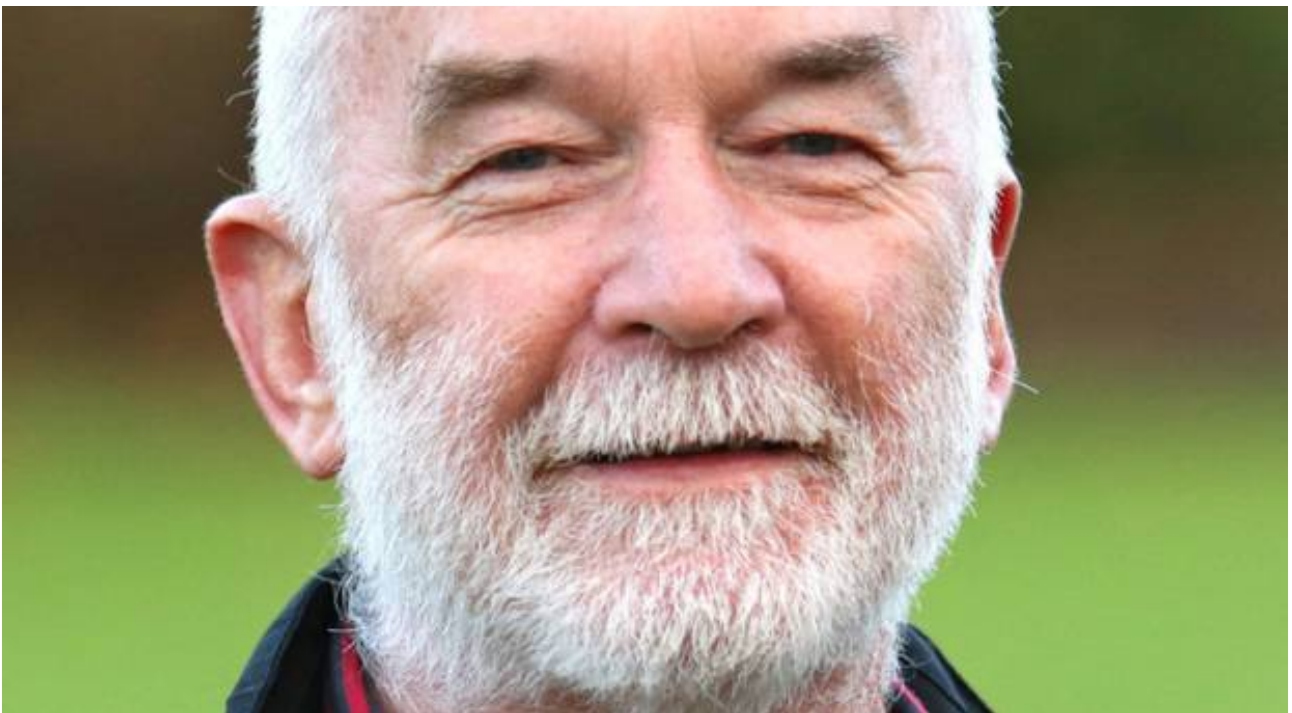


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## **Presbyterian Church: PR role not a reaction to recent difficulties**



### **Suspended: Rev Professor Laurence Kirkpatrick**

The Presbyterian Church has advertised for an official to help represent its position to policy makers and the media - but denies it is a response to recent controversies.

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The public affairs officer role, which has a salary of between £31,892 and £38,870, features essential criteria including a "good knowledge of the political structures and processes in the NI Assembly and how they interact with those in the UK Parliament".

Applicants will also be responsible for "keeping up to date with political issues in NI and the Republic, analysing public policy and legislation from a Christian perspective, and assisting in representing the Church's position to policy makers and the media".

Other criteria includes a "basic grasp of the major public policy issues in the UK and Republic of Ireland and an understanding of biblical teaching on at least some of these issues".

It follows a series of controversies affecting the Presbyterian Church in recent months. In June the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly decided that same-sex partners could not receive communion, and their children could not be baptised in the Church.

