



Image of the day - Chester Cathedral

Three new ministers are installed in Carrickfergus Presbytery

Three of the area's oldest Presbyterian churches have installed new ministers to fill their vacant pulpits.

Ballycarry, Ballyclare and Cairncastle congregations – all within the Presbytery of Carrickfergus - have had new clergy installed, the services taking place in line with current Covid restrictions.

The new minister at the oldest Presbyterian congregation in Ireland, at Ballycarry, is Rev Mark Russell, a 55 year-old father of two married to Libby, who was minister of Leckpatrick and Donagheady Presbyterian Churches in County Tyrone since 2010.

Having studied for a BA in Business Studies at Ulster University's Jordanstown campus, he went on to complete his theological studies at Queen's University and Union College, graduating with an Masters in Divinity and a Post graduate Diploma in Ministry.

The former civil servant was licensed to preach the Gospel as a probationer for the ministry, known as a 'licentiate', in First Carrickfergus Presbyterian Church, his home church, in 2008. The following year, he was ordained as the associate minister in Carnmoney Presbyterian Church, before being called as the minister of Leckpatrick Presbyterian in 2010 (the congregation was linked with Donagheady in 2017).

March 11, 2021

Rev. Russell served just over 10 years in the congregations, before being called to Ballycarry. He was installed as minister of Ballycarry Presbyterian Church in January and the installation service took place in the church and was undertaken by the Presbytery of Carrickfergus under current Covid restrictions.

This meant that only a very limited number of participants could take part. The service was, however videoed so that members of the congregation, who couldn't attend, could watch the service later.

The Ballycarry congregation was founded in 1613 and has a membership of around 580 people, made up of some 260 families.

The vacancy was caused by the retirement of Rev Gabrielle Farquhar, who had been the minister there for the past 25 years.

Another new face is Rev. Andrew Watson at Cairncastle Presbyterian Church.

For nearly half of Mr Watson's ministerial career, the father of four adult children has ministered in County Donegal, serving the congregations of Carrigart and Dunfanaghy for five years before being installed as the new minister of Cairncastle Presbyterian Church in December of last year.

Prior to that he served in the Ballyshannon and Donegal Presbyterian Churches between 1992 and 2001.



Rev. Andrew Watson

He gained a BA and BD from Queen's University in Belfast in the 1980s, and a Master in Theology in the 1990s, and was licensed as a probationer for the ministry in a special service in his home congregation of Carnmoney Presbyterian Church in June 1989.

Mr Watson, who is married to Hazel, was then ordained as an assistant minister, serving in West Kirk Presbyterian in North Belfast prior to accepting the first call to County Donegal. From 2001 he served as minister of Scarva Street Presbyterian in Banbridge for 12 years.

The installation service took place in Cairncastle Presbyterian and was undertaken by the Presbytery of Carrickfergus under current Covid restrictions. Members of churchnewsireland@gmail.org

March 11, 2021

the congregation were able to watch and take part from home via Facebook Live.

Cairncastle Presbyterian, formed in 1646, has a membership of around 470 people, made up of around 200 families. Rev. Watson succeeds Rev Fiona Forbes, who accepted a call to become the minister of Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church in Lisburn.

The third of the new ministers in the area is Rev. Jonathan Moxen, who takes charge of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church.

The 54-year-old father of three had been the minister of Greystone Road Presbyterian Church in Antrim since 2008 and is married to Gillian. He studied Philosophy and European Studies at Ulster University's Magee and Coleraine campuses, and at Queen's University studied theology and trained for the Presbyterian ministry at Union College in the 1990's. He previously worked for a map survey company in Coleraine.

He was licensed as a probationer for the ministry in New Row Presbyterian Church, Coleraine, his home church, in 1997. Three years later, he was ordained as minister of Ballynure Presbyterian, where he served for 8 years, before being called to Greystone Road.

His installation as minister of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church in the first week of January was livestreamed so that members of the congregation could watch and take part in the service from home.

March 11, 2021

Founded in the mid-1650s, Ballyclare is one of the largest congregations in the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and has a membership of around 1,200 people, made up of some 540 families.

The vacancy there was caused by the retirement of Rev Robert Bell, who had been the minister for 30 years.

