork Hospital will include nurses and medics in prayers for Covid patients**

A special Mass for Covid-19 patients, their families and all who are sick will be broadcast from one of Cork's main hospitals tomorrow, to a congregation that is being asked to join in the prayers live on YouTube, Cork Beo reports

The Mass for the World Day of the Sick is celebrated on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and will be offered by Bishop Fintan Gavin, Bishop of Cork and Ross.



*Bishop Fintan Gavin, Bishop of Cork and Ross (Image: Brian Lougheed)*

It will be broadcast live on YouTube as it is celebrated - without a congregation - from the Chapel of the Mercy University Hospital to other hospitals in the region, to nursing and care homes and to anyone who joins in on the live-stream.

Hospital staff, representing all who care for the sick, will lead singing and read prayers and readings.

Anne O'Keeffe, from Cobh who is a nurse in the Emergency Department, will read the First Reading at the Mass.

Nurse Michael Bradley, from Macroom, will sing at the Mass. He works in St Therese's Oncology Ward.

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Prayers at the Mass will be read by Lisa Tuohy, Clinical Nurse Manager, St Joseph's Ward, who is from Killorglin and by Rob O'Farrell, a physiotherapist at the hospital who is from Watergrasshill parish.

Bishop Fintan is inviting people to join him for the Mass on Thursday 11th February at 12 noon via live-stream on YouTube (you can click here at midday tomorrow)

“As a diocesan family we can be as one in prayer and solidarity with the sick and in thanksgiving for healthcare workers in hospitals, residential care facilities and homes throughout the Diocese,” the bishop said.

Rev Ted Ardis, the Church of Ireland Chaplain at the hospital, will introduce the candle lighting ceremony and Margaret McKiernan, Director of Nursing, will welcome everyone on behalf of the Mercy University Hospital.

## **Psychiatrist Dr McGarry appointed Chair of SEFF's Health and Wellbeing Oversight Team**

Dr Philip Mc Garry has almost 40 years' experience working as a psychiatrist. His father, a surgeon at the Mater Hospital until the late 1980's, treated large numbers of Troubles victims.

Philip attended St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School and Queen's University.



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He was consultant psychiatrist for West Belfast and the Royal Victoria Hospital from 1991, and in 2007 moved to the Belfast Home Treatment Team.

He has long recognised the centrality of psychosocial approaches to care, and he is the only accredited Trainer in Ireland of Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT).

He was Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland (2009-2013). Philip has published articles on suicide, Home Treatment and the training of psychiatrists and he has been Chair of the Mental Health charity Threshold.

He was President of the NI Medico-Legal Society ( 2014-2015).

Politically Philip was Chair of the Alliance Party (1993-1995) and a member of Belfast City Council (1993 to 1997) He was awarded the OBE in the January 2021 Queen's New Years' Honours List.

\*\*And for those who haven't picked up on his name or look - yes Philip is a brother of Tim (Aka Da from Give my Head Peace)

## **Ireland's fittest parish?**

At the start of January, Archdeacon Adrian Wilkinson, the rector of Douglas Union with Frankfield, in the Diocese of Cork, publicised the fact that he would walk at least 5 kilometres each day that month. This was partly for





personal relaxation, but also a conscious decision to be visible around the parish while churches were closed and much normal parochial activity had ceased. The daily target he set was relatively modest so that others might be encouraged to join in too.

A number of parishioners responded to his challenge keeping pace with him or exceeding his target. It was also an opportunity to raise money for the parish, local charities, and the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal. The fact that the parish could not host their usual large Carol Services in December, when sizeable collections for charities and overseas development projects would normally be taken, had left many worthy projects starved of financial support.

Initially the aim of the Rector was to raise €3000 through sponsorship. This figure was quickly surpassed on the specific GoFundMe page (Douglas Union with Frankfield 5Km Challenge) and through direct giving. In the end, 4 times the initial target was raised. The local charities which

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will benefit are the Cork Simon Community, Pieta House and Cork Penny Dinners. The Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal will also receive approximately €4000.

Archdeacon Wilkinson commented:

When I took up this modest challenge and asked others to join me, I had no idea how much support it would receive. I think many people find January a difficult month at the best of times. This year it has been even more of a struggle as we still contend with the pandemic. Several parishioners, who had experienced bereavement, surgery and income loss, told me that it encouraged them to get outdoors and to walk each day. Contributing to charity at the same time was an added incentive for them.'

