

March 28, 2019

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Presbyterian Church's new visitor exhibition opens in Belfast



At the official opening of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's new visitor exhibition at Assembly Buildings, its all-Ireland headquarters in Belfast yesterday (LtoR) Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast Councillor

March 28, 2019

Emmet McDonough-Brown, who officially opened the exhibition, with the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Belfast Dr Philip McGarry.

The Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown, has officially opened the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's new visitor exhibition at its Assembly Buildings headquarters in Belfast city centre.

Located on the ground floor of one of the city's iconic buildings, the permanent exhibition tells the story of Presbyterianism in Ireland over the last four centuries and the work of the Church at home and overseas today.

Welcoming Councillor McDonough-Brown, Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Belfast Dr Philip McGarry, and other guests, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, said that the exhibition had been made possible by a significant investment that the City Council had made in the project - which wasn't just for Presbyterians interested in their own history.

"In recent years we have seen a huge and welcome increase in visitors to Belfast, coming here from all over the world to experience, not only the city and its sights, but the rest of Northern Ireland too," Dr McMullen said.

"While we are an all-Ireland Church, the administrative heart of the denomination is here in Belfast and we want to be supportive of the city that we are a part of in so many different ways. In this building we welcome people from across these islands and from around the world, and while

March 28, 2019



we have been able to provide them with some information, we have not been able to really tell them of our Church's rich history and its contribution to society across Ireland.

“Our new visitor exhibition does just that and we are very thankful for the contribution that the City Council has made to enable this to happen and for the Deputy Lord Mayor's presence here today,” he said.

Across different stand-alone interpretive themed panels and interactive exhibits, visitors can walk through a brief history of Presbyterianism on the island. From the arrival of Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster some 400 years ago, to the founding of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1840, they will discover the work, mission and ministry of the Church today.

Speaking to guests, Councillor McDonough-Brown, said: “I am delighted to officially open this new visitor exhibition

March 28, 2019

which has been installed thanks to funding from Belfast City Council's Social Outcomes Fund. "This fund was established to support tourism and social economy initiatives to help grow Belfast's tourism infrastructure, and I have no doubt the exhibition will be very successful in attracting more visitors - both local and out-of-state - to the historic Assembly Buildings.

"Belfast is an increasingly diverse city and this exhibition will help us build an inclusive and shared future based on mutual respect by improving peoples' understanding of the history of this island," he said.



Guests at the official opening of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's new visitor exhibition, which took place at Assembly Buildings, its all-Ireland headquarters in Belfast yesterday. The permanent exhibition tells the story of Presbyterianism in Ireland over the last four centuries and the work of the Church at home and overseas today.



The exhibition also tells the stories of some of the influential men and women who have left their mark on Irish Presbyterianism, takes a look at the democratic nature of Presbyterian church government and some of the religious and political controversies, past and present.

With over 30 special artefacts on display, many of which have been loaned by the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, there are also interactive exhibits and audio-visual installations. These enable visitors to locate the denomination's 500-plus congregations across Ireland, interact with a 19th century map of Presbyterians in Ireland and view short films on the history, life and work of the Church.

In dedicating the exhibition to God, Dr McMullen made reference to the piece of Scripture from Hebrews 13: 8 that is on the commemorative plaque to mark the official

March 28, 2019

opening, “As we encourage and welcome more people to Assembly Buildings, I’m pleased that our exhibition joins a number of visitor attractions in the city already.

“Each tells a story, enlightening and broadening our understanding of people, places, institutions and events. In dedicating our exhibition today, I am also reminded of someone who is timeless, the one who is, as it says in the verse on the plaque, ‘...the same yesterday, today and for ever’ and is at the heart of all we do, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Team leader

The man who led the committee responsible for developing the Presbyterian Church's new visitor exhibition hopes people from all over the world will call in to Assembly Buildings while in Belfast.

Rev Jim Stothers said the project, which has taken over a year to complete, will give visitors an insight into the history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the church’s ongoing work at home and overseas.

“We anticipate there will be people coming from all over the world, not just to see the exhibition but who are in Belfast, and this will give them something to see and to learn about our church and its place in Belfast and throughout Ireland as well,” he said.

Rev Dr Robert Tosh, who was the Presbyterian Historical Society’s representative on the steering committee, said the exhibition tells the story of 400 years of Presbyterianism in Ireland in “the broadest of brush strokes”. “I think it looks

March 28, 2019

superb. It covers a lot of ground without going into it in real depth, which would be impossible,” he commented.

“You see a plan, you see all the paperwork and you’ve no idea what it is finally going to be like, and I think it is superbly done, easy to read, fairly easy to understand and they have done a good job.”

Visitor Exhibition

The exhibition is free and welcomes people in 26 different languages. It is open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public and bank holidays) at Assembly Buildings, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast.

