

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Synod in session**

May 5 2022

## Image of the day

### Synod in session

The General Synod, which is the Church's governing body, is this year meeting in Assembly Buildings over three days, concluding tomorrow Friday 6 May. Follow the business of the General Synod as it happens at - [www.ireland.anglican.org/synod/2022/news](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/synod/2022/news)

## People and places



## Primate's Presidential address to General Synod

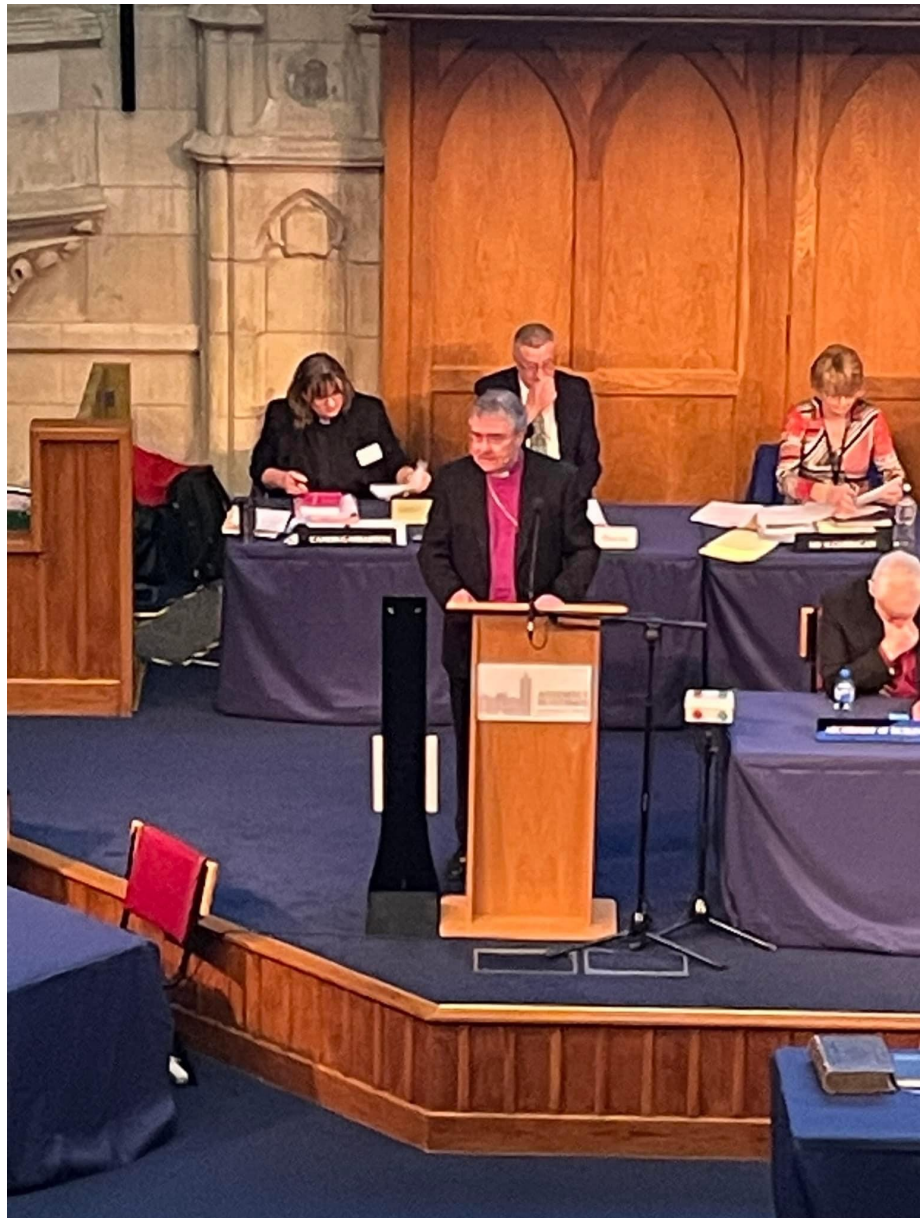
**The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Most Revd John McDowell, addressed the Church of Ireland's 2022 General Synod in Belfast yesterday afternoon. The General Synod, which is the Church's governing body, is this year meeting in Assembly**



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**Buildings over three days, concluding tomorrow Friday 6 May.**

In the course of his address, Archbishop McDowell remarked that the Church did its best when faced with the unique circumstances of Covid-19 and thanked everyone who has “worked so hard to get us to where we are now” two years on from the early days of the pandemic.



