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Down Co church completes unique stained glass collection of Irish saints



The 'Pelican' window is one of the latest additions at St Columbanus Parish Church

A Co Down church has completed a unique collection of stained glass windows depicting a gallery of Irish saints.

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St Bronagh has joined a collection of other Irish saints at St Columbanus Parish Church in Ballyholme, Co Down

Parishioners at St Columbanus Parish Church in Ballyholme joined Bishop Harold Miller on Sunday for the dedication of two striking new windows at the Church of Ireland building, which is a key site on the Ards and North Down Christian Heritage Trail.

The latest additions round off a collection of colourful images marking an array of local saints.

The distinctive windows are often admired by pilgrims visiting the area.

One of the new windows depicts St Bronagh, a sixth century Christian woman and disciple of St Patrick, who was associated with Rostrevor and Kilbroney.

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Pilgrims visit St Columbanus Parish Church to admire the gallery of distinctive stained glass windows

Bronagh built a church there, founded a community of prayer and became its abbess.

To denote her authority, Bronagh is depicted carrying her abbess's staff in one hand and the ancient 'Bronagh's Bell' in the other. The bell is a relic of the original church which lay concealed among its ruins for centuries.

The second window features a pelican pecking its breast to feed her young, which is traditional symbol of Christ sacrificing himself for humanity. It complements the 'Lamb of God' window that faces it on the north side of the church.

Rector of Ballyholme, Canon Simon Doogan, explained the origins of the distinctive gallery.

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“It goes back to the 1950s and a group of Church of Ireland clergy who wanted to reclaim a pre-Reformation, pre-schism Celtic tradition,” he said.

“And of course, on our doorstep we have Bangor Abbey and Movilla Abbey and all the names and saints and prayers associated with that.

“So, when a new church was being built here with plain glass windows, it presented an opportunity to mark the local saints.

“Here we have Gall, Comgall, Columbanus, Patrick, Columba, Finnian, Brendan and Bridget, all depicted. That’s unique. There’s no other church that we know of, especially on the Protestant side, that would major on that distinctly Irish Christian tradition.” He added that Canon Jack Mercer, who was rector of Ballyholme for 37 years, was always very keen that every window would be filled.

“We think he would be delighted that St Bronagh occupies the last space – a great woman of prayer who founded a community of prayer and a Co Down woman at that,” Canon Doogan added. Report courtesy the News Letter.

602 Presbyterians in protest letter over same-sex stance

More than 600 Presbyterians have signed a letter sent to the Church's leader saying they will not be silenced in the

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growing row over same-sex relationships, Alf McCreary reports in the Belfast Telegraph

The letter, signed by members of the Creative Conversation Group (CCG), also accuses the Church of failing to live up to its commitment to "consultation and engagement" with its members on major issues.

The ongoing dispute comes after the ruling general assembly controversially voted in June to not provide full communion for same-sex partners or to baptise their children.

It also voted to stop the traditional annual moderatorial exchanges with the Church of Scotland because of the Scots' more liberal views on same-sex issues.

The vote followed a report brought to the general assembly in June by its doctrine committee.

