

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Churches are brilliant buildings

People and places

General Assembly opens tonight

For the first time since 2019, Members of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, will gather together in person alongside invited guests from civic society and PCI's overseas partner churches and organisations, for the opening night of the all-Ireland denomination's principal decision-making and governing body.

During the service of public worship, which takes place in Assembly Buildings in Belfast, Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick of Portrush Presbyterian Church in County Antrim, will be elected as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the 177th person to hold the office since 1840 and the first from the Portrush congregation. His predecessor for the past two years, Rt Rev Dr David Bruce, will perform one of

**A Service to Mark 300 Years
of the Parish of Donegal
1722-2022
Sunday 26th June 2022**

**Preacher: Bishop
Andrew Forster**

← 10.30am
Prayers at site of 1722
Church (near Old Abbey)

11.00am →
Service in current Church

All welcome ~ Tea after

his last duties as Moderator when he addresses the Assembly and reflects on his year in office. Following is election Dr Kirkpatrick will take the Moderator's Chair and give the main address of the evening.

The Opening Night of the General Assembly heralds three days of worship, prayer, Bible study, celebration and debate. Around 1,000 ministers and ruling elders from the Church's 500-plus congregations across Ireland are eligible to participate in its 26 scheduled sessions that will involve over 70 resolutions from the General Assembly's Councils, Commissions and Task Groups. Like the Opening Night itself, the General Assembly is open to the public and will also be livestreamed.

On Thursday morning, the General Assembly will formally welcome and hear from overseas representatives for the first time since 2019. This year they come from the Reformed Church in Hungary, Church of North India,

Coffee Morning
part of the celebrations for
**300 years of the Parish of
Donegal 1722-2022**

Saturday 25th June 2022
from 10.30am
at the church hall





Scripture Union Malawi and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Some of them will take part in Thursday's session 'Listening to the Global Church'. Since its introduction in 2015, the presentation has become one of the highlights of the Assembly. This year it is entitled 'Hearing the Heart'.

Another highlight of the General Assembly is the traditional Evening Celebration, which this year will take place on Thursday evening. Looking ahead to the evening Moderator-Designate, Dr Kirkpatrick, encouraged people to come along, or if they couldn't be there, to tune into livestream. "It is always a very special night and this year we will gather around the theme for my year in office, which is 'Grace Works'. Described variously as 'amazing' in the words of the famous hymn, but essentially Grace is God's favour towards the underserving, something that changes everything for those who understand it."

