

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day

New Moderator installed

The new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has been formally installed following an event during the church's General Assembly

The Right Reverend Dr Trevor Gribben succeeded the Very Reverend Dr Richard Murray as his term came to an end. The Moderator for the PCI is the most senior office-bearer in the organisation, each one serving a one-year term in the post.

Originally from Tandragee, Rev Gribben had been serving his denomination as a clerk since 2014.

At the event, outgoing Moderator Dr Murray led the service of worship in front of 18 former Moderators, ministers and elders from the PCI's 500-plus congregations from across Ireland.

Among the civic guests present were His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for Belfast, Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Paul Doherty, and the city's High Sheriff, Councillor Fiona McAteer, along with members of the public, and Dr Gribben's personal guests.

During his address to those gathered, Dr Gribben talked about engaging “in the public square” and “in civil society” with God's message and also stressed the need to engage “with other Christian churches” during his time.



He also referenced the disorder over recent days in Ballymena during his speech, offering thanks to “people in our police force who in these past days have had to stand in front of mindless thugs and racists”.

“No matter what the statistics look like, no matter what social media might say, no matter how many times the church might be ridiculed and ignored, we have a hope and a future in Jesus Christ,” he added.

“Today as a church, we have a responsibility to take that message to this island and through partner churches to the very ends of the earth.”

Speaking as part of a wide ranging interview with the Belfast Telegraph last week, Rev Gribben — a Linfield supporter — revealed he would not attend a football match played on a Sunday, amid the ongoing debate among officials in the local league.

During the interview he also said he believes there may be a “female Moderator [for the church] in future”.

“I would probably not go on Sunday myself. I have other things to do then,” he said last week.

“I don't think it is particularly great to have significant sporting games on a Sunday. If I was out for a walk and I saw people playing cricket on a Sunday afternoon, I may stop to look at that.

“The Irish Football Association, for the Premier League in particular, states that games can be played on a Sunday, but only if both teams agree.

“If one team says they don't want to play on Sunday, then they won't be forced to. I think that, as a church, we are content with that position. I want to live in a world where we didn't have that on a Sunday.”

Regarding ordination, Rev Gribben said that within the PCI, both men and women “have equal opportunity to be Moderator”. “I believe if it is God's will, a female Moderator

will be chosen. Women are open to be Moderator as much as men. The opportunity is there,” he added.

News

Marathon first for An Garda Síochána

Inspired by the strength and resilience of his colleague who lost his young son to cancer a number of years ago, Garda Emmet Long, attached to Togher Garda Station in Cork City sought to push his endurance in both of their honour.

Garda Long ran the recent Cork City Marathon in his full operational uniform, a first for An Garda Síochána and in doing so raised €2,000 in aid of the children’s cancer ward in Cork University Hospital.

It’s his hope that this money will go towards a day out for each child and their family so that together they can take their mind’s off their experience in dealing with and navigating serious illness.

Giving churches in Northern Ireland a voice - National Churches Trust Survey

The National Churches Trust is carrying out a UK–wide survey to help policymakers, the media, and the wider public better understand the challenges churches face and to highlight the vital work that churches, like yours, do.

This survey has the support of denominations, faith, and heritage groups across the country and we encourage you to take part.

Your response will provide essential evidence to build a clearer picture – to tell a stronger, more informed story about your church, and others like it, so that together we can address some of the biggest challenges facing churches and help ensure their future.

Please complete the National Churches Trust Survey and encourage others you know to join in too. The more churches that take part, the more impactful it will be. The survey opened on Tuesday, 6th May, and runs to Monday, 30th June.

Take part in the survey and find out more information at nationalchurchestrust.org/survey

Moderator condemns Ballymena riots

Speaking from the Moderator's Chair, as he opened the second day of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's General Assembly, the Moderator, Right Reverend Dr Richard Murray, condemned the riots that have taken place in Ballymena and elsewhere, saying, "we call those who engage in such mindless acts to stop all illegal behaviour."

Speaking to the General Assembly, Dr Murray said, "Over the last two days, the first people who came out onto the



streets of Ballymena were reacting peacefully in response to the alleged sexual assault on a young girl. The right to peaceful protest must be recognised in a democratic society.

“However, what followed the original protest, was hijacked by elements intent on what the PSNI have described as ‘racist, thuggery, and violence’. This has now spread to other areas. This must be condemned and we call those who engage in such mindless acts to stop all illegal behaviour.”

Dr Murray then prayed for a restoration of peace and of good relations..

