

Church News Ireland

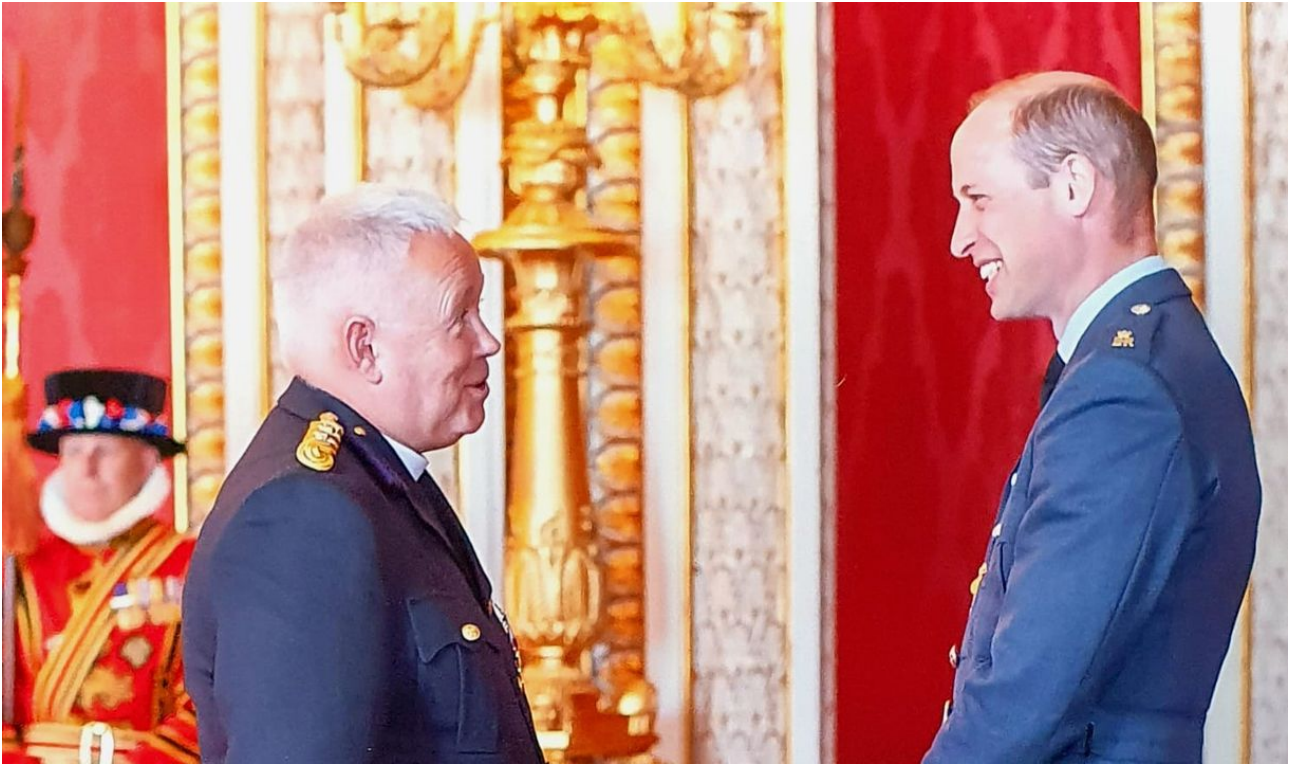


Image of the day – C of I chaplain honoured

June 1, 2022

Image of the day

C of I chaplain honoured

Padre Andrew Totten has made his final trip in uniform - with his niece Bethany - to a reception at which he was presented with the OBE by HRH Prince William.



A C of I cleric from Down & Dromore, he said he was leaving the Royal Army Chaplains

Department “with memories of many friendships along the way at 1st Royal Tank Regiment, the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, the Royal Irish Regiment, the Irish Guards, 7th Armoured Brigade (the Desert Rats), 16 Air Assault Brigade, 1st (United Kingdom) Armoured Division, the Defence Academy (AFCC & RCDS).”

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Padre Totten's most recent appointment was in the unique key role of preparing Beckett House, the new forces' chaplains' centre and the museum of Military Chaplaincy both of which are close to the forces' university at Shrivenham.

People and places

Craigs parishes organise Village Fete

The Grouped Parishes of Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan will host the Bi-Annual Village Fete on Saturday 25th June 2022 from 11am. The 'family fun day out' will be held at Craigs Parish Rectory Field.

