



Shillelagh Parish Church built by the Board of First Fruits in 1834 - Photo by Ecclesiastical

Foremost Irish religious publisher Columba Press thanks supporters after entering liquidation

Ireland's best-known independent publisher of books on a religious theme, the [Columba Book Service Ltd](#) (Columba Press and Currach Press), has thanked everyone who supported it over the years, after the company went into liquidation, Patsy McGarry writes in The Irish Times.

Managing director Fergal O'Boyle said Columba went into examinership in May "to protect the jobs of our employees while we sought new investment.

"Unfortunately, we have been unable to secure the new investment that would be needed to return the company to profitability and place us on a sound financial footing for the future."

He wished fellow indigenous Irish publishers "every success as you fight the good fight to get our own local authors onto bookshelves in the face of fierce competition from large international companies".

Founded as Columba Press in 1984 by Sean O'Boyle, with the mission to produce "thoughtful books for a thinking church", its first three titles were published in 1985.

Its first titles were Masses with Young People by Fr Donal Neary SJ, Funeral Homilies, edited by Fr Liam Swords, and Disturbing the Peace by Fr Eamonn Bredin.

It published across a broad range of subjects, including pastoral resources, spirituality, theology, the arts and history.

At its height, it published 35 new titles a year, with about 350 books in print.

Its title The Glenstal Book of Prayer (2001) sold more than 150,000 copies worldwide and topped the bestsellers list in [Ireland](#) for 18 weeks.

Its Book of Common Prayer for the [Church of Ireland](#) has sold more than 120,000 copies.

Among Columba's bestselling authors were theologian James P Mackey, Fr Daniel J O'Leary, Fr Mark Patrick Hederman, Fr Pat Collins, Fr Tony Flannery, Fr Seán Fagan and Fr Brian D'Arcy.



St George's Parish Church, Belfast, is holding a week of mission from September 10-18.

Bicentenary Week of Mission in St George's, Belfast

St George's Parish Church, Belfast, is holding a mission from Saturday September 10 until Sunday September 18 as part of the church's two-hundredth anniversary.

The mission will be led by a team from the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, Yorkshire. The team is made up of Fr John Gribben CR and five theological students,

Sebastian Hamilton, Alex Hobbs, Philip Kennedy, Steffan Mathias and Waldermar Nion.

Fr John is originally from Willowfield in east Belfast and was ordained in the Church of Ireland in 1975, serving as curate-assistant in St. Colman's, Dunmurry. Since 1979 he has been a member of the Anglican monastic order, the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield.

The week will take the form of a teaching mission on the theme Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever, with morning sessions at 10.30am Monday-Saturday (except Wednesday 14th when the session will be at 11am) and evening mission services Sunday-Friday at 7.30pm, followed by refreshments.

There will be children's events on the Saturday afternoon, September 17, from 2-4pm.

The team will be commissioned by Archbishop Alan Harper, former Archbishop of Armagh and a former Bishop of Connor, at 11am on Sunday September 11.

The rector of St George's, the Rev Brian Stewart, said: "Everyone is most warmly welcome to the events of Mission 2016 and we would ask you to

pray for his success and particularly for Fr John, Alex, Philip, Steffan, Sebastian and Waldermar.”

For further information contact

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Busy start for Moderator as he goes back to his roots

Having chaired June’s General Assembly, where he was formally elected and installed as Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar left these shores for [England and Wales to represent the Church at the general assemblies of the United Reformed Church and Presbyterian Church of Wales](#). Prior to attending them, the Moderator went to France at the start of July to take part in the official commemorations to mark the [100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme](#).

Dr. Sellar has also dedicated a new church hall in First Castlederg Presbyterian Church, visited a number of the denomination’s residential homes and schemes in Belfast, Omagh and Dublin and commissioned young people taking part in various summer teams, he has also begun to take part in Sunday services – many of these



nvitations having come from places the Moderator knows very well.

“My predecessor, Dr. McNie, worked out that he had visited and spoken in approximately 100-plus congregations during his year in office, so I have some way to go, but it has been wonderful to meet so many people across our Church so far.”

Dr. Sellar grew up and went to school in Coleraine, spending his formative years in and around the northwest before leaving for Lancaster University aged 18. And it is to the

North Coast that many of the initial invitations have come for him to visit and preach.

In July Dr. Sellar visited Portstewart Presbyterian Church, at the start of August he was in Castlerock, today he was speaking in Portrush Presbyterian and at the end of the month he will visit the congregation in Croaghmore and Ballycastle Presbyterian Church preaching at morning and evening worship that same Sunday. He will also attend the town's famous Ould Lammas Fair the next day at which one of PCI's outreach teams will be in action.

“Where I grew up is a beautiful part of the world, so I am looking forward to returning as Moderator to so many familiar places, meeting people who know me and my parents. It will be very special,” Dr. Sellar said.

“It is also a time when our congregations around the North Coast make an extra special effort to connect with the holidaymakers who flock to the seaside each year. I want to encourage them in their work for the gospel, not just in these summer months but in the great mission that they are engaged in all year round. I am also looking forward to meeting some of those on holiday too.

“It was a great pleasure reconnecting with good friends today and meeting holiday makers following New Horizon. Rev John Kirkpatrick of Portrush Presbyterian, where I was speaking today, has headed a great ministry in this seaside resort and I’ve known and respected John since our school days in Coleraine Inst,” he said.

