

Moderator reflects on his 'year in the spotlight'



Speaking to the assembled media, alongside his fellow Church Leaders after they meet Northern Ireland's main party leaders round the table this month, along with the Secretary of State and Tánaiste at the inter-party talks at Stormont House

The outgoing Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, has said that he feels a genuine sadness that his year

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in office is coming to an end. After a year in the spotlight, he also confided that on his election, back in February 2018, he had talked himself into the role by saying that it would be a 'career break' from his congregation for a year. However he soon discovered that it wasn't.

Dr McMullen was speaking to this month's *Presbyterian Herald* in advance of this year's General Assembly, which opens on 3 June, when Rev William Henry of Maze Presbyterian Church, will succeed him as Moderator for 2019/2020.

It was on his successor's selection, by the denomination's presbyteries this February, that he realised that his year in office was moving to a close. The sadness that he felt as a result, he says, was an indication as to how much he had actually enjoyed his year in office.

At the same time, Dr McMullen admits to being personally stretched by the role, as it had been more challenging and intense than he had imagined. It had also been a time when he had been inspired and excited by what he had seen of the work of the Church across Ireland and overseas.

"Each day has been special, encouraging and different. I have met all kinds of people and experienced such hospitality, realising that there is such a tremendous heart in our Church and that is one word that I would want to emphasise as I step

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down, this whole idea of 'heart', and the overall heart of our denomination is good.

"There is a great love, a great commitment, a great dedication and desire to serve the Lord across our congregations, a vibrant beating heart... This year has given me a renewed passion for the local church and how it is not on its own, but part of a bigger family. It has also shown me and reinforced the overall importance of relationships," he said.

He also acknowledged that in many ways it had been a difficult year for the Church, especially in the immediate aftermath of last year's General Assembly, with the headlines and general reaction to some of the decisions that members had taken that week. As he began his 300-plus engagements, which included preaching in different congregations most Sundays, he said that he encountered both 'support and heartache' over what had happened.

"Initially when I was elected I might have talked myself into this role by saying it would be a career break from my congregation for a year, I soon discovered that it wasn't. As Moderator you try always to listen and weigh things up, and one of the phrases I found myself using in those early days was 'on the one hand / on the other'.

"As a Church it is vitally important that we state what we believe in accordance with the Scriptures, but we must also stress the importance of having a pastoral heart and throughout the year perhaps



Dr McMullen celebrating Gretta McFall's 100th birthday. The member of Carnmoney Presbyterian was one of the many centenarians the Moderator celebrated a 100th birthday with during his year in office

God has given me the grace to respond to the challenges as I have tried to set the tone, always being gentle and consensual,” he said.

Part of that has been wrapped up in his theme for the year, ‘Building Relationships, Christ’s love compels us’, which has been a constant presence. The theme had come to him on the night of his election. “Two words struck me ‘building relationships’. As soon as I believe I was given those words, it was as if God said to me ‘this is right, but it will not be altogether easy...this is very

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much for the long-haul.’ Throughout the General Assembly and the ensuing year, bearing in mind I believe that God gave me this theme and said that it would be for the long haul, it became all the more vital and all the more imperative,” he said.

While some of the work has attracted positive headlines, such as the church leader’s initiative to bring Northern Ireland’s politicians together last September, and attending the State Reception for Pope Francis in Dublin - where he did eight TV and radio interviews in the space of 12 hours - much of what Dr McMullen has been quietly engaged in hasn’t attracted so much attention – yet has, in his own words, been ‘life changing’, especially his overseas tour of Jordan last August.

“We went to Jordan to encourage colleagues connected with PCI and it was there that we came face-to-face with Christianity and the rawness of faith in a kind of way that was simply amazing. In refugee camps we met brothers and sisters in Christ, who had experienced persecution in other parts of the Middle East, people who had put their needs on the line to serve Jesus. For me, it put a lot into perspective,” he said.

But it wasn’t just in Jordan that he discovered people making a real difference in demonstrating Christ’s love to others. Throughout his four week-long presbytery tours, his visits most Sundays to local congregations, touring the denomination’s homes and support units and seeing Presbyterians



Dr McMullen giving the sermon at the UK National Police Memorial Day commemoration to honour police officers who died in the line of duty that took place at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast in September.

showing leadership in business, have all given him an incredible bird's eye view of life in PCI, which he also said had left him "in awe" of his ministerial colleagues.

