



***Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie (right) at his installation as Moderator on the Opening Night of the General Assembly last year.***

## **Clerk's overview of Irish Presbyterian General Assembly**

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) will meet in Belfast next week, attended by 1,000 ministers and elders from its 500-plus congregations across Ireland.

Unveiling the business for the week, Rev. Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said, “Given the scope of our activity as a Church across our congregations from Bushmills, in County Antrim, to Aghada in County Cork, I am looking forward to a busy and productive time.”

The 177th annual meeting of the Church's governing body, will meet on Monday evening, 6th June to formally elect and install east Belfast Minister, [Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar](#) of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church as this year's Moderator of the General Assembly. Before Dr. Sellar's installation, outgoing Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ian McNie, will reflect on his year in office and give his address.

There then follows [three and a half days of worship, prayer, Bible study, celebration, debate and decision-making](#), where decisions taken will set the direction for the life and ministry of PCI. Following the decision made last year, the Assembly will meet for an additional day and close on Friday, 10th June.

“Much of what will be discussed is routine; matters that affect only the Church and the way we operate, but are, nonetheless important. Yet, [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

running alongside these debates throughout the week are resolutions that concern the social, moral and public issues of the day. Areas where the Church, in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, can make a unique contribution and give voice to the concerns of many people, both within and outside the Church,” Trevor Gribben said.

This year’s Annual Reports from the Church’s various Councils – known by those attending as ‘the Blue Book’ - covers 341 pages and contains the reports and the accompanying 90 Resolutions to be debated.

These include significant points affecting the mission and ministry of both the congregations around Ireland and PCI at a wider level. There are also a number of public square issues that will be debated on the floor of the Assembly. These include abortion, freedom of conscience and dealing with the past.

In light of legislative changes in the Republic of Ireland following last year’s referendum on marriage, members will also be asked to consider proposed changes to the conduct of Presbyterian marriage services. Further options for meetings of future General Assemblies will be explored and plans to commemorate two significant anniversaries will also be brought

forward: the 500th anniversary in 2017 of the Reformation and this year's centenary of the Battle of the Somme.

“Democracy is one of the strengths and hallmarks of Presbyterianism and the General Assembly is the place where we come together to take the decisions that can affect the direction the Church takes for years to come,” Trevor Gribben commented.

“They are also important times of coming together and fellowship. The vast majority of our business is open to the public, as are the worship services on Wednesday and Thursday lunchtimes, all are welcome”, he added.

In one of three alternative presentations during the week, the Council for Global Mission will present ‘Listening to the Global Church – The Welcoming Church’. In this session, the Assembly expects to hear from the Moderator of the National Synod of Syria and Lebanon and the General Secretary of the Evangelical Church of Greece.

Both ministers will focus on how their churches have welcomed, supported demonstrated the love of Christ to those fleeing the ongoing Syrian conflict. The Assembly will also hear some of the

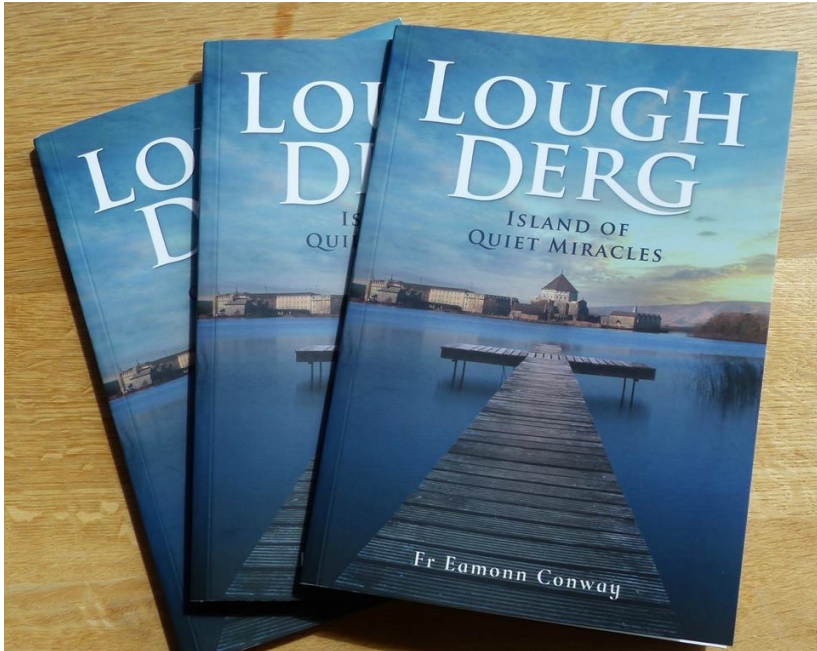
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ways in which PCI welcomes people from overseas, particularly through the local church.

