



## **Four ministers on short list for Moderator**

When the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) 19 presbyteries meet to select the denomination's 2019/2020 nominee for Moderator on Tuesday 5 February.

They will have four names to consider, the Church announced yesterday (24 January).



**Rev Mairisíne Stanfield**

The ministers - who have agreed to have their names go forward to become PCI's next principal public representative

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- are Rev David Bruce, Secretary to the Council for Mission in Ireland, Rev William Henry of Maze Presbyterian Church, Rev Albin Rankin of Stormont Presbyterian and Rev Mairisíne Stanfield, minister of First Presbyterian Church, Bangor.

Rev Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland explained that in the Presbyterian system of church government each presbytery consists of ministers and elders who are drawn from local congregations in a particular area. As a court of the church each presbytery is responsible for overseeing those congregations in its local area while undertaking other important tasks, which includes the annual selection of the new Moderator.

“The first Tuesday in February is always a significant day for Presbyterians across Ireland, as ministers and elders from our 500-plus congregations come together in their respective presbyteries, in different parts of the country, to prayerfully consider and select their nominee to be our next Moderator.

“This democratic process will see the Church choose from the four candidates. Any of these candidates may be proposed, seconded and voted on in a presbytery. If more than one candidate is proposed and seconded the presbytery will continue to vote until one candidate has received the majority support of those voting. That candidate then becomes the person whom that presbytery has registered their vote for. The minister who receives the most presbytery votes in total becomes our Moderator-

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Designate, until they are formally elected Moderator by the General Assembly in June,” Mr Gribben said.

The result is usually announced around 9pm on Tuesday evening, but should there be a tie on the first count, which last happened in 2014, presbyteries will continue to meet that evening and vote until one minister is clearly ahead.

As the denomination’s principal public representative the Moderator will have a busy year. Having ‘moderated’ or chaired the General Assembly, the Moderator will then step aside from their own congregation to preach most Sundays – often twice in different congregations - undertake an overseas tour, chair a number of the Church’s councils and represent the denomination at various public and State events.

On average a Moderator will undertake over 300 engagements during the course of their year in office. These also include travelling across Ireland to encourage local churches in their work and witness during four week-long presbytery tours. These take place in October, November, February and March.

“The role of Moderator is a particularly challenging one, often made more so by the circumstances that may arise during any particular year. Whoever is elected is deserving of our prayers as they lead us through the latter half of this year and into 2020. Playing an important role in the life and ministry of our Church across Ireland and further afield, I look forward to working with our new Moderator in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ,” Mr Gribben said.

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The General Assembly will take place in Belfast from the evening of Monday 3 to Friday 7 June. The new Moderator will succeed Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, who will continue to serve as Moderator until the opening night of the General Assembly.

## **The candidates**

### **Rev David Bruce BSc, BD**

David Bruce is the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Council for Mission in Ireland Secretary. Born in 1957, he was ordained in 1984 as Secretary to Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship. Installed as assistant minister in Wellington Street Presbyterian Church, Ballymena, County Antrim in 1985, David was called to Clontarf, Ormond Quay and Scots Presbyterian Churches in Dublin as their minister in 1987. In 1992 he became General Director of Scripture Union Northern Ireland, before being appointed PCI's Board of Mission in Ireland Secretary in 2007, continuing in his role for its successor body, the Council for Mission in Ireland in 2015. He was convenor of the Church's Social Service Committee (1987-1993) and co-convenor of the Board of Social Witness (1990-1993).

### **Rev William Henry BSc, BD,**

William Henry was installed as minister of Maze Presbyterian Church in 1997 and with Ballinderry Presbyterian (Stated Supply) in 2001. Born in 1968, he was ordained as assistant minister of Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church, County Antrim, in 1994. William was convenor of the Home and Irish Mission/Strategy for the Mission Committee 2006-2012 and Union Commission 2012-2015 convening its successor body, the Linkage Commission, from 2015 to 2018.