More than 230 influential members of the Church later put their names to a letter criticising the ruling, which was headlined 'A Cry From The Heart'. Report by Victoria Leonard in the Belfast Telegraph

## **Evensong marks 400 years of Royal Schools in Fermanagh**

A Service of Choral Evensong was held in St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen, on Sunday, 4th November to

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**Pictured with Bishop David Chillingworth and Dean Kenneth Hall are (from left); Karen Clyde, People's Churchwarden; the Revd Canon Desmond Kingston, former Chaplain of Portora Royal School; the Revd Canon David Skuce, the Revd Lorna Dreaning, Methodist Church; the Right Revd Monsignor Peter O'Reilly, Roman Catholic Church; the Venerable Cecil Pringle, Archdeacon Emeritus; the Revd Fr Conor Harper SJ, Clongowes Wood College; the Revd Canon Dr Ian Ellis, Vice-Chairman of Enniskillen Royal Grammar School; the Revd Fr Michael Sheil SJ, Clongowes Wood College; Canon Harry Trimble, former pupil of Portora Royal School; Andy McCabe, Dean's Verger, and Sandra Richmond, Rector's Churchwarden.**

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celebrate the 400th anniversary of the opening of the first Royal school in Fermanagh.

The service was conducted by the Dean of Clogher, the Very Revd Kenneth Hall, and the preacher was the Right Revd David Chillingworth, former Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, who is a former pupil of Portora Royal School and a former choir boy in St Macartin's Cathedral.

The first Free School was established in Lisnaskea in 1618 following the decree from King James I to create a Free School in each of the five western counties of Ulster; Donegal, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Cavan and Armagh.

In around 1643, the Free School for Fermanagh moved to Schoolhouse Lane, just north of St Macartin's Cathedral, and became known as Enniskillen Free School. Following the restoration of the Monarchy and the issue of further Letters Patent by King Charles II, it became known as Enniskillen Royal School, gaining a reputation for academic excellence and known as the Classical School or the Great School of Enniskillen which Dean Jonathan Swift wrote glowingly about.

A new school building was opened on Portora Hill in 1779 and its reputation grew with three 19th century headmasters establishing the academic reputation of the school; the Revd Andrew O'Beirne, the Revd John Greham and the Revd Dr William Steele. The railway enabled boarders to travel to the school from all over Ireland. It was the Reverend Steele who popularised the name "Portora" to describe the Royal School and he was awarded an

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honorary doctorate by Trinity. His successors consolidated the School as a leading academic and sporting institution.

Henry Francis Lyte, who wrote 'Praise my Soul, the King of Heaven' and 'Abide with Me', was a pupil at the School as were the literary greats, Oscar Wilde and Samuel Beckett. The Blessed John Sullivan went to Portora before becoming a Jesuit in later life and working at Clongowes Wood College SJ. During the early years of the 20th Century, the legendary Dickie Lloyd captained the most successful rugby team which won everything between 1905 and 1909 when seven of the team went on to play international rugby for Ireland.

In the First World War, 76 of the Old Portorans who served, died.

There were schools for girls established much later, including the Enniskillen Royal School for Girls which opened in Darling Street, Enniskillen. The Collegiate Grammar School opened in 1931.

Both Portora Royal School and the Collegiate Grammar School merged in 2016 to form Enniskillen Royal Grammar School.

Reflecting on the service on his blog site, Bishop Chillingworth writes -

“This is a kind of time travelling experience. I went back to St Macartin’s Cathedral, Enniskillen, to preach at the service which commemorated the 400th Anniversary of the Charter which established the Royal Schools in Ireland – as

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part of the Plantation Settlement. In this case, the school was Portora Royal School, Enniskillen.

“I became a Choirboy in the Cathedral in about 1957 but I hadn’t really been back since 1967 when we moved to Belfast.

“Portora was a kind of Glenalmond, set in the beautiful lakeland scenery of Co Fermanagh. I have pretty mixed feelings about all the schools I attended. But I can’t get away from the fact that my grandfather, my father, my uncle and I were all pupils at Portora Royal School. My father and mother both taught there.