He concluded:

I am grateful for the active support and generosity of so many in the parish. Whether we are Ireland's fittest parish is debatable, but I hope those involved will keep up their daily exercise routine, even if it is no longer in aid of good causes.

## **Christians Against Poverty: John Kirkby steps down from debt charity**

The founder of a debt relief charity that has helped more than 20,000 people with money worries is stepping down after 25 years.



John Kirkby (above) launched Christians Against Poverty (CAP) in Bradford in August 1996.

The organisation's patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, said Mr Kirkby had a "passion for financial justice".

CAP said Mr Kirkby's work had been "life-saving for countless people".

The charity works with a network of churches and has a commitment to making its services available to all, regardless of religion or belief.

Over more than a decade, CAP, which also operates in Australia, the US and Canada, has helped more than 20,000 people clear their debts.



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Mr Kirkby had previously worked in the finance industry and used his expertise to help people dealing with debt to negotiate with creditors and set up budgeting systems.

The charity now offers debt counselling, money management, job clubs, life skills groups and support for people breaking habits which are controlling their lives. The organisation said anyone needing help should contact them.

The archbishop said: "John's religious conviction and passion for financial justice has been the driving force for an organisation which has grown exponentially since its inception and helped thousands of people free themselves from the prison of debt."

## **Cave Hill, Belfast**

Mr Kirkby said:  
"I'm delighted to look at the organisation CAP is now and





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wholeheartedly know that I have played the part I was called here to do.

"I see an organisation made up of people who are strong in mission and faith, ablaze with passion and overflowing with compassion for those they help."

Paula Stringer, CAP's UK chief executive, said: "There is no doubt that John's personal commitment and sacrifice in the past 25 years have genuinely been life-saving for countless people in the UK and beyond."

Report courtesy BBC Yorkshire

## **Opinion - Notes on a crisis: With Covid and the climate crisis, we are failing the next generation, Rowan Williams writes in The Spectator.**

We are backing away from the job of resourcing young people to respond with intelligence, imagination and honesty.

As we pass the sombre figure of 100,000 deaths in the UK from the Covid-19 pandemic, we are – not unnaturally – asking what if anything we have learned that might lessen the risks we face in the future. But if we are asking about learning, we should be asking some quite literal and targeted questions about what is for most people the most visible kind of learning – what goes on in schools and colleges.