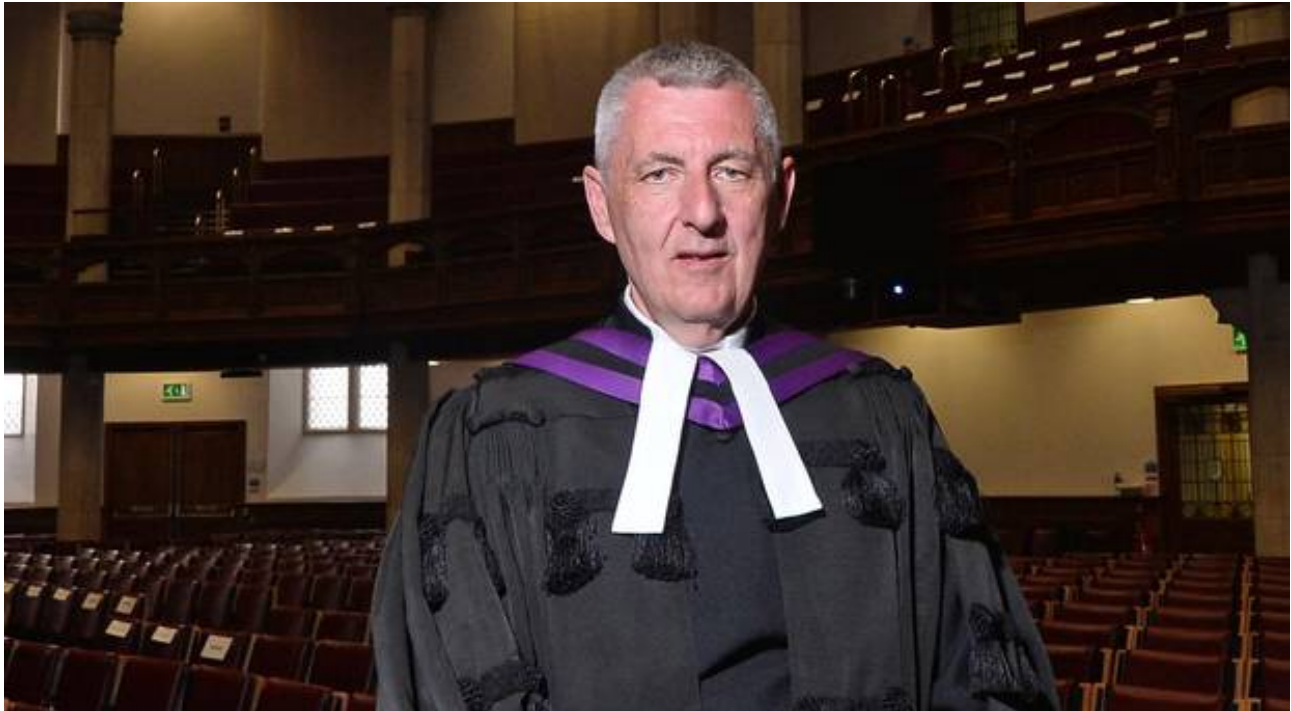
In the letter to Moderator Dr Charles McMullen, the group claims that the report "arguably arrived at the recent general assembly without full and proper consideration or debate, and certainly without proper consideration of its public square implications, or more seriously, its pastoral care implications".

The decisions caused widespread criticism of the Church by many Presbyterians here, including former Alliance Party leader Lord Alderdice.

He resigned as an elder in protest at the Church's attempts to shut down public debate on the controversy, describing the leadership being shown as "the kind of leadership of the Inquisition".

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The CCG said it wanted "to assert the long-held right of Presbyterians to exercise their God given right of private judgment, having examined the Holy Scripture and been guided by the Holy Spirit".



Presbyterian Moderator Dr Charles McMullen

They added that they "believe in loyal dissent and the need for continuing public discourse" and "respectful debate is healthy and should be encouraged".

The CCG said 602 Presbyterians had signed the letter.

The Presbyterian Church in a statement yesterday said that it was assumed that the letter was written to the Moderator for his consideration and response.

"It is very disappointing, therefore, and somewhat discourteous to the Moderator, that the authors also chose to circulate it more widely and to make it available to the media," it added.

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"This somewhat undermines the 'respectful discourse' the authors purport to be engaged in."

The statement claimed that "there are many opportunities for dialogue and discussion in the Presbyterian Church".

It said: "The annual general assembly, and the other structures of the Church, provide significant dramatic accountability where genuine dialogue can take place, rather than through the pages of newspapers."

The CCG letter is signed by the six members of its "ad hoc" committee - John and Rosemary Hunter, Susie Morrow, Linda Agnew, Heather Hanna and David Mark.