As well as live music there will be lots of activities to suit all ages including vintage tractors/cars, traction engines, bonny baby competition*, best dog competition*, penalty shoot-out*, soak the rector, bouncy castle* and so much more. (* free activities for children)

Stalls include cakes, bric-a-brac, plants, tombola, bottle stall, face painting, popcorn and chocolate pots along with various local craft and small business suppliers.

Food stalls include a tea tent, Chuck Wagon and hog roast.

Entrance fee: £5 per person and under 12's free.

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Reflections from Paternoster Learning Community

*By the Revd Abigail Sines, participant and Dean's Vicar
Christ Church Cathedral*

Earlier this month, May 9 to 11, marked a milestone in the life of the first cohort of the Paternoster Learning Community.

It was the closing retreat of what was intended to be 12 in-person gatherings focusing on encouraging and nurturing creative, missional thinking amongst the learning community participants, in this case a group of 12 diocesan clergy. As all of us are all too aware, anything that was planned for the last 2 years was subject to cancellation (at worst) or a serious, intentional re-think (at best). The 12 in-person meetings became 8 scheduled Zooms across the year, with one blessed window of opportunity to meet for lunch (thank you to the Gathering Grounds in Kilternan!) to follow-up all those Zooms, and then the final retreat which has just taken place.

On the face of it, if you had been asked in advance to make a list of things that might help you cope with the ups and downs of Covid pandemic life, being part of a 'learning community' might not have made that hypothetical list. However, looking back on it I can say that being part of the Paternoster Learning Community was a great joy and a real support over the last 18 months. I, for one, am so thankful that learning community convenors Rob Jones and Eoghan



Participants and facilitators of the Paternoster Learning Community retreat with Archbishop Michael Jackson

Heaslip persevered to find ways to make the community work in the virtual space, rather than ‘shelving’ the project until after the pandemic. From conversations within the community, it has been clear that these virtual gatherings, though not ideal, were a support and encouragement to all who participated.

The genesis of the Paternoster Learning Community goes back to a meeting held in September 2020, which explored the future development and synergy of three different mission focused enterprises in our united diocese, set up by

Archbishop Michael: Come & C, the New Housing Initiative and Gateway.

When the big vision of that concept meeting ran into the constraints of pandemic precautions, the monthly virtual gathering of the cohort managed to maintain three key elements: prayer, honest sharing and encouragement, and reflection around concepts of leadership and change as presented in the book *Pioneering a New Future* by Phil Potter. These elements were skilfully managed to avoid the dreaded Zoom fatigue! Working through the book, chapter by chapter, each month provided a helpful structure for discussion and reflection. While the pandemic had brought so many challenges, it also pressed 'pause' on some aspects of life and ministry and there was fruitful engagement to be had within those 'pause' experiences. In *Pioneering a New Future*, Potter, most recently the Archbishop of Canterbury's Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions UK, and former vicar of St Mark's Haydock, shares inspirational, yet not unrealistic, stories of change and lessons for leadership within the church. The pandemic 'pause' in some ways gave space to assess what had been happening as a matter of course, and to consider what might need to change within the life of our parish communities and the wider church.

It was a great joy then, to be able to meet with Phil Potter in person for our long-awaited learning community retreat. The time opened with a review of the 'standard operating procedures' for collaborative learning communities. A willingness to enter into honest conversation (in the context of confidentiality) is the base, from which attitudes and actions within the process grow. In a learning community

everyone has something to share and everyone has something to learn. Openness, a sense of discovery, a commitment to be fully present within the learning community space (phones put away!) and to engage reflectively set the tone for three focusing questions: What is? What could be? What will be?

For participants in this learning community, there was no suggestion of change for the sake of it or simply to pursue the next 'big idea' or fashionable, church-y resource. Rather, Phil gently facilitated for us open and honest conversation aimed at discerning the action of God's Spirit in the midst of our varied and unique ministry contexts. Do the use of our buildings, finances and other resources clearly manifest the values we claim? How do we bring our communities along in the conversation? We were reminded of the truth (to paraphrase St Paul) that 'God's strength shows up best in weak people'. Dreaming of a more expansive future, contemplating the sharing of a deeper sense of vision, or planning for the launch of a new parish initiative may each in different ways feel overwhelming, possibly unattainable. We were encouraged to be open to the surpassing ways in which God would show up, even in the situations in which we most keenly felt our own, human limitations.

