



Photo by Leslie Stuart Smith

The Very Rev. T. M. BARKER, M.A., D.D.
Moderator, 1956

Remembering Thomas Barker, Missionary to China and Moderator

In an **afternoon** lecture on Thursday, 19 January 2017 at **3.00pm** in Union Theological College, Dr Salters Sterling, former Academic Secretary,
churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Trinity College Dublin, gives an insight into the life of the Rev Professor Thomas McCurdy Barker.

Professor Barker served as a missionary in China from 1913 to 1951 and returned to Ireland taking up congregational ministry until his retirement in 1959.

He was imprisoned during the Second World War by the Japanese in Nagasaki and was there when the atomic bomb was exploded over the city on 9 August 1945.

The lecture is organised by the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland. Everyone is welcome.

Living Worship workshop series 2017

Early each year, Church Music Dublin runs this popular short course in music, liturgy and worship. It aims to help church musicians understand their role in a wider context than simply playing an instrument or directing a choir.

The course takes place on Saturday mornings and has something for everyone – musicians, worship leaders, clergy and others with pastoral responsibility – all who have an interest in the music of worship. Practical music skills are not required to take part.

The sessions are fairly informal and dialogue between the speakers and those attending is encouraged. Most speakers include some singing as part of their presentations. There is a break for refreshments half-way through the morning – always a splendid opportunity to greet old friends and make new.

The sessions on 14 January and 4 February will take place in the Mageough Hall, Cowper Road, Rathmines, D06 RK57, starting at 10am. (Enter through through the second gate of The Mageough and immediately turn right. The hall is the building nearest the Luas stop.)

Saturday 14 January 2017 - The Revd Dr Richard Clutterbuck is a minister of the Methodist Church of Great Britain and Principal of [Edgehill Theological College](#), Belfast. Before joining Edgehill he spent nine years as Principal of the ecumenical West of England Ministerial Training

Course. He is a member of the Society for the Study of Theology. He will present on the topic: *Why Liturgy?*

Saturday 4 February 2017 - The Very Revd Tom Gordon is [Dean of Leighlin](#). He was Priest Vicar at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin from 1996 to 2010 and for some years was on the staff of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute. He will present on the topic of *Why Christians Worship*, with particular focus on the Eucharist.

Saturday 11 March 2017 at 10am in Monkstown Parish Church, Carrickbrennan Road, A94 HH77.
- Dr John Rowntree worked professionally as a structural and civil engineer before turning to music. A regular visitor to Ireland, John is an organ advisor and currently holds the posts of Director of the Choir and Organist at Douai Abbey and Director of Music at St Mary's Parish Church, Douai Abbey, in Berkshire. His topic will be *Singing in Community — and How!*

The final session on 14 March, will start at 10am in Monkstown Parish Church, Carrickbrennan Road, Monkstown, A94 HH77. Fee: €10 per session

[http://www.churchmusicdublin.org/living-worship/Click here](http://www.churchmusicdublin.org/living-worship/Click+here) to view a list of speakers and subjects in previous years.



‘Our Wounded & Wonderful City’, The 4 Corners Festival Belfast 2017

The 4 Corners Festival seeks to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all. It consists of innovative events designed to entice people out of their own ‘corners’ of the city and into new places where they will encounter new perspectives, new ideas, and new friends.

The theme of this years festival is ‘Our Wounded & Wonderful City’. The 4 Corners Festival runs from Friday 3rd – Sunday 12th February 2017. The organiser’s basic message is, “Join us as we celebrate our city through music, prayer, storytelling, discussion, and more.”

<http://4cornersfestival.com/>

Sunday Mass axed in Newry due to priest shortage

Worshippers in Newry have been left disappointed by the Bishop of Dromore's surprise announcement to end the only English language Sunday Mass at St Brigid's Church, the Belfast Telegraph reports.

A dramatic fall in the number of priests has forced the Co Down church to end the service after nearly 50 years.

A decade ago there were nine priests serving Newry Parish; today there are just three.

The announcement was made at the very last 11.30am Sunday Mass at the church, when parishioners were told that they could instead attend a Saturday evening service or the Sunday Polish Mass in the church.

Weekly services have been stripped back from three to just one, on a Friday evening.

The 9.30am Saturday morning Mass in the city's cathedral, the Saturday vigil at St Mary's Old Chapel and other services have also been axed.



The Cathedral of St Patrick and St Colman in Newry, Co Down

The congregation in the Meadow parish have been angered that they were not consulted prior to the shock announcement and are disappointed that a petition attracting 600 signatures had not been acknowledged.

Bishop of Dromore John McAreavey said the changes were regrettable, but necessary.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, he said: "There is a sadness to it, of course there is. People are attached to their own Mass, their own church, and sometimes even their own seat. I say this with respect because we all have habits, particularly with religious practice."