Mr Hunter, a retired senior civil servant and an elder in Stormont Presbyterian Church, said that originally the letter had been sent to the 80 CCG members on the mailing list, who were asked to consider signing it, and asking others if they wished to do so, hence a more than 700% increase in the original signatories. Mr Hunter said: "This illustrated to us the strength of feeling in the Church on this issue. As I pointed out at the general assembly, the Presbyterian Church seems to be showing an increased judgmentalism, a lack of grace, and a loss of our inclusivity."

Tullamore C of I church hosting fundraising Country Gospel for Presbyterian church repair

The Tullamore Presbyterian community are hosting a special Thanksgiving concert with Country and Gospel singer James Kilbane at St. Catherine's Church, Hophill, Tullamore on Sunday, October 14 starting at 5 pm, the

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**James
Kilbane**



Offaly
Express
reports.

This will be
a very
special
early
evening
concert to
help

necessary fundraising efforts for the local Presbyterian Church repair fund in the town as the church is in very serious need of repair.

The local Church of Ireland community and rector Rev Isaac Delamere are kindly making available for the Presbyterian community the use of St Catherine's Church in Hophill, Tullamore to hold this evening fundraising concert by Gospel singer James Kilbane on Sunday, October 14 at 5pm and support from all churches and traditions is encouraged and will be greatly appreciated for this fundraising event.

To enjoy this evening Thanksgiving concert with James Kilbane and the Tullamore Presbyterian Church then donation tickets are €15 and are available from outlets including Trax in Tullamore and Fingerboard in Mucklagh, the concert organising committee or by calling 085 1476929. All support will be appreciated and all traditions and interested people from across the region are all very

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welcome for what will be a wonderful evening of Gospel and Country music. Church access for the concert will be from 4.30pm with the concert event starting at 5pm. This is an event is not to be missed.

The Presbyterian community in Tullamore was founded in 1856 due to an influx of whiskey workers into the area and they originally met in the hall of the Methodist Church. Nine years later the Presbyterian church was built in 1865. A further two small extensions of a school and kitchen were built in later years.

The church population has changed over the time however in the last decade the community is once again experiencing growth. The church community continues make a mark locally working with parent and toddler groups, helping refugees and playing host to various community and church groups.

This local work has given a new life and vitality in Tullamore Church and town. However the Presbyterian Church building is over 150 years old and is in serious need of repairs to make sure that it remains safe and fit for purpose as a place of worship and a resource for the local community. The church is also a listed building and the cost of repairing this local historic structure will be very high. The Presbyterian church community in Tullamore have been contributing to repairs however they are now reaching out to the wider Christian family and friends both near and far for help.

Since 2004 and RTE programme "You're a Star" James Kilbane has released a total of thirteen successful albums reaching multi-platinum sales. He is a well know voice on

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radio, television and internet with his country and Christian music. His music is today growing far and wide in such countries as Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, South America as well as America, the United Kingdom and Canada. Kilbane's home grown approach attracts many from every walk of life and many traditions. Currently Kilbane's latest album is "The Family Collection" and he presents a regular Sunday afternoon Gospel music programme on SKY television. The upcoming Tullamore Thanksgiving concert will include many of his family songs including There is a place, Mama's Roses, Because He Lives, The Richest Man, The Nazarene Song and so many more great songs.

Derry's Churches Trust given Queen's seal of approval



Elizabeth Hamilton of Churches Trust with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

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An inter-church group set up over 30 years ago has been given a royal seal of approval.

The Churches Trust has been presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

It was established by the leaders of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Catholic Churches in Derry in response to high levels of deprivation.

The award was presented by the Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Londonderry Dr Angela Garvey, who commended the trust for its outstanding contribution to volunteering.

Chief executive Fiona Fagan said it was an honour to be recognised.

The Churches Trust was one of four organisations from the city recognised. The others were Britannia Concert Band, Foyle Child Contact Centre and Caw and Nelson Drive Action Group.

