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'Exciting Time' for New Edinburgh Divinity Head



Professor Helen Bond, the new head of the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh, has said that it is an 'exciting' time for the subject at the university.

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Professor Helen Bond took over as head of the school a month ago. She said: “There has been a lot to learn. It’s very different in a leadership role – it’s a whole different perspective on things.

“We are very strong at the moment. I think we are the largest place in the UK to study theology, we are number one in Scotland in terms of research and teaching and it’s a really exciting time.

“I want to engage with the outside world a bit more, and really position the school as a place where people come to and think of for the study of all religion, not just Christianity and Judaism.”

Professor Bond has been at the School of Divinity for 18 years. She specialises in New Testament studies, with a particular interest in the historical figure of Jesus and the early development of Christianity. She has been Director of the Centre for the Study of Christian Origins since 2011.

She is the first female head of the School of Divinity at Edinburgh, and possibly of a major divinity department in Scotland. With the Rev Professor Susan Hardman Moore taking over as Principal of New College, one of the centres where Church of Scotland ministers are trained, Professor Bond says it illustrates how far women have come in the study of divinity in Scotland.

“Fifty years ago it would have been very much a male dominated place – male staff and male students. Even when I came 18 years ago there weren’t many female

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members of staff. Nowadays, at undergraduate level we have got far more women than men, and in staff I think it's about one third women. There has been a real change in the whole culture of divinity, it's a really different place of work than it was in the past, and I think that's all to be celebrated."

Enniskillen thanksgiving service for the work of St John Ambulance

A thanksgiving service for the work of St John Ambulance and its many volunteers in Clogher Diocese is taking place in St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen during 11am morning worship on Sunday, 16th September 2018.

The service, to be conducted by the Dean of Clogher, the Very Revd Kenneth Hall will be attended by The Lord Prior, Sir Malcolm Ross, the third highest ranked person within the Order of St. John under the Sovereign Head, the Queen and the Duke of Gloucester.

The most senior Knight of the Commandery of Ards in Northern Ireland, Viscount Brookeborough KG, will also be in attendance.

The service is to promote awareness of the contribution made by so many volunteers, some of whom have been with the charity for over 30 years, who with St. John Ambulance vehicles, attend sporting and community event, providing first aid cover.

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The charity has 1300 adult volunteers attached to 28 units in Northern Ireland with a fleet of 63 ambulances. In addition there are over 1000 cadets and badgers.

Lord Brookeborough said: “Every one of these people is an unpaid volunteer. This is a service to thank them for what they do.”

He gave an example of the commitment and necessity to have St. John Ambulance at sporting fixture and at major public events. At the recent Clogher Valley Show, one of the largest one-day agricultural shows in Ireland, there were two St. John Ambulance vehicles present and by mid-afternoon, both were fully engaged and a third was asked to be on standby.

St John Ambulance volunteers are trained in first aid to treat all types of injuries ranging from headaches to heart attacks. They use these skills to provide first aid treatment at a wide variety of public events.

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Volunteers often arrange further medical assistance and transport for patients or provide comfort and rest to people in need of more prolonged care.

A spokesperson stated: “St John Ambulance is the nation’s leading first aid charity. Every year, more than 400,000 people learn how to save a life through our training programmes, including hundreds of thousands of young people. Our volunteers provide first aid in their communities, keeping people safe at events, and working alongside the NHS in response to 999 calls.

“We’re also always campaigning to raise awareness of first aid and directly educate the public. We provide medical cover for events – from major sporting fixtures and music festivals to public gatherings. We’re the leading provider of workplace training, reaching over 250,000 people a year. Over half of the people we train are under 18. We don’t just teach life-saving skills – we offer life-saving opportunities as well. We give people access to important skills they wouldn’t otherwise get the chance to learn. First aid is such a simple skill, but it has an incredible impact. We want everyone to learn it, so that they can be the difference between a life lost and a life saved.”

Former Stormont minister claims he was attacked for his Christian faith

A former Stormont minister has claimed he was attacked for his Christian faith.

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Jonathan Bell said he was labelled a "monster" who had to be put to sleep over a green energy scheme which was plunging into chaos in Northern Ireland.

He claimed he was the victim of a massive smear campaign and was framed by members of his own party.

The senior figure who he claimed briefed against him was David Gordon, who led the communications strategy of the Executive Office department in 2016.

Mr Bell made a series of explosive claims as he gave evidence to a public inquiry in Belfast into why the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme costs spiralled under his Enterprise Department's watch.

He blamed the DUP for "fitting him up", his former special adviser Timothy Cairns and officials for not making him aware what was happening, and claimed Mr Gordon briefed that he was a "monster who had to be put to sleep".

"I fear I have been the victim of a massive smear campaign," he said.

Mr Bell was minister at the Enterprise Department, which oversaw the RHI scheme, from 2015 to 2016.

He told the inquiry: "I have to say to you, I am just one boy, I can't operate against the Executive Office."

