



Image of the day - Durham

Reports

Reduction in size of C of I General Synod to be considered

In key areas of church worship and governance the General Synod must agree on changes presented in the form of a Bill to be discussed, indeed debated, in three readings, similar to the UK parliament's procedures.

Five Bills will be brought before the members of General Synod for consideration:

Bill No.1 – This Bill will be presented with a view to setting out the principles upon which clerical and lay members of General Synod represent dioceses, and to establish a regular review of the size, distribution and membership of the House of Representatives of the General Synod.

Following extensive consideration with dioceses, it provides for a reduction in the membership of the House of Representatives from 648 members to 597 members (in a transitional period covering 2024-2026) and then to 534 members (in the 2027-2032 triennium) – the number of representatives from each diocese being equal to the number of cures in the diocese, with an additional number of places allocated on a sliding scale (i.e. from one for the diocese with the largest number of cures, to twelve for the diocese with the smallest number of cures). The representation for dioceses which are amalgamated would be fixed until the subsequent review, the first of which would commence in 2030.

Bill Nos. 2, 3 &4

– The Commission on Ministry will present three Bills, regarding: gender balance amongst parochial nominators; conflicts of interests or loyalty for diocesan lay nominators; and, in relation to



nominations to an incumbency, timely communication both to the nominee and to those who have not been nominated.

Bill No.2 will seek to ensure that those who act as parochial nominators at a time of vacancy have within their ranks a measure of gender balance, and thus assist in representing the demographic of the parish or group of parishes.

Bill No.3 would provide that no person shall act, or be capable of acting, as a diocesan nominator with respect to any parish of which such person shall be at the time a registered vestry member.

Bill No.4 seeks to ensure that clergy who are nominated to a parish (or parishes) are informed promptly, and to allow an element of flexibility for the bishop giving that person time to reach a decision, whilst at the same time ensuring that the Board of Nomination acts in an efficient and a timely fashion.

Bill No.5 – The purpose of this Bill is to provide procedures for the election of a bishop for the United Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe in the event of the sees of Limerick and Killaloe and of Tuam, Killala and Achonry falling vacant simultaneously.

This follows legislation in 2019 to provide for the union of the United Dioceses of Tuam, Killala and Achonry with the United Dioceses of Limerick and Killaloe under one bishop, and for related changes. However, the legislation did not consider a situation in which both sees would become vacant at the same time which is due to occur on 31st October 2021 as the Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry and the Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe have both signalled their intention to resign on the same date. It will be necessary to convene an episcopal electoral college for the new see, and this Bill provides for the electoral procedure provided for by General Synod in 2019 to be used where both sees become vacant at the same time.

On Monday 26 - the Motions being placed before Synod

Church leaders invite prayerful support for Service of Reflection and Hope

In a joint statement the Church Leaders have invited ‘prayerful support’ for their Service of Reflection and Hope, which takes place at St Patrick’s Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh on 21st October 2021.

The Church Leaders said, “towards the end of 2020, after prayerful reflection and dialogue, we made a decision as the



Church Leaders Group to undertake a collective programme of engagement with the 1921 centenaries. We were conscious that these centenaries would highlight painful moments from our past which continue to impact relationships in our present. We felt a responsibility as Christian leaders to explore the opportunity to deepen the work of reconciliation in a context of respectful dialogue. We cannot undo the past, but we can learn from it, and we all have a responsibility to contribute to the healing of relationships from our different perspectives.

“As Church Leaders we have been saddened by the polarised public commentary around our Service of Reflection and Hope. The tone of the public debate has shone a light on the societal wounds we wish to reflect on in this service. We wish primarily to gather in prayer for healing of relationships, and in doing so, to demonstrate a renewed

commitment to working together for peace, reconciliation and the common good.

“We of course understand that not everyone will feel able to participate with us in this service, but for those who do, particularly in our local churches across this island, we wish to clarify in this statement the context and original vision for the service, and invite people to join with us in prayer and reflection.”