Within the retreat, there were times for individual reflective work and each participant was encouraged to spend time fleshing out one short-term (within the next 6 months) action item, or one long-term (next 5 years) challenge or opportunity. This concrete process provided a good balance to wider and more aspirational conversation around vision. We were able to come away from these exercises inspired,

but also with particular, time-bound ‘next steps’ in our minds.

Phil’s closing work with us was based on reflection around the encounter of the risen Christ with the disciples on the beach, as told in John 21. This encounter with the despairing disciples, highlights four areas in which those in leadership, whether lay or ordained, need themselves to be ‘pastored’:

- Jesus asks, ‘You have no fish, have you?’ There is a need for accountable sharing, to acknowledge when something has gone wrong, to confront the need for change, re-evaluation, or a difficult conversation.
- Jesus says, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some’: In Jesus’ day, it was normal for one of the fisherman to remain on shore, to observe the conditions of the water, to notice from a strategic vantage point, that which the people on the boat might not be in a position to notice. There is a need for leaders to have someone available in a coaching or mentoring role.
- Jesus invites, ‘Come and have breakfast’: Church leaders need themselves to be cared for. They need those who provide loving support, without judgement or an impulse to constantly engage in problem-solving.
- Jesus questions, ‘Do you love me?’ Jesus brings this soul-searching question to Peter three times. Church leaders need someone to help keep an eye on heart, whether in the form of a spiritual director, counsellor or some other form of supervision.

This take-away from the retreat was equally important to the 'action item' or 'mission plan' aspect. Ministry can often be an isolating experience, as much as we make an effort to build teams and share in the work together. To avoid burnout, cynicism, or other potential harms of an isolated ministry experience, it is essential for leaders to have in place for themselves these essential, distinct aspects of support. No one 'support' person will provide accountability, coaching, unconditional love and counselling! Along with our short-term and long-term plans, we each came away from the retreat conscious that, if we don't already have these support structures in place, then our first steps in any 'action plan' should be to investigate possibilities and identify how to access these supports.

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Having been greatly enriched by the experience of learning and relationships within Paternoster, we look forward to how this initiative may develop in the future to encourage the next cohort, and beyond to grow in creativity, sense of mission and pioneering spirit across the united dioceses.

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News reports

General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church to meet in person this year

After two years of being hosted online, the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church will meet in person this year at St Paul's & St George's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, from Thursday 9 June to Saturday 11 June 2022.

The meeting has been arranged in hybrid format, to allow a small number of members to join remotely using the technology that allowed a 'virtual' General Synod to go ahead in 2020 and 2021.

The agenda and papers have now been sent to members and published here on the Scottish Episcopal Church website, detailing the business scheduled.

Proceedings will begin on the Thursday with the Opening Eucharist at Ps & Gs, with the offering going to the Ukraine appeal by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).

As might be expected, one of the first business sessions of Synod will involve discussion of developments and experiences during the Covid pandemic. The day's agenda will also include the second reading of the Scottish Liturgy 1982 with Alternative Eucharistic Prayers, followed by motions on liturgies for first reading, and the commemoration in the Scottish Calendar of figures of the Reformation Period until the Repeal of the Penal Laws.

On Friday morning, Synod will consider revisions to the process for electing bishops, and the second session of the day will include a focus on the war in Ukraine, with Synod to be addressed by Sabine Chalmers of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees. Synod will also hear from the Rev Markus Dünzkofer, Rector of St John the Evangelist in Edinburgh, who travelled to the Poland/Ukraine border as part of an aid mission from Scotland, helping refugees escape from the war in their country.

Synod will then be asked to endorse a statement about Ukraine in the name of the Primus, the Most Rev Mark Strange, as part of a motion which also states that Synod deplores Russian aggression in Ukraine.

In the afternoon, committee updates will include a presentation from the Provincial Environment Group as the SEC continues its 'Towards Net Zero 2030' journey, and a report from the Ethical Investment Advisory Group along with a motion to adopt a new Ethical Investment Policy Statement for the SEC Unit Trust Pool.

The final day's agenda features safeguarding, budgets and quota, and elections, before business is concluded with a

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presentation from the Provincial Youth Committee and then the closing act of worship.

