

June 4, 2019



‘We need to enjoy God’ - Moderator

In his address to the Opening Night of this year’s General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in Assembly Buildings, Belfast (3 June), the denomination’s newly elected, Moderator, Right Reverend Dr William Henry, has challenged the Church not to simply admire God from a

June 4, 2019

distance, but to get up close and make a connection with him - and 'enjoy God'.

The 50-year-old minister of Maze Presbyterian Church in County Antrim, is the youngest Moderator to be elected since 1931.

He was addressing 800 church members, overseas guests and civic dignitaries during the opening service ahead of four days of debate by ministers and elders from the Church's 500-plus congregations across Ireland. Meeting together in General Assembly they will discuss a diverse range of church-related matters and public issues.

During his address, in the historic setting of the Assembly Hall, Dr Henry unveiled his theme for his year in office - 'Enjoying God'. Exploring his theme he said that for many Christians, because of the pressures and busyness of life and the daily routine of sameness, there was a tendency to simply admire God from a distance without "getting up close and really making a connection with him. It was exactly for that reason that I want to take as my theme for the year 'Enjoying God'," he said.

Speaking of one of the pieces of Scripture that was read during the service, Romans 5:1-5, the Moderator, who grew up in Mallusk in County Antrim said, "The flow of the passage, and the weight of the meaning is that to live life as you were intended, to get the most from life, you need to have a deep wellspring of joy. And that enjoyment of God comes from a vibrant transforming relationship with God...I believe that Christian joy gives us an entirely different way

June 4, 2019

to get through life. The joy that God gives is so different it changes your life.”

Dr Henry explained that he believed the reason for this was that “Christian joy is not based on your circumstances...we can rejoice even in the negative experiences of life because we know God is working through these things – he’s doing something in us through it all. And it all culminates in hope. Now there’s a word for modern day living!”

With many young people in his growing County Antrim congregation, the Moderator has a passion for youth ministry. Quoting an essay by the American pastor, Dr Kevin DeYoung on reaching the next generation for God, the Moderator said that Dr DeYoung pointed out that you didn’t need to be ‘cool and trendy’ – “It’s to live like Jesus, To show them Jesus. To give them hope for the future.

“We need to grab them with passion, we need to win them with Love, we need to hold them with holiness and we need to challenge them with Truth. That must be a challenge to us to embody and to show the love of Jesus demonstrated in normal living. People will not give Christianity a second thought if it seems lifeless, rote and uninspiring. You cannot pass on what you do not feel yourself. That is why I feel so strongly about my theme for the year – ‘Enjoying God’.

Dr Henry continued, “It makes no difference whether your church building is old or new, whether it’s big or small, or whether whatever you do in it is formal or casual – you need a passion and a joy for Jesus. This joy is so different from anything that life offers and it’s this joy that should be seen in a Christian - and whenever Christians gather together -

June 4, 2019

and it all points to the fact that Jesus is unique and is worth following. This is what the Presbyterian Church ought to be known for when they are talking about us.”

The Moderator said that it was a message of hope for everyone. “Inside the church. Outside the church. We are all the same flesh and blood. We face the same health uncertainties. Every one of us is on the same daily treadmill. We need hope to transform our present experience, and I believe this passage is telling us that this hope is found in enjoying God. I do believe the Gospel can transform life and our experiences.”

He continued by saying that he believed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ could transform what he described as the ‘failures of life’ and even there, people can still experience and enjoy God. In closing his address, Dr Henry said “...So even when we fail personally, in our actions and in our words, when we feel we as a church fail and have not communicated well enough the love of Jesus as we should, when we feel our politicians fail, when we feel our institutions fail - we remind ourselves God doesn’t fail.

“In our hardship and struggles we look to see what it is that God has been aiming to do around us, through us and in us to put these things right. We need to make the step to enjoy God right now, right where we are and see where that leads us.”

During Assembly week, Dr Henry will preside over 26 sessions – the vast majority of which are open to the public – where members of Assembly will have the opportunity to discuss around 110 reports and consider over 100

June 4, 2019

resolutions that will set the direction for the life and ministry of the Church for the coming year and beyond.