He alleged that Sky News Ireland correspondent David Blevins gave the DUP advice on how to discredit him

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Solicitor Denis Moloney and his client, former DUP minister Jonathan Bell (right) as they arrive at the RHI inquiry at Stormont Parliament buildings in Belfast.

and that advice from the journalist included attacking his Christian faith.

Sky News has strongly denied the claims.

A statement from Sky News said:

"The suggestion by Jonathan Bell that David Blevins advised the DUP on anything is completely and utterly untrue."

Text messages between Mr Bell's former special adviser Mr Cairns and DUP leader Arlene Foster as well as another special adviser, Timothy Johnston, revealed that Mr Cairns would "fit his story to whatever the party narrative was to be", Mr Bell claimed.



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Mr Bell also contended to the inquiry that he first became aware of issues with the scheme on August 24 2015.

In September he signed an order for cost control measures with a four-week delay.

But he has insisted he would have authorised it earlier if he had been aware.

There was a surge in applications for the scheme before the cost-cutting tariffs took effect in November.

Almost 1,000 boilers were accredited to the scheme between August and November.

Mr Bell's special adviser Timothy Cairns has given a statement to the inquiry that he gave the minister a briefing about the RHI scheme on July 8 before Mr Bell went on holiday.

Mr Bell refuted that.

Mr Cairns also claimed in his evidence that Mr Bell had limited availability that summer between his family holiday to China in July and being away in Portstewart in early August.

Mr Bell responded saying: "I was available for every meeting, every photocall, every business ... (civil servants) could've contacted me at any time ... but there was no attempt to contact me, I believe."

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Mr Bell has also distanced himself from a four-week delay in introducing the cost cutting measures to the scheme.

He claimed he was told the delay was necessary to get measures through.

The inquiry also heard claims from Mr Bell that he was told some DUP special advisers had an interest in keeping the scheme, without the cost cutting measures, open as long as possible.

We must go to the people – Bishop Deenihan of Meath

Priests in commuter towns need to engage actively with their communities to boost the Church's visibility, Ireland's newest bishop has said.

“It's about interacting with the community – it's about getting involved, and becoming part of the community,” Meath's Bishop Tom Deenihan told Greg Daly of The Irish Catholic.

“If the community isn't coming into the Church, it's about the Church going out into the community. Now, that sounds very clichéd, but we have to be visible, we have to be present, and we have to be meeting people where they're at,” he said, pointing out that this is in line with Pope Francis' emphasis on a missionary Church.

“You want a situation where the priest is known, where people can come to the priest, or they can come to the church and are able to make that connection if they need to,” he continued.

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Canon Tom Deenihan (centre) during the Episcopal Ordination at the Cathedral of Christ the King in Mullingar on Sunday.

Dr Deenihan was ordained as Bishop of Meath in Mullingar's Cathedral of Christ the King on Sunday, September 2, succeeding Bishop Michael Smith, Ireland's longest-serving bishop.

During his comments after his ordination Dr Deenihan spoke of how Catholics must avoid defeatism and remember the joy that is "critical" to Christian belief. Looking forward to the priestly ordination of Deacon Fergal Cummins at the end of the month, he called for prayers for vocations and encouragement for those considering vocations.

"If Christ personally invited his followers to follow him, why should we think it would be different in our day? We must, all of us, give that word of invitation and encouragement," he said.

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Challenges

Speaking to this newspaper, Dr Deenihan noted that the Diocese of Meath is increasingly a diocese of satellite towns and said: “There are challenges for parish in that, because I think parish thrives as a community and if people are leaving early in the morning and not returning until late at night, it can be much more difficult to build community.”

Calling for the Church to work actively to build direct links with individuals, he said dynamic parishes can play a crucial role in this.

“The parish is becoming more active, and that’s good, because I think things again are being created,” he said. “I think the days of people coming to us are gone. We have to go to them.”

Empty chair from Lisburn to symbolise in Ypres the lost lives of Great War

The Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum will mark Ireland’s contribution to the Great War by collaborating in a special project with In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, Belgium.

The local museum was specially invited to donate a chair from its collection to sit alongside chairs from 120 other nations who lost men and women in Belgium during the Great War (1914-18) in a major art installation in Ypres.

As part of the centenary of the Armistice, or the end of the war, in November 2018 the chairs will be installed in Astrid

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Park, in the shadow of Ypres famous cloth hall, as part of lantern-lit vigil in memory of the war dead.

Alderman Paul Porter, chair of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Leisure and Community Development Committee, commented that "it was a privilege that Lisburn should be chosen to represent the nearly 50,000 individuals from across the island of Ireland who lost their lives in the Great War."

In thanking the museum for its work over the last four years in telling the story of Lisburn and the First World War through its exhibition and education programme, Alderman Porter added that "the war had a huge impact on Lisburn, with nearly 1,000 men and women perishing in the conflict" and "it was important that their sacrifice was remembered."