"As time has gone on I have had a renewed passion for the Church of Jesus Christ. We live in a society that is fractured and broken, but the local Christian community of God's people is very much the hope of the world, something that I have witnessed across our Presbyterian denomination and farther afield."

Dr McMullen said that he had been inspired by people across the denomination, "from the exuberance of a thousand teenagers committed to Christ at last year's 'Making A Difference' event in

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Coleraine, to being so blessed by the long years of Christian witness of the centenarians I have met, and so many faithful people in between.

The 173rd person to hold the office since 1840 and the 5th Moderator to come from Bangor also said that he had seen the year as a 'marathon sprint' and that he will keep praying that the Lord will get him safely over the line.

"There will be a certain amount of relief, but it will be tinged with genuine sadness that it has come to an end. But I have run the race, supported so steadfastly by Barbara, by the prayers of many and the awesome power of the Holy Spirit. As a parish minister first and foremost, I will look forward to returning to West, but with memories of an unbelievable year," he said.

On the opening Night of the General Assembly Dr McMullen will give a fuller review of his year to those gathered in the Assembly Hall. For those unable to attend the Opening Night is streamed live on the PCI website, www.presbyterianireland.org. It will also be broadcast live on BBC Radio Ulster 1341 Medium Wave.

The live stream will continue throughout the General Assembly, which closes on Friday 7 June. You can also follow the debates on Twitter @pciassembly using the hashtag #PCIGA19



Christians around the world observe Anglican Communion Sunday this weekend

Christians from all over the world will pray for the Anglican Communion on Sunday (26 May) – the feast day of St Augustine of Canterbury. The member Churches of the Anglican Communion were first asked to set aside a Sunday for prayer for the Anglican Communion in 2002, when the

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Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Hong Kong, “to raise awareness of and celebrate the Anglican Communion.”

The call was repeated when the ACC met in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2012, for ACC-15. In a resolution, the members said that they “encourages churches of the Anglican Communion to celebrate, and take advantage of resources produced for Anglican Communion Sunday.” And in 2016, ACC-16 in Lusaka, Zambia, the ACC went further, and invited member churches “to stipulate the Sunday closest to the Feast of Saint Augustine of Canterbury (26 May) as Anglican Communion Sunday to celebrate and pray for the Anglican Communion.”

The resolutions also called on parishes to raise funds to support the inter-Anglican budget, which supports the work of the Anglican Communion Office (ACO).

This year, the ACO has raised awareness of Anglican Communion Sunday through social media, and has shared a collect, adapted from one used as the 2008 Lambeth Conference, as one which churches can use on Sunday.

*Heavenly Father
in whom we live and move and have our being,
guide this your Anglican Communion in its proclamation of
the Gospel
that we who witness to the Good News of your kingdom
may reveal your presence to all who yearn for the truth,
a truth that sets us free,
by your Spirit and in your Son
today, tomorrow and for ever. Amen*

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Bishop of Bristol speaks of being ‘silenced’ by ‘tribalism’ in Gloucester Diocese in the 1990s



The Bishop of Bristol, the Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, She was among a handful of bishops to respond individually to the abuse inquiry findings

[THE Bishop of Bristol](#), the Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, has said that she was “silenced and marginalised” while she was a deacon in [Gloucester diocese](#) in the 1990s by the same “tribalism and clericalism” identified by the official abuse inquiry in its latest report.

Bishop Faull was one of a handful of bishops to respond individually to the scathing conclusions published in the latest Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse ([IICSA](#)) report, [Anglican Church Case Studies: The diocese of](#)

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[Chichester and the response to allegations against Peter Ball](#) ([News, 17 May](#)).

In both [the diocese of Chichester](#) and the wider Church, it states: “The responses to child sexual abuse were marked by secrecy, prevarication, avoidance of reporting alleged crimes to the authorities and a failure to take professional advice.”

This included the Church’s “unwavering support of [Peter Ball](#)” — the disgraced former bishop and convicted abuser — during the Gloucestershire Police investigation (allegations about Ball came to light when he was translated from Lewes to Gloucester), and its failure to “recognise or acknowledge the seriousness” of Ball’s misconduct.

Bishop Faull posted on Twitter: “I was a Deacon in Gloucester Diocese from 1990 to 1994. I longed to be able to speak to the then Archbishop of what we observed and experienced. But the tribalism and clericalism identified by IICSA silenced and marginalised me (and others). It still does.”

She declined to comment further, however, when approached by the *Church Times*.