Married to Nora, the father of three – who were all at the Opening Night service - is the denomination's 174th Moderator since 1840, and the fifth to come from a congregation in the Lisburn area. Before he was formally nominated and elected Moderator, his predecessor, Dr Charles McMullen gave his address and reflected on his year in office.

Dr McMullen spoke of visiting many rural congregations across Ireland, describing them as having been “part of the backbone of Presbyterianism for generations and are still central to the community as they seek to respond to contemporary challenges. Wherever I have travelled, again and again I have been impressed by the faithfulness and dedication of God's people...

“As Barbara and I have sought to bless and encourage, we too have been so blessed and encouraged by our overall impression of a denomination in which there is a strong, beating heart,” he said.

He spoke about the renewed passion for the local church that he had gained and how it was the hope of the world, and how he found himself “simply in awe of my colleagues as I have experienced over and over again how ministers are leading and serving their people with transparent graciousness, servant-hearts and sacrificial love... while holding out faithfully before them, Sunday by Sunday, and week by week, the unchanging promises of the Word of God.”

June 4, 2019

Talking about Scripture, and what it teaches about marriage, Dr McMullen said, “It is our duty to uphold what the Scriptures teach, but to do so in a manner that is pastorally sensitive, does not turn our General Assembly into a series of case studies, or a place where we create a hierarchy of sin. In a rapidly changing and secularising Ireland, as the Bible reminds us, we need to speak the truth in love and not be perceived to be closing the door to those who would see our churches as a cold place, when we know that not to be the case.”

In a wide ranging address, that covered his overseas tour of Jordan and his visit to northern Greece to see how one small denomination is doing so much to help and support Syrian refugees, to the Church’s chaplains in the RAF, Army and prisons, the Minister of West Church in Bangor said, “As I have travelled around Ireland, I have experienced so many good news stories.

“It has occurred to me that as a society we are bombarded by bad news stories and endless negativity. This is not to deny the brokenness of our political processes and the pain in so many lives. But as followers of Jesus Christ we have been given the wonderful privilege of telling a better story. It’s about fullness of life in Jesus Christ and that amazing adventure of faith that takes us out from clinging to the shorelines as we share him in word and in deed with others...”

He concluded by saying, “To know that we are loved by an everlasting love, that the local church is the hope of the world and to reach out to community as we share and

June 4, 2019

demonstrate that better news story of Jesus Christ - what better story can there be than that!"

Business at this year's General Assembly will start on Tuesday, 4 June at 10.30 am and conclude on Friday 7 June. All are welcome. For full details visit www.presbyterianireland.org/pciga2019

General Synod 2019



Bullying and harassment to be highlighted in Clergy Wellbeing Survey at Scottish Episcopal General Synod

[On next page](#)

June 4, 2019

The annual meeting of the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church takes place from 6-8 June in St Paul's & St George's Church, York Place, Edinburgh. Church members from across Scotland who have been nominated members of General Synod will gather in Edinburgh for the three day meeting at which a range of issues, concerns and opportunities facing the Church will be discussed and debated.

This year's agenda includes a report on a Clergy Wellbeing Survey carried out earlier this year, in which indications of bullying and harassment have been made. This is of serious concern to the Church and will be a priority for its leadership to address over the coming weeks and months. Other items include a proposed revision of the Church's Ethical Investment Policy and a report on the Church's Safeguarding Audit.

Interfaith relations are always of importance in the Church's life and this year General Synod is delighted to welcome the Director General and Chief Imam of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society, Sheikh Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi, to address Synod.

What it means to be human is a question that Synod members will be considering when presented with a report on the Challenge of Genome Editing from its Church in Society Committee.

General Synod will be constituted by the Most Rev Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross & Caithness and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church when he delivers his Charge to Synod during the opening Eucharist on the

June 4, 2019

Forgiveness is liberating: Christian captive Terry Waite reflects on life at 80

The Christian who was kidnapped in Beirut thirty years ago reflected on the power forgiveness has had on his life as he celebrated his 80th birthday on Friday last.