Raymond Corbett, President of the Lisburn Branch of the Royal British Legion, said it was "wonderful to see a simple chair from Lisburn included in this international display in Ypres". 'Memorial Chairs' is on display in Ypres until November 11, 2018. To learn more about Lisburn and the Great War visit the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum's hugely popular WWI exhibition. For details visit www.lisburnmuseum.com

Church of England numbers at record low, survey finds

The number of people who describe themselves as belonging to the Church of England is at a record low, a survey found.

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Canterbury Cathedral, one of the most iconic buildings of the Church of England.

Since 2002, the proportion of Britons who identify as Church of England has more than halved, falling from 31 per cent to 14 per cent.

The sharpest decline happened among 45 to 54-year-olds - 35 per cent in 2002 compared with eleven per cent in 2017, according to data from the National Centre for Social Research's (NatCen) British social attitudes survey.

The proportion of people who describe themselves as Roman Catholic (eight per cent) belonging to "other Christian affiliations" (ten per cent) and "of non-Christian faiths" (eight per cent) have remained fairly stable.

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Fifty two per cent of people now say they have no religion, compared with 41% in 2002, and men are more inclined to say they follow no religion than women (57 per cent compared with 48 per cent), the survey found.

Seventy per cent of those aged 18-24 say they have no religion - an increase from 56 per cent in 2002, while two per cent of this group view themselves as Anglicans, down from nine per cent in 2002.

The number of Scots who say they belong to the Church of Scotland has fallen overall, from 31 per cent in 2002 to 18 per cent in 2017.

Roger Harding, head of public attitudes at the NatCen, said: "Our figures show an unrelenting decline in Church of England and Church of Scotland numbers.

"This is especially true for young people, where less than one in 20 now belong to their established church.

"While the figures are starkest among younger people, in every age group the biggest single group are those identifying with no religion.

"We know from the British Social Attitudes survey that people's views are becoming more socially liberal on issues like same sex relationships and abortion.

"With growing numbers belonging to no religion, faith leaders will no doubt be considering how to better connect to a changing society."

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Dave Male, the Church of England's director of evangelism and discipleship, said: "It has been clear for some time that we have moved from an era of people automatically, and perhaps unthinkingly, classifying themselves as Church of England or Anglican to one in which identifying with a faith is an active choice.

"We also know from research that people, particularly younger people, are less aware of denominations.

"Yet research, especially amongst young people, shows an increase in willingness to engage in faith.

"Our experience is that people - of all ages - haven't stopped searching for meaning and answers in their life.

"Ultimately the Church exists to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

"That was never meant to be easy and that work goes on whatever the figures may say."

The 2017 survey consisted of 3,988 interviews with a representative, random sample of adults in Britain.

Progress made towards 2020 Lambeth Conference

"Progress continues to be positive and financially we are on track" – that was the message from the Chief Executive of the Lambeth Conference Company, Phil George, to members of the Anglican Consultative Council's Standing

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Ballymoney National School



Cork double

Yesterday
an
extension
to
Ballymoney
National
School was
formally
opened and



blesed by Bishop Paul Colton who later in the day
consecrated a chapel (above) in St Luke's Home.

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Committee as he briefed them on plans for the gathering of Anglican bishops from around the world in 2020.

“The first year of LC2020 planning is complete,” he said. “In many ways we are ahead of schedule and well positioned for the planning and preparations of the next two years.”

“I have a growing excitement about the Lambeth Conference and that is partly because when I talk to so many people I sense that they are growing very excited as well,” he said.

Three members of the Standing Committee are members of the Lambeth Conference Design Group, established to set the programme for the event: the Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba, from the Anglican Church of Southern Africa; the Bishop of Nairobi, Joel Waweru, from the Anglican Church of Kenya; and Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion.

The Lambeth Conference is one of the four Instruments of Unity of the Anglican Communion. Held roughly every 10 years, it is a gathering of the bishops of the Anglican Communion, drawn together by the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The 2020 gathering will be held between 24 July and 3 August at the University of Kent in Canterbury.

The programme will include a spiritual retreat, Bible studies, plenary sessions, teaching and seminars, and services in Canterbury Cathedral, the mother church of the Anglican Communion. The programme will also include a day of events in London.

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The theme of the 2020 Conference is “*God’s Church for God’s World: walking, listening and witnessing together*”. The specific issues under discussion are being drawn up in consultation with the Anglican Communion Primates – the leaders of the 39 independent Churches that make up the Communion – at regional Primates’ Meetings taking place this year and next.

“The regional Primates’ Meetings continue being very helpful in terms of gathering topics for the programme, building excitement and galvanising local support both for attendance and local fundraising,” Phil George said.

Members of the Standing Committee discussed a range of issues related to the conference: including the cost and difficulties for bishops in some parts of the world in obtaining visas to enter the United Kingdom.

A website will be launched in the Autumn to replace a temporary webpage which gave initial information. This will coincide with the sending of invitations to bishops and their spouses.

