

## **Today at the General Assembly – Tuesday, June 6**

Today marks the first full day of business at this year's General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), which is meeting in Assembly Buildings, Belfast. Having been formally nominated and installed yesterday evening as Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely will chair the first of this week's sessions.

At the start of the annual weeklong gathering of 1,000 ministers and elders from the Church's 500-plus congregations across Ireland, there will be a major emphasis of the Church's plans to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

In his address last night Dr. McNeely described being Moderator during the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary as "quite awesome" and the Reformation as Martin Luther's, "remarkable initiative that started the

wheels of transformation in the church that has had such colossal influence for five centuries.”

Members of Assembly will hear detailed plans of a special celebration entitled ‘Faith at the Crossroads – Rediscovering the Reformation’. The event will take place over three consecutive days in three different venues: Dublin (17<sup>th</sup> October), Londonderry (18<sup>th</sup> October) and Belfast (19<sup>th</sup> October).

Following on from Union Theological College’s conference on Martin Luther in February, the keynote speaker at Faith at the Crossroads will be Dr. Conrad Mbewe of Kabwata Baptist Church in Zambia. Last here for 2016’s Bangor Worldwide Missionary Convention, Dr. Mbewe’s preaching ministry has led him to be described as ‘the Spurgeon of Africa’. Each event is free of charge with praise led by members of New Irish Arts.

In the first of three alternative presentations that seek to give specific insight into the work of the Church in different areas of its ministry, the Council for Congregational Life and Witness will present ‘Fellow workers with God who makes things grow.’

Taken from I Corinthians 3:7, the presentation will reinforce the denomination's Fruitful Congregations initiative and is an opportunity to draw the General Assembly's attention to some of the key aspects of what 'fruitful' means. The spotlight will fall on three particular areas:

- The development of Women's Ministry
- Leadership development is another important aspect of the Council's developing work, emphasized by the launch of a DVD Bible Study resource for congregations called 'Valuable Leadership'
- The SPUD Report, ('Speaking, Participating, Understanding and Deciding') will highlight the importance of congregations making use of social media for communication with the emerging generation and in the areas of outreach and discipleship.

An important aspect of work that will also be reported on is 'A vision for small and fruitful' - an examination of existing congregational capacity for developing life and witness across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Earlier in the day's proceedings, the Moderator will receive the guests from overseas churches. This year there are more overseas delegates than in previous years, with guests coming from as far as East Africa, Pakistan, Latvia and Hungary. The Moderator of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, Rev. Fadi Elia Dagher will speak on behalf of the overseas delegates. The Church of Scotland delegation is led by its Moderator, Rt. Rev. Derek Browning. Dr. McNeely will also receive local representatives from the Methodist Church in Ireland, Religious Society of Friends and the Church of Ireland.

The General Assembly will hear how PCI is delivering an effective Social Care service through the provision of residential, nursing, supported housing, respite, day care and various community based programmes. An update will also be provide on progress towards the opening of the new residential care home in Garvagh that has been named 'Trinity House', after a special competition to name the new home, which will open later this year. The new name not only honours the legacy and coming together

of the residential homes of Ard Cluan in Londonderry and York House in Portrush on the one site, it also gives the home a clear Christian identity. The Church's commitment to providing services to those with dementia will also feature in discussions as will its Adult Safeguarding Congregational Policy and Guidelines.

Details of all resolutions and reports to this year's General Assembly can be found at [www.presbyterianireland.org/GA2017](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/GA2017).

Most of the General Assembly's proceedings will be streamed live and can be viewed at [www.presbyterianireland.org](http://www.presbyterianireland.org). Live updates on proceedings can be followed @pciassembly on Twitter using the hashtag #PCIGA17.

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