

Church name Edinburgh minister as next Moderator



Moderator Designate of the Church of Scotland
(2017) Rev Derek Browning of Morningside
Parish Church, Edinburgh.

Edinburgh minister The Rev Dr Derek Browning has been nominated as the next Moderator of the General Assembly. He will be sworn in next May for the following twelve months.

Dr Browning (54), minister at Morningside Parish Church since 2001 was key organiser of the biggest annual open-air festival in Princes Street Gardens attended by 5,000 people.

He said: "Being nominated as Moderator is the greatest honour the Church of Scotland can bestow. It is a huge privilege".

Dr Browning, who graduated with the degree of Doctor of Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States in 1997, will succeed the Right Rev. Dr Russell Barr as the Church of Scotland's ambassador at home and abroad.

He read history at Corpus Christi College in Oxford, and opted to train for the ministry ahead of pursuing other graduate career options working for the BBC in London and the oil giant Shell.

Dr Browning, who is also a graduate of St Mary's College in St Andrews, was ordained at Cupar Old Parish Church in Fife in 1987.

He said : "I was in my early 20s when I felt a call not only to be a Christian, but to become a minister.

"For some people this is a gradual realisation, but for me it was a sudden awakening that I couldn't put off until I had

dealt with the questions it posed, and explored the possibility.

“My ministry afterwards has stuck with those two themes: dealing with questions and exploring possibilities.”

Dr Browning says the Church is evolving : “Structures and organisations around us continue to change, but the big questions about who we are, why we are here, and what must we do and be are the ones people continue to ask,” he added.

“These are challenging times for people of faith and for the Church.

“An American colleague said recently ‘The Church isn’t dying, it’s re-forming.’

“Re-forming is a costly and unsettling process but a fit-for-purpose 21st century Church must have the resilience and the flexibility to be unashamed of its faith in Jesus Christ, and practical in its living out of that faith.”

Dr Browning, who enjoys cooking, the performing arts, cinema and theatre in his spare time, has served in the Church in several capacities in St Andrews and Edinburgh Presbyteries and also at a national level.

He is currently the convener of the General Assembly’s Business Committee, which also has responsibility for the Heart and Soul event in the gardens.

Dr Browning, who has contributed to BBC Radio Two’s ‘Pause for Thought’ programme, said: “The theme for Heart and Soul 2017 is ‘Word of Life’ and this rich and layered theme speaks to me about many things but ‘inclusion’ is one of those words of life.

“The issue of social inclusion is a key one in society and the church”.

Dr Browning, a former pupil of North Berwick High School, said he believes social inclusion is clearly a “gospel issue” and hopes to use his time as Moderator to highlight ongoing work carried out by churches that support people on the margins of society.

He added : “People find themselves excluded for all sorts of reasons and the Church must play a role in bridging the gaps between individuals, communities and nations.

“The Church has much to offer, and has much to learn. Jesus was often found not only at the heart and centre of things but also on the fringes and the margins and that is where the Church must be.”

Dr Browning said the Church must recognise that society is changing and must respond accordingly : “The challenge facing the Church is bound up to going to where there is vulnerability and need and offering welcome, hope and acceptance.

“I believe in a ministry of presence and chaplaincies in hospitals and the armed forces, universities and schools, work-place chaplaincies and chaplaincies to groups on the fringes of society, take the work of the Church outwards to where people are.”