Dr. Sellar also said that he was looking forward to September when he will be speaking in New Row Presbyterian in Coleraine, the congregation that he and his family attended when they lived in the town.

Top cleric says Church of England risks becoming a ‘suburban sect’

One of Britain’s senior theologians has warned that the Church of England is in danger of becoming a narrow sect “driven by mission-minded middle managers” who are alienating clergy, congregations and the general public, Harriet Sherwood writes in an article in The Guardian.

Martyn Percy, dean of Christ Church, Oxford, writes in the afterword of his latest book, The



Martyn Percy, dean of Christ Church, Oxford

Future Shapes of Anglicanism, that church leaders' strategy is moving towards "centralised management, organisational apparatus and the kind of creeping concerns that might consume an emerging suburban sectarianism, instead of a national church".

His far-reaching criticism comes as the Church of England presses ahead with a major reform programme, which includes diverting funds away from struggling rural parishes – traditionally its backbone – to new evangelical churches in city centres.

Other controversial elements of the Renewal and Reform programme include MBA-style management courses for bishops and other senior officials, the identification and fast-tracking of talented young clergy into leadership positions, and an emphasis on “church planting” – the establishment of new urban churches directed at young families and students.

The programme is an attempt by Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, and other leading figures to reverse the church’s dramatic decline. Forecasts earlier this year suggested numbers attending Church of England services regularly [would continue to fall for another 30 years](#) to about 1% of the population.

Renewal and Reform has created discord within the church, although a motion welcoming the programme was overwhelmingly carried at last month’s synod in York. But some critics claim there is little room for substantial debate on the programme.

According to Percy, the strategy is fundamentally flawed. “It will take more to save the Church of England than a blend of the latest management

theory, secular sorcery with statistics and evangelical up-speak,” he writes.

See -

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/13/justin-welby-church-of-england-suburban-sect>

Pope Francis makes surprise visit to women rescued from prostitution

Pope Francis has paid a surprise visit to a community helping 20 young women get their lives back together after being rescued from prostitution.

Continuing his Year of Mercy practice of dedicating one Friday a month to meet people facing special struggles, the Pope visited the house operated by the John XXIII Community in northeast Rome.

The community members, the Vatican said, were “20 women liberated from the slavery of the prostitution racket. Six of them come from Romania, four from Albania, seven from Nigeria and one each from Tunisia, Italy and Ukraine.”



Pope Francis sits with members of the Pope John XXIII Community

The women's average age is 30, said a Vatican press statement. "All of them have endured serious physical violence" and are now being protected.

Pope Francis's visit, the Vatican said, is another call to combat human trafficking, a reality the Pope has described as "a crime against humanity" and "an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ".

The Pope's "Mercy Friday" visits are part of his personal observance of the Holy Year of Mercy. While leaders of the communities and structures

he is visiting are given some advance notice, there is no publicity and no open press availability. Usually, the Vatican releases a few photographs and sometimes a short video clip afterward.

Since January, the Pope has visited a home for the aged and a home for people in a persistent vegetative state; a community for recovering drug addicts; a refugee centre near Rome and a refugee camp in Greece; a L'Arche community; and a home for sick and aged priests.

The Vatican includes among the Mercy Friday practice several of Pope Francis's activities the last Friday of July in Poland: his visit to the Nazi's Auschwitz death camp and to a pediatric hospital and his attendance at the World Youth Day Way of the Cross service, which involved young Iraqis and Syrians, as well as youths from other war-torn countries and difficult situations.

News briefs

+++ Archbishop Welby: Abuse victims must be heard -The silencing of abuse victims is itself a form of abuse "as bad if not worse than the first

betrayal,” Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said. The archbishop made his comments in a foreword to the [current issue of *Crucible*](#), which bills itself as the journal of Christian social ethics. Its current issue focuses on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

+++ Chaplain to Madeira ‘impressed’ with locals’ resilience in face of fires - The Anglican priest serving the island of Madeira has spoken of the resilience of local people as they battled severe fires which ravaged the community. Three people were killed in the blazes, which are thought to have been caused by arsonists. The fires were so big that firefighters were flown in from the Azores and the Portuguese mainland to help bring them under control.

+++ Australian Anglicans help flood victims in Tasmania - The generous response by Australian Anglicans to a disaster relief fund enabled the Diocese of Tasmania to provide its flood-hit community with emergency care packs. The diocese established a permanent Disaster Fund after a 2013 bush fire, allowing it to offer help to those affected by the floods within 24 hours. An [emergency appeal](#) raised around \$60,000 Australian dollars (approximately £36,000 GBP)

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Maynooth seminarian dismisses criticisms as unwarranted

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/maynooth-seminarian-dismisses-criticisms-as-unwarranted-1.2751962>

Catholic Church damaged by Maynooth allegations

Irish News

<http://www.irishnews.com/opinion/columnists/2016/08/13/news/catholic-church-damaged-by-maynooth-allegations-647881/>

The Catholic church flounders again over sexuality within

Sluggie O'Toole

It's hardly satisfactory for the **church** once again to default to anonymous ... And although Cardinal d'Alton was the all-Ireland primate, there was no ...

<https://sluggerotoole.com/2016/08/13/the-catholic-church-flounders-again-over-sexuality-within/>

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