

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Bicentenary of Kilmood Church**



June 25, 2022

## Image of the day



## Bicentenary of Kilmood Church

Last weekend St Mary's Kilmood in Down and Dromore celebrated its bicentenary with a range of activities.

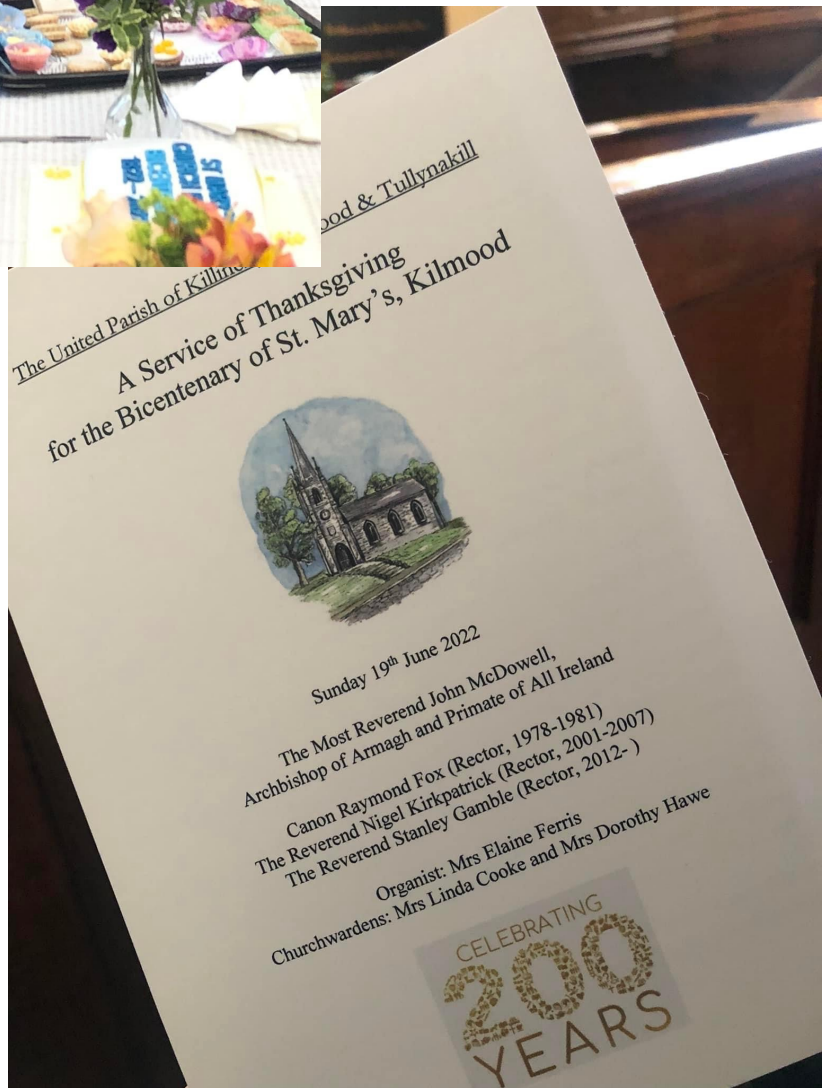
These included the launch of a parish history by Nick Perry at family activity day at Florida Manor, and a service of celebration at which the preacher was the Archbishop of Armagh, Most Reverend John McDowell.

The Rector, Rev Dr Stanley Gamble was joined by former rector, Canon Raymond Fox.





# Bicentenary of Kilmood Church



## People and places



### **Mothers Union leader recognised on International Widows' Day**

**'International Widows' Day was marked this week. The Mothers' Union in Derry & Raphoe felt it was an appropriate day to say 'Thank You' to a very special lady .**

Maisie attended the Maundy Thursday service 2019 in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, where she received the Maundy money.

In 2001, Maisie Haslett, in response to her own experience of isolation and loneliness, following the sudden death of her husband, Sidney, set up a Widows' Friendship Group, affiliated to Templemore Mothers' Union.

Each member of the group has found they have something in common and time out from their grief. It is a safe space to unburden worries, seek advice and share stories of family



June 25, 2022

and friends. Through covid times the group have encouraged each other and remained in touch.

The MU in Derry and Raphoe stated - "We give thanks for Maisie's God given vision and her ability to lead and encourage which has brought comfort and friendship to many over 21 years.

"In all things God works for the good of those who love Him. (Romans 8:28). What an inspirational lady!"