Wednesday also sees an Evening Celebration of public praise and worship in the Assembly Hall that begins at 7.45pm. The new Moderator, Dr. Sellar, will lead the service, which is themed 'A Community of Global Concern,' the Church's Fit for Purpose theme for 2016. Rev. Dr. Chris Wright, International Ministries Director for the Langham Partnership, will be the keynote speaker.

The installation of the new Moderator on Monday evening is also open to the public and will be broadcast live on BBC Radio Ulster 1341 Medium Wave from 7pm. Business commences at 9.30am on Tuesday. The installation and other public sessions will be streamed at [www.presbyterianireland.org](http://www.presbyterianireland.org). You can also follow [@pciassembly](https://twitter.com/pciassembly) on Twitter using the hashtag [#PCIGA16](https://twitter.com/PCIGA16).

## **New book on Lough Derg to be launched on opening weekend of Three Day Pilgrimage**



The author of a new book published this month hopes to open the mystery of Lough Derg for a whole new generation. Author, Rev Prof Eamonn Conway will launch *Lough Derg, Island of Quiet Miracles* on Saturday 4 June during the opening weekend of one of Ireland's oldest living pilgrimage sites.

Rev Prof Eamonn Conway, said, "This is first and foremost a book about Christian spirituality. It is one account of how a relationship with God might be supported and nurtured. Pilgrimage can play a key part in opening ourselves up to the mystery of God, and as pilgrimages go,

Lough Derg has to be one of the most unique, and, in my view, one of the best. Through the centuries it has been a privileged place of encounter with God, a place of healing, a place where people have battled with and defeated their demons, whatever these might be, anything that diminishes us as human beings.

“Lough Derg continues to be that place today, a sanctuary where people can go to experience in a direct and tangible way the mercy and healing of God. I hope this book will be a guide for pilgrims old and new, and perhaps also a help along the spiritual journey for those who cannot go to the holy island but journey towards God in their hearts.”

Saint Patrick’s Sanctuary – the pilgrimage site – is located on Station Island in Lough Derg which is four miles north of the village of Pettigo, Co Donegal. It is often referred to as Saint Patrick’s Purgatory or simply Lough Derg. The Diocese of Clogher has been the sole custodian of Lough Derg since 1780. Historical records date the practice of pilgrimage on Lough Derg to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Legend also presents the cave on the island as the place where Saint Patrick had his vision of Purgatory. Saint Patrick is said to have left a disciple in the area and the foundation of one of the earliest monastic

Christian settlements followed. The remnants of the monastic prayer cells remain central to the pilgrimage tradition. Today, the Lough Derg Three Day Pilgrimage follows a pattern prayer from the Celtic monastic time and shows remarkable continuity with the earliest systematic account of the pilgrimage, which dates to the 1600s.

The island pilgrimage is currently overseen by the Prior, Father Owen McEneaney, a priest of the Diocese of Clogher. Speaking ahead of the book launch, Father McEneaney, said, “This book is timely in that it opens the treasure-trove that is Lough Derg. It is a *must read* about a pilgrimage that has the potential to transform your life.”

## **Anglican World magazine showcases global church family**

The global family of the Anglican Communion in action is showcased in the latest edition of Anglican World out this week.

It features stories of churches working to tackle hardship, disease, injustice and homelessness. Writing in the magazine, Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Josiah Idowu-





Fearon, said, “Wherever we are, God calls us to be an active part of his family making a difference through out prayers and actions... across the Anglican Communion we have enormous opportunities to show God’s love in practical ways and see lives transformed.”

The magazine includes a focus on Fiji and how the church has been standing alongside those affected by Cyclone Winston, which hit the region in February killing 44 people and leaving hundreds homeless. Chief Executive Officer of the Anglican Missions Board, the Revd Canon Robert Kereopa explained how their three-phased emergency plan was being rolled out

now offering temporary shelters and trauma counseling for the victims.

Ways to help the church be more inclusive of people with disabilities features in an article about a workshop in Rwanda for representatives from East and Central Africa. Anglican Alliance Relief and Programmes Manager, Dr Janice Proud helped organize the event. “People with disabilities make up 20% of the poorest of the poor... The most amazing thing for me was how those gathered for the workshop seemed to already be aware that they were not reaching people with disability in their work, and they were ready to explore how to adapt their practice and resources to ensure that it was sensitive to and inclusive of people with disabilities,” she said.

This issue also includes a story from Athens about how churches in the city have come together in response to the migrant crisis, supporting vulnerable families with advice and basic supplies.

While other features include the church response to a deadly virus, looking at Ebola in Africa and Zika in South America and an item from Cyprus about how people are making new spiritual

journeys on an island steeped in Christian history and tradition.

