



Image of the day - Exeter Cathedral

The incredible 14th century vault of Exeter Cathedral is the longest continuous medieval stone vault in the world.

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People and places

Portrush minister to be PCI's next Moderator



Ministers and elders from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) 19 regional presbyteries met across Ireland on Monday evening (1 February) and chose Portrush minister, Rev John Kirkpatrick, to be the Church's next Moderator.

Known as the Moderator-Designate until the Church's General Assembly in June, he will formally succeed the current Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, as PCI's principal public representative at this summer's meeting. A son and grandson 'of the Manse' – he was one of four nominees that the all-Ireland denomination had to choose from this year, which traditionally elects its Moderator-Designate on the first Tuesday in February.

Alongside Mr Kirkpatrick, this year's nominees were Rev Dr Colin McClure, minister of First Larne Presbyterian Church, Rev Dr Trevor McCormick, minister of Frist Kilrea and Boveedy Presbyterian Churches and Rev Alastair McNeely, minister of Richhill Presbyterian Church. Each received the following votes:

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- Rev John Kirkpatrick 10 votes: The Presbyteries of Ballymena, North Belfast, South Belfast, East Belfast, Dromore, Dublin & Munster, Iveagh, Omagh, Templepatrick and Tyrone
- Rev Dr Colin McClure 1 vote: The Presbytery of Carrickfergus
- Rev Dr Trevor McCormick 3 votes: The Presbyteries of Coleraine & Limavady, Newry, and Route
- Rev Alastair McNeely 5 votes: The Presbyteries of Ards, Armagh, Derry & Donegal, Down, Monaghan.

Having received the most votes from the Church's 19 presbyteries, Mr Kirkpatrick will be the denomination's 177th Moderator since 1840 and its first from Portrush Presbyterian Church.

Speaking about his election, the 65-year-old North Coast minister said, "I am genuinely surprised by what has happened, but very excited at the prospect of the story God is going to write from June and the months that follow. As I continue to serve the Lord Jesus in this new role, I am looking forward to coming alongside our churches at this critical time, encouraging them as we move forward from Covid. I also look forward to building good relationships wherever possible, honouring Jesus and representing our Church across the island and further afield."

Born in in Limavady, Mr Kirkpatrick was brought up from the age of three in Ballymena. A third generation Presbyterian minister – his father had been minister of Balteagh

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Presbyterian, near Limavady, while his grandfather had also served in congregations in Counties Donegal, Tyrone and Antrim.

Mr Kirkpatrick has been minister of Portrush Presbyterian for nearly 30 years, having served in the holiday town since 1993. Prior to that, he spent nearly six years in Garryduff Presbyterian near Ballymoney, his first congregation. He was ordained in 1985 as an assistant minister in Megain Memorial and Mersey Presbyterian Churches in East Belfast. When he became minister in Portrush, he also represented PCI in its partner relationships in Central and Eastern Europe until 2005.

Having attended Ballymena County Primary School and Coleraine Academical Institution, he went on to study farm management at Greenmount Agricultural College from 1973-1976, with an agri career in mind. This led to three years of study at the University of Ulster's, Coleraine campus, where in 1979 he gained a BSc in Social Science and Environmental Studies. After spending a year working for the Department of Agriculture, in 1981 he attended Belfast Bible College before starting his studies at Union Theological College for the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the same year.

Talking about his faith, Mr Kirkpatrick said, "With a father and a grandfather as Presbyterian ministers, you might say that I am not only 'a son of the Manse', but 'a grandson of the Manse' as well. While I came to a personal faith in Jesus at the age of nine, there was never an expectation that I would follow in their footsteps. But God, obviously, had other

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plans and I genuinely give thanks for the near 40 years I have spent in the ordained ministry.”

Today he ministers to a congregation of around 220 families in and around the seaside town, which grows considerably during the summer months and at Easter. “I would describe myself as a ‘preaching pastor’, as I see the linked importance of preaching and teaching the Bible, coupled with pastoral care being the complimentary need to this.

“The issues that we face at Portrush Presbyterian Church, or ‘PPC’, are set against the context of the 21st century, a secular society, but a hungry society. In my time in PPC we have reflected the wider cultural trends, which I am glad to say have been away from ‘nominalism’ and traditional church attendance, to a more committed church community living in a community where outwardly church is less important, but certainly not without value.