As usual, the proceedings at Synod will be live-streamed online.

The return to an in-person General Synod meeting means that associated events are also able to take place this year after a two-year break. A Freshers' Meeting for new members will be held in the Upper Hall at Ps & Gs shortly before Synod opens, and later that day, the Synod Dinner will be held at the George Hotel Edinburgh. On the Friday evening, Cornerstone Bookshop will host a reception for Synod members at its premises on St John's Church Terrace, Princes Street, as has happened in previous years.

Additionally, the opening day will see the Provincial Global Partnerships Committee warmly invite Synod members to take part in Thursdays in Black, where participants wear black every Thursday as part of the campaign to end violence against women. Anyone can take part, regardless of gender, and participation is not obligatory.

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Simon Preston 1938 - 2022

Westminster Abbey organist who gave thrilling accounts of Messiaen and played at Royal weddings

Simon Preston, who has died aged 83, was organist and master of the choristers of Westminster Abbey from 1981 to 1987, directing the music for major state occasions including the wedding of the Duke of York and Sarah Ferguson in 1986; earlier in his career he played the organ at the consecration of Guildford Cathedral in 1961 and the wedding of Princess Alexandra and Angus Ogilvy at Westminster Abbey in 1963.

Preston had an engaging personality; he was good looking and entertaining company. But there was an element of the prima donna about him that made collaboration with others, except on his own terms, difficult – and this trait led ultimately to an unhappy parting of ways with the Abbey.

From his position at the console Preston brought gravitas to any occasion while also entertaining large audiences with thrilling accounts of the repertoire, particularly in the music of Olivier Messiaen, in which he excelled.

Preston in 2005: he was an engaging personality, but his time at the Abbey became increasingly tense and he departed for a freelance career

Preston in 2005: he was an engaging personality, but his time at the Abbey became increasingly tense and he departed for a freelance career

A Prom at the Albert Hall in 1964 led to a 10-minute standing ovation as the audience cheered and stamped their feet, while an early-evening recital of music by Bach and Messiaen at the Festival Hall, which would normally attract a modest audience, required a rare opening of the hall's upper balcony.

He also assisted Neville Marriner in composing much of the music attributed to Salieri in Milos Forman's film *Amadeus*, and helped to create the Calgary Organ Festival in 1990, which is still going strong.

By the mid-1960s Preston's performances on the organ were receiving the highest praise. "His technique is as good – and in some cases superior – to that of the continental virtuosi," wrote one critic after a concert in 1967, adding: "In addition, he brings to his playing an individuality and warmth that reflects his own engaging personality."

He was hardly less talented as a choir director, and it was his career at Westminster Abbey that brought Preston the most attention as he sought to revive interest in English composers. Until that time "the choir didn't sing a great deal of the [Henry] Purcell music, so it's been something of a new thing for them," he told *Gramophone* magazine in 1986. He was also an enthusiastic admirer and frequent user of the 20th-century choral works of Herbert Howells.



The music for the Duke and Duchess of York's wedding on July 23 1986 included Walton's Crown Imperial march and was watched by a television audience estimated to be 500 million worldwide. But with the arrival of a modernising dean, Michael Mayne, just before the wedding, life at the Abbey was already changing, not least with the introduction of the Alternative Service Book – to the disdain of a musician who was wedded to the Book of Common Prayer.

Meanwhile, the inevitable tensions between his duties in the Abbey and the exigencies of his performing career were never satisfactorily resolved, and his demands for leave – often extending over several weeks – taxed the patience of an otherwise tolerant Dean and Chapter. Indeed, the waggish comment that the residents of New York and Cape Town stood a better chance of hearing Preston play the organ than the congregation of Westminster Abbey contained an element of truth.

Also unresolved was his relationship with the choir, the performance of which he transformed, though never to his own satisfaction. He sought the dismissal of half the lay vicars and their replacement by other singers on five-year contracts, neither of which was feasible. A voice trial of 19 boys led to the acceptance of none of them, though several of those rejected were eagerly recruited by other cathedrals. He was also not prepared to play for the Christmas Eve midnight service on the grounds that it was not in his contract.

image

After much tension Preston left the Abbey in 1987 to pursue a freelance life. He was diplomatic about his departure, telling a Canadian newspaper that he had never seen the job as an end in itself and that rehearsing for a service every day, as well as playing for three services on Sundays and festivals, had become rather tedious.