“But as always this is a time of change. The boarding school that Portora was is no more and a merger has just taken place with the Girls Collegiate School at the other end of town. The merger has been something of a bumpy ride but it will sort itself out in time.

“...the sermon honours among others former pupils Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde and Henry Francis Lyte – whose hymns we sang yesterday.

“I met old friends, more from my Primary School than from Portora – but it was extraordinary.”

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## Rev Lynda Peilow, rector of St Nicholas' Collegiate Church, makes Galway history



In November 1990, Ireland elected its first female president in Mary Robinson. That same year - but six months earlier - the Church of Ireland approved the ordination of women as priests and bishops, Kieran Andrews of the Galway Advertiser writes.

Twenty-eight years later, the Rev Lynda Peilow has made Galway history by becoming the first female rector in the 700 year history of our city's historic and iconic St Nicholas' Collegiate Church. She is very aware of the honour, but does not want to be viewed exclusively in terms of gender. "I'm very privileged to be the rector, full stop," she tells me as we sit in the St Nicholas' sacristy on a Wednesday

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morning. “I’m ordained 21 years so for me it’s not an issue of gender, it’s about the person, but I know there’s quite a lot of excitement around my appointment because I’m a female priest.”

Her full title is Rector of the Church of Ireland Galway Group of Parishes, which also takes in Kilcummin in Oughterard, but the commutes between the city and Connemara will not daunt her. For the past 17 years she was Rector of Edenderry Union in her native County Offaly, where she had four parishes to cater for.

Indeed Rev Peilow is a very proud Offaly woman. “I would say I’m from the centre of the universe,” she laughs. “I’m from Geashill, a small, picturesque village, our local town would be Tullamore, about 10 minutes away. I’m the only girl in my family - I’ve four brothers, God love me! - so I came fourth, and I’m very blessed in the technique of ironing shirts and making dinners and peeling spuds for all the boys. But I had a great childhood and was very blessed with the family and area in grew up in.”

Rev Peilow describes that family life in Offaly as “Church of Ireland through and through”. Yet her later path towards ordination was in no way inevitable. While “we would have been encouraged to go to church, went to all the services, all the fundraisers, and went to the Church of Ireland school”, at the same time, her Christian faith was a part of her life, not its only focus. As she says: “I wasn’t overly immersed in religion.”

During adolescence though, something changed. “In my early teens I felt some kind of call, which really frightened me,” she admits. “Instead of going towards it I went ‘No’.



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My nickname was 'Mouse' because I was terribly shy and it was an issue. I suffered from lack of confidence in myself because I was so shy, so how could I be ordained, or teach, or preach, or speak to people?

"I remember one night thinking, for the peace of it, maybe I'll go to a vocations weekend. I didn't tell anybody except my parents, and when I was there, I never felt such peace. From there on in, with the peace I felt in answering the call and following the call, I felt steady, and knew this was what I wanted to do, so all my ambition went into then becoming ordained."

Her time in theological college was transformative, not just spiritually and intellectually. It also saw her overcome that shyness and lack of confidence which initially held her back. "I got confidence with time, going from a child to a teenager to an adult," she says, "and my training was blessed with the people I was with at the college. The more I sought ordination, the happier I became, and assured this was the right thing for me. In that I found confidence. Confidence is something we all struggle with, it's part of our humanity, so I still wouldn't describe myself by any means as 'confident', I'm just learning to do what I do confidently."

In the time since Mary Robinson became Uachtarán na hÉireann, and the Church of Ireland appointed its first female ministers, Ireland has been utterly transformed - a transformation symbolised by the marriage equality referendum of 2015; the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in May, and last month's vote to remove the offence of blasphemy from the Constitution.

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While the victories in these campaigns have dealt a massive blow to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, not so the Church of Ireland. It is worth noting the CofI supported a Yes vote in the Blasphemy referendum; urged members to vote according to their individual conscience on equal marriage, with a number of leading figures, such as Archdeacon Gordon Linney advocating Yes; and also asked parishioners “to think through the issues involved carefully and with prayer” in the abortion referendum.