## **Cathedral, choral and musical**

**Westminster Presbyterian Church Choir** from Nashville, Tennessee will give a concert on Friday 10 June 2016 at 6.00pm in **St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh.**

The Church is a 1,900-member congregation of the Presbyterian Church USA, located in the West End area of Nashville, Tennessee. The music ministry of Westminster is committed to musical excellence as their appropriate offering to God in worship, and involves over two hundred children, youth, and adults in its graded choral programme.

The 2016 Westminster Presbyterian Tour Choir is made up of members from the Laudate and Westminster Choirs. The Laudate Choir is comprised of singers in grades seven to twelve. The Westminster Choir is the adult ensemble of the church. While members from the two choirs are combined for this tour, each choir has responsibility for choral leadership at one of two Sunday morning services every week during the school year, as well as regular Evensongs.

The adult choir frequently presents major choral works with orchestra and has offered such masterworks as J. S. Bach's 'Magnificat, St. John's Passion', and other cantatas; the Requiems of Brahms, Duruflé, and Mozart; Haydn's 'Creation'; Lauridsen's 'Lux Aeterna'; Respighi's 'Laud to the Nativity'; Rutter's 'Gloria'; as well as many choral settings of the evening service. The Laudate Choir tours bi-annually and previous tours have included Chicago, New York City, Seattle, Toronto, Washington, D.C., as well as Germany, Prague, and Scotland with the adult choir.

Dr. John Semingson has served as Director of Music Ministries at Westminster since 2001 and holds degrees in organ, church music and choral conducting. Dr. Polly Brecht, Associate Director and Organist, holds degrees in organ and piano, and also serves on the faculty of the Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University. Mr. Keith Cole, tour manager, is a member of Westminster Church and is the Southeastern U.S. Group Tour Account Executive with Witte Travel & Tours. He holds degrees in voice, musical theatre, church music and divinity

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**Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin** has announced the return of the **Summer Music School** this June. All children between the age of 10 and 18 are welcome to attend this free summer school which will include music workshops with the organists of the cathedral, group singing lessons, a free tour of the crypt and the belfry, and lots of other fun activities. The summer school will run from 11am until 3pm from the 7th to the 9th of June. To enrol please contact the cathedral office on 01 677 8099 or contact the Director of Music at [ian@christchurch.ie](mailto:ian@christchurch.ie)

## News briefs

**The 120th Anniversary of St. Columba's Parish Church, Knock**, in East Belfast will be celebrated at the Patronal Festival on Sunday 5th June. 10.30am – Patronal Festival Eucharist and Dedication of the recently refurbished West End of the Church which now includes a Welcome Area and Tea Point. This work is facilitating renewed growth and community outreach. The Preacher will be Archbishop Robin Eames. Following the service the updated edition of the book 'A House Not Made With Hands' will be launched which details the history

and development of the parish throughout the past 120 years. 7.00pm – Choral Evensong where the preacher will be the Rt. Revd Dr. Gordon McMullan (former Curate and Rector of the parish) and the prayers will be led by Archdeacon Gregor McCamley (former Rector of the parish).

The Rector of St. Columba's, Knock, the Revd John Auchmuty, says: "This will be a significant weekend in the life of our parish as we celebrate the 120th anniversary of St. Columba's Knock in both word and song. It will be a unique opportunity to give thanks to God for all that has been achieved through the hard work and generosity of so many people in past years whilst also seeking God's guidance in the years ahead.

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**Re-opening of St. Bernadette's Church, Belfast** - On Sunday 29th May St. Bernadette's Parish Belfast celebrated the re-opening of their Church with concelebration of Mass by Bishop Noel Treanor, Bishop Emeritus Anthony Farquhar and Fr. Paul Armstrong, Parish Priest.

Speaking of the resilience and faithfulness of the parishioners of St Bernadette's, Bishop Farquhar



commented ” I remember how this Church continued to be a spiritual presence on this road in very difficult times. This was at a time when unplanned demographic changes were taking part in this city, and we did not escape in this parish. They were indeed difficult times.”

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**C of I Archive of the month** - Local and family historians with an interest in County Galway will benefit from transcription and indexing work of surviving **registers for the parishes of Killinane and Kilconickny, near Loughrea**, together with other detailed information of local interest, released online in June’s Archive of the Month. The work has been compiled by local historian **Gerry Kearney**, who has recently self-published *The Church of Ireland Unions of Killinane and Kilconickny, Loughrea, County Galway – A History* (2015). Colourfully illustrated with images, the presentation demonstrates what can be gleaned from combining the written evidence in registers and other parish record sources with local history fieldwork. While researching the history of his wife’s ancestors – the Taylors of Athenry, Ardrahan and Kilchreest – he transcribed all the surviving records of both parishes, now located alongside many other collections, in the RCB Library, Dublin, where



they have been held in safe custody since 2007. Biographical notes of the families of these small communities were compiled from the transcribed church records, gravestone inscriptions from Killinane and Bookeen graveyards, and other related research material. Dr Susan Hood, Assistant Librarian at the RCB Library, comments: “We commend the work of Gerry Kearney who has faithfully reproduced the contents of surviving parish registers for Killinane and Kilconickny, and for his willingness to contribute to ongoing efforts to index and make available parish registers for research.” To view the register transcripts and indexes see: [www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive)