“Primarily we love to share the Good News in all ways we can, but we know we must earn trust and respect. In this, we see the location of PPC as critical to a very wide community of visitors and friends, helped by street gospel distributions and other opportunities as cultural moments in the town provide platforms for evangelism. As Moderator, I want to translate the life and experience of ministry in Portrush, both church and community, to a bigger canvas, but with the same vision and pattern,” he said.

Mr Kirkpatrick also explained that building relationships with the community, and serving the community, were both important. “We see our presence as a gospel one, building relationships with all where we can; people and The

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Moderator-elect (centre) is chaplain to motorcycling events. He is photographed with two assistants.

organisations are part of this involvement from our local schools, to the PPC's shop in the town that connects with community in a different way and funds various community projects. We also encourage our members to be active in the community in various ways through the RNLI and REACH, for example, a community project which took on a greater significance due to Covid."

With regards to the pandemic, he said that while the lockdown was difficult for so many different reasons, it also created an opportunity to try new things. "We did recorded services and streaming services. I did a daily devotional called 'Side-by-Side' and a video reading of several appropriate books such as 'The hiding place' by Corrie ten Boom, 'To a different drum' by Pauline Hamilton, and churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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Elizabeth Kuhn's, 'Green leaf in drought' as I wanted to encourage our people in their isolation."

Married to Joan for 40 years this summer, a palliative care nurse, they have four children and five grandchildren.

"Thursday was baking day in our home during the lockdown when Joan baked. The following day I was able to deliver to folk as part of my rounds, giving me a chance to listen to them and pray for them on the doorstep, or in their garden. We've made every effort to be in church and have life back when we were given the chance. Thankfully we have a big building, which has meant we could welcome everyone back safely."

Thinking about his forthcoming year in office, Mr Kirkpatrick said, "For everyone, the last two years have seen all aspects of life, and Church life with it, turned upside down and the story still isn't over yet. As time moves on, I hope and pray that we will be able to process the many painful memories that it has left behind. I appreciate that this will not be an easy, or a straightforward journey for everyone, as our stories are all different.

"With this in mind, as Moderator, I look forward to visiting congregations, ministers and their families, seeing what they have been through, how they have coped, and ministering into that. Stepping into my predecessor's shoes after two years will not be easy, and I pay tribute to Dr Bruce as he has led the Church through this time of national and global crisis. Whatever the year may hold, I am thankful to God, that I won't be undertaking it alone, and certainly not in my own strength, for Jesus will be with me!"

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When Mr Kirkpatrick is not in the pulpit, or visiting members of his congregation, he says that he enjoys walking, reading, watching films and listening to an eclectic mix of music. His more active pursuits include a love of motorcycle sport, motocross and motorcycle racing. Since 1994, he has been Race Chaplain to the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland. He also enjoys gardening and bee keeping.

Mr Kirkpatrick will be officially nominated to this year's General Assembly at its opening night in Belfast on 22 June when he will succeed the current Moderator, Rt Rev Dr David Bruce. Dr Bruce will continue in office as the PCI's principal public representative until then.

Bishop's appointment to Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe confirmed

The House of Bishops has confirmed the appointment of the Rt Revd Michael Burrows, currently Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, as Bishop-designate of the United Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe.



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His translation is planned for Thursday, 14th April 2022.

Bishop Michael Burrows was elected Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe by the Episcopal Electoral College on Friday, 14th January 2022.

Bishop Burrows succeeds the Rt Revd Patrick Rooke (formerly Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry) and the Rt Revd Dr Kenneth Kearon (formerly Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe) who both retired at the end of October 2021, at which time the two dioceses were united. He has served as Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory since 2006, and was previously Dean of Cork, Rector of Bandon, Church of Ireland Chaplain at Trinity College Dublin, and Curate in Douglas with Frankfield.

In-person meeting of the General Synod in Belfast May 2022

The Standing Committee of the General Synod of the C of I has agreed that the 2022 meeting of General Synod will be held in-person using the Presbyterian Church's Assembly Building in Belfast.

The Standing Committee met in an online format on Tuesday, 25th January 2022.

“Mindful of the relaxing of Covid measures, members of Standing Committee expressed a preference to proceed with an in-person meeting of the General Synod in May 2022 with some social distancing in place. “ It was reported that due to its greater capacity, the Assembly Buildings,

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Belfast, could facilitate such aspirations and that it is possible to reschedule the Synod booking at Croke Park to next year. Further arrangements for General Synod 2022 will be confirmed in due course.