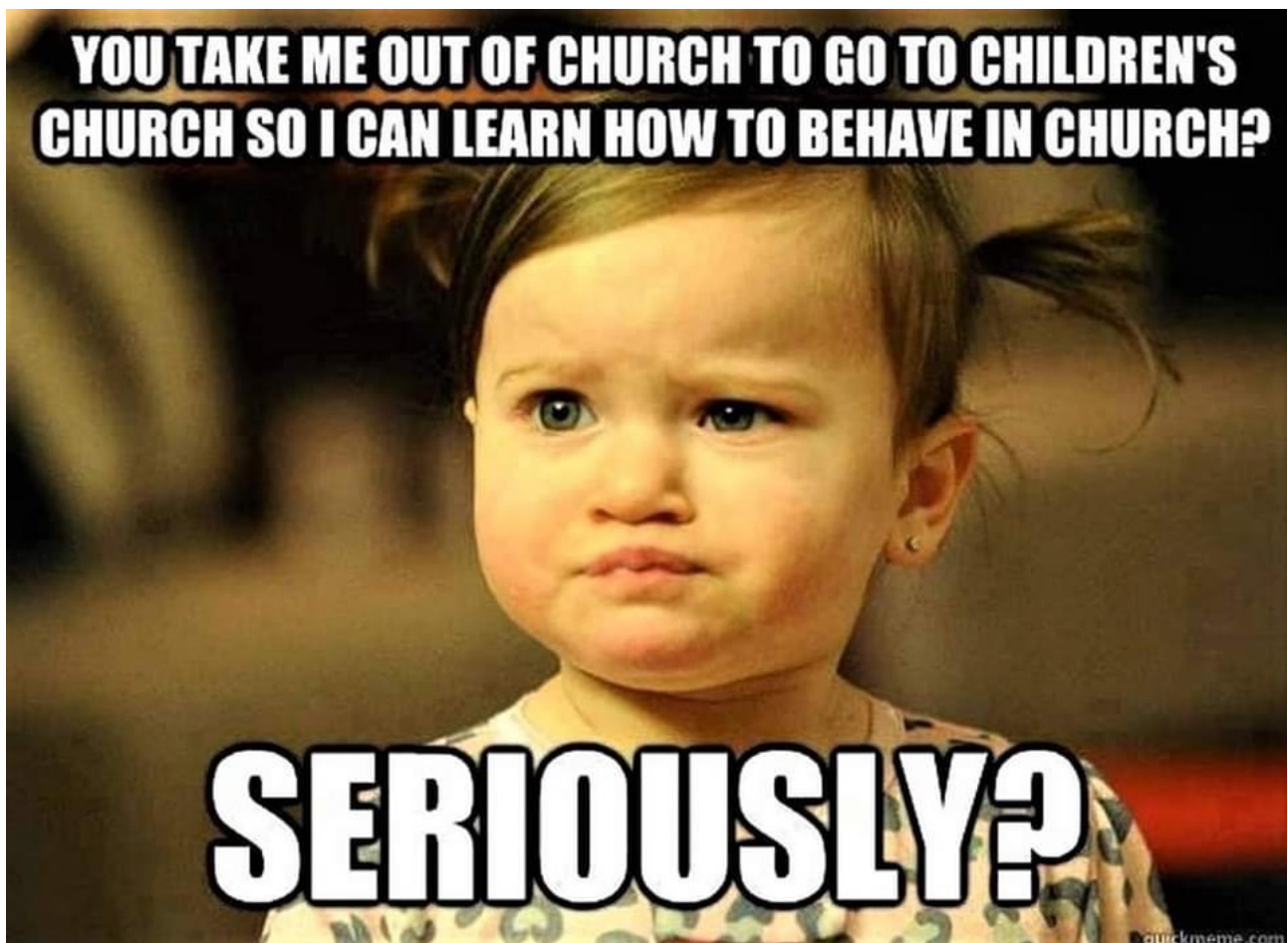
"With worship and music provided by the New Irish Arts, and specially commissioned poetry from Andrew Roycroft, our keynote speaker will be Peter Lynas. As the Evangelical Alliance's UK director, and before that the director of EA in Northern Ireland, many people will know Peter from his appearances on local media. I look forward to him bringing a wider perspective to our theme, while I will give a short reflection. You don't need a ticket and all are welcome," Dr Kirkpatrick said.

PCI is one of the largest churches in Ireland and the largest Protestant, or Reformed' denomination in Northern Ireland. Along with its primary focus on mission and ministry as part of the Church of Jesus Christ, the General Assembly is a time where the pressing social, moral, denominational and

public issues of the day are also discussed. As the Rev Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly explained, while many of the issues are important, some can be mundane, but necessary, and sometimes they can be controversial.

“Some of that business this week will reflect the recent times that we have lived through. We all recognise that Covid-19 is still around and many people are still feeling its effects and grieving personal loss. It continues to cast a long shadow and is at the heart of some substantial pieces of work that will come before us this week,” Mr Gribben said.

The Clerk was referring to the reports of two Task Groups that were established by last October’s General Assembly – the Pandemic Response (Governance) Task Group and the



Pandemic Response (Theological, Moral & Spiritual) Task Group – and the work of the Council for Congregational Life & Witness.

“In some respects, looking back it is still difficult to comprehend what actually happened, but it is prudent to look at our response, which is what Members of Assembly will do when they discuss the first report on Governance. Essentially it looks at what was done in the light of experience, examining in detail the interim processes that were put in place at the time, looking at their strengths and weaknesses, areas where improvements could, or should, be made and key lessons for the future,” he said.

Mr Gribben said that the second report is a wide-ranging interim report which seeks to review PCI’s response to the pandemic setting out theological, moral and spiritual principles to guide the Church in any similar situation in the future.

On Friday, the Congregational Life & Witness’s (CCLW) will present an hour-long alternative presentation entitled ‘The Turning of the tide’. During the presentation, Members of Assembly will get a picture of how congregations are emerging from the pandemic, with stories focusing on pastoral care, discipleship and leadership for this season. Moving forward, it will also look at opportunities and challenges for youth, children’s and women’s ministry and new resources to help and support congregations. During the Assembly the Council will also announce a two-year listening exercise across the denomination’s 19 regional presbyteries to enable it to better resource the whole

church, as well as to more fully understand the impact of the pandemic.