The [Bishop of Gloucester](#), the Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, said on Tuesday that she was “deeply ashamed” of the legacy in her diocese. The Church still had a “journey to travel” in terms of its approach to safeguarding.

“Peter Ball was a former Bishop of Gloucester, and I am deeply ashamed of that legacy, and deeply sorry; just as I am deeply ashamed and sorry about the abuse people have suffered across the Church, which, in the past, has so often

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been compounded by wholly inadequate response and a lack of compassion and understanding.”

She paid tribute to Neil Todd — the first victim to accuse Ball publicly, in 1992 — who took his own life in 2012. “It is utterly inexcusable how the Church handled this case. People allowed themselves to be manipulated, and those in authority did not follow the correct processes. They were instead trying to protect themselves and the reputation of the Church. . .

“It is vital that we listen deeply to the victims and survivors that come forward, take them seriously, and act in the right way. While I believe the Church has come a long way regarding safeguarding processes, policies, and structures at both local and national level, there is still a journey to be travelled.”

The [Bishop of Worcester](#), Dr John Inge, has described himself as “a victim of Ball”. It emerged last week that he submitted a witness statement to the abuse inquiry in May last year, in which he said that he had been “used and manipulated” and subjected to naked praying by Ball in the 1980s.

He wrote on Twitter: “I can’t speak with any authority of the Chichester report but, as a victim of Peter Ball who gave evidence, I think the criticisms of those who protected him are well deserved. A great stain on the Church.”

The [Bishop of Newcastle](#), the Rt Revd Christine Hardman, responded: “Thank you for saying this. I cannot speak with the authority of your experience but wholeheartedly agree with all you say.”

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The [Bishop of London](#), the Rt Revd Sarah Mullally, also responded to the report on social media. She wrote on Twitter: “I have just completed reading the IICSA investigation report on the Anglican Church — difficult reading. I am humbly reminded of words at my consecration as bishop ‘Give humility that she may use her authority to heal and not to hurt, to build up and not to destroy.’”

A [statement](#) from the House of Bishops last week welcomed the recommendations listed in the report. “We recognise that the publication of this report causes most hurt and concern to survivors themselves. It reopens wounds,” the bishops said.

The [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) had asked every bishop “to read and study the full report in detail, and we are absolutely committed to this. The Church has failed survivors, and the report is very clear that the Church should have been a place which protected all children and supported victims and survivors.

“We are ashamed of our past failures, have been working for change but recognise [that] the deep cultural change needed takes longer than we would like to achieve. We welcome the recommendations.”

The report would go to the National Safeguarding Steering Group next month, the Bishops said, “so that the Church can formulate a detailed response to the findings and recommendations as we approach IICSA’s wider Church hearing in July.”

The lead bishop for [safeguarding](#), the Bishop of Bath & Wells, the Rt Revd Peter Hancock, has been asked to report back to the House and to the General Synod. “It is

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absolutely right that the Church at all levels should learn lessons from the issues raised in this report and act upon them.”

WCC Pentecost message “To prophesy is to tell the truth”

The regional presidents of the World Council of Churches sent special greetings to churches around the world celebrating Pentecost.

“To prophesy is to tell the truth,” reads the message. “No rank or class, no race or club, no gender, nor even any religion, has a monopoly on the truth.”



Sunrise above the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

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Even humble fisherman can rise to tell the truth, the message notes. “And no falsehood or lie can withstand the sturdy witness to the all-inclusive, healing, indeed transformative love of God revealed to us in Jesus,” reads the message. “These days, we need such prophetic witness to the truth—in our societies and politics, in ourselves and our churches.”

There are no guarantees of objectivity in science or politics or journalism, the message continues. “We must always search out the truth amid competing probabilities and uncertainties and even self-deception,” the text reads. “Yet the deepest truths of our lives—the goodness of being, the dignity of all persons, the integrity of creation, the need for justice and peace--can be tested not only by the integrity of the quest but also by the authenticity of their proponents and, in the end, by the criteria of love.”

At Pentecost, we witness the birth of the church amid a world of many languages and cultures, continues the message. “God’s truth, enflamed by the action of the Spirit, creates a loving community of truth to counter self-serving deceits of the powerful,” the message reads. “No religious claim that incites extremism or terror can be true.”

God’s vision of justice and peace is the nonviolent alternative to empire, the message concludes. “Its all-embracing kinship prizes yet transcends differences, rebukes self-serving falsehoods, shames demagoguery, and battles oppression,” the message reads. “It heals trauma and reaches out to the stranger and the marginalized.”