Explaining the process of installation, Rev David Allen, Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said, “Each minister in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in a service of ordination, which is conducted by the local presbytery. When a vacancy occurs in a congregation the local presbytery has responsibility for appointing a minister from the presbytery who acts as the ‘vacancy convener’ for the congregation. They will look after the congregation while it is deemed to be ‘vacant’ or without a minister, and will work with the congregation, leading it through the process of calling a new minister.

“Any serving minister in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s 500-plus congregations can apply. Congregations can also approach ministers and eligible assistants, asking them to consider becoming the minister of the congregation.

Normally the elders will interview prospective candidates, and some may be asked to preach in the church building. The congregation then meets to vote for, or call, their new minister. The presbytery will then hold a service of installation.”

Courtesy The Larne Times. See also -

March 11, 2021

Carrickfergus Presbytery's 'team spirit' praised by Moderator

<https://www.larnetimes.co.uk/country-and-farming/carrickfergus-presbyterys-team-spirit-praised-moderator-1741025>

C of E refuses to bless radical home wedding plans

The Church of England has refused to bless radical plans for home weddings proposed by the Law Commission.

Last year, the Commission – which advises the Government – recommended that pubs, hot air balloons, rivers and lakes would be suitable locations for weddings to take place, if officiated by a state-recognised individual.

It also said weddings could take place in private homes, and that the proposed changes would allow couples to pick from a wider variety of both religious and non-religious ceremonies.

Religious content

However, Mark Sheard of the CofE's Mission and Public Affairs Council said the "commercialisation of the wedding ceremony was undesirable" and that "the public nature of marriage necessitated that weddings should not be held behind closed doors".

March 11, 2021

He noted that “the report’s definition of a ‘religious group’ for the purpose of licensing celebrants was inadequate”.

He said: “We suggested that the present ban on all religious content in civil weddings should be eased to permit Christian or other religious references that were, for instance, taken from literature rather than liturgy.”

Undignified

Sheard added that “by addressing the law around weddings without considering the question of marriage, the proposals were conceptually flawed.

“The Commission’s approach led them to conclude that the State should, in effect, support a deregulated market of wedding celebrants and venues. Consequently, the Commission’s stated desire that weddings must be ‘dignified’ would be undermined by its own recommendations.”

When the proposals were released, The Christian Institute’s Deputy Director Simon Calvert warned: “The experience of the USA shows that ‘anything goes’ wedding ceremonies trivialise the marriage bond.”

Promises

The Commission also recommended removing the requirement for certain ‘prescribed’ words to be said, and instead allow couples to say any words that express consent.

March 11, 2021

Mr Calvert emphasised the importance of the promises stated in wedding vows “to ensure the commitment is genuine and legally valid”.

Funding for churches confirmed in UK Government budget

The Church of England's representative in parliament has confirmed that some of the £300 million dedicated to 'Levelling-up' town centres will be going to churches and cathedrals.

In the House of Commons, Andrew Selous MP told MPs during Church Commissioners' Questions that churches have been included as part of the Government's plan to reinvigorate high streets and community spirit.

He was prompted by a question from church-goer and Lib Dem Munira Wilson MP, who asked: "how much the Church of England administered in grants to churches for the purpose of restoration in the last financial year. "

Andrew Selous, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, answered: "The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England has administered £10 million of the Government's culture recovery funding to 68 churches and cathedrals and about £250,000 in conservation grants.

"The £300 million additional funding announced yesterday is very welcome, as is the fact that the levelling-up fund specifically includes churches and cathedrals. The national Church does not routinely fund capital works, but it does

March 11, 2021

liaise closely with a wide network of funders who provide support for parish churches and cathedrals."

The budget, released on Wednesday, states: "The Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets. The prospectus will provide guidance to local areas on the process for submitting bids, the types of projects eligible for funding, and how bids will be assessed. To ensure that funding reaches the places most in need, the government has identified priority places based on an index of local need to receive capacity funding to help them co-ordinate their applications."

The Government wants to encourage the development of rural and coastal town centres, clean energy projects and cultural attractions such as museums, sports venues and heritage sites.

This was also acknowledged and appreciated by the Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart, Convenor of the Bishops in the House of Lords, who said: "The £300m additional funding for the Culture Recovery Fund is very welcome and will support the many small businesses and independent contractors our churches employ and support.

"I also note that the Levelling Up Fund prospectus specifically mentions cultural and heritage assets, including churches, and we look forward to churches and cathedrals particularly in areas of high deprivation taking part in this programme."