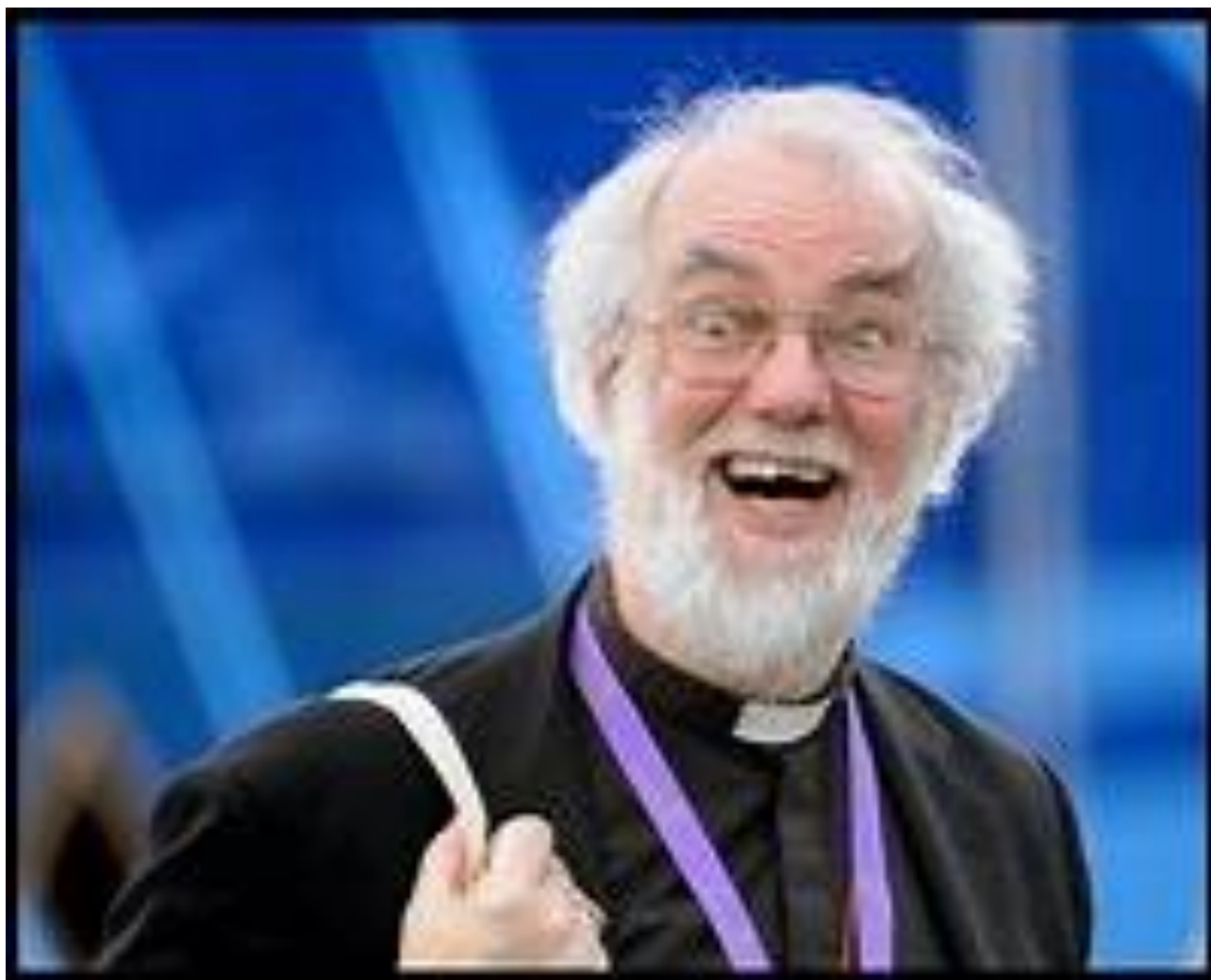
It is true that educational issues have been a lightning rod throughout the pandemic. They have been a vehicle for anxieties about national priorities, social disadvantage, mental health, the calculation of risk and a good deal more. The reproach of “letting our children down” has been flung around the political arena in a startling variety of ways. But where does the real betrayal of our children lie? Education at every level is still seen predominantly in terms of providing employable skills, and its effectiveness is routinely measured by its success in securing jobs. But what if we are now at a point in the history of our culture where this is not just inadequate but actively disabling?

This is a concern at the most practical level. We may or may not be looking at a long-term shift in our attitude to work, as

some have argued. But, in the short term, the rising generation faces an even higher measure of insecurity than we have grown used to in the past couple of decades. The job market will be fraught and uncertain, the gig economy will be both more pervasive and more risky, and the correlation between education and purchasing power is not going to improve in a hurry. Continuing to parrot bromides about education and the world of employment won't be helpful or honest. If education truly prepares the young for their future, it must help them better understand this uncertainty, and find the resources of mental well-being that will enable them to live with it.

This opens up a much larger issue. We are used to plaintive cries that not enough students opt for scientific subjects, and related worries about the supposed drift of our culture towards an anti-scientific relativism or, ultimately, a post-truth mentality. But one of the things we have learnt in the past ten months is that we set ourselves up for profound confusion if we talk about "science" as a source of self-evidently clear and effective solutions, as if narratives and values played no role. Bland claims to be "following the science" have acquired an unhappily hollow sound.

Working scientists will almost always say that the bridge between evidence and action is a tough one to construct, and needs a breadth of awareness about social and individual variables for it to be durable. Any regular reader of Phil Whitaker's superb contributions to this magazine will recognise the complex fusion of technical skill, intuition, values, psychological alertness and sensitivity to social or economic environment that is needed for effective and humane medical intervention.



The application of scientific research requires judgement and responsible risk-taking, applied across boundaries and disciplines. We must understand this if we are not to load science with impossible expectations – and so breed a dangerous cynicism when it fails to deliver the solutions we've been promised. Yes, encourage students to take scientific subjects; and help them see those subjects within the complexities of human history and interaction.

In the next half-century we will face dramatically increased risks of climate crisis as well as of the medical crises that go with it. The Covid pandemic should have intensified tenfold the urgency of reckoning with the dangers we already face



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because of a ravaged environment and multiple new varieties of global mobility and interconnection.