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On Sat. 4th June, the **Royal Munster Fusiliers Association** and representatives of Kerry County Council will officially dedicate the memorial which was erected by **Tralee** Town Council near Ballymullen Barracks. The memorial is in memory of those from Tralee town who died in the First World War while serving with the RMF and other military units, including those of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Two panels are being erected at the memorial containing the names of those who



were killed. This will be an open event and all are invited to attend the ceremony which will take place at 3.00pm.

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**Becket's bones return to Canterbury** - The bones of Thomas Becket, the 12th century Archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered at the behest of King Henry II, are to return to the cathedral where he was killed and buried at the conclusion of a pilgrimage tour through south east England from their home in Hungary. The arrival of the relics of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral on Saturday will be the

culmination of Becket Week – an ecumenical series of events organized by the Hungarian government.

## News links to reports on faith, politics and education

### Archbishop astonished at moves to remove Eighth Amendment

Irish Times

He also said renewal of the **church** in Ireland could take “about 30 years” and that damage done by clerical abuse scandals was “something that we ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/archbishop-astonished-at-moves-to-remove-eighth-amendment-1.2667313>

### Mail

Reports comments of Professor Timothy Garton Ash of Oxford University that Jesus Christ would be banned from speaking at universities if he was alive today along with other 'non-violent extremists'. Prof Garton Ash complained that Britain has become ‘too feeble’ at supporting free speech and insisted that the public must stand up against self-censorship. The European Studies expert told the Hay Festival that UK universities are now encouraged by Home Office legislation to block even non-violent extremists from appearing.

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3617842/Jesus-Christ-BANNED-speaking-universities-alive-2016-non-violent-extremists-Oxford-professor-warns.html?ITO=1490&ns\\_mchannel=rss&ns\\_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3617842/Jesus-Christ-BANNED-speaking-universities-alive-2016-non-violent-extremists-Oxford-professor-warns.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

### **Mirror**

Reports a new book, *Hunger Pains*, written by food bank volunteers. Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite, worked in her local centre in Stockton-on-Tees as part of a research project. She says, “Food banks are silently slipping into everyday life.” Article notes that the Trussell Trust provided more than 1.1 million three-day food supplies in the UK last year, running more than 425 centres across the country.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/food-banks-silently-slipping-everyday-8088594#ICID=nsm>

### **Guard/Mail**

Reports that artefacts from Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire are going on display for the first time in a new exhibition. Founded in 1132 it was the first monastery of the Cistercian order located in the north of England. Two of its early abbots were venerated as saints. Henry VIII dissolved the monastery in 1538.

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/jun/01/rievaulx-abbey-riches-from-dissolution-come-to-light-in-new-museum>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3618221/Henry-VIII-wouldn-t-happy-Artefacts-Yorkshire-abbey-destroyed-Tudor-king-display-time-centuries.html>

### **Premier**

Reports the results of a YouGov poll which found Geraldine Grainger, better known as the *Vicar of Dibley*, has topped a list of fictional characters likely to vote ‘remain’ in the EU referendum later this month. YouGov asked voters how they thought 30 different fictional characters might vote on June 23rd. Others likely to vote remain were Mary Poppins and *Yes Minister*’s Sir

Humphrey Appleby. On the other side of the debate, Basil Fawlty of *Fawlty Towers*, Jim Royle of the *Royle Family* and Del Boy of *Only Fools and Horses* were most likely to vote to leave.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Vicar-of-Dibley-most-likely-to-vote-remain-in-EU-ref>

## Comment

**Eve Stand:** Old Europe is much bigger than EU (*scroll down*) cites Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury speaking at an offshoot of the Rimini conference, the biggest cultural festival in the world concentrating on European identity and Christianity.  
<http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/melanie-mcdonagh-child-or-gorilla-you-choose-a3260306.html>

**Ind:** Meredith JC Warren, Lecturer in Biblical and Religious Studies, University of Sheffield writes a commentary review of series six of *Game of Thrones*. She asks the question if resurrection appears to be a very real possibility for some in the mythical Westeros – what can the Bible add to the discussion? The article highlights the biblical story of Lazarus.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/game-of-thrones-season-6-spoilers-jon-snow-sansa-stark-resurrection-in-the-bible-and-george-rr-a7057566.html>

## Obituary

**Guardian:** The Revd Dennis Nineham, religious thinker who served the C of E on its Synod and Doctrine Commission.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/31/the-rev-dennis-nineham-obituary>

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June 2

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