



Belfast Minister to be new Presbyterian Moderator

The Rev. Frank Sellar, Minister of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in east Belfast is to be the next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The 57-year-old received the most nominations from the Church's 19 presbyteries when they

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met independently across Ireland yesterday evening (February 2nd) to elect a successor to the current Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie.

Known as the Moderator-Designate, Mr. Sellar - who received 18 votes - will officially take up office when he is formally elected and installed as Moderator at the start of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's General Assembly on June 6th.

The east Belfast minister will be the sixty-fourth Moderator to come from Belfast. Speaking about his election, he said, "It has been a huge privilege to have been involved in a lifetime of leadership in local congregations, south and north. I'm humbled that the wider church has trusted me with this responsibility, granting fresh opportunities of mission, which this year as Moderator of the General Assembly will bring, not only serving the wider church, but society throughout the whole of Ireland and further afield."

The election takes place annually and this year there were three nominees. Along with Rev. Frank Sellar, Rev. Robert Bell of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church and Rev. Tony Davidson of First Presbyterian Church, Armagh, were also nominated and received the following votes:

- Rev. Frank Sellar - 18 votes: The Presbyteries of Ards, Armagh, Ballymena, North Belfast, South Belfast, East Belfast, Coleraine and Limavady, Derry and Donegal, Down, Dromore, Dublin and Munster, Iveagh, Monaghan, Newry, Omagh, Route, Templepatrick, and Tyrone
- Rev. Tony Davidson - 0 votes
- Rev. Robert Bell - 1 vote: The Presbytery of Carrickfergus

Rev. Frank Sellar is married to Claire, who is an Occupational Therapist, the father of three was born in 1958, and brought up in Coleraine. He was educated locally at The Hon The Irish Society School and Coleraine Academical Institution and attended New Row Presbyterian Church. His father was the well-known educationalist and artist, RG Sellar ARUA.

After completing his BA Hons degree at Lancaster University in Geography and Art in 1979, Mr. Sellar trained to be a teacher at Queen's University, Belfast, gaining a PGCE in 1980.

He joined the staff of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship in 1980 (now IFES

Ireland) and served students for three years in the Republic of Ireland, before training for the Presbyterian ministry at Aberdeen University, where he graduated with a BD Hons in Systematic Theology and Church History in 1986. He completed a Masters of Ministry degree from the Presbyterian Theological Faculty Ireland in 2013.

After completing his training at Union Theological College in Belfast, he was licensed in Ballycastle Presbyterian Church in 1987 and ordained Assistant Minister in Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church, Bangor, in 1988.

In 1990 Mr. Sellar was called to minister in Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church in the heart of Dublin city, where he served for 17 fruitful years. In 2007 the Sellars' moved to Bloomfield Presbyterian Church, a large congregation of nearly 500 families, strategically placed in CS Lewis and Van Morrison territory at the corner of Beersbridge Road and Cyprus Avenue.

Describing his ministry as Gospel driven, 'Based on the Bible, passionate about people and centred in Christ'; he said, "at Bloomfield we seek to 'Know Jesus and Share His love' and try to do that in a whole variety of ways, making available all the activities which go on in church

to people of all backgrounds within the community.

“Jesus is the antidote to all the bad news which is so prevalent in a broken society. Church is not for those who think that they are now ‘good enough’, but for people who know that they are not, but recognise their need of a Saviour who can make them whole.”

Mr. Sellar’s passion for people has encouraged his congregation to actively engage with their local community centre, by leading summer schemes, homework clubs, Sunday kid’s work and through a youth club designed specifically for children with autism and severe learning difficulties. This facility also provides much needed support for their caring parents.

Having ministered in the South for 20 years and 11 years in the North, Mr. Sellar has the vision that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland serve as a vibrant Reformed witness throughout every province in the island that is welcoming to all, irrespective of background, culture or ethnicity.

As well as family life, Mr. Sellar enjoys walking his labra-doodle on the North Coast, current affairs, broadcasting and the occasional bit of skiing.