March 11, 2021

Munira Wilson question was prompted by concern for a church in her own constituency, St Michael's church in Fulwell, which is has no formal heating or lighting. The team have raised over £1.5 million, but need a further £230,000 to make the church functional.

Mr Selous responded: "I am delighted to learn about the growing congregation and all the good work happening at St Michael's Fulwell. The commissioners provide strategic development funding to the Church nationally in order to support major change projects that will make a significant difference to mission and financial strength across dioceses. In addition to the culture recovery fund, the National Lottery Heritage Fund has recently launched a new set of funding priorities to support Covid-19 recovery and is open to applications now."

To apply for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, click here and scroll down to Northern Ireland -

[[] <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/sign-in>]

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

St Patrick's Breastplate versions

Tom Maxwell and The Lockdown Collaboration Choir have provided a recording of St Patrick's Breastplate that may be used in St Patrick's Day services or, indeed, privately. Tom plays the organ on this recording with many Christmas Collaboration Choir members returning to provide the vocals. You can simply play it direct from the web page link

March 11, 2021

below. You may also download the music using the links provided in the download section on the site. The recording may be found at:

[[] <https://www.churchmusicdublin.org/st-patricks-breastplate/>]

And if you would like to hear a different melody - here is a link to a video made in Zion Church, Rathgar, a couple of years back of the earlier Jozé setting of the Breastplate; it was in Church Hymnal up to 1960 and was adored throughout the Church of Ireland. Jozé version of Breastplate -

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yWVn5TP4es>]



Charles Wood Festival competition deadline

March 11, 2021

Just under ONE week left to enter the Charles Wood Song Competition. Along with great monetary prizes and prestigious performance opportunities, beautiful trophies will be awarded to the winners. All details on CWF website: <http://charleswoodsummerschool.org>

CITI webinar: Online church in a post–lockdown world

The Church of Ireland Theological Institute is hosting a webinar event for all Church of Ireland members to explore ‘online church in a post–lockdown world’.

This event is free of charge and is scheduled to take place on Friday, 16th April, from 10.00am to 12.30pm. (Registration is required in advance – please see details below).

The morning will consist of two sessions led by the Venerable Bob Jackson. It will include opportunities for group discussion, a coffee break, and a final plenary session during which Archbishop Michael Jackson will offer a short personal response to the webinar content.

About the speaker - Bob Jackson was a Government Economic Adviser in the days before Mrs Thatcher was invented. After twenty years of parish ministry in Yorkshire, he became a missionary working for the two English archbishops, and then an archdeacon. More recently, he has focussed on the theory and practice of church growth. Having tried to retire, he came out of retirement to help think through good practice and the future of online church. Bob is the author of numerous publications, most recently

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

March 11, 2021

Everybody Welcome Online and Everybody Welcome to the Future. He leads a families–based fresh expression of church in his village of Eyam in Derbyshire and invents pilgrimage routes in his spare time. He is married to Christine with two grown–up children and four grandchildren.

Registration

To register in advance for this event, go on to CITI page on Facebook
us02web.zoom.us

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Please note, the closing date for registration is Wednesday, 31st March.

Upon the closing date, you will be invited to complete a very short survey in advance of the event.

If you have any further queries, please contact Jane Kelly – janeKelly@theologicalinstitute.ie

Green Anglicanism: Understanding Ecological Justice Theologically

Tickets for Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 12:45 PM

[[] <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/green-anglicanism-understanding-ecological-justice-theologically-tickets-144019354767>]

March 11, 2021

Church in Wales webinar - 'Uprooting Hate, Seeding Love'

The Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue is highlighting a webinar by the Church in Wales on 'Uprooting Hate, Seeding Love' which will focus on what the three Abrahamic religions have to say on the issue of hatred.

The Inaugural Address will be made by the Most Revd John Davies, Archbishop of Wales.

About the webinar - Hatred for others, their values and beliefs, can diminish and disfigure communities. It can be like an invasive weed which threatens and chokes good growth in the otherwise beautiful garden of human cooperation and mutual flourishing. Hatred can be the result of ignorance and resentment between creeds and worldviews considered to be incompatible. On the other hand, peace is a most precious plant which can blossom as we seed love to shape our lives and societies according to the purpose of God. Speakers will explore this theme from the perspectives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Speakers

Rabbi David Rosen KSG CBE - International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee

Dr Clare Amos - Director of Discipleship at the Church of England's Diocese in Europe and former Programme Executive and Coordinator for the World Council of Churches

March 11, 2021

Asif Iftikhar - Fellow at the al-Mawrid Foundation for Islamic Research (Lahore, Pakistan) and teacher at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)

Moderator - The Reverend Rana Youab Khan, Church in Wales Advisor on Interreligious Affairs

Registration - To register for the event, pre-booking is essential. Please click on this link to register your interest.