Archbishop McDowell also:

+called for civic society to “encourage and struggle for the common good in partnership with those who govern” following the “atomisation of public space” – a trend related to how social media has developed in recent years;

+affirmed that “the backbone of the Church of Ireland throughout this island is the rural parish” and that the

## **C of I's distinctive contribution to reconciliation is essential**

Church has a role in working with people in rural communities as we respond to the challenges of climate change;

+reported on the initial findings of the ethnic diversity, inclusion and racial justice research project which he had announced at the 2021 General Synod and the need to help people find a place at home in the Church in a world of migration; and

+spoke on the “distinctive contribution to reconciliation” which members of the Church make as disciples of Jesus Christ, including through engaging with other agencies and groups in society and encouraging people “who seek to bring wholeness to lives that are very damaged and usually overlooked.”

He commented: “We should be clear in everything that we say publicly and privately that we are contributing to the discussion and achievement of a reconciled society as Jesus’ disciples.”

The Archbishop added that the Christian experience of reconciliation is not transactional: “It is not a case of me bringing my change of heart to God, which he then is almost obliged to reward by forgiveness and reconciliation.

“It is the presence of Jesus that creates my change of heart and I am his debtor for my repentance as for everything else in those transforming experiences and encounters.”

## **Scene setting sermon at Synod's opening Eucharist in St Anne's**

**The General Synod of the Church of Ireland commenced yesterday May 4 with a Service of Choral Eucharist in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.**

The preacher was the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, who spoke of the challenges of the pandemic in his sermon.

“As we meet together for this General Synod service we do so with joy and a heightened sense of appreciation for the fact that once again, we are able to gather from across the Church of Ireland, for much has changed since General Synod members last shared Holy Communion in St Columb's Cathedral in Derry in 2019,” Bishop Davison said.

“Along with the rest of humanity, our Church, our dioceses and parishes saw our pattern of life interrupted unexpectedly as a result of that now infamous global pandemic! We were forced to stop, to cease our regular patterns of activity and to wait patiently for science and medicine to regain the upper hand.

“Happily, amongst all the difficulties, we can tell many positive stories – stories of clergy and congregations demonstrating imagination and innovation as they adapted and sought out new ways to keep connected with parishioners and to reach out in service to the communities around them.”

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Bishop Davison commented that it was quite remarkable that only four dioceses in the whole Church of Ireland have the same bishop that they had when General Synod last met in person!

And he spoke of the ‘stocktaking’ happening across the Church in the wake of Covid-19.

The text of the sermon is available here -

[[] <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/synod/2022/speeches> ]

## Historic ecumenical event in Geevagh

**A weekend-long ecumenical event that took place in the South-Eastern Sligo Parish of Geevagh and Highwood last weekend was described as “historic” by Parish Priest, Fr. Laurence Cullen.**

The Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin, the Venerable Dermot Dunne joined parishioners in celebrating Mass at St Joseph’s in Geevagh and St Bridget’s in Highwood, the two churches located in the Parish. Fr. Cullen explained:

“Our Parish community was honoured that he was able to join us in an ecumenical celebration of the Eucharist.”

“It is my belief, particularly in an increasingly secular world, that there is no room for divisions amongst mainstream, or orthodox, Christians. Pope Francis himself has said that in areas of the world where followers of Jesus are persecuted,



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Dean Dunne being presented with a momento of his visit to Geevagh Parish by John Davey, Secretary of Geevagh Parish Pastoral Council, accompanied by Fr. Laurence Cullen.



they are not persecuted as Catholics, Anglicans or Protestants, but as Christians.