## Liturgical Welcome to Kerry



Pictured at the Liturgical Welcome to Kerry for Bishop Burrows, which took place on June 11th, Fr Gregory OP, Rev Jim Stephens, Bishop Michael Burrows, Bishop Ray Brown, Fr Tadhg PP, St Johns Parish, Rev Robert Warren

June 25, 2022

former Rector of Tralee. Photo by kind courtesy of Paddy White Photography.

## **Presbyterian college to host major conference on Martin Luther**

**The General Assembly heard that a major international conference on the Bible would take place in Belfast on September 12 and 13.**

Organised by the church's Union Theological College, the conference is entitled, 'Martin Luther: Bible Translator, Illustrator & Publisher' and celebrates the 500th anniversary of Luther's translation of the New Testament, known around the world as his 'September Testament'.

The conference will bring together an international team of scholars and will reflect on the legacy of the September Testament and many of the ramifications that are felt to this day.

For more details visit  
[ [www.union.ac.uk](http://www.union.ac.uk). ]

## **Down and Dromore Diocesan Synod meets in person**

**The Down and Dromore Diocesan Synod met in person on 23 June for the first time since the Rt Revd David McClay became bishop in January 2020.**

June 25, 2022

Synod members gathered in the Jethro Centre, Lurgan, which also played host to the service of Holy Communion. We were delighted to welcome the Minister of Windsor Presbyterian Church, Revd Ivan Steen, as our visiting preacher.

In 2021 Bishop David called the diocese to the work of Discipleship, Leadership and Apostleship and this year in his Presidential Address he reiterated that call and his ten-year vision for the diocese.

“It is very appropriate that we are meeting in this building,” he said. “The story of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law is significant. It speaks to us clearly of our three diocesan priorities – priorities more vital than ever to the health of our parishes as we put Covid-19 behind us.

“We see the making of a disciple through Moses making clear to Jethro God’s saving work among his people. This message led Jethro to embrace for himself God’s saving grace and truth and expresses his commitment to God boldly and clearly.

“The story of Jethro also highlights our second priority as a diocese – leadership. He makes clear the high priority that must be placed upon recognising, recruiting and releasing others around us into leadership.”

Moses also reflects an apostolic ministry in that he will lead the people forward in ways with which they had become unfamiliar during their years in Egypt.

June 25, 2022

“It’s time for the church to now move forward in hope, full of faith, believing and knowing that God is able. It’s His church and He wants His church to thrive.”

Bishop David’s address was full of challenge, but he also pointed Synod towards the wide variety of resources that the diocese has in place to help parishes minister effectively. These include the diocesan staff team (recently joined by Josh Thornbury and Millie Bellew), leadership training opportunities, courses and new literature.

The bishop also shared encouragements including:

On 29 June seven new Lay Readers will be commissioned. This will bring our total number of Diocesan Lay Readers to 70 and 14 emeritus readers, some of whom remain very active.

We now have in total 18 Diocesan Evangelists or evangelists in training.

We now employ 28 paid youth workers and children’s workers. This is more youth and children’s workers than this time last year.

Thirteen people have just completed an accredited pastoral care course bringing the total in our diocese to 81 in the past five years.

We have secured £125K outside funding towards a Ministry Apprentice programme and will begin to recruit soon.

Bishop David highlighted some upcoming initiatives such as an autumn training course for bible study group leaders; the Generosity Course on video, a September Gift Day for the Diocesan Rejuvenation Fund and plans to plant at least one





new diocesan outreach initiative to reach out to and care for refugees.

As he concluded, Bishop David said: “Nothing stands still, and these apostolic opportunities will continue to emerge over the next 10 years in our broken world that needs faithful Gospel church led by faithful Gospel people empowered by God the Holy Spirit.”

Download Bishop David’s Presidential Address in full in pdf format at -

[[] <https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2022/06/diocesan-synod-meets-in-person> ]

During the afternoon business session Standing Orders were suspended and Synod heard three presentations:

Revd Ivan Steen spoke about supporting refugees; Rebekah Fozzard brought us up to date on MindMatters, the Church of Ireland’s Mental Health Initiative; and Revd Stephen McElhinney (SAMS) presented on the post–Lambeth Kingdom Voices events in August which are being co–hosted with CMSI.

## In the media

### Ongoing dissent at Presbyterian General Assembly over same-sex issues

**Delegates advised that the position of the church on major issues should not be undermined in public by ministers or elders, Patsy McGarry writes in the Irish Times.**

The Presbyterian General Assembly in Belfast has been told “the Bible is not a toxic text, but the word of life”. Outgoing moderator Rev Dr David Bruce also told members how “we have found ourselves in recent times under harsh scrutiny as a people”.