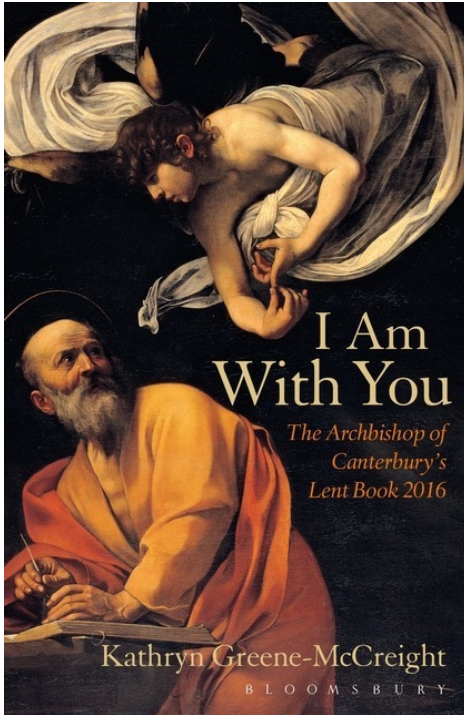
“I am looking forward to my year as Moderator, especially as it coincides with the General Assembly theme for 2016 which is ‘A Community of global concern’. Christians are never permitted to be isolationists. We are called to learn from and share with our brothers and sisters in the worldwide Church, participating with them in the urgent task of world evangelism, stewardship of the earth’s resources and challenging injustice, poverty and oppression in Jesus’ name,” he said.

Rev. Frank Sellar will be the 177th Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland since the election of the Very Rev. Dr. Samuel Hanna in 1840.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2016

‘I Am With You’, Kathryn Greene-McCreight’s meditation on God’s presence, is the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book for 2016

In *I Am With You*, Episcopal priest and theologian Kathryn Greene-McCreight examines the biblical portrayal of God's presence among us as light in darkness.



With an introduction by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, *I Am With You* is a reflective and thought-provoking guide to the season of Lent. Close readings of Scripture are woven into a framework patterned on the Offices of the Benedictine day and the seven days of creation.

In his foreword, Archbishop Justin Welby says: “This book is about growing closer to God. That is at the heart of a good Lent. We come to a time of fasting, discipline and study, in order that we

may renew our knowledge of His presence. That involves a stripping of those things that divide us from God, developing our obedience to His call and venturing deeper into the fire of His love.

“The themes of light and darkness, and the use of the pattern of the Offices, give contrast and stability to the unfolding chapters. Through the book we travel through day and night, the reality of human experience lived through our lives. At the end the dawn brightens with the hope and certainty of resurrection, the knowledge that in the grace and love of God we are called to eternal life with the one who smashes down the barriers of death.”

The book takes us “back to the heart of orthodox Christianity,” he adds, “which is not a set of dogmatic or doctrinal propositions, nor a way of life, let alone a set of rules – although there are aspects that spring out of the richness of the Christian life in each of these areas.

“It is about the lived experience of the presence of God in all circumstances and all times, including everything that life can throw at us.”

Kathryn Greene-McCreight (PhD, Yale University) is associate chaplain at The Episcopal Church at Yale; priest affiliate at Christ Church in New Haven, Connecticut; and a theological writer

whose previous books include *Darkness is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness* and *Feminist Reconstructions of Christian Doctrine*.

To find out more, visit: <http://www.lentbook2016.com/>

Let them speak - listening to our young leaders

The Legacy of The Good Friday Agreement Continues With Belfast's Young Leaders

The 4 Corners Festival and Ulster University Belfast Campus are hosting *Let Them Speak: Listening to Our Young Leaders* on Friday, 5 February, 2016. This event will welcome 90 sixth form students from more than 23 schools across Belfast to meet each other, exchange views, and present their ideas for Belfast's future to community leaders. As The Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, this event is a unique opportunity for these 90 young leaders, many of whom were born that year, to meet in one room, discuss their hopes and aspirations for their respective futures and Belfast, and present their ideas. Likewise, the invited panel of community leaders will have a unique

opportunity to listen and respond to Belfast's young leaders, and describe how these ideas may impact their civic work moving forward.

Hosted at Ulster University's Belfast campus, *Listening to Our Young Leaders* will include a presentation by Ms. Maggie Swarbrick, Ulster University Course Director for Journalism on best practices for youth-led media campaigns. Using what they learn in the presentation, the young leaders will later pitch their ideas to a panel of seven "Keynote Listeners," including the Belfast Deputy Lord Mayor Alderman Guy Spence, Chief Commissioner for the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland Dr. Michael Wardlow, and Reverend Cheryl Meban. After listening to the presentations, the keynote listeners will provide feedback on what they heard, as well as discuss how they might do things differently, influence others, and review policies based on what the young leaders said.