“If those who hate us regard us as being one, then let us be one. This weekend’s events were a manifestation of that ambition.

“The Dean, who has been a personal friend of mine for almost 40 years, visited both of our churches, where he preached most eloquently on the infinite mercy and love of God. After Mass on Saturday night the Parish presented

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Dean Dermot with a framed print of Ben Bulbin as a memento of his visit and he joined parishioners for a cup of tea and a biscuit on both Saturday night and Sunday morning. Report courtesy The Sligo Champion

## **‘Love is the only message for serving Jesus’ – Bishop John Sentamu in Dublin**

**Lord Bishop John Sentamu was in Ireland at the weekend on his first visit here since becoming chair of Christian Aid globally. The former Archbishop of York was the preacher at the Cathedral Eucharist in Christ Church Dublin on Sunday**

Archbishop Michael Jackson was the celebrant. After the service he met Christian Aid staff and supporters.

Bishop Sentamu began his sermon in song – ‘Hard Day’s Night’ by the Beatles. Drawing on the Gospel reading from St Luke he noted that the disciples had been fishing all night but had caught nothing.

For Peter there was unfinished business, he said. He had denied Jesus three times on Holy Thursday by a charcoal fire. Now he had had a hard night’s work and had caught nothing but Jesus turned a hard night into a good day. He told the fishermen to cast their nets again and they pulled them in full of fish. When they came ashore, they realised it was the Risen Lord – he had helped them with their work and had cooked breakfast. Then beside the fire, Jesus asked Peter three times: ‘Do you love me?’





Bishop Sentamu said Jesus drew Peter out. “Peter loved Jesus – always had done, always would... Jesus died for the forgiveness of sins. He does just this with Peter. He forgives him and rekindles him. The ministry of Jesus was given to Peter because he loves Jesus,” he explained. “Love and not affection is the only message for serving Jesus. Actually what matters is that we love him. Our bad days and nights are never too hard to come to Jesus.”

He contended that when we receive a commission from Jesus, he expects a proactive response from those he has forgiven.

Bishop Sentamu reminded the congregation of the words of St Teresa of Avila in ‘Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with

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which He looks  
Compassion on this  
world". He finished  
by urging everyone  
to go together and  
make him known.

## May issue of the C of I Gazette

The May issue of  
'the Church of  
Ireland Gazette' is  
online today and in  
print Friday. St  
Columba's church in  
Glencolumbkille  
graces the front

cover, and in her editorial, Emma Blain writes about the  
precarious position this historically and spiritually significant  
church finds itself in. To read more, or subscribe, follow this  
link.

<https://gazette.ireland.anglican.org/>

## Antrim Parish seeks Finance and Administration Officer

All Saints Parish Church, Antrim, has a vacancy for a Parish  
Finance and Administration Officer. This is a lively and  
welcoming parish situated in Antrim town centre, with over  
400 families and strong community links. Find out more  
about this job opportunity at -

<https://connor.anglican.org/vacancies/>



## News reports

### Do not be Putin's altar boy, Pope tells Russian patriarch

**The head of the Russian Orthodox Church should not act as Vladimir Putin's mouthpiece by offering unconditional support for the war against Ukraine, Pope Francis said on Tuesday.**

Patriarch Kirill has been criticised for his unstinting approval of the invasion, in which Russian troops have been accused of raping Ukrainian women, torturing male captives and deliberately targeting civilian areas.

The head of the Russian Church "cannot become Putin's altar boy", Francis told the newspaper Corriere della Sera.

He had a 40-minute conversation on Zoom with Patriarch Kirill on March 16, which the Russian Orthodox leader spent the first half reading out a justification for the invasion.