The titles of the interpretive themed panels are:

- Presbyterians come to Ireland
- Beliefs and organization
- Meeting Houses
- Mission in Ireland
- Union Theological College
- Ardens Sed Virens - Burning yet flourishing - five centuries of Presbyterian witness in Ireland
- Controversies – religious and political
- Beyond these shores - the influence of mission
- Meeting the need - engagements with society
- Contemporary church life
- Gathering and worship

The special artefacts include an iron wall-mounted baptism font and pewter communion ware, an early ‘pocket sized’ 1655 copy of the King James Bible, a New Testament and a

March 28, 2019

Book of Psalms in Irish. There are also some smaller items of interest on display such as communion tokens, a pulpit timer and other pieces that tell their own stories – like the imperial Chinese travel document issued to a Presbyterian missionary traveling to Manchuria. The Moderator's 1905 Chair, which is used at the Church's annual General Assembly is also on display.

Social Outcomes Fund

The objective of the Social Outcomes Fund is to provide capital support to local tourism and/or social economy initiatives, which are developed to support the growing community tourism infrastructure.

Assembly Buildings

The first home for the central administration of the Church was situated in Belfast's May Street in what is now Ross's auction house.

Whilst the May Street site provided office accommodation, it was recognised that there was a need for an Assembly Hall and after much discussion by a number of committees over several years, the congregation of Fisherwick Presbyterian Church agreed to vacate their site in order to build what is now Assembly Buildings at a cost £74,000.

Designed in the architectural style of a Scottish baronial castle, the gothic structure boasts a 40m high clock tower, a bell tower housing Belfast's only operational peal of 12 bells, which can chime hymns and carols on the hour. The building was officially opened at Fisherwick Place in Belfast

March 28, 2019

city centre by The Duke of Argyll, the brother-in-law of King Edward VII at the start of the 1905 General Assembly Week that June.

The building also contains several exquisite examples of stained glass. An impressive piece can be found on the first floor at the main entrance to the Assembly Hall. 'The Carrickfergus Window' was a gift donated by the Presbytery of Carrickfergus in 1992 to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the 'birth' of Presbyterianism in Ireland in 1642. The window depicts a ship arriving from Scotland at Carrickfergus which is represented by the Castle built there in the 11th century. While other examples can be found in the Assembly Hall, Minor Hall and in other parts of the building, two complete windows from Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church can also be seen. The church was destroyed during the Belfast Blitz of 1941, but the windows were preserved and installed in their new home during the renovations in the early 1990s. The stained glass either side of the organ loft at the front of the Assembly Hall depict four of Jesus' Parables. These special windows were removed for safe keeping at the height of the Troubles in Belfast and were only reinstalled in 1992.

Bishop Crean urges support for Cyclone Idai relief efforts in Africa

Bishop William Crean of Cloyne has called for support for Trócaire's Lenten campaign in order to bring relief to the people affected by Cyclone Idai in southern Africa.

March 28, 2019

Bishop Crean, who is Chair of Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, said: "The scenes of devastation in southern Africa following Cyclone Idai are frightening in their impact. Our hearts go out to the millions who have lost loved ones, homes or livelihoods as a result of this terrible disaster."



The Bishop of Cloyne offered prayers for those affected by Cyclone Idai, particularly the people of Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Speaking on the response of Trócaire to the crisis, Bishop Crean said: "As well as providing immediate humanitarian relief, Trócaire will work with communities over the months and years ahead as they rebuild their lives."

He continued: "The immediate needs are huge, but the long-term implications of this disaster are very worrying. Crops have been destroyed, which will lead to serious food shortages in the months ahead."

March 28, 2019

Urging people to support Trócaire's Lenten Appeal, the Bishop said: "Donations to Trócaire during Lent will go towards providing short-term relief and long-term security to people affected by Cyclone Idai, as well as to millions of more victims facing similar crises around the world."

Bishop Crean concluded: "Lent is a time for giving and sacrifice. The terrible suffering of our brothers and sisters in southern Africa as a result of Cyclone Idai cries out for a generous response on our part."

Launch of review of Dublin & Glendalough's discipleship project

'Come&C: Growing in the Image & Likeness of God', a review of Dublin & Glendalough's discipleship project, will be officially launched this Friday (March 29) at DCU's All Hallows' Campus.

The book, written by David Tuohy SJ and Maria Feeney, documents the Come&C project from its roots in the Vision and Mission questionnaire that parishes responded to in 2015 through its implementation, outlining parish and diocesan activities, before looking to the future. It celebrates parish activities, examines the programme's impact on individuals and parishes and explores the dynamics involved in developing a programme of intentional discipleship within the dioceses.

March 28, 2019



David Tuohy SJ

Come&C is based around the Five Marks of Mission. The Five Marks – which have been distilled to Tell, Teach, Transform, Tend and Treasure – were introduced by the Anglican Communion almost 30 years ago but had not been a particular focus in Dublin & Glendalough. Through Come&C they have become a major tool in helping individuals and parishes develop discipleship.