The sub-group on the possible use of videoconferencing for meetings provided an interim report with proposals to follow at the Standing Committee's next meeting in March.

Hope in Chapel Lane - Belfast city centre lunches for students

In preparation for Student Lunches starting next week in the city centre, the organisers took a morning deep cleaning and



PCQ
Presbyterian
Chaplaincy
at Queen's

U
Ulster
University

FREE STUDENT
Lunch

EVERY TUESDAY
BETWEEN 12.30-2PM

AT HOPE ON CHAPEL LANE
BERRY ST

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organising the kitchen down at Hope at Chapel Lane on Berry Street!

Partnering with the Cheryl Meban from the Presbyterian Chaplaincy at Ulster University Belfast & Jordanstown the student lunches will be running every Tuesday 12:30-2pm on Berry Street.

All students living and studying in the city centre are welcome to drop in on a Tuesday for a free lunch - with an opportunity for prayer and support provided!

Transforming Lives for Good in Lisburn

A ‘Transforming Lives for Good’ project is now up and running in Lisburn, with Lisburn Cathedral and Christ Church Parish teaming up to become a centre for the area.

Coordinator, Donna Meenagh, and deputy coordinator, the Rev Derek Harrington, curate in Christ Church Parish, said: “It has been a passion of a few to have this valuable resource available to the schools in Lisburn with the help of passionate volunteers.

“We are currently in two schools in the area with seven coaches who are dedicated to spending one hour a week, one-on-one with a young person identified by the school as a child who would benefit from early intervention whether it be for social, emotional or mental health needs.”

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The project started officially in November, with five weeks of coaching before the Christmas break. “Our focus has been having fun and building rapport,” the coordinators said.



“Having resumed in the second week of January, our plan is to have a focused project/interest alongside some ‘me time’ where each coach helps set goals to equip their child with tools in order to be of benefit to them in areas of identified need.

Speaking about the experience so far, one Lisburn TLG coach said: “Coaching is such a fulfilling experience. I was a churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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bit fearful before coaching started, but since meeting the teachers and the young boy, it has been a joy to say the least, and with God's grace I know it will be a blessing for the young boy."

Another coach commented: "It is an honour and a privilege to be trusted to come alongside a child who is struggling emotionally in school, and become an encourager, a listener, a conduit for positivity and purveyor of fun activities!

"The consistent connection between coach, school and family is a real blessing. I certainly put every ounce of faith into these one-hour sessions and so far, so good."

Donna and Derek added: "Please do pray for our TLG centres across Northern Ireland, that God would continue to raise up coaches with a heart for children and young people who are struggling to get alongside them to help bring positive change into their lives."

How a church bench helped tackle loneliness

Drop-in sessions at a Church of England parish, set up to provide a 'safe space' for people feeling anxious or lonely in the wake of the pandemic, have proved so popular that they are being expanded to cater for demand.

'Ric's bench', offering tea, coffee, snacks and a place to chat at St Richard's parish in Haywards Heath, West

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Sussex, will be launching a fourth session in response to demand.

Father Chris Brading, Vicar of St Richard's, said the two-hourly sessions are attracting people of all faiths and none to the church and hall.

Volunteers are coming forward from the church and the wider community, he said. The sessions are about listening, engaging with guests and providing signposting to specialist support if needed.

The 'Ric's bench' title is taken from a bench - actually a pew - preserved from the original 'tin church', that was demolished to make way for the current church building in the 1930s.

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The bench now sits outside the hall as a symbol of the ongoing outreach work of the church.

"We set up at the end of September but we had been praying about this through the lockdown.

"Loneliness and anxiety were clearly on the rise because of Covid.

"'Ric's bench' is somewhere you can go and sit, where you can meet friends and talk to people or just sit and reflect," Father Chris said.

As a result of its work running a dementia café twice a month, the parish has established links with GP surgeries in the town, and these are helping to spread the word about this latest initiative.

New Zealand churches urge support for Tonga eruption recovery

Leaders of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia have joined with Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches and the Religious Society of Friends asking for financial support a people in Tonga respond to the impact of the volcanic eruption and tsunami.

The Aotearoa New Zealand-based church leaders have released a joint call that asks church members to offer prayers and send financial support to Tonga through

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Christian World Service and the churches' own partner agencies working in Tonga.

The church leaders' statement opens with an exhortation to courage from Joshua 1:9 "...Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

The statement, which was signed by Archbishop Don Tamihere and Archbishop Philip Richardson goes on to acknowledge those who have died and the concern that they feel for Tonga.