“The discussions that we have, and the decisions that we take, will set the direction for the life and ministry of the Church for the coming year and beyond. It is not only a collective and prayerful process, but a democratic one in the best sense of Presbyterianism,” Mr Gribben said.

As the Assembly meets on a Saturday for the first time in many years, Members will be able discuss a range of issues in the public square, from the cost of living crisis to the reform of education in both jurisdictions, hate crime and devolution in Northern Ireland.

“It will certainly be a busy three days as we will also be looking at mission at home in Ireland, including church planting and other new missional opportunities, alongside other reports on important work that is ongoing across the Church. As in previous years, the General Assembly will also be presented students for the ordained ministry,” Mr Gribben said.

The Clerk concluded by saying, “As I have often said, at the heart of the Church is our central calling to proclaim and live out the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in a world that is constantly changing and in need of hope. Much of our work in these coming days seeks to further that primary calling in different contexts. It will also be great to be together, and to worship together again.”

June 22, 2022

The Opening Night of the General Assembly, Evening Celebration and business before members will be livestreamed at -

[www.presbyterianireland.org/ga22]

Parish and Diocesan Readers commissioned in Dublin

Seven people from varying walks of life gathered in Christ Church Cathedral united in one cause on Sunday afternoon (June 19). They were commissioned by Archbishop Michael Jackson as Parish and Diocesan Lay Readers having completed their training despite pandemic obstacles.

Seb Dungan from Kill O' the Grange and Brian Hickey from Kilternan were commissioned as Parish Readers. Lynn Adams from Coolock and Raheny, John Dean-O'Keeffe from Holy Trinity Killiney, Thabi Madide from Delgany, Jean Salter from St Matthias Killiney-Ballybrack and Mandy Swanwick from Tullow were commissioned as Diocesan Readers. As a reminder that Covid continues to present obstacles, one of the Diocesan Readers, Dee Huddleston from Celbridge Straffan and Newcastle-Lyons, could not be present but will be commissioned in due course.

Lynn, Thabi and John gave brief reflections on lay ministry in conversation with Dean's Vicar, the Revd Abigail Sines, at the beginning of the service. Lynn, reflecting on Dee's words, said it was an honour to be called to lay ministry and hoped they could serve as God's hands and feet in the world. Thabi noted the Lord's words that the harvest is



Newly commissioned Parish and Diocesan Readers – Seb Dungan, John Dean O’Keeffe, Lynn Adams, Thabi Madide, Mandy Swanwick, Jean Salter and Brian Hickey with Archbishop Michael Jackson, the Revd Alan Breen, the Revd John Tanner, diocesan director of Lay Ministry Training, and Ruth Gyves, Diocesan Reader at Holy Trinity Rathmines.

plentiful but the labourers are few and encouraged others to consider training as Readers who, she noted, occupied a unique position within the structure of the Church. Looking at how the Readers’ roles may develop, John said that they were ‘foot soldiers’ but added “notwithstanding our ordinariness I hope to try something extraordinary in this role”.

The sermon was preached by Ruth Gyves, a Diocesan Reader from Holy Trinity Rathmines. She took as her text

Proverbs 3: 5–6, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart; lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path.’

She said it was necessary to rely fully on God by trusting him wholeheartedly. “Not trusting God with your whole heart can lead to anxiety and stress. If we don’t trust him fully, then it leaves the door open to feeling responsible for what happens to us. Jesus wants us to lean completely on him – he has said that if we cast our cares on him, he will sustain us,” she explained.

She reminded those being commissioned that God had called them to ministry and said they should not lean or rely on their own abilities but should seek Him first. “If you rely on yourself then your ministry will become all about you – your focus must be on God and on what he wants to do through you, using your unique character that he has given you,” she said.

Ruth said that Proverbs urged the Readers to acknowledge God in all their ways – to get to know God and listen for his voice in everything they do. “Allow God to be the foundation of your life and ministry – don’t just come to him for the occasional check in. [...] When we seek him with all our hearts and acknowledge him in all our ways, we will find him and he will be there in our point of need,” she stated.