No guarantee UK Government will keep promise on climate finance says Christian Aid

Responding to the UK Government's Spending Review, Christian Aid's Head of Campaigns and UK Advocacy Jennifer Larbie, said:

“The Chancellor hasn’t moved an inch to salvage the UK’s now fragile credibility with Global South governments.

“Today brings no guarantee that the government will keep its promise on climate finance. How can we fear anything but more broken promises like those we saw earlier this year with international aid?

“This month will see world leaders come together for a summit on financing for development; a litmus test of the UK’s promises to deliver justice to the world’s most marginalised people.

“If UK ministers are serious about turning words into action, they will listen to global south leaders and use their powers to cancel debt through measures that won’t even cost the taxpayer.”

Archbishop of York apologies for safeguarding failures in new report

The Archbishop of York has apologised for safeguarding failures in the Church Commissioners' annual report.

The Church Commissioners manage the Church of England's property and investment portfolio.

Most Rev Stephen Cottrell wrote in this year's update that he is "truly sorry for the prolific and abhorrent abuse highlighted in the report and its lifelong effects on its victims".

The report also describes the Church's "reputational risk" as being "at an elevated level", given the Archbishop of Canterbury's resignation over safeguarding failures in November 2024.

The warning came as the Church Commissioners announced they would be investing more than £1.6 billion towards the work of the Church from 2026 to 2028. Part of this funding will go towards a victim redress scheme, which had already been announced. It will be comprised of £150 million.

Additionally, £30 million will be allocated towards a national safeguarding network.

Dame Sarah Mullally said: "While no amount of money can ever erase the harm done by perpetrators of abuse, these spending plans will support the vital work of safeguarding in the Church and underpin the new National Redress scheme."

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The report states: “Further reaction (including negative comment) to this programme of work is expected when the intended new Fund for Healing, Repair and Justice is launched, making investments and issuing grants.”



Skreen couple raise well over €30,000 for Christian Aid Ireland

Christian Aid Ireland says a very special thank you to all those kind-hearted and stoical people who continue to raise funds to support our work - despite some very real difficulties in their own lives.

Take Herbie and Marion Watt, for example, who live in County Sligo. This wonderful couple have raised well over

€30,000 for our work since they began their annual ‘open-house’ coffee event at their home near Skreen in 2000.

In recent years, Herbie’s eyesight has deteriorated and sadly he is now registered blind. Despite this setback, and the changes it’s brought to both their lives, Herbie and Marion are still counting their blessings – and fundraising for people living in poverty and crisis. This year, Herbie and Marion’s open house event raised around €2,300 for Christian Aid Week, with around 60 neighbours and friends dropping in for a cuppa and some of Marion’s delicious home baking.

Unlike a typical coffee morning that might run in a church hall for two hours, Herbie and Marion welcomed their first visitor before 11 am and said goodbye to the last person around 7.30 pm. Marion explained: “We like to spread it out across the day to give us time for a proper chat with our friends and neighbours.”

The Watts, who are members of the Methodist community in Sligo, tell us that their event was supported by members of all the local churches – Methodist, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Catholic.

Please join us in thanking Marion and Herbie for their unwavering support. We’re also grateful to everyone who donated so generously.

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Please help the RNLI through the 2025 AIB Community Fund

The RNLI has a wonderful opportunity to be awarded up to £21,000 through the 2025 AIB Community Fund. However, they need your help.

If you want to show your support, please nominate the RNLI by clicking on this link:



RNLI OPEN DAY

DONAGHADEE
THE HARBOUR

Saturday 14 June 2025
11AM - 4PM

Featuring a variety of stalls.

Lifeboat open 12-3pm, followed by Lifeboat display.

 DonaghadeeRNLI
 @DonaghadeeRNLI



The FRAL is the charity that users help to save lives and protect the vulnerable in Ireland and Wales. (0002036, Scaturcl (Gadara) Ireland 0003055)
such in the case of the Red Cross and the Ministry of the Army.

<https://aib.ie/personal-forms/community-fund>

Then, simply put in your name and email address, select the RNLI as your chosen charity, use the charity registration number 209603 and choose Northern Ireland as your location. Select Education and Opportunities as the social theme and put in a short reason for why you think the RNLI should receive the funds. This should take no more than two minutes of your time. Thank you for your support.

Education



Armagh Royal visits their cathedral

June 13, 2025

Royal School Armagh Year 9 had a brilliant Religious Studies trip to St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral.

They explored the stunning architecture, discovered the rich history, and deepened their understanding of the Cathedral's purpose and significance. It was wonderful learning about the deep connections between the Cathedral and our school. Many thanks to Very Revd. Shane Forster for our inspiring tour.