Perhaps this is why Rev Peilow questions describing the increasingly secular Republic of Ireland as also being a post-Christian society. It is also to do with her focus on the personal experience of religion, faith as a living thing, and the individual’s relationship to God. “I’m not sure about the term of Post-Christian Ireland. From my point of view, as a priest, there is a need for clergy,” she says. “In St Nicholas’, there are so many people still coming here on the Sunday morning, and during the week, to seek out God, to have quite time with God, or to participate in worship.

***'I would still see the need to draw alongside people, to assure them, in the name of God, that they are loved and cared for, that they have a role, a part, a purpose in life, and that they are precious'***

“As a priest I’ve always been incredibly busy, which would also signify that people have needs. The needs might have changed, the outlook towards Christianity might have changed, but certainly to have a true and living faith is a decision people make. A lot of people are still in that decision making mode, and a lot of people who experience



a crisis in their life, one of the first places they turn to is the church.”

Rev Peilow outlines the role she sees herself playing in helping people on their faith journey. “I would still see the need to draw alongside people, to assure them, in the name of God, that they are loved and cared for, that they have a role, a part, a purpose in life, and that they are precious,” she says. “I would see that as the role of the priest, and also in celebrating the sacraments and in baptising, and celebrating the Eucharist. They are the most wonderful privileges.”

Rev Peilow believes it is important to see beyond numbers and any kind of “getting bums on pews” box ticking. “You have to lead by example,” she says. “You show people they

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are loved and cared for, there is a relevance and you make Christ relevant in their lives. That is sometimes very easy, at other times it is very difficult, but you have to remember that people who are coming to church, or who want to belong, are made feel welcome and that they are made feel that they belong - and it's not all my job. God is very active in there as well.

“To have a true and living faith is a wonderful and exciting thing. There are a lot of people who have that faith, they just don't know how to maybe publicly profess it or practise it. There is a great saying that ‘ministry is presence’. You want to be present with people, to be approachable. I would like to make God very relevant in this day, and help people see that God is someone who came among us, not someone who led from far off, and therein lies the excitement of Christmas, and the Birth - that God chose to be among us.”

Regarding Galway, Rev Peilow says she, her husband Clive, and their children, Chloe, Peter, and Amelie, are still “finding our feet”, but nonetheless “settling well”, thanks to “the warmth, the welcome, and the hospitality” here which “has been phenomenal”.

“I've got to get to grips with St Nicholas' and the parish here, and the hospitals, and the chaplaincy in the university,” she says. “I'm open to all opportunities and invitations, so we'll see where that takes us, but always with God at our centre, and in St Nicholas' there is such a fantastic team here working so hard to keep this church open, to keep the work done. There is an amazing team here that is allowing me to be the priest. I would endeavour that we be the church we've always been, and please God, in time, something more.”

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## St Mary's, Crumlin Road, celebrates 150 years



St Mary's Parish Church, Crumlin Road, Belfast, will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its consecration with a Service of Thanksgiving on November 25.

St Mary's, a gothic style high Victorian Church with an enormous central tower, was designed by London architect William Slater, and was intended to accommodate 800 worshippers.

It is built of Mourne granite and sandstone and cost £6,500 to build.

The foundation stone was laid on October 27 1865 by the Most Rev Marcus Gervais Beresford, and the building was

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consecrated and dedicated by the Rt Rev Dr R Knox, Bishop of Connor, on November 28 1868.

The five stained glass windows in the Sanctuary were presented by Mrs Blakiston-Houston and her son, Mr J Blakiston-Houston.

The first housing in the area sprang up in the 1860s to accommodate the workforce and their families who were mainly employed in the thriving linen industry on the Crumlin Road.

The closure of the mills in the 1960s hastened the physical and social decline and of the area.

In 1912, Trinity College Mission, later known as the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Riga Street, Shankill Road, was carved out of St Mary's Parish. It existed as a parish unit on its own for some 80 years. The area was restored to St Mary's in 1989.

The Church of the Holy Redeemer closed for worship in 1995 and parishioners and parish organisations transferred to St Mary's Parish. Refurbishment work on the church organ, which is presumed to date to the building of the church in 1868, was completed in August 2006.

The service on Sunday November 25 begins at 3.30pm.