### **Rev Albin Rankin BSc, BD**

Albin Rankin has been the minister of Stormont Presbyterian Church in east Belfast since 2008. Born in 1963 Albin was

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ordained as assistant minister in High Kirk Presbyterian Church, Ballymena, County Antrim, in 1989. Two years later he was installed as minister of Edenderry and Seskinore Presbyterian Churches in County Tyrone. From 1998-2008 he was minister of First Ballymoney Presbyterian Church in County Antrim. Since 2014 he has been Clerk of PCI's Presbytery of East Belfast.

### **Rev Mairisíne Stanfield BD**

Mairisíne Stanfield has been minister of First Presbyterian Church, Bangor in County Down since 2013. Born in 1965, she was ordained in 1990 as assistant minister of Regent Street Presbyterian Church, Newtownards, County Down. Mairisíne was installed as minister of First Presbyterian Church, Ballynahinch in County Down, in 1993, before being called to First Bangor 20 years later.

## **Christian Aid's Supporter Conference**

Christian Aid's Supporter Conference each Spring brings its volunteers and supporters from all over Northern Ireland together to inspire, equip and inform ahead of Christian Aid Week in May. Whether you collect, make soup for a lunch, help count the money raised or support Christian Aid in your own way, you are invited!

The keynote speaker will be Jeanne Kamara, Christian Aid's Country Manager in Sierra Leone; Jeanne will share first-hand stories of the Christian Aid Week focus project, and how the money you raise could help babies to be born safely and save mothers' lives.

As usual, participants will also have the opportunity to delve a bit deeper with the seminars and there will be resources



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that they will be able to browse and see whether they would be helpful in their church and community.

The morning begins with coffee at 10am and ends with lunch at 1pm, and during these, participants will meet other volunteers to chat and encourage each other and share ideas of what's working in their church.

Please RSVP for catering purposes: [belfast@christian-aid.org](mailto:belfast@christian-aid.org) or call Vicky at 028 9064 8133

This is a really important morning in the Christian Aid calendar where those taking part will be inspired, equipped and informed for Christian Aid Week 2019, so please make sure to spread the word amongst your church, your committee and your collectors. Perhaps you could fill a car, or even a train carriage with supporters from your local area. We've provided an example notice for your church bulletin, a poster and a flyer below.

[St Patrick's Church](#), Jordanstown are hosting the conference –it is situated on the [Jordanstown Road](#), Newtownabbey, approximately one mile off the Shore Road running along the northern side of Belfast Lough towards Carrickfergus. There is a large car park for drivers, or alternatively, the church is a 6-minute walk from Jordanstown Train Station.

## **Young Irish writers explore repentance in Lent study guide**

The contributors to the study are Katie Lynch who writes on 'Temptation – resisted by coming home'; Philip King who writes on 'Repentance – turning towards our death'; Scott

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**Canon Dr Ginnie Kennerley (BACI), Emily Murtagh (RevoLectionary), Katie Lynch (RevoLectionary), Archbishop Richard Clarke, Scott Evans (RevoLectionary) and the Revd Dr William Olhausen (BACI).**

Evans who writes on 'From roots to the fruits – the barren fig tree'; and Emily Murtagh who writes on 'Coming home – the Prodigal Son' and 'All my love – Mary anoints Jesus's feet'.

The guide produced by the Biblical Association of the Church of Ireland (BACI) was officially launched in Church House, Dublin, on Tuesday (January 22) by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, who commended the study for use throughout the Church of Ireland and beyond.

This is the 9th year that BACI has produced a Lent study. The theme for 2019 is "Transforming Repentance: Coming Home to God" inspired by the Lent Gospel readings from Luke. It is produced by UCD chaplain, Scott Evans and his

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team of writers at [RevoLectinary](#), an online platform for young Irish writers to contribute to the discussions on the weekly readings from the Lectionary, offering fresh perspectives for clergy and laity on the Gospel readings for the following Sunday.

For the 2019 Lent study, the team decided to explore what Luke could teach about repentance in a world where the word has passed out of style. In the introduction, Scott notes that: “The Hebrew word for repentance (“teshuvah”) combines two verbs: ‘to return’ and ‘to feel sorrow’. It means to grieve the ways in which we so easily forget who we are, what we were made for and who we are invited home to. It means to come home to the One who is redeeming, rebuilding, restoring and reconciling all things to himself. When we understand repentance in this way, it is very hard to confine our conversations about it to the academic and the abstract”.