"We are watching the news reports from Tonga with great care and concern for the people of Tonga.

The eruptions of Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai have caused considerable harm and we are only beginning to see the extent of the damage.

So far we know three people have lost their lives. Acid rain, ash and other debris cover the land and sea. Water supplies, food crops, homes and infrastructure have been damaged and destroyed. Many are worried and anxious but people are looking after each other. They are praying, singing and cleaning up – as they do after every disaster."

The church leaders, which included national Baptist Church leader Charles Hewlett, Presbyterian Moderator Hamish Galloway, Methodist President Andrew Doubleday and Religious Society of Friends Co-Clerks Anne and Alistair Hall, goes on to encourage friends of Tonga in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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“In Aotearoa New Zealand and in many places, people with family in Tonga are anxiously awaiting news. Our prayers are also for you and for the speedy restoration of full communications.”

“We know the people of Tonga will need help to get through this period, to recover and rebuild their lives and livelihoods.”

Church leaders urged supporters in Aotearoa New Zealand to send financial support to church agencies that partner with churches in Tonga and come with strong records of delivering effective and accountable aid through local Tongan organisations.

“If you can make a donation, please give generously to Appeal for Tonga supported by the: Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia (Anglican Missions), Methodist Church of New Zealand, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Baptist Churches of New Zealand, and Christian World Service.”

The church leaders’ statement ends with a call to prayer and solidarity with Tongans now facing the massive task of recovery - rebuilding properties, replanting food crops and rebuilding livelihoods.

“Your prayers, consideration and support of those affected by the eruptions, tsunami and their aftermath are so important and we thank you for showing your compassion to the people of Tonga at this time.”

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The leaders' statement includes each of the churches' own agencies, including the two official agencies backed by the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia: The Diocese of Polynesia (via Anglican Missions) and Christian World Service.

In the media

Lord Mayor of Dublin speaks of isolation felt in growing up Protestant near Border

Irish Times

'Lack of understanding of faith and culture gives rise to fear,' Gilliland tells forum

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/lord-mayor-of-dublin-speaks-of-isolation-felt-in-growing-up-protestant-near-border-1.4791348>

First anniversary of Myanmar military coup - fresh calls for diplomatic solution

The Church of Scotland

Church leaders have renewed their calls on the UK Government to use ... The Methodist Church of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Ireland, ...

<https://churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2022/articles/first-anniversary-of-myanmar-military-coup-fresh-calls-for-diplomatic-solution>

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New Presbyterian Church head ‘willing to see woman church moderator’ in future

Belfast Telegraph

The new Limavady-born moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has said he would be “willing to see a woman moderator” in the church in the future.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/new-presbyterian-church-head-willing-to-see-woman-church-moderator-in-future-41303680.html>

Bishop James Jones calls for Royal Commission on future of policing

Church Times

The former Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd James Jones, has called for the establishment of a Royal Commission on the future of policing.

Bishop Jones, who chaired the independent panel which blamed a lack of police control for the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, said that he had reflected on the continuing experiences of the families of the victims in their efforts to discover the truth of what happened.

“It is now 60 years since the last Royal Commission, in 1962,” he said on Tuesday. “Society has changed dramatically, and the criminal landscape even more so: non-recent cases, cyber crime, child sexual abuse, international fraud, misconduct in public office, hate speech, discrimination, trafficking, and modern slavery are but some examples that call into question whether our police services are properly established for the 21st century.

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https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/4-february/news/uk/bishop-james-jones-calls-for-royal-commission-on-future-of-policing?utm_s

Anger as councillors block Queen's Platinum Jubilee but fund Irish unity talks.

Newsletter

https://www.newsletter.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/anger-as-councillors-block-queens-platinum-jubilee-but-fund-irish-unity-talks-3549485?utm_s

How did Presbyterians become part of Western Pennsylvania's in-group?

PublicSource

Historian Peter Gilmore, photographed at Sixth Presbyterian Church, ... Only members of the official Church of Ireland could own land or hold ... In the late 1700s, Irish Presbyterians were stereotyped as low-class political radicals. By the late 1800s, they were part of the establishment. Religion, ethnicity, class and politics all played a role.

<https://www.publicsource.org/pittsburgh-faith-race-place-presbyterians-from-margins-to-maintstream-history/>

Poem for today

Winter-Time by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;

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Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake

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