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The Pope said he listened, but then said to Kirill: "Brother, we are not state clerics, we cannot use the language of politics, but that of Jesus. We are shepherds of the same holy people of God."



Patriarch Kirill, 75, primate of the Russian Orthodox Church since 2009 and an ally of President Putin, regards the war as a rejection of Western values, particularly tolerance of homosexuality and other signs of moral “decadence”.

He has conflated religious faith with nationalism and loyalty to the Putin regime. The Pope and the patriarch met in an historic encounter in Cuba in 2016, the first such meeting since the Great Schism between Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054.

There were plans for a second meeting in Jerusalem next month, but that has been cancelled, with the Pope saying it could “send the wrong message”.

Francis said he had requested a meeting in Moscow with President Putin but had not received a reply.

“I fear that Putin cannot and does not want to have this meeting right now,” the Pope said. “But how can you not try and do whatever you can to stop the atrocities?”

## **Alpha leadership conference encourages Christians to put Jesus before celebrity**

**It's OK to have role models but there is only one true leader and that's Jesus, says Alpha pioneer Nicky Gumbel.**

That was his message to over 130,000 people taking part in the Alpha Global Leadership Conference this week.



The conference was held online and hosted by churches in 173 countries around the world.

Gumbel said his ambition in life was "Jesus only" as he challenged participants to put Him first.

"There are many things we could put alongside Jesus in our lives - Jesus and money; Jesus and our career; Jesus and our freedom," he said.

"I am certainly not there yet. There are plenty of 'Jesus ands' in my own life. I'm on a journey but I want it to be Jesus only."

Gumbel cautioned Christians against being too attached to an individual or a church leader.

"How can I make that my ambition? Jesus only. No more Christian heroes [or] celebrities. Only one leader: Jesus," he continued.

The conference also heard from actress Tracy Ifeachor, who starred in BBC's *Showtrial* and who will soon be appearing in the upcoming movie, *Wonka*, alongside Timothée Chalamet.

Ifeachor spoke of turning down high-paying roles in the past because she did not feel called by the Lord to do them.

She said that being a leader takes strength and resilience, and that it can sometimes feel lonely.

"I remember being at drama school and thinking, I don't see anybody who looks like me leading shows, and a visiting lecturer said, well maybe you're the one to change it," she said.

"Everyone is the one to change something and I think that's what it is to be a leader. Everybody wants to be a leader but there's still that temptation to look to your left and to your right and think why don't I have company? Why don't I have this or why don't I have that?

"Sometimes God is calling you out into deeper water and you are going to feel like you are the first or the only, and you're not necessarily going to have the support structure you need because it isn't there, they've never had you there before.

"So you are the one to help build it and that takes a different kind of resilience and faith and compassion and strength that only God can provide."

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

### **Brother David SF on healing**

Recording of Br David SF from the recent Thursday healing service at St. Patrick's, Ballymacarrett. Divine Healing Ministry says - Ask the Lord if there is someone he wants

you to share this recording with. Be blessed in His healing, peace and joy in forgiveness.

<https://youtu.be/jULfsdpbBmE>

## Perspective

### Gender based violence

**by Rt Revd Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans**

*Preaching at the Mothers' Union annual service in Truro Cathedral. Isaiah 7:10-14, Hebrews 10:4-10, Luke 1:26-38*

**Of all the hundreds of shocking images to have come out of the horrors of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it's the ones from the bombed maternity hospital in Mariupol that have most seared themselves onto my heart. The young, heavily pregnant woman with her polka dot pyjamas, desperately running down the bombed out stairs and then – thank God – photos of her with her new born baby shortly afterwards.**

Other photos were much more distressing – soldiers carrying pregnant women on stretchers out of the shattered ruins of the building. Some of them we now know, did not survive.

It is women who suffer most in war. They suffer most because civilians make up 70% of those caught up in violence, they suffer because the majority of refugees are women, they suffer at the hands of soldiers, they suffer

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because women always suffer when law and order break down.