He explained that he had an obligation to protect the wellbeing of the priests: "I have a responsibility to make sure there is adequate provision of services, but I also have a responsibility to make sure priests do not find themselves with a burden that is unsustainable. I don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg, and that's our clergy."

The bishop said that falling priest numbers and a decline in church attendance, with the exception of Christmas Eve, had led to the changes.

He added that the community must accept provisions once made possible by nine priests cannot continue with a third of that number. He also expressed doubts over the sustainability of the four Sunday Mass services at Newry Cathedral.

"The last thing I want to do is be responsible for damaging people's faith and I am very sensitive about that. When you disturb how people express their faith, sometimes they don't find a new pattern. They will stop praying and fall away. They will drift," he said.

"It's the only Polish Mass, and it's important that we keep it.

"They haven't got a Polish church and it's right that they use ours, because they are part of our community."

http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/parishioners-left-shocked-as-sunday-mass-is-axed-due-to-priest-shortage-35342817.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks

Pope meets with Italian earthquake victims on eve of Epiphany

Last night, Thursday, 5 January, the Vigil of Epiphany, Pope Francis met at the Vatican with victims of the devastating earthquakes that struck central Italy in the course of the past year.

Almost 300 people were killed in an earthquake that struck near the town of Amatrice on August 24. Just over two months later, a series of quakes struck the same region, including a magnitude 6.6 earthquake on October 30 - the largest quake to strike Italy in over thirty years. Only two people died in the October quakes, although a number of towns, including Norcia, the birthplace of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica, suffered serious damage.



Pope Francis prays as he visits the earthquake-ravaged town of Amatrice, Italy, in August 2016

The Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia, Renato Boccardo, said the meeting with the Pope “was dedicated especially to those who lost their loved ones, their homes, their economic security, those who have been displaced from their land.” The Pope, he said, wanted to welcome especially those who, in different ways, have been wounded by the quakes, and who are looking for “consolation and hope.”

Approximately 800 people from the diocese, with their Archbishop and their pastors, took part in

the audience. Representatives of the civil authorities leading rebuilding efforts were also present. The pastor of the Abbey of S. Eutizio near the town of Preci addressed the Holy Father in the name of all those present.

A press release from the Archdiocese said the meeting would strengthen the local church in its principle task following the earthquake. The Church, it said, is called primarily to support “the interior-moral renewal of the people.” To that end, a further important gathering will take place next Sunday, when the Archbishop of Perugia-Città della Pieve, Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, will celebrate Mass for earthquake victims in the village of San Pellegrino di Norcia.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Private university expansion plans a 'risk too far'

BBC News

There are warnings against a rapid expansion of new universities - as student finance for such colleges quadruples.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-38508362>

RHI scandal: DUP's David McIlveen criticises Foster over RHI 'omni-shambles'

BBC News

A former DUP MLA breaks ranks and criticises his leader Arlene Foster, saying the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme is an "omni-shambles".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-38514678>

Aid agency seeks staff redundancies

Irish Examiner

25 redundancies sought after a challenging year

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/aid-agency-goal-to-seek-staff-redundancies-771134.html>

Premier

Reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken of his joy at being able to preach in South Africa. Archbishop Justin delivered a sermon on walking in the Spirit during Evensong at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town when he warned against both abandoning the law and becoming legalistic. He also warned of division, saying: "When we do not walk by the Spirit the church is divided; for the Spirit brings us as one to Jesus, to love inexhaustible and hope that never fades."

Premier

Reports that the Archbishop of York is set to go back on the road as he plans to join all 21

deaneries in the Diocese of York throughout 2017 and 2018 for weekends of celebration, witness and blessing, telling others of the love of God (see above). The first stop will be Northern Ryedale from Friday 13 to Sunday 15 January 2017. The mission weekends will build on the ministries already taking place in the Diocese of York and follow on from the Archbishop's six-month long Pilgrimage of Prayer, Witness and Blessing across the Diocese which ended in May 2016.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/Across-the-UK/Yorkshire/Archbishop-Sentamu-Back-On-Tour>

Christian Today

Reports that a cross-denominational group of ten churches is providing accommodation and three meals a day for homeless people amid the cold winter conditions. The Tunbridge Wells Churches Winter Shelter, which is now in its sixth year, rotates between eleven church halls across the Kent town. The shelter, which runs this week until 5 March, provides 12 beds, breakfast, a takeaway lunch and a two course dinner.

Christian Today

Reports that the watchdog International Christian Concern (ICC) has published the list of the 12

worst countries for Christian persecution across the world. North Korea, Iraq, Syria and Nigeria topped the list, while Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, India and Egypt were "perennial abusers of religious freedom" says the report. The ICC also listed a third category, 'New and Noteworthy', in which it placed countries where "events... indicate declining religious freedom and are cause for alarm". Within this list was the US, Russia and Mexico.