Launching the study, Archbishop Clarke said that we now live in a victim culture and we want others to apologise. However, he said that repentance goes beyond apology. Apology is simply an explanation while repentance comes from the Greek word ‘metanoia’ which means the changed mind, or in the Bible it is used to mean ‘changed heart’. It means not only to turn away from something but to turn to God. “Repentance is coming home,” he stated. The Archbishop added that repentance also has a cost.

The Bible Study booklets are available from BACI treasurer, Barbara Bergin ([berginba@gmail.com](mailto:berginba@gmail.com)) and the Bookwell in Belfast ([www.thebookwell.co.uk](http://www.thebookwell.co.uk)) at the usual price of €2.50 or £2.25 plus postage. The studies can also be downloaded



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from the BACI website

<[www.bibliahibernica.wordpress.com](http://www.bibliahibernica.wordpress.com)>

## **Pope Francis: I will go to Japan in November**



### **Conversing with journalists on the flight to Panama, Pope Francis spoke about migrants and about future voyages**

Pope Francis said he would be going to Japan in November, and urged people to “get ready.”

The Holy Father’s remarks came aboard the flight to Panama, in response to a question from a Japanese journalist asking if the Pope was planning a trip to his

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country. Pope Francis said he also wanted to visit Iraq, but that the local Bishops say it is not safe at the moment.

Another journalist gave the pope a picture of the young migrant who died at sea, who had his report card sewn into his clothes. The Pope was visibly moved, saying he wanted to talk about it on the return journey.

In answer to a question from a reporter Italian television network Tg1 about the walls erected to stop migrants in Tijuana, on the border between Mexico and the United States, Pope Francis said that fear makes us crazy, and he suggested reading the editorial in *L'Osservatore Romano* titled "I muri della paura" ("The Walls of Fear").

The interim Director of the Holy See Press Office, Alessandro Gisotti, responding to questions from journalists, said that the Apostolic Voyage of the Pope to Japan "is in the phase of being studied. As the Holy Father has already said on other occasions, he has a great desire to go to this country. With regard to a possible visit to Iraq, the conditions at the moment do not exist for a visit of the Holy Father, as already affirmed also by Cardinal Pietro Parolin on his return from his visit to the country last December."

## **Abuse allegations against the late Bishop George Bell are "unfounded", inquiry finds**

An independent inquiry carried out by a senior ecclesiastical lawyer has ruled that fresh allegations against the late Bishop George Bell are "unfounded". Bishop Bell, the former Bishop of Chichester, was described today by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby as a "highly



esteemed bishop who died over 60 years ago”. Archbishop Justin apologised for the way the Church handled allegations against Bishop Bell, which were first made public in October 2015.

On 22 October 2015, the C of E issued a surprise statement announcing that it had reached a settlement in a civil claim bought by a complainant known as “Carol”. The complainant had alleged that she had been abused by Bell when she was a girl. The announcement caused controversy and many supporters of Bishop Bell said that the Church had been too quick to condemn a revered man who, because he had died decades earlier, could not defend himself.

In December 2017, an independent review carried out by the senior lawyer and politician Lord Carlile [criticised the Church’s handling of the allegation](#). He made a number of recommendations which, apart from one, the Church

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accepted. The one it declined to adopt was the recommendation that secrecy should surround settlements in cases where the accused has died and was unable to offer a defence.

The following month, the C of E announced that fresh information had been received following the publication of the Carlile Review, and that a core group has been formed to look into them. January 2019: Decision on fresh information is published

In April 2018, Sussex Police announced that they had carried out “a proportionate investigation” and was not talking matters further. The C of E appointed former police Detective Superintendent Ray Galloway to carry out an investigation and the Bishop of Chichester appointed Timothy Briden QC, Vicar General of the Province of Canterbury, to conduct a review.