Though the 4 Corners Festival was co-founded by Fr. Martin Magill of Sacred Heart Parish and Rev. Steve Stockman of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church four years ago, *Listening to Our Young Leaders* is the first event in the Festival's history to partner so closely with Ulster University and include this level of youth engagement and participation. Fr. Magill pointed out the

significance of bringing together so many of Belfast's young leaders from across the city. He said:

“This year's festival, which has been about listening, will include listening to young people speaking about their hopes for Belfast in the future and what they would like to see our politicians deal with in the Assembly. All speakers were born after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, so what they have to say will be all the more poignant.”

Ulster University Pro Vice Chancellor for Development and Provost of the Belfast and Jordanstown Campuses Prof. Alastair Adair also highlighted the importance of engaging with and listening to Belfast's young leaders, and is looking forward to bringing the students together at Ulster University's new Belfast Campus. He said:

“Ulster University is delighted to host the 4 Corners Festival and to welcome the young leaders into our new Belfast campus development. It is vitally important that we listen to the voices of our young people and take account of their hopes and aspirations. This is an essential part of the University's civic engagement as we seek to inspire and motivate

future generations of students and citizens to achieve their ambitions and be a positive force for good in our society.”

The *Listening to Our Young Leaders* Event is part of the annual 4 Corners Festival (running from 28 January through 7 February.) The theme of this year’s festival is ‘the art of listening,’ and aims to inspire people to ‘cross boundaries’ and participate in events in all four corners of the city. The programme is wide-ranging, including music, discussions, art, poetry, film, and a churches’ walk. More information on the 4 Corners Festival can be found at www.4cornersfestival.com.

For information email
admin@4cornersfestival.com.

'In Search of Jesus' – Belfast Lent Course with Brendan McCarthy

The Rev Brendan McCarthy returns to St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, for a fourth series of seminars with this series entitled ‘In Search of Jesus’.

This gets underway on Wednesday February 17 at 7.30pm and continues on Wednesday evenings for six weeks.

The course explores the relationships between the Christ of faith, the Jesus of faith and the Jesus of history and asks the questions, what do we know and what might we reasonably believe about Jesus? As with previous courses*, all opinions are welcomed and respected, and Brendan describes this as ‘an exploration, not a devotional study.’

The course programme is as follows:

Session 1: History and Faith: We examine the various interpretations of ‘the Christ of faith’ and ask whether various constructions of ‘the Jesus of history’ are really faith statements. Does the ‘Jesus of history’ exist even if there was an ‘historical Jesus’?

Session 2: Unpeeling the Onion: We track back through history, examining the layers of interpretation that emerged from the Enlightenment, the Reformation, Medieval Scholars and the Post–Constantine Church.

Session 3: Biblical Pictures: We look at how close the New Testament can get us to the historical Jesus, examining Paul’s epistles, the Gospels and the emergence of ‘proto–orthodoxy’ in the second century.

Session 4: Crossroads: We look at the place of belief in ‘the cross and the resurrection’ and examine the interplay between event and interpretation.

Session 5: Just the Facts: We look at what might reasonably be asserted as known facts about Jesus and the emergence of the Christian Church and faith.

Session 6: Reasonable Belief: We look at ways in which the facts outlined in session five enable various beliefs about Jesus to develop. In particular we examine orthodox, post-orthodox and humanist belief about Jesus.

Brendan McCarthy has a primary degree in divinity as well as Master’s degrees in theology, history and human rights law and a doctorate in Christian Ethics. He is an ordained Anglican Priest and is currently the Church of England’s national adviser on Medical Ethics and Health and Social Care Policy.