Noel Edmonds brands Archbishop of Canterbury a 'hypocrite' over Lloyds investment

Noel Edmonds has launched an astonishing attack on the Archbishop of Canterbury, criticising for failing to meet with HBOS fraud victims and investing in Lloyds Banking Group.

The Deal or No Deal TV star - who is seeking £64 million in damages from HBOS owner Lloyds - called Justin Welby a

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"hypocrite", claiming he tried numerous times to book an appointment with the head of the Church of England.

"Is there a bigger hypocrite than Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the CEO of 'Lords Bank'?", he said during a panel at the SME Alliance annual meeting in London.

"Ever since all this started, I've been trying to get an appointment with him, representatives of mine have been trying to get an appointment with Lambeth Palace, so I could explain some of the issues affecting not just Lloyds victims, but all victims of banking crime and my efforts have been rejected."

Corrupt bankers from the HBOS Reading branch were jailed last year for a £245 million loans scam which destroyed several businesses, before they squandered the profits on high-end prostitutes and luxury holidays.

Mr Edmonds is planning to pursue Lloyds for millions in damages for losses allegedly suffered when his former

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business Unique Group was destroyed as a result, although he has yet to lodge legal papers.

He noted that the archbishop last week mounted an "ecclesiastical attack on zero hours contracts, describing them as an ancient evil" before it emerged that a number of church staff were employed on those terms.

The church leader also attacked Amazon, despite its investment arm - the Church Commissioners - holding shares in the retail giant.

Mr Edmonds spoke during the panel which was held at Church House in Westminster where the Church Commissioners' officers are based.

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He continued: "...he [Archbishop Justin] won't meet me or any Lloyds victims and the church is one of the biggest investors in Lloyds Banking Group," prompting applause at the meeting.

Lloyds Banking Group is listed as one of the Church Commissioner's 20 most valuable share holdings, according to its 2017 annual report.

Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) boss Andrew Bailey used a speech earlier this month to update on progress on two HBOS cases, including its investigation into former senior managers of the failed bank.

It followed a 2015 review which found its top brass were ultimately responsible for its demise.

He said a substantial amount of information has been gathered and that new, potentially relevant documents are now being obtained.

Its second HBOS probe relates to "extent and nature of the knowledge" of misconduct within the Reading branch, as well as its communications with the FCA's predecessor the Financial Services Authority after the issues were discovered.

"We are nearing the end of our investigative review and considering what action is appropriate," he said.

Lambeth Palace has been contacted for comment.

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Cathedrals should be places where people can 'slip in' and 'slip out' without being bothered by anyone, the Bishop of Chelmsford has suggested.

People like cathedral services because they can be left alone – bishop

The Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell told the National Cathedrals Conference in Manchester this week that people were attracted to cathedrals because they were 'less likely to be pounced on', [the Telegraph reports](#).

While the Church of England has been struggling with a [decline](#) in attendance across its 16,000 churches, its cathedrals have been enjoying something of a [renaissance](#).

In stark contrast to regular church services, attendance at cathedral services rose by 17 per cent between 2006 and 2016, with over 11.3m people attending at least one cathedral service in 2016 alone.

Bishop Cottrell suggested lots of people are attracted to cathedrals because of the anonymity they offer.

While cathedrals are popular destinations for tourists as well as those seeking spiritual respite, the bishop said it was important that cathedrals preserve their heritage as a quiet space.

'I think there are thousands and thousands of people who want to come quietly, who even want to come secretly, and it's getting harder and harder to do that in the modern-day

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Sun rays in Winchester Cathedral

bouncy and accessible Church of England,' he said.



'So cathedrals have a special vocation and opportunity to be somewhere that you can slip into unseen and slip out of unseen.'

He also spoke positively about cathedrals offering services that do not make too many demands on those attending.

'It is important to realise that people don't just express their belonging in patterns of attendance, but in what they need spiritually when they attend, and some people need space around them,' he said.

'Somewhere where you're less likely to be pounced on, to be asked to join in, where the worship doesn't need you to say anything.'