[Read the full Pentecost Message](#) (available in English, German, French and Spanish)

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Archbishop of Canterbury pays tribute as UK Prime Minister announces her resignation

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has expressed his “admiration and gratitude” to the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, after she announced that she will step down in the coming months. Mrs May will step down as leader of the ruling Conservative Party on Thursday 7 June. Conservative MPs and members will then take part in an internal multi—stage electoral process to elect a new party leader, who will become Prime Minister. Mrs May will continue to serve as Prime Minister until the election process is complete. In his statement, Archbishop Justin called on people to pray for political leaders “in these critical times in our shared national life.”

“During the last three years of leading our nation through times of profound change and uncertainty, Theresa May has shown determination, resilience and a sense of public duty that has never wavered”, Archbishop Justin said. “That is a service to us all that deserves our admiration and gratitude.

“As Mrs May prepares to stand down from office over the coming months, this is a moment to pause and pray for her and her husband, Philip, whose support has been unwavering, and for all those around them working to ensure a smooth transition into new leadership.

“Every day in churches across the country, we pray for our political leaders. We pray that they be guided and strengthened in wise leadership that strives for the common good. We pray too for their protection, safety and wellbeing



The UK Prime Minister Theresa May has said she will stand down as Conservative Party leader on 7 June and as UK Prime Minister once the party has elected a new leader

in the roles they take on for the benefit of our communities and our nation. We also pray for their families who with them carry the burden that being in public life brings.”

He continued: “In these critical times in our shared national life, people of faith should commit to pray for all those who lead, all those who are led, and work together with all of goodwill, especially for those who are vulnerable and on the margins. As Christians we pray that our society would be shaped around Christ’s hope-filled vision of abundant life for every person.”

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The Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart, who convenes the Lords Spiritual – the 26 Church of England bishops with seats in the House of Lords, the upper house of the UK Parliament, said: “Theresa May has given dedicated and committed public service to the country during very difficult times. I wish her and Philip well as they prepare for life beyond Downing Street.

“I am especially grateful to the Prime Minister for the priority she has given during her time in Government to addressing the evils of modern slavery, and for a focus on global freedom of religion and belief.

“In her statement today Theresa May reminded us of the importance of compromise. Now more than ever we need political leaders and Parliament to focus on what unites us, especially when it comes to a way forward with Brexit.

“That will be the biggest task facing our next Prime Minister. My hopes and prayers are for an orderly transition and for all those who continue to give themselves to public service in national and local life.”

Today in Christian history

May 25, 735: Bede ("The Venerable"), father of English history, dies. In addition to his Ecclesiastical History of the English People (731), biographies of abbots, and Scripture commentaries, he wrote our primary source for the story of how Celtic and Roman Christianity clashed at the Synod of Whitby in 664.

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May 25, 1535: After holding Munster under siege for over a year, the army of the city's Roman Catholic bishop breaks in, capturing and killing the radical Anabaptists who had taken control. The Anabaptists had acted on the prophecy of Melchoir Hoffman (later modified by Jan Matthys) that Christ would soon return, and only Christians in Munster would survive. During the siege, Matthys and his followers became increasingly despotic and maniacal, enjoying excesses while the people starved and introducing wild innovations such as polygamy.

May 25, 1824: The Sunday and Adult Sunday School Union in Philadelphia establishes the American Sunday School Union. It purposed to use Sunday schools as a means to instill Christian and democratic values "wherever there is a population." In 1970 it changed its name to the American Missionary Society.

May 25, 1865: Evangelist and ecumenist John R. Mott is born in New York. He served 40 years with the Y.M.C.A. (while that organization was still aggressively evangelistic), chaired the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference, and was named honorary president of the World Council of Churches at its inaugural session.

News briefs

+++ St Patrick's Maynooth Summer Open Day - is on Saturday 22nd June. It's the perfect opportunity to explore studying Theology & Arts at SPCM. The Theology Talk takes place at 1.35pm in the Arts Block, just across from the Iontas Building

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+++ A Little Lifetime Foundation - hold a Blessing of Remembrance in Glasnevin Cemetery at the Old Angels Memory Garden on Sunday 26 May at 3pm. This invitation is for all families who have lost a baby to find some comfort in coming together to remember your baby in a special way.