His previous seminars in St Anne’s were:

- The God Enquiry – October 2014
- Christian Ethics – March 2015
- Of What Earthly Use is the Bible? – September 2015

The course fee is £50. A registration form can be downloaded on the Belfast Cathedral website at www.belfastcathedral.org/filestore/documents/news/2016/Regform.pdf

Dublin clergy on course



The Dublin and Glendalough Clergy Conference is currently taking place in Kilkenny. The main speaker is Br Philip Bartholomew SSF and the theme is 'Ministry Today: A Franciscan Approach'. Additional speakers include Dr Johnston McMaster on 'Blood Sacrifice in the

Context of 1916' and Dean Tom Gordon on 'Creative Liturgy'.

‘The world shouldn’t fear China’s rise,’ says Pope Francis

Pope Francis has said the world shouldn’t fear China’s rise to prominence as a global superpower.

The Pontiff made the comments in an interview with Asia Times.

“We must not fear challenges of any kind, since everyone, male and female, has within them the capacity to find ways of co-existing, of respect and mutual admiration,” the Pope told journalist Francesco Sisci at the Vatican.

He continued: “It is obvious that so much culture and so much wisdom, and in addition, so much technical knowledge – we have only to think of age-old medicinal techniques – cannot remain enclosed within a country; they tend to expand, to spread, to communicate. Man tends to communicate, a civilization tends to communicate. It is evident that when communication happens in an aggressive tone



to defend oneself, then wars result. But I would not be fearful.”

The Pope said it was “a great challenge to keep the balance of peace” between China and the rest of the world, and that because Europe receives “an increasingly rich contribution” from China, “it is necessary to accept the challenge and to run the risk of balancing this exchange for peace”.

“The Western world, the Eastern world and China all have the capacity to maintain the balance of peace and the strength to do so. We must find the way, always through dialogue; there is no other way,” he said.

During the interview, the Pope spoke of his long-standing admiration for China, which stretches back to his childhood.

“For me, China has always been a reference point of greatness. A great country. But more than a country, a great culture, with an inexhaustible wisdom. For me, as a boy, whenever I read anything about China, it had the capacity to inspire my admiration. I have admiration for China,” he said.

Francis also sent his best wishes to the people of China ahead of the upcoming Chinese New Year of the Monkey.

“On the eve of the New Year, I wish to convey my best wishes and greetings to President Xi Jinping and to all the Chinese people. And I wish to express my hope that they never lose their historical awareness of being a great people, with a great history of wisdom, and that they have much to offer to the world,” he said.

Social justice theme of film series at Christ Church, Dublin

In a new departure this February, Christ Church cathedral, Dublin will screen a series of films based on a social justice theme.

Four films will be shown in all, on each Monday in February at 7.30pm. The series will open with a classic; '12 Angry Men', the 1957 film concerning the jury of a homicide trial. Appropriately, it will be introduced on Monday 1 February by barrister and film buff, Dermot Manning.

The second film, 'Citizenfour', to be shown on Monday 8 February, is a topical documentary made in 2014 concerning Edward Snowden's revelations of the abuse of power and trampling of privacy rights by intelligence agencies all over the world. It will be introduced by Dr T.J. McIntyre, a lecturer in law at University College Dublin and the chairman of Digital Rights Ireland.

The third Monday, 15 February, will see the screening of 'Persepolis' , a 2007 film based on Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel about her life in pre and post-revolutionary Iran and then in Europe. It will be introduced by a cathedral canon, the Revd Patrick Comerford, who is a former Foreign Desk editor at the Irish Times.

The series will conclude on Monday 22 February with the iconic 1966 film, 'Cathy Come Home', concerning homelessness. Directed by Ken Loach in a gritty documentary style, it will be introduced by Mike Allen, Director of Advocacy at Focus Ireland.

The showings will take place in the recently refurbished music room, entered via the dean's gate at the top of Lord Edward Street. Admission is free and all are most welcome. Wine and refreshments will also be available.

For any queries about the series, please contact the cathedral education officer, Ruth Kenny at ruth@christchurch.ie

Details of the series are available online at www.christchurchcathedral.ie

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Green light for legislation cutting number of Stormont departments

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/green-light-for-legislation-cutting-number-of-stormont-departments-34417009.html>

Letter from Church of Ireland clergy in support of TEC following Primates gathering

Episcopal Cafe

<http://www.episcopalcafe.com/letter-from-church-of-ireland-clergy-in-support-of-tec-following-primates-gathering/>

Tributes to father who drowned after canoe capsized in Kenmore Bay

Belfast Telegraph

Bill Topham, an electrician and the warden at St Patrick's **Church of Ireland** in Kenmare, Co Kerry, died after the 17ft (5.2m) boat overturned a few ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/tributes-to-father-who-drowned-after-canoe-capsized-in-kenmare-bay-34413483.html>

Children from non-religious homes 'discriminated against in Irish schools'

Irish Independent

"Those schools are allowed to not admit a child, if their **religion** doesn't match that of the school. "A recent survey shows one-in-five people in **Ireland** ...