Context for the Service of Reflection and Hope

Speaking about the context for the service, the Church Leaders continued, “we first set out our intentions and aspirations for this year in our New Year’s statement in which we acknowledged that what for some is a cause for celebration in the centenary of the formation of Northern Ireland, will be for others the centenary of a key moment in the partition of the island, evoking feelings of loss and separation. We shared that:

For us, as Church Leaders, the centenary opens up opportunities for greater understanding of each other, for further healing and reconciliation between our communities. This centenary also provides the opportunity for us to reflect together on the failings of relationships and use of violence across the whole island which have marred our past and which in some ways continue to cast a shadow on the present. Mindful of our interconnectedness, we recognise our different perspectives on this centenary even among us as Church Leaders. Still we commit ourselves to building a future together in which historic mistrust and division becomes a thing of the past.



“We approached these themes through prayer and worship, composing a centenary prayer and coming together for a broadcast worship service in May in which we reflected on what partition has meant in each of our lives and families. We sought to contribute to reflection within churches, publishing a statement on St Patrick’s Day acknowledging our own failings and highlighting the responsibilities of the Church. We have engaged in dialogue with a wide range of different groups, both within and beyond the churches, including Christian leaders in the other jurisdictions across these islands, and community leaders from different backgrounds. We will soon be releasing a podcast series on the theme ‘Identity and Belonging — Past, Present, Future’ which shares something of these conversations.”

Content of the Service for Reflection and Hope

The Church Leaders continued, “the Service of Reflection and Hope was planned for the latter part of the year so that it would be shaped and informed by the range of engagements outlined above, and to allow as many people as possible to join with us in this work. We re-state once again that the service is an initiative of the Church Leaders’ Group and Church Leaders have been wholly responsible for its planning, organisation and design. As we stated in March, it does not form part of any other programme of events.

“The ongoing risks of Covid-19 will restrict the space for in-person participation, but the service will bring together community representatives from across these islands. It will be underpinned by a Christian vision of reconciliation, which calls us to acknowledge the pain of the past, confess our own failings and commit ourselves to peace in the hope that relationships can be renewed as God reconciled us to himself through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-29).”

Hope for the future

In conclusion, they said, “as Church Leaders, people of faith, we stand united at this crossroads looking forward, by the grace of God, to a better and brighter future. We recognise the need to better respect our differences, but we must learn “to differ well” and be prepared to listen and show charity to those with different views and aspirations.

“As we prayerfully prepare for what will be a Christian act of worship we invite as many people as possible to join us in prayer on the day of the service and we hope that it will be a positive and honest contribution, through faith, to peace and healing in this land.”

Centenary Prayer

Sovereign, wise and gracious God, in whose hands lie the past, present and future, we acknowledge before you our failures, our divisions, and the hurt we have caused you and one another. Forgive, restore, and heal us. The events of partition and formation, which took place one hundred years ago on this island, changed, shaped, and determined the outlook for this place which we all call home. As we reflect upon those times and bring to mind what happened then and in the years since, we acknowledge before you our different and often polarised interpretations of history. As we travel onwards in our journey, may we learn from the experiences of the past and from those who trod these roads before us, so that the inheritance we pass on to the next generation is the gift of understanding, peace, and hope. In faith we pray, and humbly ask, in the name of him who is the light of the world and giver of all hope, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This statement has been issued on behalf of the Church Leaders Group which comprises the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Archbishops of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Most Rev John McDowell and the Most Rev Eamon Martin respectively; the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Rt Rev Dr David Bruce; the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu and the President of the Irish Council of Churches, the Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson.



Revd Prof Anne Lodge appointed Priest Scholar at Christ Church Cathedral

The Revd Prof Anne Lodge has taken up the role of Priest Scholar at Christ Church Cathedral. Prof Lodge is the Director of the Church of Ireland Centre (CIC) in the DCU Institute of Education.

In this part time voluntary role, she will contribute to the life of the cathedral through collaborations on educational programming.

The Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, the Very Revd Dermot Dunne, has welcomed Prof Lodge to the ministry team of the cathedral.