We need to see this situation clearly, and to develop the habits of mind and body that will resist despair, equip realistic response and also enable a clear-sighted acceptance of the limits to what we can solve or master in a lifetime. But what is our present educational philosophy doing to nurture such ways of thinking and feeling? Does a good education have anything at all to do with learning to face mortality?

The head of a famous Catholic school many years ago shocked his secular colleagues by saying that he regarded his school's job as teaching his pupils how to die. I doubt whether what he meant was a constant explicit insistence on the imminence of the great leveller. But he saw that any education that simply offers students evasions and half-truths – about who and what they are, what the world is and what the limits of human power and resource may be – is failing in its purpose.

What does it mean to “fail our children” in this broader context? It means backing away from the scale of change that we face, and from the job of resourcing young people to respond with intelligence, imagination and honesty. It would be ridiculous to pretend that there are a few simple restructurings that will achieve this. We need a courageous rethinking of our ingrained assumptions about education. We need to pay some critical and sympathetic attention to those despised and frequently attacked parallel worlds of the Montessori and Steiner systems. We need the issue of resources for the human spirit to be at the heart of

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educational vision – including craft, drama, sport, exposure to the raw natural world, community service. And anyone who thinks this is somehow in tension with responsible scientific training has not understood either sciences or humanities.

The New Statesman's weekly back-page Q&A always ends with the question: "Are we all doomed?" There is a simple sense in which the answer is "yes". There is nothing we love or value that we shall not eventually have to give up, there is no life-project that does not have an expiry date .

The more interesting question is whether we can imagine not just giving up but "giving over" – finding the energy to hand on what we love and value, to enhance lives that will outlast ours. And for this to happen we have to have space and skills to explore what those things are, to love what "we must leave ere long", as Shakespeare's sonnet puts it. It is time for us to think again about all our educational institutions and practices in that light.

Rowan Williams is an Anglican prelate, theologian and poet, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 2002 to 2012. He writes on books for the New Statesman.

This article is from The Spectator's "Notes on a crisis" series  
Published in The Spectator 27/01/2021

## **Pointers for prayer**

Today we pray for protesters in Russia. After opposition politician Alexei Navalny was arrested last week,

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widespread pro-democracy protest has broken out nationally, with many peaceful protesters arrested. We pray for the preservation of the right to protest.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

Pray that the right person will be appointed to lead Church Army in the next chapter. Pray for wisdom for the Board members as they meet to decide who will be appointed.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.

Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also

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be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities



Today we pray for Mozambique. A cholera outbreak combined with a growing humanitarian crisis after fighting in a northern province displaced more than 500,000 people last year has led to the UN calling for help in the region.

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.



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Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all  
things,  
now and for ever.

## Speaking to the Soul

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 4:5 NLT

Whatever you are doing today it's vital to have a clear objective. Dithering or being unclear about your objective is frustrating, confusing and exhausting. Paul clearly didn't suffer from this problem! He was absolutely clear that his role was to preach about Jesus, pure and simple. In a church that was very interested in the different personalities of their leaders, Paul makes it plain that he doesn't want to be the focus of attention.

There's a word that I love that sums this up very well. It's the word Christocentric – centred on Christ. The calling of every Christian is to be Christocentric which means that in our everyday life we seek to put Jesus at the centre of our thinking, our relationships and our activities. Paul was a preacher and it is clear how this applied to him. He was

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determined not to impress people with beautiful polished sermons but to ensure that people met with Jesus and understood that he died on the cross for them. But if you are not a preacher (and most people aren't!) your calling is also to be Christocentric. If you are a shopworker you need to ensure that your care for customers and other staff radiates the love of Jesus; as a businessman you need to act graciously and honestly towards others; as a teacher God calls you to set an example through the care and thoughtfulness that you show to your students; and as a parent you need to ensure that your patience, love and influence help your children to know Jesus for themselves.

Because Jesus is the focus of our lives, the greatest calling possible is to be his servants. A servant's life is devoted to doing everything that the master wants. That would be an appalling way of life if you had an uncaring and bad master. But if you have the best master in the world, then to be a servant to such a person would be life at its absolute best. And we have such a master!

## QUESTION

What do you need to do to make your life more Christocentric?

## PRAYER

Loving Father, help me today to live as the servant of Jesus before anything else. Amen.

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