Belfast Royal Academy's cathedral link

Belfast Royal Academy (B.R.A.) Cliftonville Road. Belfast.(1888) The Belfast Royal Academy was founded in 1785 and is the oldest school in the city.

Originally situated across the street from St. Anne's Cathedral in what is now Academy Street, it was transferred to the Cliftonville Road in 1880, when the present building was erected. For more than a century the school was named Belfast Academy. On 27 November 1887, Queen Victoria granted permission for the school to style itself Belfast Royal Academy, and its name was officially changed in January 1888. The link with the Cathedral remained strong as its Roll of Choristers evidences.

Dromore High School responding to school bereavement

This statement was formed and circulated on behalf of the Board of Governors, pupils and staff of Dromore High. It is exemplary in content and pastoral sensitivity. It states -

Over the past weekend, the Governors, staff and students of Dromore High were informed of the death of one of our year 12 pupils, Sarah Eakin. Sarah had an interest in netball and in equestrian sport, representing school on the netball court and in the equestrian team, an interest she shared with her Dad.

Sarah had been diagnosed with leukaemia in year 11 and missed most of her studies that year. Keen to keep up with her classwork, Sarah did, however, observe some of her lessons remotely via a special robot camera supplied by the Children's Cancer Unit Charity.



Sarah

Sarah underwent treatment, was given a positive prognosis in the summer of 2024 and was able to return to school in September 2024. Once back in school at the start of year 12, Sarah made it her business to catch up on any missed studies taking extra lessons with some staff who were happy to provide their time after school hours.

Sarah clearly enjoyed being part of the Dromore High family again. Despite her illness, Sarah endeavoured to attend the school formal back in March. There she enjoyed a night with her closest friends who we know will miss her dearly. Her attitude throughout this school year was always positive and her attitude to her illness was never to make a fuss or seek special treatment. Observing Sarah around school, one would not have realised that she had been unwell.

An aspiration to study A levels was firmly in Sarah's sights throughout this year to which she held until her last few days. Our sixth form next year will be the poorer for her absence.

The loss to our school family is made more difficult because at the commencement of year 12 we watched Sarah return to school and had high hopes that her illness was behind her. Sadly, this was not to be.

In her last weeks Sarah faced her terminal diagnosis with incredible bravery and fortitude and with a maturity that many could only aspire to. Her steadfastness during illness and especially in her last few weeks has been truly inspirational and for that and her many other exceptional qualities we will remain very proud of Sarah.

Our thoughts turn now to Sarah's family who will be enduring the pain of her loss. We will of course be praying for Sarah's Dad Geoff, her Mum Joanne, her brother James and the wider family circle in the coming days."

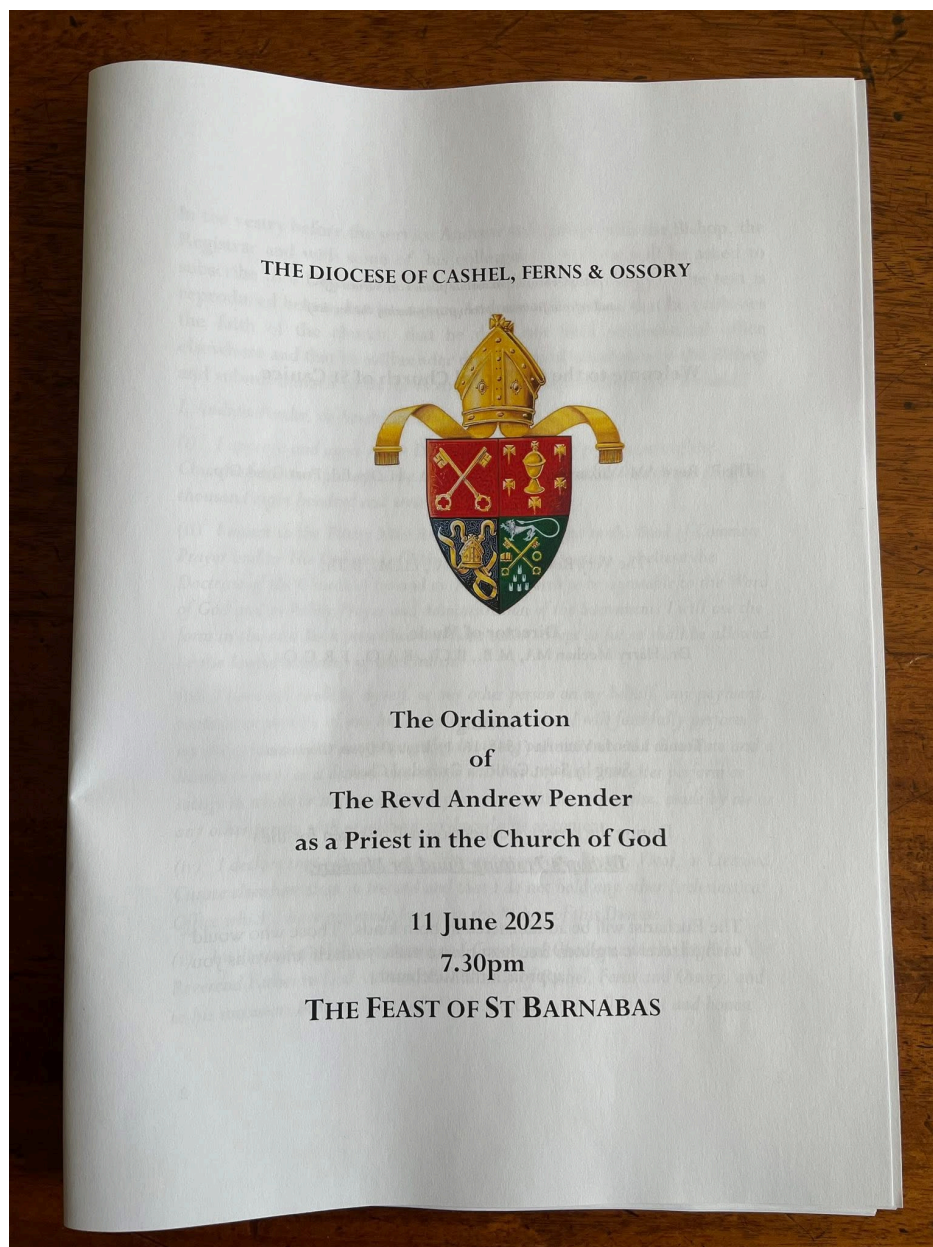
Sarah is the second year 12 pupil in Dromore High to pass away this academic year which has made 2024-2025 an

