**PCI welcomes NI Assembly call for better end of life provision**

 The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has welcomed the unanimous support given to the cross-party motion in the Northern Ireland Assembly today (27 April) around end of life issues, which emphasised ‘a good end of life experience for people in Northern Ireland’ and greater investment in palliative care services.

Speaking after the debate, PCI’s Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce said, “While it can be all too easy to focus on what divides us politically, it is heartening to see MLA’s come together to call for better end of life outcomes to be included in the Executive’s forthcoming Programme for Government (PfG).

“The true measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable. Our submission to the PfG consultation noted that access to good, well-resourced palliative care affords dignity to those reaching the end of their lives and provides necessary support to their families. It is important to realise that many of the organisations, which provide this care outside of formal healthcare settings, rely on charitable donations to sustain their operations. We therefore echo the calls of others for a greater focus on palliative and end of life care within the Programme for Government, which needs to be adequately resourced. I trust that the Executive, and Health Minister take note of today’s debate.

“Our ministers and pastoral care teams, along with chaplains working in hospitals and hospices, count it a real privilege to support and journey with families who are caring for a loved one coming towards the end of their life. Our experience from sitting beside countless bedsides is that social, emotional, financial and spiritual factors are all important components which can contribute to a peaceful and dignified death.

“It goes without saying that restrictions placed on all of society over the past year to combat Covid-19 have been particularly difficult for clergy of all denominations to care for and support those experiencing bereavement. In these difficult times, it is our prayer that those who have lost loved ones know the peace of God that transcends all understanding, and the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is new every morning.”

The motion debated in the Northern Ireland Assembly on Tuesday 27th April 2021:

***The Inclusion of End of Life Outcomes in the Programme for Government***

*That this Assembly believes everyone impacted by death, dying and bereavement should receive the care and support they need; expresses its concern that demographic trends in Northern Ireland predict a significant increase in chronic illness and palliative care demand in the years ahead; notes that Scotland and Wales have current palliative care strategies and that the Republic of Ireland’s Programme for Government contains seven clear commitments on end of life care; further notes the New Decade, New Approach agreement commitment to invest in palliative care service improvement has yet to materialise; recognises that the care and support available to people as they die has an enormous impact on their quality of life and that each death leaves a number of people bereaved; and calls on the Executive to ensure that the draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework includes indicators around death, dying and bereavement and the importance of a good end of life experience for people in Northern Ireland.*