She continued: “When we trust God completely; when we lean fully on him and when we spend time in loving relationship with him, he will direct our paths.”

Archbishop Eamon Martin leads Irish delegation to Rome

Archbishop Eamon Martin, the Derry-born head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, is to attend the 10th World Meeting of Families which begins in Rome on Wednesday.

The Irish delegation, which will be led by Dr Martin, will include family members as well as the chair of the Council for Marriage & Family, Bishop Denis Nulty, of Kildare & Leighlin.

Ireland of course, hosted the 9th World Meeting of Families in August 2018 which was attended by Pope Francis and tens of thousands of people from home and abroad.

Held every three years and sponsored by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family, the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) is the Catholic Church's largest international gathering of families.

This week's ceremonies will be live-streamed from Rome.

To follow the events, click on www.romefamily2022.com.

CNI

Methodist ordinations

On Sunday morning 12th June the latest ministers to be ordained in the Methodist Church in Ireland were Daphne Hanna and Michael Jones.

A traditional pre-service was introduced by the Rev Alan Wardlow and the main service by the new President the Rev David Nixon, with the Rev Dr Heather Morris and Tom Wilson also taking part.

The address to the ordinands was given by the new Lay Leader Tom Wilson and the two ordinands gave brief accounts of their spiritual journeys.

Daphne spoke of God consistently making a call on her life from when she was a young girl to the present day. God gave her courage and patience during her time in training and she was confident that, as the master potter, he would continue to mould her life.

Michael spoke of his very long journey from candidating to ordination (14 years), but said that God's timing was always right. Ordination followed and then Holy Communion for everyone.

Traditionally, there would have been refreshments and time to talk to the ordinands after the service, but this did not happen on this occasion, cognisant of the on-going threat of COVID.



Orange Order attend thanksgiving service in Armagh Cathedral

Brethren, Sisters and Juniors from the Orange Order attended County Armagh Grand Orange Lodge Service of Thanksgiving for the Centenary of Northern Ireland and Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Armagh City

There was a great turnout of almost 1,000 Brethren, Sisters and Juniors at the special County Armagh Grand Orange Lodge Service.

The parade was led by Hamiltonsbawn and Tullyvallen Silver Bands. Present were the Queen's Lord Lieutenant for Co Armagh, Lord Caledon; the Lord Mayor of Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Councillor Paul



Greenfield; Carla Lockhart MP; the Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Most Wor Bro Edward Stevenson; Grand Treasurer, Wor Bro Brian Dorrian; Grand Mistress of the Association of Loyal Orangewomen of Ireland, Most Wor Sister Joan Beggs; and the County Grand Masters of the other Loyal Institutions.

The Service was conducted by the Dean of Armagh, the Very Rev Shane Forster, and took the form of Choral Evensong. The preacher was The Most Rev John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland, possibly the first time in 60 years that the most senior cleric in the Church has preached at an Orange service.

The County Grand Chaplains also took part with the prayers and the offering was for Air Ambulance Northern Ireland and the Cathedral.

The Cathedral filled to capacity with several brethren having to stand around the sides.

Thanks were extended to all who attended from the District Lodges; to the 2 bands; to the County Colour Party; and to the Armagh District Marshalls.

Special thanks were also given to the Dean of Armagh for all his valued help and co-operation with the arrangements for a memorable service.

The County Grand Lodge now looks forward to the Twelfth celebrations in the city.

News reports

Rwandan Archbishop supports UK immigration policy

Rwanda's Anglican Archbishop has defended the UK government's plans to send asylum seekers to the African nation.

It's after the first flight taking seven asylum seekers to Rwanda was cancelled this week following a last-minute intervention by the European Court of Human Rights.

The policy has sparked criticism among church leaders in the UK, including the Archbishop of Canterbury who has called it "ungodly".

On Saturday Most Rev Justin Welby said the Church of England opposes the policy because "it outsources our

responsibilities and treats vulnerable and traumatised people without any kind of dignity, compassion or justice” and it is “not how God calls us to treat each other”.

But Most Rev Archbishop Laurent Mbanda told the BBC the policy is not immoral and said the country is ready to welcome people needing a home.

For the 67-year-old head of the Anglican Church in Rwanda, the policy will help alleviate the global immigration crisis. He said dealing with those fleeing conflict should be a burden shared among countries.