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7ttq62dESiyffyelwrV8uQ


Alternatively please send an e-mail to interfaith@cinw.org.uk by 11 March.

Methodist World Development

Planning your annual World Development & Relief church service?

Visit our website to download everything you need!

- ✓ Sermon (Video)
- ✓ Kids' talk
- ✓ Prayers
- ✓ Reading

Download here 
buff.ly/2JBvTQv

Media review

Child left with scars after falling into brambles at school settles for €90k

Irish Examiner

A child left with facial scars after falling into brambles while playing at her Montessori school has secured €90,000 under a settlement of her High Court action.

... proceedings against the Representative Body of the Church of Ireland and Louise Fitzsimons, trading as Deerpark Montessori School, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Noting the Court of Appeal's reduction of a lesser award in a case involving a scalding injury, the judge said the offer was very good for a case like this and he would approve it.

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/courtandcrime/arid-40240346.html>

Belfast Jewish community and cricketers latest to be hit by NI Protocol rules

Belfast News Letter

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/jewish-community-and-cricketers-latest-to-be-hit-by-ni-protocol-rules-3158723>]

NI abortion law changes referred to Human Rights Commission.

BBC News

March 11, 2021

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56315956>]

Pope's visit to Iraq - Archive of daily reports

Catholic Herald

Pope Francis is back in Rome, and his historic pilgrimage to Iraq is in the books. "All our coverage, from start to finish, is here and free to all comers. My take: Pope Francis decided on a long play".

[<https://catholicherald.co.uk/section/free-access/>]

Ireland fishing cuts in new EU arrangements

Daily Express

[[] <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1406605/brexit-news-eu-news-fishing-ireland-michel-barnier-micheal-martin-irexit?>

Comment - What Roy Greenslade doesn't understand about the Troubles by Ian Acheson

Belleek is the most westerly point in the United Kingdom. It's a small village, right on Northern Ireland's frontier where County Fermanagh reaches out towards the Atlantic, Ian Acheson writes in The Spectator.

The final destination for many motorists driving across a now invisible border are the beaches of County Donegal. It is the place we learned this weekend where journalist Roy



Roy Greenslade

Greenslade was persuaded to support the violent extremism of the provisional IRA in the 1970s and 80s.

Greenslade's views on republican terrorism were, of course, an open secret for many years, as he rose to senior positions at the Sunday Times, the Daily Mirror and, latterly, became a professor of journalism at City, University of London. He now discloses with some pride that, at the same time as working for papers that condemned the IRA's dirty work, he was anonymously contributing to Sinn Fein's media outlet, An Phoblacht, justifying it.

His rationale for breaking silence in a piece for the British Journalism Review was to try to explain this subterfuge to his grandchildren. He has failed in this task. Greenslade is an unrepentant supporter of the 'armed struggle', lacing his self-regarding apologia with metaphors of 'war' and 'insurgency' that are put to work in some heavy lifting in the

March 11, 2021

village of Belleek and its locality. While Greenslade was holidaying with top ranking republicans on the coast and drinking the Kool Aid of its futile death cult, just a few miles inland the reality was rather different.

Greenslade wrote of the terror of 'dodging imaginary bullets' in nearby Derry city. This was an escape denied to many of the local IRA units' victims operating from his newly adopted county. In 1988, William Hazard and Fred Love were driving their work van out of Belleek after working on repairs at the local police station. As the two pension age contractors drew up to a junction, they were surrounded by four IRA gunmen who used automatic rifles and a handgun to pour 150 bullets at close range into the vehicle. 150.

Greenslade's rhetorical skills might have been in even greater demand a few months earlier when the IRA surrounded a car containing chemist's assistant Jillian Johnson, 22 and her fiancé Stanley Ligget just outside the town. Neither had any connection to the security forces, as if that might have excused the unfolding savagery. The gunmen shot her 27 times, 'basically cutting her in two' according to Mr Ligget's recollection of the inquest.