In [a detailed report](#) released yesterday (Thursday), Mr Briden concludes that the fresh allegations are “unfounded”.

“The Church’s dilemma has been to weigh up the reputation of a highly esteemed bishop who died over 60 years ago alongside a serious allegation”, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said [in a statement](#) issued response to the inquiry’s findings. “We did not manage our response to the original allegation with the consistency, clarity or accountability that meets the high standards rightly demanded of us. I recognise the hurt that has been done as a consequence.

“This was especially painful for Bishop Bell’s surviving relatives, colleagues and supporters, and to the vast number of people who looked up to him as a remarkable



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role model, not only in the Diocese of Chichester but across the United Kingdom and globally. I apologise profoundly and unconditionally for the hurt caused to these people by the failures in parts of the process and take responsibility for this failure.

“However, it is still the case that there is a woman who came forward with a serious allegation relating to an historic case of abuse and this cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet. We need to care for her and listen to her voice.”

He continued: “I want to make it very clear that Bishop George Bell is one of the most important figures in the history of the Church of England in the 20th century and his legacy is undoubted and must be upheld. His prophetic work for peace and his relationship with Dietrich Bonhoeffer are only two of the many ways in which his legacy is of great significance to us in the Church and we must go on learning from what he has given to us. I hope that ways will be found to underline his legacy and share the learning from his life with future generations.”

In [a separate statement](#), the current Bishop of Chichester, Dr Martin Warner, said: “we have learned that the boundaries of doubt and certainty have to be stated with great care, that the dead and those who are related to them have a right to be represented, and that there must be a balanced assessment of the extent to which it would be in the public interest to announce the details of any allegation. . .

“We recognise the hurt that has been done to all who have been directly involved, including the family of George Bell and those who continue to respect his achievements, as a



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result of the areas where we have fallen short. We apologise profoundly and sincerely for our shortcomings in this regard. The responsibility for this is a shared one, as are the lessons learnt from it.”

He continued: “We have all been diminished by this case. The legitimate quest for certainty has been defeated by the nature of the case and the passage of time. Bishop Bell cannot be proven guilty, nor can it be safely claimed that the original complainant has been discredited. There is an uncertainty which cannot be resolved.

“We ask those who hold opposing views on this matter to recognise the strength of each other’s commitment to justice and compassion. Moreover, we continue to believe that the good things that George Bell did in his life will stand the test of time. His prophetic work for peace and his relationship with Dietrich Bonhoeffer are only two of the many ways in which his legacy will go on being of great significance to us in the Church and we hope and pray we can go on learning from what he has given to us.”

The inquiry by Timothy Briden did not re-open the investigation into claims by the first complainant, Carol, as that was outside the terms of reference. It concentrated instead on new allegations that arose following publicity surrounding the first case.

## **January 25 in Christian history**

**January 25, 98:** Upon the sudden death of Emperor Nerva, Trajan takes the throne. In 110, he asked Pliny the Younger to investigate a new superstition, "Christianity." Pliny's report

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of a relatively harmless though widespread cult led to moderate persecution—and the first recognition that Christians were distinct from Jews.

**January 25, 1627:** Noted physicist and chemist Robert Boyle is born in Ireland. After a lifetime of writing about science, religion, and harmony between the two, he underwrote an annual eight-lecture series defending Christianity against unbelievers.

**January 25, 1841:** Anglican clergyman John Henry Newman publishes Tract 90 (in a series begun in 1833), an argument for a catholic interpretation of the Thirty-nine Articles. It was the pinnacle of the Oxford Movement, but the last straw for the bishop of Oxford and others. Newman was forced to resign his parish, and he converted to Roman Catholicism four years later.

**January 25, 1907:** Social reformer and author Julia Ward Howe, composer of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," becomes the first woman elected to the National Institute of Arts & Letters.

**January 25, 1959:** Ninety days after his election to the papacy, Pope John XXIII announces his intention to hold an ecumenical church council. The Second Vatican Council opened October 11, 1962, and was the Catholic church's most searching self-examination ever.

**AN INVITATION  
to become a**

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