“Professor Lodge’s new role will be Priest Scholar which encapsulates the varied ministry Anne will engage in throughout her time with us. Anne brings with her a breath of experience and a depth of knowledge gained from her many academic pursuits and qualifications. Anne continues to pursue her career as Director of the Church of Ireland Centre at Dublin City University. This being a more than full time post Professor Lodge will weave her ministry with us through her daily commitments to her profession. The cathedral is ideally placed to accommodate such a varied and yet non defined ministry whereby Professor Lodge will be able to use her extensive educational knowledge in many and varied ways to enhance the cathedral’s educational outreach to the united dioceses and the wider Dublin community. I am excited by this development and I look

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forward to working closely with Anne as she begins a new chapter in her ministry as the cathedral opens to new and exciting possibilities and expressions of ministry,” he said.



The Revd Professor Anne Lodge

Prof Anne Looney, Executive Dean of Dublin City University's Institute of Education, has also commended Prof Lodge on her new role.

“I want to congratulate my colleague and the Director of the DCU Church of Ireland Centre, Rev Prof Anne Lodge, on her new role as Priest Scholar in Christ Church Cathedral. In many ways, the relationship between a denominational Centre and the secular University mirrors the relationship of a Cathedral to its city. The spaces are different, but the spaces between can be a source of insight, dialogue, challenge, reflection and research. Anne will bring her experience as the founding director of the DCU Church of Ireland Centre, her widely recognised leadership in scholarship and advocacy in teacher education and school governance to this new ministry. And in turn, this new ministry can further connect the Centre to the communities and schools it serves, and open new spaces – secular, sacred and scholarly – for our students and researchers. We look forward to learning more about the role as it evolves,” she commented.

Prof Lodge said she was blessed to have been given the opportunity to become part of the cathedral’s ministry team.

“I have spent many years doing part-time parish ministry, as a youth leader, a Sunday School teacher, a parish reader, a lay reader, an ordinand, a deacon intern and then a curate. Serving in a parish, in any capacity, is a great privilege. Being part of the life of the diocesan cathedral is also a great privilege. My ministry encompasses both my day-to-day work in the Church of Ireland Centre, and indeed, across the university in DCU and my new ministry in Christ Church Cathedral. My location in both places will enable me to explore and extend the sharing of those distinct ministries between the two spaces. One of the great blessings of the part-time, voluntary role that I now hold in

the Cathedral is that I am free, in consultation with the Dean and other members of the cathedral community, to shape this role creatively, innovatively and in ways inspired by our shared Christian faith and vocations,” she explained.

The first two shared activities give some flavour of the creativity and public expressions of, and engagement with faith that this role can facilitate. Last May, the Church of Ireland Centre, the Centre for the Study of Irish Protestantism, the Cathedral and the United Dioceses were involved in a shared initiative to launch the latest Lindchester book by Catherine Fox in a live-streamed event that can now be viewed on

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVFA_oT_Jto.

It is hoped that similar joint public initiatives with a variety of speakers and topics will be held in the future. Meanwhile, the Church of Ireland Centre, the cathedral and the United Dioceses will host an exhibition of children’s work from ten primary schools entitled ‘Living Faith Living History’ in Christ Church later in October. There will be a live exhibition and also a publication based on the children’s work.

Appreciation - Ruth Blevins was an inspiration to all

Though challenged with deafness and blind, Ruth was incredibly inquisitive and determined to do things some thought impossible, Carmel Robinson writes.

Ruth Blevins was born in Portadown in October 1965, the daughter of Norris and Maureen Blevins. Her mother had contracted Rubella (German measles) during pregnancy

and Ruth was born deaf and with very limited sight - she went completely blind later in life. She had four brothers: Harold, Derek, David and Stephen.

Her childhood was divided between her home in Portadown and her school in Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

She spent a short time at Jordanstown School for the Deaf outside Belfast but 12 years at Condover Hall School for the Deaf Blind in Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

Her mother flew to England and back 12 times a year for 12 years to ensure Ruth was given every opportunity to succeed. At Condover, she learned a bespoke type of sign language for children who are both deaf and blind and excelled at every lesson and extra-curricular activity.

