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## 'Let past go' – new moderator

By Suzanne McGonagle

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THE new moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland last night urged members to open themselves up to people they have traditionally kept their distance from.

Dr Donald Patton was speaking after he was officially installed as



A Presbyterian moderator at the opening session of the Church's general assembly.

The 57-year-old – minister of Old Church in Randalstown, Co Antrim – was nominated by 11 of the 21 presbyteries which met throughout Ireland earlier this year to vote for Dr John Finlay's successor.

Originally from Warrenpoint, Co Down, Dr Patton spent his early years living in Derry and Portadown.

Speaking following his installation, Dr Patton welcomed the positive political developments within the past year.

**"We take heart that our old and bitter enemies are working together in government.**

moderator of the Presbyterian Church of

**"Our prayers are with them as they work to achieve a settled and shared future for all," he said.**

Ireland wants church members to change

their thinking PICTURE: Mal McCann

**"Meanwhile, for the most part, we are able to breathe the air of peace. The recent business investment**

**conference hosted in Belfast gives us hope for a brighter future.**

**"This has come about because of a new way of thinking. All sides have sought a new way of working together for the good of all.**

**"There's a new way of living because there's a new way of thinking that is making a difference."**

But Dr Patton added that the Troubles had "left us a legacy of complicated and thorny issues to deal with".

**"Many still continue to bear the scars of personal grief and loss."**

He wished Lord Eames and Denis Bradley well as they draft their report on how to deal with the legacy of the past.

Turning to the spiritual, Dr Patton told the audience that the church must continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it challenged the many idols of modern day lives.

**"We worship at the shrine of materialism believing that things can save us.**

**The credit crunch and the consumer crunch are exposing the clay feet of the God of materialism," he said.**

Dr Patton also added that family life had broken down “creating fragmentation and instability in society”.


“There are fewer healthy models of the relationships that provide a secure environment for the formation of steady character and emotional stability,” he said.

“With no agreed philosophy gluing society together there is an increasing sense of lostness and of drift.”

The business sessions of the assembly are due to begin today and among the issues to be debated are the establishment of a youth assembly, the need for the church to reduce its carbon footprint and the maintenance of church involvement in education.

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