Asher's bakery owner reveals attacks on business

the Irish News

The publicly-funded Northern Ireland Equality Commission, which has a statutory duty to monitor anti-discrimination laws, brought the legal action on ...

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2016/02/01/news/ashers-bakery-owner-reveals-attacks-on-business-402783/>

Homily on abuse by Bishop of Kilmore angers victims

Irish Examiner

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/homily-on-abuse-by-bishop-of-kilmore-angers-victims-379399.html>

Plea for peaceful Belfast St Patrick's Day celebrations

Newsletter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/plea-for-peaceful-belfast-st-patrick-s-day-celebrations-1-7194012>

Christian Today

As many as six in 10 British adults visited a church, chapel or religious meeting house in the last 12 months, according to a survey commissioned by the National Churches Trust. The article notes that the results counter the more usual narrative of perpetual decline that has dominated surveys in recent years. "Although too soon to give certainty, the survey is one of the first to give affirmation that the more confident, outward-looking evangelistic strategies of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Pope Francis in Rome could be yielding tangible results."

Ind

More than 300 academics at Oxford and Cambridge Universities have signed a joint statement calling on the institutions to pursue more "morally sound" investment

policies that have no basis in fossil fuels. The signatories, who include the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and the Astronomer Royal Lord Rees, say that Oxford and Cambridge should put their multibillion-pound endowment funds to better use in the light of "looming social, environmental, and financial pressures".

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/oxbridge-academics-demand-end-to-fossil-fuel-investment-a6847541.html>

Mail/Tel

Campaigner Peter Tatchell yesterday came out in support of a Christian bakery company, which refused to sell a cake with a gay rights slogan saying while he disagreed with their views, it is a basic "infringement of freedom" to force people to promote ideas which they conscientiously object to. The case goes to appeal this week. The *Telegraph* reports the story with an interview with the married couple, described as evangelical Christians, who run Ashers Bakery.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3427354/Tatchell-backs-bakers-gay-cake-appeal-Campaigner-says-changed-mind-firm-broke-anti-discrimination-laws-wants-defend-freedom-religion.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/12133736/Its-like-a-science-fiction-nightmare-say-Christian-bakers-in-gay-marriage-cake-case.html>

BBC/Mirror/Mail

Reports that the church and mosque in the Calais 'jungle camp' were bulldozed yesterday as part of a plan to clear a 100m security zone around the camp's perimeter. Hundreds of immigrants at the shanty town in Calais were given just one hour's notice before the next phase

of demolition began. Volunteers and refugees helped to move refugees' possessions and dismantle the shelters before they were demolished.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35462715>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/refugee-crisis-cops-bulldoze-church-7289022#ICID=nsm>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3426943/French-authorities-demolish-makeshift-church-mosque-used-thousands-migrants-Calais-jungle.html>

BBC

A background feature on the new film *Spotlight* about the work of a team of Boston journalists which proved that dozens of Catholic priests had been abusing children for years and that the Church had been systematically hiding it.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/35464956/the-story-of-the-abuse-uncovered-in-the-film-spotlight---it-really-did-happen>

Guard

Weather article notes that today is midwinter day, the halfway point between the winter solstice and spring equinox. The days are rapidly getting longer, by about four minutes, and it is marked as a significant day in many cultures. For Christians, February 2 this year is Candlemas.

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/feb/01/warming-heart-winter>

Comment

BBC: Religious Affairs Correspondent Caroline Wyatt "Battle joined over place of faith in Education".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35456536>

Mail online: Peter Hitchens responds to a blog from the Diocese of Chichester on George Bell.

<http://hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/2016/02/the-bell-affair-an-attempted-defence-of-th-co-e-and-my-rebuttal-of-it-.html>



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