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## **Today at the General Assembly – Wednesday June 6**

On the second day's business in Belfast today (6 June), at the Presbyterian Church of Ireland's General Assembly, the Church's governing and decision-making body will discuss a range of issues that include a biblical response to climate change, Human identity, the Church's relationships with other denominations, including the Church of Scotland and inter-church groups. It will also discuss its approach to interfaith and multi-faith events and hear from delegates of partner churches from around the world. The Moderator will also receive students accepted for the Ordained Ministry.

### **Missional focus**

In the first business session of the day, the General Assembly will hear from the Council for Congregational Life and Witness. This Council seeks to support the on-going life, mission and witness of congregations in their work with all age-groups.

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The report quotes one observer's comments who summed up the present situation for ministry and mission in the Church in just in four simple words: 'Difficult task - Active hope'. The report acknowledges the difficult task that is faced in a rapidly changing and increasingly secular society, but focuses on the 'Active hope' that is being experienced now in congregations and is in anticipation of what God is doing by His Holy Spirit to enable them to be fruitful where He has placed them.

Among the matters discussed will be the result of a major review of the Church's Summer Outreach Teams programme - undertaken by the Outreach Committee - which endorses the need for denominational teams in supporting congregations for local mission and the development of team members in missional discipleship.

The General Assembly will also hear of a number of new resources: 'Encounter' will lead participants to reflect more deeply on aspects of worship. 'PROXIMITY' is the first of series discipleship resources for use in of one-to-one, or other small scale relational discipling, while 'ASK' is a series of 12 postcard-sized prayer prompts for use by members in private prayer and in Sunday worship. The Council's report also looks at how to simulate congregations to go into overseas mission.

### **Listening to the Global Church**

This afternoon the Council for Global Mission will present a session entitled 'Listening to the Global Church'. This is the fourth year such a session has featured at the General Assembly, providing members an opportunity to hear what God, through the life and witness of the global church, might

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be saying to us here in Ireland, not least through the partner delegates and guests from around the world. This year the presentation is entitled, 'Streams in the Desert'

Through interviews and with prayerful reflection, delegates from partner churches and organisations across the globe will share with the Assembly the ways they see God's life giving Spirit at work through His people, even in the most challenging of environments.

Contributions will be brought from Rt. Rev. Peter Gai Lual Marrow, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan; Dr. Terence Ascott, International CEO of SAT 7, the first Christian Satellite TV organisation broadcasting in the Middle East and North Africa; and Rev. Manojkumar V. Gohil, a senior Presbyter in Raikhad, a large congregation in the Church of North India, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

During the day's business, the Moderator of the General Assembly, Dr. McMullen, will receive students accepted for the Ordained Ministry, placing them under the care of their presbyteries.

### **General Council**

The General Council will present its second and third reports this afternoon. The Council is the largest and most representative body under the Assembly and can act on behalf of the General Assembly between meetings, as appropriate.

A resolution will be brought outlining the denomination's approach to interfaith and multi-faith events. The General

Assembly will also receive a report by the Doctrine Committee on same sex couples and the sacraments, having been asked by the General Council to prepare guidelines for Kirk Sessions to address the issue of same-sex couples who may seek communicant membership, or who may request the baptism of a child. The focus of the report is on the 'specific theological question of what constitutes a credible profession of faith and how it is to be understood and applied in these particular circumstances'.

Members of Assembly will also this afternoon hear from the Human Identity Task Group as it acknowledges the 'urgent need to get good, accessible material from a Biblical standpoint into the hands of PCI members' on the topic of gender identity. One such resource will be a special printing of Vaughan Roberts' short book *Talking Points: Transgender* with a customised PCI introduction, copies of which will be circulated to each minister and congregation.

### **Relationships with other denominations**

In the second of the day's sessions of General Council business, the General Assembly will consider a number of areas regarding its relationship with some inter-church bodies, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church.

The General Assembly will discuss whether it should accept invitations to attend the General Assemblies of those two denominations and in turn no longer issue invitations to attend the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's General Assembly; or resume accepting invitations for the Moderator to attend the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and continue to accept invitations from the United Reformed

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Church. It will also be suggested that areas for the mutual benefit of both denominations on a working level, through various councils, committees and departments, should continue or could be considered.

## **Youth Assembly Fringe and Wednesday Evening Celebration**

Following the close of business, the Church's Youth Assembly will hold a fringe event entitled 'Together: Connecting the Generations' in the new conference facility on the ground floor of Assembly Buildings. A brand new promotional video will be launched at this event, aimed at inspiring connection between the generations within congregations.

The popular Wednesday Evening Celebration of worship and prayer will be held in the Assembly Hall at 7.45pm. Open for all to attend, the theme of the evening is Building Relationships. Led by the Moderator, Dr. Charles McMullen, it will include a keynote address by well-known speaker and author, the Rev. Rico Tice, the developer of the popular Christianity Explored course, who is the senior minister (evangelism) at All Souls, Langham Place in London.

Details of each day's business of the 2018 General Assembly can be found *here*. Resolutions and reports before the General Assembly can be found *here* in the 2018 Blue Book. Additional reports and resolutions can be found in the Supplementary Reports *here*.

Most of the public sessions will be streamed live via this website. All public session proceedings can also be followed

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