Serving as the Archbishop of Canterbury's special envoy, Terry Waite was held in captivity for nearly five years whilst trying to free western hostages in Lebanon.

He was kept hostage from 1987-1991.



Reflecting on his time in captivity, Mr Waite told Premier news his faith gave him the strength to persevere: "I could say in the face of my captors, you have the power to break my body and you've tried, the power to bend my mind and you've tried but my soul isn't yours to possess."

He shared how his trials taught him how to love the poor: "I've always had sympathy for people who are on the margins of life. But that sympathy in captivity was changed into empathy.

June 4, 2019

"Being there equipped me to be able to do more and understand more of the situation that many people in this world find themselves in."

Mr Waite, who was kept mainly in solitary confinement during his captivity, revisited the country several years after his release in 1991, to offer his forgiveness to Hezbollah - the organisation believed to have been behind his kidnapping.

He said he's learnt the importance of seeking reconciliation through times of division: "You don't have to agree with what people do, to be able to forgive.

"If you can't forgive it restricts your own future. Forgiveness is liberating."

Earlier this year the Lebanese Embassy held a reception in honour of Terry Waite and his humanitarian efforts.

As he celebrates his 80th birthday, Terry seems to have no intention of slowing down and plans to return to Beirut later this year to continue to work on peace building efforts.

Sudan troops clear protest camp in Khartoum, kill over a dozen

Civilian protesters fled in fear as Sudanese security forces fired off rounds of live ammunition.

The assault on the months-old sit-in camp at the heart of Khartoum began early Monday morning.

Troops set fire to demonstrators' tents and the sound of gunfire filled the air. Videos posted online showed people running through the streets and ducking for cover.

June 4, 2019



Protestors march in Khartoum

By midday, security forces had taken control of nearly the entire camp, sealing off the area.

Sporadic unrest flared around the capital after news of the crackdown spread. Smoke was seen rising from various locations around Khartoum, and reports emerged of protesters blocking a bridge across the Nile river with burning tires.

Heart of protest movement

The camp had become the epicenter of a movement that is seeking to bring democratic reform to Sudan.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators set up the camp outside the Sudanese military headquarters in April, following the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir.

June 4, 2019

Negotiations between protest leaders and military officials have sought to decide the makeup of a transitional government.

Protesters are calling for “limited military representation” in a sovereign council to lead Sudan until civilian rule takes over in three years.

Easily-foreseen crackdown

An Italian journalist who is expert on Sudan told Vatican Radio that a strike last week showed the protesters’ strength and vast social appeal.

Raffaele Masto said the crackdown was expected to start from one minute to the next after the 2-day strike was widely-observed throughout the country.

The United States and several European nations are calling on Sudan’s military to halt their violent suppression of protesters and civilians.

June 3 - Today in Christian history

Significant events on this day

June 4, 1873: Charles F. Parham, founder of the Apostolic Faith movement and one of the founders of the modern Pentecostal movement, is born in Muscatine, Iowa. In 1900 he founded the Bethel Bible School, where speaking in tongues broke out—launching the Pentecostal movement.

June 4, 2019

June 4, 1948: The Far East Broadcasting Company, based in the Philippines and broadcasting across Asia, goes on-air with the staff singing "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

June 4 - News briefs

A survey of contemporary church life

+++ Labyrinth Experience at Christ Church, Dublin -

Dates: Monday, 10th of June, 17th July, and 4th August. Time: 19:00h

Admission: Free, no booking required. For the first evening in their summer series of Cathedral Nights on 10 June, the evening will begin at 7:00 pm when Dean will provide a brief introduction to labyrinths and an opening prayer and reflection. On 17 July and 4 August, an opening prayer and short lectio divina meditation will take place between 7:00 and 7:30 pm. For each of the three evenings the cathedral will remain open until 9:00 pm. Suggested points for prayer, as well as quiet, reflective music will be available inside the cathedral for those wishing to have some guidance in their prayers, or individuals will be welcome to simply walk the labyrinth in the cathedral grounds in their own time and at their own pace. Visit the Christ Church [Events Page](#) for more information

