**Statement**

**11 May 2021**

**PCI: ‘Reconciliation is key to any**

**future legacy proposals’**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has reiterated its belief that that any meaningful approach to dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past must place reconciliation at its heart. PCI’s Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, was speaking following today’s (11 May) State Opening of Parliament and the UK government’s announcement in The Queen’s Speech, that it would bring forward new legislation on legacy.

In a statement from Assembly Buildings in Belfast, Dr Bruce said, “While we await the actual detail of this new legislation, upon which we will comment further, it is clear that a balanced and broad-based approach, which commands cross-community support is urgently needed.

“Any framework that deals with the complex legacy of Northern Ireland’s past needs to rest upon the important principle of reconciliation worked out through storytelling, justice for victims and information recovery. If Northern Ireland is to move forward, and its people flourish, reconciliation must be at the heart of any future process.”

Dr Bruce explained, “The Christian understanding of reconciliation rests upon the coming together of both love and justice. Love sent Christ to be with us. Justice sent Christ to the cross. Both were needed to reconcile us to God. So it is in the realm of human life. Love and justice need to come together, as the foundation of reconciled relationships.

“Reconciliation is about the work we do now to restore relationships broken by the past, in a way that can lead to a better and shared future for us all. In fixing our gaze on the past, it can be all too easy to forget that we need to live together in the present.

“It is our hope and prayer that being able to address the past effectively will enable us all to reimagine and create a better future, one that is based on a reconciled community at peace with itself. This, however, will require deep engagement with the people of Northern Ireland, especially those who have suffered the most, the victims and survivors,” Dr Bruce said.

“Many victims and survivors come from our Presbyterian family. It is impossible to quantify the suffering that violence visited on them and so many other innocent people. There was no moral justification for the illegal taking up of arms, either republican or loyalist. Then as now, history cannot be rewritten in an attempt to portray as legitimate, what was morally repugnant and totally unjustified. In the same spirit, there can be no justification for the illegal misuse of force by agencies of the State commissioned to uphold the law. In both situations, where cases are brought and wrongdoing is proved, justice must be served.”

Dr Bruce concluded by saying, “With some of the children of the Troubles now in their 50s, and a post-ceasefire generation approaching 30, an effective, workable and agreed approach to dealing with the past is long overdue. We await the detail of what is proposed and reiterate our call for a process that has reconciliation at its heart, promoting healing between and within communities. Only then can we truly learn to live with one another in the present, lay the foundations of a better future, and begin to deal effectively with many of the unresolved issues that have been left in the wake of our past.”