“It was always very difficult to practise at the Abbey because there were so many tourists,” he said, adding that the limited rehearsal time available in the evenings had to be shared with his three assistants.

Simon John Preston was born in Bournemouth on August 4 1938. He was aged five when he heard an organ recital by George Thalben-Ball, which piqued his interest in the instrument. At first he studied piano, but was encouraged to take up the organ by an uncle who played at his local parish church.

With the choir stalls being the traditional route to the organ loft, the 10-year-old Preston approached David Willcocks, seeking a place in his choir at Salisbury Cathedral. But with no vacancies Willcocks recommended him to Boris Ord at King's College, Cambridge, where a couple of boys' voices had broken prematurely and the young Preston was able to study organ with Hugh McClean. Later he was educated at Canford School in Dorset.

In 1957, when Willcocks took charge at King's, he remembered the eager young Preston – now studying organ with CH Trevor at the Royal Academy of Music – and offered him the post of organ scholar. He remained at King's for five years, taking the opportunity to conduct and compose; among his many duties, he was entrusted with accompanying the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. A recording from this time of Orlando Gibbons's Fantasia brought him to the attention of a wider audience.

Preston had planned to study modern languages and join the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but if he still had any intention in that direction it disappeared after hearing Arthur Wills at Ely Cathedral perform Messiaen's Transports de Joie, which opened a whole new avenue of music to him. His first appearance in London was at the Festival Hall under Willcocks in 1962, in a performance of Janáček's

Glagolitic Mass, a work that has a terrifyingly exposed part for the solo organ that, according to one critic, he played “with dumbfounding brilliance”. Preston recalled that Willcocks had “asked me to play instead of their regular organist, which was very brave of him ... It was something of a baptism of fire.”

That year Ossie Peasgood, the long-serving sub-organist at Westminster Abbey, died suddenly and Preston stepped into his shoes, working under Sir William McKie and later Douglas Guest as one of the youngest professional musicians to serve the Abbey since Purcell some 300 years earlier. There, he attracted critical attention for a series of recitals featuring Messiaen, of whose music he was by now the leading British exponent. He also made his first appearance at the Proms and toured the United States and Canada.

After a brief spell as acting organist at St Albans Abbey, Preston was appointed organist and tutor in music at Christ Church, Oxford, from 1970 – where he replaced the instrument with one by the Austrian firm of Reiger – before returning to Westminster Abbey to succeed Guest as organist and master of the choristers in May 1981.

After his departure from the Abbey, Preston’s performing career continued unabated, with high-profile concerts and recordings such as the Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic under James Levine, Poulenc’s Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa, and Copland’s Symphony for Organ and Orchestra with the St Louis Orchestra under Leonard Slatkin. He also recorded the

complete cycle of Bach's organ works for Deutsche Grammophon.

Like most pianists and organists Preston was unable to take his preferred instruments on tour and had to live with what was provided. He recalled making one recording in the chapel of Knole House, the Sackville-West ancestral home near Sevenoaks, where the organ still relied on a manual air pump.

"It's freezing cold and you have to stand to play it," he told Gramophone. "Actually I had someone to pump the bellows for me – it's a foot pump and I couldn't really assimilate the technique of pumping and playing at the same time."

Meanwhile, interviewers found that his wit was as dry as his talent was prodigious. Asked by the New York Times in 2012 to compare an organ in Woolsey Hall at Yale University with some of those he had performed on elsewhere, he replied simply: "This one works."

He was among the first to play the Albert Hall organ after its restoration in 2004, when he was heard at the Last Night of the Proms in Samuel Barber's Toccata Festiva conducted by Slatkin, which has a cadenza for feet alone. He returned to the Albert Hall in 2008, when he performed Janáček's Glagolitic Mass once more, this time with Pierre Boulez, and nine days later gave the first concert of a Bach Day, opening it with the famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor.

Simon Preston, who listed his recreations as "croquet and crosswords", was appointed OBE in 2000, advanced to CBE

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in 2009; in 2014 he was awarded the medal of the Royal College of Organists, the college's highest honour.

He married Elizabeth Hays in 2012.

Simon Preston, born August 4 1938, died May 13 2022

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com