Church critics were “lighting on a number of social policy issues such as the provision of abortion, end-of-life care, the redefinition of marriage, a changed understanding of human identity, among others” and “consider our views to be incomprehensible, or even dangerous”, he said.

“We are painted as rigid, unchanging and even unloving. We have been described as a people who exclude rather than include” and as “a denomination which will be left behind on ‘the wrong side of history’” while “some have adopted a position of overt opposition to us in the media”, he said.

He called on members “to be confident in the calling we have received to be the church of God, and especially when to do so means swimming against the tide. We need to state with loving clarity to the world around us that we are not



mindful to redefine our relationship with the Bible, which as our supreme standard we consider to be the word of God. We will not rewrite it, re-edit it or reframe it.”

Rev Dr Bruce was speaking at the opening of this year’s General Assembly in Belfast where his successor, Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick, was installed as moderator for the coming year. Approximately 800 delegates from the church’s 19 presbyteries all over Ireland are meeting this week for the first in-person General Assembly since 2019, due to the pandemic.

The largest Protestant denomination in Northern Ireland, the Presbyterian Church has 204,000 members belonging to 532 congregations throughout the island of Ireland, with over 95 per cent of members in Northern Ireland.



Ongoing fallout from the 2018 General Assembly decision to ban same-sex couples from communion and refuse Baptism to their children continued in debate on Thursday. In 2018 also, the church severed links with the Church of Scotland because of its perceived more liberal stance on same-sex issues.

Rev Trevor Gribben told delegates that “in the church alone resides the right to interpret her standards under the word of God. So when the General Assembly of the church comes to a mind on a position, that is the position of the church, and those who’ve taken ordination vows on big issues shouldn’t be undermining that position in public and shouldn’t be ignoring and doing the opposite to what the assembly has decided.”

Rev Alistair Beattie said: “We have sadly witnessed how the Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church of England and Wales and others have moved regarding homosexuality and other gender issues in the church. Should this house at some time dare to move in a similar direction, are those of us who disagree on the basis of Bible teaching bound to silence on such a decision as this or by such decision as this?”

He continued: “It is my prayer that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will not make such contentious decisions as we have witnessed elsewhere. Yet if such things should happen, I would want to be assured that I and fellow ministers of like mind would not be bound to silence but would have freedom to express what we believe the word of God to teach.”

June 25, 2022

Rev John Dunlop noted how the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was rich, predominantly white, male, and culturally British. “Now there’s nothing wrong with being rich, being white, being male or being British provided we understand that we’ll be carrying to the Bible biases of rich people, biases of white people, of male people and of culturally uniform people by and large,” he said. “When we come to the scriptures we have got to understand and appreciate the biases which we bring to it and listen to other people who have a divergent point of view,” he said,

He hoped a report to be presented to the General Assembly next year would be one which “makes room for this diverse, creative, energetic, biblically interpretive theological discourse which this church at all times needs and, at this particular moment in history, desperately needs.”

Rev Cheryl Meban, chaplain at Ulster University in Belfast, told the General Assembly how in her work “I encounter many people who experience the marginalisation, the pain and trauma caused by decisions of this body, decisions which for them undermine the authenticity of the gospel.”

Those decisions were “causing not peace and unity but deep personal, familial and community damage, division and upset. And in such circumstances every minister, every elder, surely, in our responsibility as leaders, must use every Christ-like means to change the minds of our colleagues, our congregants and the wider community,” she said.

Rev Gribben repeated out that it was “not legitimate for ministers who have promised to yield submission of the Lord

June 25, 2022

to the courts of the church to deliberately and proactively, in an organised way, go out and seek to undermine that”.

## **Catholic schools claim NIO hosted conference excluded them**

BBC News

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-61916505>

# **Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books**

## **Open to all - Controlled schools**

The Open To All campaign works on behalf of Northern Ireland's controlled schools.

You are invited to find out more about the Controlled schools role in education in the region, alongside other churches. Please visit [ [trc-churcheducation.org](http://trc-churcheducation.org) ]

Watch the TRC video to hear controlled schools tell us how their school is #OpenToAll. If you are associated with a controlled school get involved!

Access video to post on your social media channels here - [ [bit.ly/3Hyhexc](https://bit.ly/3Hyhexc) ]

You are encouraged to get in touch and tell the TRC your story at -

[ [info@csscni.co.uk](mailto:info@csscni.co.uk) @EdAuthority ]



↓ New Resource

# The (un)Holy Land

UNDERSTANDING THE PALESTINE/ISRAEL CONFLICT

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## Methodist Church (un)Holy Land project

The (un)Holy Land project is a resource to help Irish Methodists study, reflect and respond to life in Israel and Palestine.