Britain has made a five-year deal with Rwanda, making the African nation responsible for some of the asylum seekers arriving to the UK.

Under the new policy, those sent to Rwanda will be accommodated and supported in the country while their claim is processed. If permanent refugee status is granted, they will remain in Rwanda.

If rejected, they will be able to apply for other immigration routes but could face deportation.

This is not the first time Rwanda’s Anglican Archbishop has disagreed with other members of the Anglican Communion.

Earlier this month, Archbishop Laurent rejected Archbishop Justin’s invitation to attend the Lambeth Conference this summer over Biblical interpretations of sexual identity.

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Together with the Archbishop of Nigeria and Uganda, the cleric said they won't join "the multitudes to do evil".

Archbishop Laurent told the BBC he believed it is time for the African churches belonging to the Anglican Communion to challenge their mother church instead of waiting for the Archbishop of Canterbury telling them what to do.

The legality of the Rwanda policy will be tested in a court hearing next month.

In the media

Michael Higgins has delighted Sinn Fein by politicising the Irish presidency - Ruth Dudley Edwards

Being President Higgins means never having to say you are sorry, Ruth Dudley Edwards writes in the News Letter.

Nothing seems to shake this life-long Marxist's remarkable and unjustified self-belief.

He's just dropped two enormous clangers — but he won't admit it.

He has plenty of form, of course. Has he ever admitted that Hugo Chavaz, whom he eulogised, turned Venezuela into a basket case? Nope.

Or that Fidel Castro, whom he mourned as “a giant among global leaders whose view was not only one of freedom for his people but for all of the oppressed and excluded peoples on the planet,” had been a champion abuser of human rights who had murdered, imprisoned or driven into exile millions of his own people?
Certainly not!

Last year he famously caused deep offence by refusing the invitation to an ecumenical church service in Armagh specifically designed by cross-border Catholic and Protestant clergy to mark — not celebrate — the establishment of Northern Ireland and the strides the churches had made over a century in crossing the sectarian divide.

With the exception of Sinn Féin (which was delighted to be given cover to boycott it), the Irish Communist Party and a few of the hard left, politicians north and south were appalled.

So too were most media commentators other than ultra nationalists.

Did Higgins say he had misunderstood and would in fact be delighted to join in? No. That would have implied that he had made an error. And the monumentally vain President Higgins doesn't make errors. He is infallible.

June Clanger No 1 was his statement on the atrocity in Nigeria, when as the Pentecostal mass was ending, men with bombs and guns staged a massacre at a Roman Catholic church that left around 40 dead and more than a hundred wounded. As anyone who pays attention to Nigeria

knows, it is one of the many countries plagued by anti-Christian violence, but perish the thought that the fervently secular Higgins would blame Islamist terrorists — this time, seemingly, Islamic State West Africa Province.

His baffling climate-change-focused message of commiseration infuriated the bishop of Ondo, Dr Jude Ayodeji Arogundade, who described it as “incorrect and far-fetched”.

“The first two bishops of the Diocese of Ondo were Irishmen,” he said, “the church building in which the attack took place was built by Irish missionaries and some of the people killed were baptised, confirmed and married by many venerable Irish missionaries.”

Victims of terrorism, he added sharply, “and indeed all Nigerians would be thankful if world leaders propose fruitful ideas to the government of Nigeria on how to protect the citizens and make Nigeria a safe place to live. This would be a better way of honouring the victims of hate and putting an end to the increasing killings.”

The People’s Virtue Signaller Higgins says what people want to hear regardless of reality or of unintended consequences. He buried this criticism from the Nigerian bishop by using the time-honoured method of attacking the government on a crowd-pleasing issue. The housing crisis, he explained, in what was a very thinly-disguised anti-capitalist distortion of the truth was “our great great failure” and a “social disaster” that successive governments had failed to address.

Although this intervention on housing has succeeded in making the media forget about Nigeria, if you care about democracy, it is Higgins's Clanger Number 2.

Not for the first time, he has dangerously politicised the presidency, secure in the knowledge that his personal popularity means politicians are afraid to criticise him. Only a very few brave voices are suggesting that he has now crossed the line that keeps the presidency out of politics.

Sinn Féin and the hard left are cracking open the champagne.

Poem for today

Music by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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