



CEREMONY: Dr David Bruce, the new Presbyterian moderator, gave his address on Monday evening via a livestream rather than before a traditional 900-strong congregation. Three other clergy were involved in the ceremony



## DR DAVID BRUCE INSTALLED AS PRESBYTERIAN MODERATOR

THE Presbyterian Church installed its new moderator this week, in a ceremony that had to be livestreamed with just four people involved because of the coronavirus restrictions.

Rev Dr David Bruce, the first moderator in more than 20 years to come from a position outside parish ministry, said he hoped that some of the lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic would remain.

"If there is to be a 'new normal'... perhaps we might hope that some of the richest learning we have gleaned might be retained as abiding features of Irish life – things like generosity, community spirit, volunteering for practical care and appreciation for good work well done," he said.

This year's Presbyterian General Assembly, which should have been meeting this week, has been cancelled.

It was, said Dr Bruce, an "unusual situation... exemplified by the empty hall before us, and that you, the congregation, are watching online".

The Covid-19 crisis has, he said, "refocused our attention on the need for excellent care in the community".

"The most vulnerable ought to be our first, not our last priority in caring – and we commend the incredible commitment of all on the front line, in particular those in our health services, and care home staff, working in difficult conditions across the sector, and note among them the wonderful work of the Presbyterian care teams working in our residential facilities across the country."

If protecting older people should be a priority, so too is caring "for people at the earliest stages of their lives also", he said. "It has been deeply distressing to see the radical liberalisation of the law in both jurisdictions regarding abortion," Dr Bruce said.

"Like all ethical issues, there must surely be a point of principle upon which our decisions rest and we as a Church affirm again that life is holy to God, and that the most vulnerable in society deserve the most assiduous protection from society – and this includes the unborn."

## Tackling our throwaway culture

The Columban Missionary Society organises a schools journalism competition in Britain and Ireland each year, with young people aged between 15 and 18 invited to enter an article or video. The theme of the 2020 competition was 'Tackling our Throwaway Culture' and the winning print entry came from 16-year-old Thornhill College, Derry student Trinity McKeever. Here are her thoughts on food waste, *Laudato Si* and smorgasbord...

THERE has been such a focus on the waste from bottles, bags, and packaging, that it is easy to forget about the waste that comes out of our kitchens every week.

The difference? Of course, you need some plastic for bottles, you need to make those bags out of something, but the 1.3 billion tonnes of food waste that stain our planet every year – equivalent to a tonne for every person in India – is completely unnecessary and totally avoidable.

Walk into your kitchen and take a good look at your food bin. Its presence can be comforting, can't it? Almost as though you don't need to worry about your food waste, just as long as it's in the right bin.

Open it. That two-day old pastry which looked a little bit stale; where did it end up? That banana that had gone somewhat brown; where did it end up?

It's not like these foods would cause us any real harm by eating them. If someone were to serve them to you in a meal, you wouldn't notice. So why is so much of it wasted?

Well, that answer is slightly complicated, but sadly, as with many things,

it is mainly so that the big brands selling this food can profit.

It starts in the farms, where the farmer might discard up to 20 per cent of the produce grown, not because they taste differently, but because they don't meet the aesthetic standards set by the aforementioned big brands.

The deciding factor of whether or not food makes it to market is if it looks good enough to eat, even if it is already good enough to eat.

In the supermarket, shelves might be restocked several times a week, not because the remaining food has gone bad, but because they want their aisles to look like they are bursting with fresh food.

Do you know why most supermarkets lock their dumpsters outside? It's not to keep away animals.



"Within one cosmic minute, humans have decided that the Earth was ours to take. To change. To destroy"

And what happens to a piece of lettuce which has started to droop? Even if it tastes exactly the same, it goes in the bin.

It's not just stores that decide this though; there are laws that cause producers to throw away cucumbers for being too curvy, potatoes for being too small, and tomatoes for being the wrong shade of red.

Imagine this: You walk to the nearest supermarket – with rows upon rows of newly restocked items, of course – and you walk to the back of the shop. Do you know why most supermarkets lock their dumpsters outside? It's not to keep away animals.

It is because they do not want you to see the piles of food that are being thrown away.

So imagine you did get the dumpster open. Are you expecting mouldy bread, sour milk and cherries shrivelled down to their pips?

Well, what you would see could amount to your weekly shop, and most of the food is not even past its sell-by date.

This is especially troubling when you consider that, according to a 2016 survey published by the *Guardian*, 'More than 8 million in UK struggle to put food on table'.

It is difficult to think about parents who fight just to give their children the basic nutrition they need to make it to the next day, when 62 per cent of the UK's population is overweight.

However, this imbalance between food and health is not the only reason to be concerned. All of that food in the bins, in the dumpsters, where does it all go? To the landfill.

Some of you may be thinking, "Oh that's OK, it's like compost – it's natural."

However, when food gets tipped into the rubbish heap, it begins to decompose anaerobically, meaning it can't receive any oxygen, so methane is produced – a gas that is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Environmental scientists have calculated that we have 12 years, at

most, before climate change becomes irreversible.