It can be used for group study or be engaged with as a personal study guide to complete in your own time.

The guide and videos are available now to download from our website:

[ ] [bit.ly/unholyland](https://bit.ly/unholyland)[ ]

## Perspective

### Protocol debate no place for public figures to sneer at those they disagree with - Archbishop John McDowell

**I can't remember a more difficult or more polarised moment in Northern Ireland or in the relationships between the UK and Ireland over the past 20 years. The friction and the drama have many causes, but events have come together to create a moment of real jeopardy.**

The issue which is acting as a symbol for wider community and international tension at the moment is the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The origins of the Protocol are relatively straightforward, but it has become fantastically complex in its development and the range of ills now being attributed to it, or threatened in consequence of it.

Very few people will have the time or the expert knowledge to master the detail of the Protocol.

But it is, by its very objectives, tied to the 1998 Agreement. As such, it is a great pity that it has provoked a degree of partisanship which now seems to militate against a consensual outcome.

But the debates around Brexit and the Protocol do not stray far from questions of peace, political stability or constitutional futures.

June 25, 2022

My own instinct is that it might be wiser at this time to reflect for a moment on how, as a society that has to live in this small space, we might approach the current challenges together, rather than choosing between what have become a rather rigid set of narratives and fixes.

As a disciple of Jesus Christ who also happens to be a Church Leader, the principal questions which I need to ask myself at this time are “how will what I do or say express my discipleship of Jesus Christ?” and “how will it contribute to the common good?”

Church Leaders are not party political figures nor are we the accredited representatives of any political community.

I would guess that the majority of Church of Ireland people in Northern Ireland are unionists of one sort or another and most Church of Ireland people in the Republic of Ireland are broadly nationalist.

Probably there is also a substantial minority (particularly) of under-40s in both jurisdictions who would class themselves as “neither” or “other”. Fortunately there are a large number of elected representatives from political parties or political communities who are able and willing to speak for all these groups.

So as a Church Leader I do not speak for, with, or to the Church, or to broader society in that way.

It is not for me as a Church Leader to parade the political affiliation of Church of Ireland people in those terms.



June 25, 2022

In many ways, their political or constitutional affiliation is none of my business. This alignment of denominational and political affiliation has been a feature of our history and has only succeeded in making many in society suspicious of where the Church's conclusive loyalty really lies. In doing so, it has impeded the Church's usefulness in the world and has at times also cheapened the Gospel and its implications.

The God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ is not a Unionist or a Nationalist, or a 'Neither'.

He is the Sovereign Lord of all peoples, a God of justice and generosity, who desires the good of all. For those of us whose churches are organised on an all-island basis, this is especially important to remember.

Brexit, the issue which created the need for a Protocol, has been undoubtedly divisive throughout the UK. Yet there is only one place where those divisions are seen as threatening violent disruption and social disintegration.

This is particularly so because shadowy groups who once had some electoral credibility, but who have now re-transitioned to their core competencies of drug dealing, extortion and oppressing their own communities, are trying to exert political pressure via their proxies.

Perhaps it is important that opinion from the shadows is brought into the open; perhaps not. In any case, there will always be something of the night about it.

June 25, 2022

In contrast, in a functioning democratic society, the views expressed by trade bodies, academics, business people, and even church people, are necessarily heard – those whose purpose is simply to inform from a base of knowledge or evidence, rather than to campaign. It is vital that their freedom to speak is respected and protected.

Of course, nothing can stop the poisoned imaginations behind anonymous Twitter accounts, but there should be no place for sneering asides from public figures towards those whose evidence doesn't align with a particular narrative. That leads only to a nervous discussion and a shrivelled public space.

Northern Ireland has always had an electoral democracy, but it has not always had a democratic culture.

Democracy in its fullest sense, is not like parenthood, automatically passed on to the next generation.

The fundamentals are easy to forget, not least around what other generations called “civility”; fairness and transparency in public debate. It is an insidious form of barbarism to say that “politics is a rough old game” and therefore “anything goes”.

The web of relationships and internalised decencies which make good societies work is much easier to unravel than to knit.

Brexit and the Protocol will continue to affect different parts of these islands in different ways and to provoke different fears from different quarters.

June 25, 2022

We need to be very careful about what we say and what we listen to in these matters.

Above all, we need to focus on what is our common interest in the here and now so that we might avoid what would divide us even more painfully in the future.

The Most Revd John McDowell is the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland. Published in the Belfast Telegraph.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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