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incredibly challenging time for pupils, staff and the wider school family. We deeply appreciate the support of the Critical incident Team from the Education Authority and the support of our own pastoral staff and other outside agencies which has helped many of us at various times this year.

'The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of distress; he cares for those who take refuge in Him' - Nahum 1 v 7.

On behalf of the Board of Governors, Staff and Pupils of Dromore High



**Clergy and
ministry**

**Ordained
in Saint
Canice's
Cathedral,
Kilkenny**

**On the Feast
of Saint
Barnabas the
Rev'd Andrew
Pender was
ordained to
the sacred
Priesthood in**

**Saint Canice's
Cathedral, Kilkenny,
by the Rt Rev'd
Adrian Wilkinson,
supported by priests
of the Diocese.**

Andrew was brought up in Malahide Co Dublin but has been living in Baltinglass for a number of years. He holds a B.Sc. in applied science and a M.Sc. in physics from the University of Dublin. A celebration of Evensong at Christchurch cathedral Dublin was the spark that reignited an interest in faith and put him on his current spiritual path. He is a deacon in the Baltinglass group of parishes and was a diocesan reader prior to this role. He lectures in physics in the Technological University of Dublin. He has three children and plays Spanish flamenco guitar as a hobby.



Supported by family, friends and parishioners, Andrew was reminded by the Bishop that one year previously, he had been made Deacon on the Feast of Saint Barnabas. The Bishop set before Andrew the model of Barnabas, the 'Son of Encouragement' who had helped introduce Paul into the

fellowship of the Christian community when people were wary of him, but Barnabas saw his gifts.

The first lesson was read by Joan Jackson, and the second by Canon Mairt Hanley, the Dean-elect of Old Leighlin and the Rector of Baltinglass where Andrew's vocation was nurtured. The Rev'd Janet Finlay, the first person to be ordained to the Ordained Local Ministry in the Diocese read the Gospel and preached.

At the moment of ordination the bishop and all priests present laid hands on Andrew, praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Andrew for the Office and Work of a priest in the Church. Andrew was given a bible by the Bishop as a sign of the authority he has received to preach the word and to administer the sacraments.

The Peace was followed by a Celebration of Holy Communion. The setting was Tomás Luis de Victoria, Missa O Quam Gloriosum, sung by Saint Canice's Cathedral Choir. The anthem was Abendlied , by Josef Rheinberger.

At the end of the service Andrew stood alone before the bishop and was reminded that the treasure now entrusted to him is Christ's own flock.

He was then led out by the Bishop along with family, friends and parish representatives.

Refreshments followed, provided by the Baltinglass Group of Parishes where Andrew will continue to serve.