Ruth worked as a Domestic Assistant in the Laundry and Estates Department of Craigavon Area Hospital (Southern Health and Social Care Trust) for 36 years - an incredible achievement for someone without sight or hearing.

Her boss described her as 'a joy to be around'. COVID restrictions in the hospital prevented her from working for 12 months but she was determined to return and did so just three months ago. She was a well-known character around the hospital.

Her brother David said: "Ruth had what I describe as a contagious joy. She laughed a lot and she made other people laugh wherever she went.

“To describe her as inquisitive would be an understatement. When Mum stopped to talk to people, Ruth would immediately stick her hand out for Mum to sign who it was.

“She had an exceptional memory, particularly for birthdays. She knew everyone’s birthday and, even if she hadn’t seen them for years, would waken on their birthday and ask Mum if she had sent a card or a text message.”

Ruth had a more active social life than her four brothers combined! She attended the Deaf Club, the Eagle Fellowship, the Disabled Christian Fellowship to name but a few.

She never missed Sunday worship at her church - Tandragee Methodist.

She had a wide network around her - work colleagues, social workers, befrienders, etc. Her family is deeply grateful for the contribution each of them made to her life. Her funeral was restricted to 60 people but more than 3,000 people have watched it online.

If one word could sum up Ruth, her family believe it is ‘determined’. She embodied the Helen Keller quotation: “While they were saying among themselves it cannot be done, it was done.”

David said: “While we, as a family, were busy asking how Ruth would cope with school, with work and with life in general, Ruth just kept answering the question by accomplishing more than we ever imagined. When Ruth

decided something had to be done and done in a certain way, there was no changing her mind.

“She had the kindest heart. Ruth used to help facilitate sign-language exams but when candidates forgot the vowel, she would lift the right finger to help them pass. Failure wasn’t in her vocabulary.”

Ruth has been an inspiration to many and her family attributes it to her sense of joy.

Her brother Stephen said: “People were inspired by her ability to converse on her hands, by her achievements at school and at work, by her active social life.

“But among the many lovely memories they have shared with us since her passing, there is one word we have heard repeatedly: laugh. Even when she was telling her younger nieces and nephews off for messing up her bedroom, she would laugh. She just loved a bit of craic and it radiated from her.”

He explained: “When Ruth was born, the doctors gave her little hope. They said she would never sit upright, never mind walk but a Methodist lay preacher prayed for her and the following morning, she sat upright for the first time.

“She had begun to rewrite her story. She was one of Northern Ireland’s Young Deaf Achievers in 1993, a bridesmaid at two weddings and enjoyed holidaying with relatives living in Spain and Scotland.”

David recalled: “For Ruth’s 50th birthday, Mum and her travelled to my brother Derek’s home in Spain. What they didn’t know was that Ruth’s other three brothers - Harold, David and Stephen - had flown to Spain six hours behind them. When Mum and Ruth arrived at a hotel for Ruth’s birthday breakfast, we were all there to surprise her. Mum could not believe her eyes and Ruth did what Ruth always did - laughed and laughed.”

David said: “Ruth was not just the centre of our family - the only daughter/sister, with two older brothers and two younger brothers - she was the life and soul of it.

“Our late father adored her (she often spoke about how he would hug her again when she got to heaven) and Mum devoted her entire life to Ruth.

“Her brothers wanted to change the world for her but Ruth ended up changing the world for us in every positive sense. She totally enriched our lives.”

At Ruth’s funeral her brothers paid a beautiful tribute to both their sister and their mum. “Mum, we love you. A unique daughter needed a unique mother and God chose the very best for Ruth. You have devoted your life to her, been her rock in every sense and you’ll not have to leave her behind. God, in His grace, has taken her on ahead, waiting on the other side.”

Ruth Ann Elizabeth Blevins, from Turnberry Green, Tandragee, died suddenly at home on September 13.

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She was the dearly loved daughter of Maureen and the late Norris and sister of Harold, Derek, David and Stephen.

Her funeral was in Tandragee Methodist Church on Thursday 16th September 2021 followed by interment at Killyman Parish Churchyard.