And what we see in Ukraine, and South Sudan, in Afghanistan and the Yemen, and in all the other hidden conflicts around the world, is the



extreme end of a spectrum of disadvantage, discrimination and violence experienced by women in every society – including ours.

Amongst the most shocking of the statistics that could be listed is this one: 1 in 3 women around the world experience physical or sexual violence.

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And that's why the Mothers' Union is so involved with and committed to the No more 1 in 3 campaign. And I stand with you in that, and I am committed to playing my role, as a



man, as a husband and father of three girls, as a church leader and as a disciple of Jesus Christ, in that campaign and in speaking against gender inequality of any kind.

And it is men who need to take the lead in this – not in the way men so often take the lead, by taking over, but by acknowledging that the problem is largely ours. That it is men who perpetrate acts of violence against women, men who benefit from discrimination and that it's men who need to change.

And as we do so, we need to acknowledge – I need to acknowledge – that Christianity and the church have contributed to the inequality that we see around us. We know that the bible includes stories of violence against women, and that those stories have been used to tolerate, condone and even promote discrimination and worse.

But the Scriptures are a complex tangle of narratives and voices, perspectives and people. And while we must acknowledge that there are 'texts of terror' that speak of violence against women, there are also, sometimes hidden away and sometimes there in plain sight, other voices; voices that undermine inequality, which call out injustice and which refuse to allow us to tolerate any kind of violence against women.

And top of the list of those voices, is Mary.

And today, we celebrate the story of one of the great women of history; we celebrate the first time we meet Mary.

Astonishing, strong, brave, imaginative Mary. Faithful, creative, prophetic Mary. Generous Mary. Mary, mother of God.

But even Mary, the woman whose consent changed the world, has been used to shore up male power and authority. Mary, who was so brave and bold in saying yes to God, despite the shame it would bring upon her, has been over spiritualised and robbed of her personality.

Mary, who gave her active consent and, in her own power and authority, said 'yes', has been portrayed as a mere vessel, there simply to carry a baby.

Mary, who must have had calloused hands and rough feet, has been painted as a pure, white-robed ghost, floating above the dirty world.

But still, even through all the projections and attempts to keep her silent, Mary speaks. And she speaks with authority.

She tells us that God always seeks consent. That when he calls us to do his work, however big or small, it's an invitation that he makes, and that we can say 'yes' or 'no'.

And Mary tells us that to say 'yes' requires strength and a willingness to be bold. That saying yes might well mean getting our hands dirty and may well lead us to suffering, as well as to joy.

And she reminds us that at the heart of God's work is scattering the imagination of the hearts of those who are proud enough to think they're in charge; it's bringing the

powerful down from their thrones and lifting up the lowly; it's filling the hungry with good food; it's sending the rich away empty.

And this is the mother who brought up Jesus. The one who taught him, who shaped his imagination and who introduced him to the world, to people and to his work.

This strong, faith-filled woman, who saw the injustice of the world and called it out, was the one who shaped Jesus' mind and imagination.

No wonder Jesus treated women differently. No wonder he broke taboos, refused to allow a woman caught in adultery to suffer violence, hung out with women you weren't meant to hang out with. No wonder he was able to be tender and gentle, to express emotion. No wonder. Mary after all, was his mother.

And so today, as we celebrate the work of the Mothers' Union around the world; as we celebrate the faith, creativity and strength of you, and our 4 million sisters and brothers, let's look again to Mary – the real Mary, and hear her voice rise up to speak to us today. And hearing her, commit ourselves again, in whatever context we live and work, pray and lead, to a just world in which women can live in peace, in which women can be equal with men, in which we together, can work for justice, mercy and an end to all violence.

In the face of the war in the Ukraine, of what we know life is like for women in so many places, in the light of the fact that

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1 in 3 women will suffer violence, that's a big commitment.  
An impossible commitment perhaps.

And the angel said to Mary, 'nothing will be impossible with God' and Mary replied 'here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word'.

Amen

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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