In the media

Presbyterian Church settles tribunal cases with academic and Co Tyrone pastor

A professor has settled a case taken against a Presbyterian-run college after he was dismissed following a contribution he made to a BBC radio programme, Angela Davison reports in the Belfast Telegraph

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has “reached a confidential resolution” with Rev Professor Laurence Kirkpatrick.

And, in a separate case, a former trainee Presbyterian minister has also reached a confidential settlement with the church.

The revelation of two separate settlements follows claims made in an anonymous email seen by this newspaper.

Presbyterian ministers were contacted alleging the church has been embroiled in a series of long-running tribunal cases and had to pay out significant sums in compensation in the past decade.

Mr Kirkpatrick left his role at Union Theological College in controversial circumstances six years ago.

A church disciplinary panel found him guilty of “gross misconduct” and he was dismissed from his post after 22 years.

He took a case alleging unlawful discrimination and unfair dismissal.

This newspaper has seen an agreed statement on the resolution of the long-running case involving the church and Professor Kirkpatrick.

It says: “Laurence Kirkpatrick, who was employed as Professor of Church History by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland between September 2, 1996 and March 20, 2019, issued a number of proceedings against the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, including allegations of unlawful discrimination and unfair dismissal which were disputed and denied by the church.

“Since that time both parties have been unable to reach a consensus in relation to these allegations.

“In the interests of all concerned, the parties have now resolved the litigation and reached a confidential resolution, without admission of liability by the church, actual or implied.”

The case followed from Rev Kirkpatrick's sacking after comments he made during the 2018 interview.

Speaking on BBC Radio Ulster's Talkback programme, he publicly disagreed with the Presbyterian Church's outright opposition to same-sex relationships.

Rev Kirkpatrick told listeners he would be “horrified” if students were taught that same-sex relationships were sinful.

He was subsequently suspended and a disciplinary panel later found him guilty of gross misconduct, resulting in his dismissal from Union Theological College.

In the case against the church, Prof Kirkpatrick previously said he believed his comments on Talkback were not the real reason behind his dismissal, but rather it was due to the fact that he was divorced.

A legal document on the Employment Tribunal website shows the case involved alleged sex discrimination on grounds of marital status, and discrimination on grounds of religious belief and political opinion.

Prof Kirkpatrick also claimed victimisation against the church.

The church said this week: “As a rule the church does not comment on matters relating to individuals, particularly when they concern matters of employment.”

Separately, Tom Finnegan, now pastor of the Vineyard Church in Dungannon, Co Tyrone, brought a victimisation claim after his ministry training with the Presbyterian Church was terminated.

Mr Finnegan reached the settlement with the church in February.

In a statement to this newspaper, Mr Finnegan said: “The tribunal proceedings were settled, following mediation between the parties.”

The terms of the settlement have not been made public but it's believed that a confidentiality agreement was reached.

Meanwhile, an anonymous email has been circulated to Presbyterian ministers raising concerns about the number of settlements in general.

The email, sent from an account called 'Troubled Presbyterians', alleges the PCI has spent significant sums settling cases with complainants in the last 10 years. It was sent ahead of this week's annual General Assembly.

Whether the figure alleged is accurate is unclear, as the precise details of each of the known settlements are generally protected by confidentiality agreements.

However, a search of the Employment Tribunal's website, where the “Presbyterian Church” is listed as a respondent, reveals a number of cases in recent years.

Notices about the cases of Kirkpatrick and Finnegan being closed do not appear online due to new rules around withdrawn cases not being published.

The email says that members of the Presbyterian Church should know the facts.

It calls for questions to be raised at the General Assembly about the matter, including how much in PCI funds are being

spent and how they will be recorded in the church's annual accounts.

The Presbyterian Church was contacted for comment on the Finnegan case and the email, but said it would not be saying anything further.

Poem for today

Lament for the Poets: 1916

by Francis Ledwidge

I heard the Poor Old Woman say:
"At break of day the fowler came,
And took my blackbirds from their songs
Who loved me well thro' shame and blame

No more from lovely distances
Their songs shall bless me mile by mile,
Nor to white Ashbourne call me down
To wear my crown another while.

With bended flowers the angels mark
For the skylark the place they lie,
From there its little family
Shall dip their wings first in the sky.

And when the first surprise of flight
Sweet songs excite, from the far dawn
Shall there come blackbirds loud with love,
Sweet echoes of the singers gone.

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But in the lovely hush of eve
Weeping I grieve the silent bills"
I heard the Poor Old Woman say
In Derry of the little hills.

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

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**Link in Monday through Saturday from
early morning. Please recommend to your
friends**