David Tuohy is a Jesuit priest and an Ecumenical Canon in the Church of Ireland and has worked with Archbishop Michael Jackson and others in the Church of Ireland on educational projects. In 2015 he was asked by Archbishop Jackson to take part in his Come&C project. Maria Feeney is employed at the Institute of Education at DCU where she teaches and supervises across undergraduate and teacher education programmes.

March 28, 2019

David was interviewed by Pat Coyle for Soul Waves Radio recently. When asked for his personal reflections on this work, David comments that he was really inspired by the fact that those involved came to a realisation that this was not just a parish or diocesan project, but that they were sharing in discipleship at a number of levels, particularly as part of the wider Anglican Communion.

Vote of the people must be respected, says Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said the vote of the people must be respected and called for people to pray for "national agreement".

The Most Rev Justin Welby said on social media on Wednesday it was "easy to tell MPs how badly they are doing, easy to abuse and threaten".

But the archbishop said MPs "deserve respect" and urged people to pray for them and for a "decision that has widespread support".

He said: "It's easy to tell MPs how badly they are doing, easy to abuse and threaten. But they have to decide for us and deserve respect.

"Let us pray for them (or intend well if not pray), for a decision that has widespread support and for a process that brings national agreement."

March 28, 2019



In a further tweet, Abp Welby added: "Reconciliation is less about agreeing than about finding out how to disagree well.

"We must respect the vote of the people and unite our country #hopefilledfuture."

His comments come on the same day MPs will vote on which kind of Brexit they favour.

The archbishop has previously called for reconciliation over Brexit, telling a House of Lords debate on leaving the EU "there is a requirement for national reconciliation".

Archbishop Welby told the Lords if both sides could not compromise then the country will face a no-deal Brexit.

He added: "There has to be an agreement in which all accept the need to deliver 'the will of the people', which was expressed in the referendum, while also recognising that when it was expressed in such a close result there is a duty to build in compromise - an inevitability, albeit unwelcome to some.

March 28, 2019

"If not there will be, by default, a no-deal Brexit. That outcome would be not only a political and practical failure but a moral one equally as serious as ignoring the result of the referendum entirely."

The Archbishop has also urged Remainers and Brexiteers to get together this weekend.

The Church of England is aiming to get people who disagree over membership of the bloc to "chat over a cup of tea and pray for our country and our future".

It also tweeted on Wednesday that its "Lent Pilgrim reflection" for today was around extreme forgiveness and quoted Luke 23.32-43: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

Humanists call for repeal of NI's blasphemy laws

A campaign calling for the repeal of Northern Ireland's blasphemy laws has been launched by Northern Ireland Humanists. The organisation has called on people to write to their MLAs and advocate for a change in the law.

"In England and Wales, these laws were repealed in 2008, and in 2018, citizens in the Republic of Ireland voted in a landslide referendum to repeal the country's blasphemy laws. It's time that we followed suit, and repealed our blasphemy law in solidarity with the victims of anti-blasphemy legislation around the world," the group said.

March 28, 2019



Canon David Oxley (left) following his installation as Prebend of St Audeon at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

Responding to the campaign, Rev Ian Brown, the Free Presbyterian Church's former Clerk of Presbytery, commented: "I'm sure that law will not have been exercised for quite some considerable time, but it should be retained as a standard. People talk about respect and tolerance – they are buzz words in society – so why can't God's name and person be offered that same respect and tolerance?"

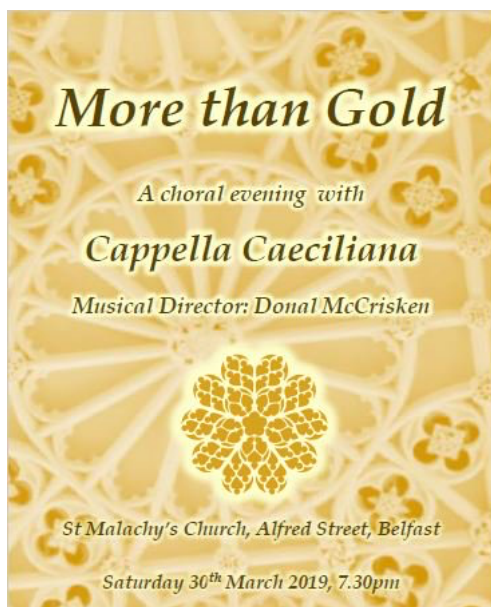
Rev Brian McClung, minister of Newtownabbey Free Presbyterian Church, agreed that the existing law should be

March 28, 2019

retained, but added: "If the Lord already forbids it, it is a secondary issue that the law of the land forbids it."