Donegal has many splendid beaches where you can imagine Greenslade, who has written of their beauty, walking with his locally born wife. If he took a stroll on Rossnowlagh's wild strand, it was where two other sweethearts took their last walk together.

A year after Johnson was butchered in the dark, 23-year-old former police reservist, Harry Keys, was surrounded by IRA gunmen outside his girlfriend's house as he dropped her off

March 11, 2021

after a day at the seaside. He was slaughtered in front of her in the name of a new Ireland. Keys had made the lethal mistake of crossing the frontier into Donegal for love where he was the softest of targets. They shot him 23 times at point blank range and cheered in front of his horrified partner when they had finished.

Greenslade remains admirably consistent at least; this local sadism was a 'war,' he says. If this were indeed the case, the International Tribunal at the Hague would still be working overtime on arrest warrants. His defiant description of the 'fine young men' of the Provos smacks of nauseating revisionism. It's surely the case that, in Northern Ireland, the ideological violence that Greenslade covertly defended as legitimate was a convenient occupation for people who would otherwise just have been unremarkable psychopaths and serial killers.

Greenslade's grandchildren are in for a festival of cognitive dissonance. How can someone who enthusiastically endorsed the sort of physical force described above also be 'appalled by the carnage?' Most of the people put to death in the now fallow murderscape of the Fermanagh/Donegal hinterland were defenceless Irish men and women from the Protestant minority community, many with ancestry in that part of Ireland that pre-dates the founding of modern America.

How can these poor, forgotten dead be victimised again as being expendable products of an unwelcome, unwanted British imperialist machine that underpins his ideological credentials? What sort of pathology leaves a professional journalist completely blind to the naked sectarianism of the

March 11, 2021

cause he venerates? Greenslade admits his complete failure to understand Ireland as a cub reporter there in the 70s. His understanding has not matured with age.

There ought to be a memorial to the role played by journalism in Northern Ireland's troubled past; those brave men and women who took risks and probably saw too much in the pursuit of truth. Greenslade's pitiful bravado has provided at least one service to those who might think of its design: Do not start from here.

Ian Acheson was born and raised near the Co. Fermanagh border. Ian Acheson is a former prison governor

Courtesy The Spectator, 01.03.2021

Pointers to Prayer

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the place where we are And transform us by the presence of your Son. In this place, may we encounter the One who embodies your love. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us at the break of day And be with us in all that lies before us. In the place in which we live, may we see life renewed. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the place of suffering And bring your healing presence among us. In the place of suffering,



enable us to reach out to those beside us. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the place of sorrow And bring your light into our darkness. In the place of sorrow, may we become bearers of your light. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us in the rhythm of life And renew hope within us. In the community in which we live, may we bear witness to the God of hope. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God of Space and Time, Meet us in the place where we are today. Meet us at the close of day And be with us through the night. Keep us safe and bring us to the dawn of a new day. Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.



Speaking to the Soul

The Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 1:41-42 NLT

Forgive me for a little pop psychology. It seems to me that some people are naturally activists. They are always up and doing. And then other people are naturally reflective. They want to stand back from life and consider everything carefully. In this beautiful little story from Jesus’ life we meet two sisters who are perfect examples of these different approaches to life.

Martha is the activist. She knows that Jesus is having a very busy ministry and she has decided that he needs a good meal. Martha is sure she is right and is therefore appalled when she spots her sister skiving. Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet listening carefully to him and, meanwhile, Martha is fuming. She cannot believe it. Mary should be working as hard as she is, and so in a complete strop Martha goes to Jesus and tells him to order Mary to help her. Jesus' response must have been devastating for Martha. She was so sure that she was right but Jesus gently informs her that she is completely wrong. Mary was the one who got it right. Listening to Jesus was a much higher priority than getting the meal ready.

What are we to conclude from this story? It would be logical to conclude that all housework is wrong! But that was not what Jesus was saying! His point was that this was the wrong time for it. The truth is that activity and reflection are both vitally important. Yesterday we learnt that God wants all of us to turn our love into practical action like the Good Samaritan. And today we have learnt that we all need to recognise the importance of spending time at the feet of Jesus. So if you are an activist like Martha then God wants you to learn the importance of sitting still and listening to him. And if you are naturally reflective like Mary you need to remember that God is also looking to you to turn your devotion into loving, costly action.

QUESTION

What have you learnt from this story?

March 11, 2021

PRAYER

Lord help me to learn the importance of both action and sitting at the feet of Jesus. Amen.