An invite from Christ Church, Dublin - Come and join us tonight 25 May at 20:00h for The Line-Up Summer Concert in Christ Church Cathedral on Saturday May 25th. We'll be showcasing new choral arrangements of pop, rock and soul classics including songs from movies and musicals!

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+++ Beach baptisms in Ballyholme Bay - Ballymacconnell beach car park was filled with cars on a recent Wednesday evening, as the sun set over Ballyholme bay for the baptism of Ben Cavan and Josh Reddy. In spite of a gloomy afternoon, a beach bathed in evening sunshine was the perfect setting. Both Ben and Josh grew up in Ballyholme and the shore represented the natural location for their baptism – as well as being the closest thing Bangor has to the river Jordan!

A large number of parishioners joined family and friends of Ben and Josh in what, for many, was the first open–air full immersion baptism they had witnessed. With the Rector, Andrew Watson, Rory Wilson and Robbie Jackson wetsuited and on hand to lower and raise, there was spontaneous applause when each man resurfaced followed by a celebratory glass of Shloer for everyone on the beach afterwards.

The water in the church font was a little bit warmer on the Sunday morning following. Two adult confirmation candidates, Trudi McBurney and Andrea Kelly, opted for the more traditional Church of Ireland ‘wetting of the head initiation’. It was a big step for both ladies to stand up in a church full of people and make their promises but again they were surrounded by family, friends and fellow church members.

As Bishop Harold Miller reminded the congregation at the Confirmation Service on Sunday evening, baptism does not come without cost and for many Christians in the world it is a dangerous step to take, and one which takes true courage and faith.

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+++ Please pray for - Those bereaved recently, this is a time of sadness. Pray for comfort for those who mourn today, that they will feel God's presence whether the loss is recent or more distant. May we be aware of the sadness of others and give comfort.

- PM [#TheresaMay](#) as she has announced her resignation and for her country as it prepares for a new leader at this difficult time.

+++ Food for thought - "It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men."
CSLewis

News Links May 25

Church of Ireland Synod responds to childbearing grief

Church Times

A BILL that will make provision for a service of prayer and naming, and the funeral service, in cases of miscarriage, stillbirth, and neonatal death ...

Church of Ireland Synod: 'Populism is imperilling democracy', Dr Clarke warns

Church Times

THE Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Richard Clarke, praised Derry for its resilience and example in the face of adversity, in a presidential address to the ...

Church of Ireland Synod: Representation puzzle solved

Church Times

A CONTENTIOUS issue regarding the possible reduction of synodical representation, mooted in 2018, was resolved at the General Synod. The model ...

Church of Ireland Synod: the Church is in retreat, says Bishop of Kilmore

Church Times

THE Christian **Church in Ireland** is in retreat, the Bishop of Kilmore, the Rt Revd Ferran Glenfield, said on Thursday of last week, on the first day of the ...

Church of Ireland Synod: Merger of two dioceses approved

Church Times

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A BILL to allow the creation of a new diocese within the **Church of Ireland** was given final approval on Thursday of last week. The Bill was proposed by ...

Church of Ireland Synod: Communion by extension

Church Times

During an experimental period, the Liturgical Advisory Committee had found that, in some areas of the **Church of Ireland**, the proposed service met a ...

Church of Ireland Synod: Education crisis in Northern Ireland is failing the young, says Bishop Good

Church Times

THE Bishop of Derry & Raphoe, the Rt Revd Ken Good, told the General Synod last Saturday that a crisis in the education system in Northern **Ireland** ...

Church of Ireland Synod: Merger of two dioceses approved

Church Times

A BILL to allow the creation of a new diocese within the **Church of Ireland** was given final approval on Thursday of last week. The Bill was proposed by ...

Mull of Kintyre Chinook crash: Church of Scotland votes against destruction of MoD records

Belfast Newsletter

The crash saw the cream of Northern **Ireland's** counter terrorism intelligence officials die during a The **News** Letter is asking the MoD for comment.

Church urges MoD not to destroy Chinook crash records

Belfast Telegraph

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has been urged not to destroy records relating to a helicopter crash which killed 25 leading Northern **Ireland** ...

Abuse allegations against former Bishop of Chester

ITV News

The **Church of England's** appointed a judge to lead an investigation into allegations of historical sexual abuse against a former Bishop of Chester.

The Church of England's transgender guidance should be withdrawn

ChristianToday

The **Church of England's** transgender guidance should be withdrawn ... The group was encouraged that the bishops agreed that the **press** release that ...

AN INVITATION

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