More on next page

June 4, 2019

+++ Signs of Hope In A Time Of Despair - A Matthew Fox Lecture in Christ Church, Dublin. Rev. Matthew Fox; spiritual theologian, an Episcopal priest and an activist for gender justice and eco-justice. Author of 'Order of the Sacred Earth'. Accompanied by Meshi Chavez; bringing in Lakota prayer through drumming, song and innovation and Nóirín Ní Riain; an Irish singer, writer, teacher, theologian and authority on Gregorian chant. Dates: Saturday, 22nd June Time: 19:30-21:30h. Admission: Adult: €30.00; Senior (aged 65+): €22.50; Student (with valid ID): €22.50. Visit the [Christ Church Website](#) for more information

+++ Soul of Belfast in Cathedral concert - Hailed as 'the soul of Belfast', the Belfast Community Gospel Choir (BCGC) has literally taken Northern Ireland by storm. They are relentless ambassadors for the city of Belfast and the whole of the province as they spread the message of love, joy and peace through their music. The choir's resume is impressive including many TV appearances, performances for heads of state, royalty, corporate and civic functions and charity and church concerts. Internationally they have performed in New York City, Boston and Indiana, USA. They will sing in Belfast Cathedral on Sunday 16th June at 7.30pm. Information about tickets can be found [here](mailto:Lorna@belfastcathedral.org). Lorna@belfastcathedral.org

+++ C of I on green u tube - At General Synod the Church and Society Commission showed a video highlighting examples of how parishes are looking after the environment. This is now available online (at <https://youtu.be/tUUQ0JgzuMI>) and a brief article to

June 4, 2019

News Links June 4

[My runaway dad left us homeless and penniless, I've battled depression... but telling my kids I have ...](#)

Belfast Telegraph

Alan Abernethy (62) is the **Church of Ireland** Bishop of Connor. He's served in ministry in Ireland since 1981 and he recently finished his third book ...

[Presbyterian General Assembly opens in Belfast](#)

Irish Times

The Presbyterian **Church in Ireland** has just under 220,000 members belonging to 535 congregations across 19 presbyteries throughout Ireland, most ...

[Tributes paid following the death at 98 of a popular Greenock minister](#)

Greenock Telegraph

Alexander Chestnut MBE was ordained in 1948 by the Presbyterian **Church of Ireland** but served for almost 25 years in the Church of Scotland in the ...

[Jason O'Toole comment: Archbishop Eamon Martin is right to advise parents not give kids phones ...](#)

Irish Mirror

I'd rarely, if ever, find myself seeing eye-to-eye with the Catholic **Church** on most matters – especially concerning children or parenting. But I'm ...

[Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Anniversary: Five Weird Facts About the Historic Event](#)

Newsweek

A runner at base camp scrambled to deliver the British expedition's **news** to a ... Henry VIII separated the church from Rome in 1534, sparking broad ... As “Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the **Church of England**,” ...

[Humanist weddings rise by 266 per cent across England and Wales](#)

The Independent

While humanist weddings went up 266 per cent between 2004 and 2016, **Church of England** weddings fell by 28 per cent, Catholic by 34 per cent and ...

[Bishop supports those demonstrating against Trump](#)

Premier

A **Church of England** bishop has said he is happy to support those demonstrating against Trump's state visit to the UK on Monday and questions ...

[Pope asks Roma to forgive Catholic Church over abuses](#)

Irish Times

June 4, 2019

Pope Francis has asked forgiveness in the name of the Catholic **Church** for the mistreatment of the Roma people, a move likely to increase tensions ...

[Abolish the Priesthood](#)

The Atlantic

... being dead was once unthinkable, but then the **news** came from **Ireland**. ... **Ireland** was heaven to her, and the Catholic Church was heaven's choir. ... to investigate accounts and rumors of child abuse in **Ireland's** residential ... social justice, and **religious** reform—questions that defined my work for the ...

AN INVITATION
to get Twitter leads from CNI
Just a click on the Twitter logo on
the CNI home page

+ Please share CNI with your friends
www.churchnewsireland.org