News briefs

+++Featherstonhaugh Lecture Series 2019 - 'The re-
imagination of Church' on Wednesday, 10th April 2019, at
3pm. Venue: Church of Ireland Theological Institute. Canon
Dr George Lings is one of England's leading missiologists
and an expert on the development of Fresh Expressions in
the UK context. Until recently he directed the Church Army
Research Unit in Sheffield and has contributed to ground-
breaking research on the contemporary state of the church.
He is particularly identified with the Mission-shaped Church
report and has visited Ireland on numerous occasions. All
are welcome to attend. Please contact Jane Kelly
(janeKelly@theologicalinstitute.ie) to secure a booking.



+++Capella Caeciliana in concert - "More than Gold"
concert in the historic (1844) St Malachy's Church, Belfast.
Sat 30th Mar, 7.30pm. Proceeds towards the magnificent
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March 28, 2019

restoration of the church. Tickets £12, Matchetts Music or online. Students/under 25s free. Programme & booking details: concert-diary.com/concert/131432...

+++Food for thought - "To have Faith in Christ means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him." - CS Lewis

March 26 in Christian history

March 28, 1515: Spanish mystic Teresa of Avila, founder of a reformed Carmelite order, is born. Though her contemporaries noted her practicality and administrative skills, her legacy stems from her mysticism, evidenced in her Autobiography, Way of Perfection, Book of Foundations, and Interior Castle.

March 28, 1592: Czech theologian Jan Comenius, educator of the Bohemian (or Moravian) Brethren, is born in Nivnice, Czechoslovakia. As today, the region was tormented by warfare, and Comenius believed the only way to bring peace was through education. He designed a plan for educating every province and country, which he presented in The Great Didactic(1632). Education, he believed, should be more than just learning facts and languages (as was the case in his day), it should mold Christian character and should be marked by observing the physical world. He is called "the father of modern education".

March 28, 2019

March 28, 1661: Scottish Parliament passes the Rescissory Act, repealing all church-state legislation created since 1633 (Charles I's reign). In essence, the act restored the Anglican episcopacy to Scotland and quashed Presbyterianism, which had been the national church since 1638. In 1690 Parliament again established the Church of Scotland as Presbyterian.

March 28, 1885: The Salvation Army is officially organized in the USA. 5 years earlier Commissioner George Scott Railton and seven female Salvation Army officers arrived in New York City to begin expanding the organization in America. Though they were initially met with hostility and occasional violence, by 1883 the Army had expanded into 12 states. In 1886 the organization was endorsed by President Grover Cleveland during a visit to the White House by a Salvation Army delegation.

March 28, 1937: Billy Graham gets his first opportunity to preach when his teacher John Minder unexpectedly assigns him the Easter evening sermon. Graham tried to get out of it, saying he was unprepared, but Minder persisted. Desperately nervous, Graham raced through four memorized sermons, originally 45 minutes each, in eight minutes

March 27, 1667: English poet John Milton publishes Paradise Lost, an epic of humankind's creation and fall.

News Links

['I presumed the two tribes of Ulster might eventually blend, as folks do at a wedding'](#)

March 28, 2019

Irish Times

I grew up in south Ulster, in the shadow of the beautiful **Church of Ireland** Cathedral at Kilmore in Cavan. Our next door neighbours were Protestant ...

[Pilgrimage: The Road to Rome – Who are the celebrities?](#)

BT TV

He has questions about the **religion** as his mother lost her Catholic faith after ... on TV panel shows such as Mock the Week and Have I Got **News** For You. ... Eurovision Song Contest winner Dana brought the title home for **Ireland** ...

[Scholarship Day Keynote Address Highlights Friendship of Lewis and Tolkien](#)

Etown NOW (press release) (blog)

Interestingly enough, when the pair met, Lewis was an agnostic, raised in a religious family that attended the **church of Ireland**. Tolkien was a devout ...

[Blessed with talents': friends and colleagues remember Independent journalist Lorna Reid](#)

[Independent.ie](#)

Hundreds filled the St Philip and St James **Church**, Booterstown, Co Dublin, to pay their respects to Lorna Nelson Muir Kennedy whose familiar byline, ...

[Belfast Church Targeted By Vandals](#)

[4ni.co.uk](#)

St Paul's **Church** on the Falls Road was targeted shortly before 2am on ... An SDLP MLA is encouraging people in Northern **Ireland** to sign an online ...

March 28, 2019

17th century Cork couples needed 'insurance policies' of up to €200k to get married

Irish Examiner

... returns, originals wills from the 16th century, and more than 1,000 **Church of Ireland** parish registers filled with baptism, marriage and burial records.

Plans for new wave of religiously segregated schools revealed

TES News

The proposals include five Catholic, three **Church of England** and one other Christian school, two Muslim, two Hindu and one Jewish school.

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March 28, 2019