It is our responsibility, and our duty, to care for our planet, as Pope Francis said in his encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*.

We may journey across the solar system, but it is foolish to ignore the beauty and the life already around us. The trees and forests that provide shelter and sanctuary to so many of our beautiful animals, are being cut down at the rate of 1,000 football fields a day.

The shield of the ozone layer, guard-

## Preparing for a post-lockdown Church

The coronavirus crisis has brought to the forefront the tension between maintenance and mission, says Fr Stephen Langridge. As churches prepare to reopen, there is a 'wonderful opportunity' to rediscover the primacy of evangelisation and to reshape 'ecclesial structures'



Now the only option is to become what Pope Francis describes in *The Joy of the Gospel*: parishes "capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity... the Church living in the homes of her sons and daughters" rather than "a useless structure out of touch with people, or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 27).

The only option for us now is to become once again a missionary Church.

As we look towards an easing of the restrictions I think these extraordinary circumstances raise questions for the future.

Our parishes need to be engaged in both maintenance and mission but Pope Francis has been very forthright in his condemnation of "self-referential" parishes, and of that clerical mindset that sees the Church in terms of administering sacraments and RCIA programmes.

As the Holy Father puts it: "Mere administration cannot be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission" (EG 25).

This is a time to mobilise the bap-

The Church exists to evangelise, that is to proclaim Christ in such a way that people come to conversion.

We have to minister to people who show up, but we are called to much more than that. It would be a mistake to go back to an exclusively maintenance mindset.

A characteristic of the maintenance model of the Church is that we sacramentalise people without evangelising them. We now have a wonderful opportunity to rediscover the primacy of the evangelisation.

In the Church it has always been Word and Sacrament. In fact, when we look at the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it is Word then Sacrament. This Sacramental Fast is a time for us to encourage people to feast of the Word of God.

The present situation is also a wonderful opportunity to move away from the clericalism that has hampered the mission of the Church. That mission does not depend on a building and nor is it carried out exclusively by the ordained minister.

This is a time to mobilise the bap-

## Winners

TRINITY'S winning entry in the Columban Schools Journalism Competition was first published in the May/June edition of *Far East*, the magazine of the Columban Missionaries.

It can be seen there at columbans.ie/ columban-schools-journalism-2020-winning-article/ and more information about the competition can be



Inbhear Scéine/Kenmare Community School. Second place was awarded to Sebastian Christian Kjelsen of Scoil Phobail Bheara, Castletownbere, Beara, Co Cork.



WASTE NOT: A still from the winning entry in the video category of this year's Columban Journalism Competition. The film was made by Aishling Rochford, of Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine/Kenmare Community School

ing us from harmful UV rays, is decaying because of us. Not to mention the endangered creatures in our seas, our forests, our woods, being hunted and neglected to the point of near extinction.

In terms of Creation, humans are already ruining days two, three, four and five. If the history of the earth took place within 24 hours, humans would appear after 23:59.

Within one cosmic minute, humans have decided that the Earth was ours to take. To change. To destroy. Climate change may seem so vast,

so broad, it is tempting to cover your eyes and pretend it doesn't exist, as it's not like there is anything an ordinary person can actually do to tackle this throwaway mentality.

Well, there is. Just by limiting your own personal food waste, shopping from local areas and markets, you are not only making a difference, but you are inspiring others to do the same.

Next time you clear the fridge or cupboard, think twice about binning something, even if you don't know what to make with it. Hasn't anyone heard of a smorgasbord?



PRIVATE INTENTIONS: St Mary's in Chapel Lane, Belfast was among the churches to reopen last week after the Northern Ireland Executive said that places of worship could offer solitary prayer. Safety measures include a one-way system, hand sanitiser gel and limited access to pews to maintain a two-metre 'social distance' between people. Churches are now planning how they might open for public worship PICTURE: Liam McBurney/PA

ted. We cannot continue to use lay people to build up the Church. It is time to use the Church to build up lay people, equipping them to become the primary agents of evangelisation in today's society.

Already during our extraordinary Lent in isolation we have seen examples of committed lay faithful taking up that challenge.

We are witnessing a new movement of the Spirit raising up people "with a new evangelising fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed" (EG 29). It would be a tragedy if we thought we could return to business

as usual. Finally, the recovery of our missionary identity will necessitate structural and cultural changes in our dioceses.

Pope Francis acknowledges "there are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelisation" (EG 26).

Often an overly bureaucratic culture within dioceses will discourage rather than facilitate innovation.

Many priests are reluctant to try new things if the message from central office focuses on risk aversion and pitfalls rather than the advantages of adopting new methodologies.

'Ecclesial structures' include our

parish and deanery configuration. Consideration of priestly wellbeing, as well as the financial problems caused by the lockdown, require us to ask whether it is right to keep present structures on life-support rather than reconfigure our deaneries and parishes for mission.

Fr Stephen Langridge, parish priest of St Elizabeth of Portugal Parish in Richmond, Surrey preached the recent vocations retreat for Down and Connor Diocese. Fr Langridge is an associate of the Divine Renovation Network in the UK.