The family has asked that donations in lieu of flowers can be made to Sense NI, c/o George McNabb & Co, 106 Bridge Street, Portadown.

Courtesy the Portadown Times

News briefs



Moderator visits Balmoral Show

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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The Moderator said "It was a real pleasure to visit the Ulster Farmers' Union stand at the Balmoral Show with Rev Kenny Hanna. Met with Victor Chestnutt and William Irvine. Very encouraging conversation."

Irish Methodist World Development Annual Report

2021 Annual Report is now available. "View it here and find out how, together with our supporters and partners, we're building futures..."

[buff.ly/3mp8nad]

Youth Officer for Divine Healing Ministry

Peter Kirch has been appointed part-time Youth Officer for IDHM. Many of you already know Peter as he has been a member of the prayer ministry team for a few years. Peter has been serving in youth ministry for over 10 years through his church (St Brigid's Church of Ireland, Mallusk). Peter was born in Marysville Ohio, moved to Ireland when he was 3, and became a Christian at 5 years of age. He is a creative evangelist and videographer with Crown Jesus Ministries and is passionate about media; he graduated from Ulster University with a BA in Media Studies and Production.

Peter says "I have volunteered with DHM since 2015 and I'm so excited to officially join the team. I'm looking forward to seeing what God has in store for this season."

Please include Peter in your prayer as he helps develop the ministry of prayer, healing and unity with young people, monthly healing services for young adults and creates new youth-friendly IDHM resources.

Polish and parish ministry at St Eugene's

Fr Ignacy Saniuta has been welcomed to St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry. He will also continue his ministry to the Polish community in the Diocese of Derry.

Fr Ignacy was born in Belarus to parents of Polish origin. He was ordained a priest in 2004 and was released by the Bishop of Vitebsk (Belarus) in 2016 to study English in Limerick. Fr Ignacy has served since September 2018 in Drumragh (Omagh) and Langfield and as Chaplain to the Polish speaking community.



Installation of Canon at Rosscarbery

Installation of Canon Elaine Murray: On Sunday, 19th September 2021, Canon Elaine Murray, Rector of Carrigaline Union, was installed to the Prebend of

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Timoleague on the Chapter of St Fachtna's Cathedral, Rosscarbery. The pandemic had delayed the service.

New Chair of the Commission's new stakeholder engagement forum.



Charlene Brooks, Chief Executive of ParentingNI and deputy chair of the NICVA executive committee, has been appointed Chair of the Commission's new stakeholder engagement forum.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Inaugural Elizabeth B. Stephens International Organ Competition

The Stephens Family has announced the inaugural Elizabeth B. Stephens International Organ Competition, to

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be held June 15-17, 2022, in Atlanta, GA, USA. The competition is open to all organists aged 32 and younger as of June 15, 2022, and features \$21,000 in prize money.

Please visit website for more information:
prumc.org/organ-competition

Sunday Morning Services BBC Radio Ulster

The Sunday Morning Service on BBC Radio Ulster for 29 September is Parish Mass from St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast.

On 3 October the service will be led by the Revd Adrian Dorrian who is Team Vicar in the Lecale Area Mission Partnership. The service will have a Harvest theme.

The programmes will be broadcast at 10.15 am and will be available afterwards [at this link](#).

Poem for today

The Foggy Dew by Katharine Tynan

A splendid place is London, with golden store,
For them that have the heart and hope and youth galore;
But mournful are its streets to me, I tell you true,
For I'm longing sore for Ireland in the foggy dew.

The sun he shines all day here, so fierce and fine,
With never a wisp of mist at all to dim his shine;

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The sun he shines all day here from skies of blue:
He hides his face in Ireland in the foggy dew.

The maids go out to milking in the pastures gray,
The sky is green and golden at dawn of the day;
And in the deep-drenched meadows the hay lies new,
And the corn is turning yellow in the foggy dew.

Mavrone ! if I might feel now the dew on my face,
And the wind from the mountains in that remembered place,
I'd give the wealth of London, if mine it were to do,
And I'd travel home to Ireland and the foggy dew.



Speaking to the Soul

See post for today on site

