



Derry and Strabane Holocaust Memorial event

The Dean of Derry, Very Rev. William Morton, joined civic and community leaders at Londonderry's Guildhall on Tuesday for a special event to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. It was organised by Derry and Strabane District Council's Community Relations Department, and attended by the Mayor, Cllr. Elisha McCallion.

The theme for this year's event was 'Don't Stand By'. It featured reflective readings by a number of participants representing churches, voluntary organisations and the North West's small, Jewish community.

Dean Morton read a statement made by the late Lutheran pastor, Martin Niemöller, who became an outspoken critic of Adolf Hitler and spent seven years in concentration camps:

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.*

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

The 'Don't Stand By' event included a couple of short films, made by the Holocaust Memorial Trust, and reflected, too, on other more recent genocides in Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia and Darfur. The event encouraged those present to

challenge racism, sectarianism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice.

Fleet ferrying thousands of fleeing Jews to freedom was called Little Dunkirk

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/commemorating-heroism-on-holocaust-memorial-day-1-7181512>

Auschwitz a testimony to all evil

News Letter

January 27 marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazis' most horrific extermination camp – Auschwitz Birkenau. It is also International Holocaust Memorial Day. Political commentator and former News Letter Education Correspondent, Dr John Coulter, tells of his own nightmarish trip to the Polish camp as part of those commemorations.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/auschwitz-a-horrifying-memorial-to-evils-of-racism-1-7182098>

Female cleric laments lack of women at top of Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian women have “a hard road to walk”, the Church’s first female minister has said on the day three were nominated to contest the election for moderator, Alf McCreary writes in the Belfast Telegraph.



Rev Dr Ruth Patterson

The next Presbyterian leader will be either Rev Tony Davidson of First Armagh Presbyterian Church, Rev Robert Bell of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church or Rev Frank Sellar of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in east Belfast.

No female minister has ever been elected to the top post in the Presbyterian Church, despite the nomination of women in recent years. The Church currently has 345 active ministers, of which only 21 are female.

The first female Presbyterian minister in Ireland was Dr Ruth Patterson, who was ordained in January 1976. She was the first woman cleric of any denomination to be ordained here.

Dr Patterson was nominated twice for moderator, but was unsuccessful both times. Two years ago Rev Liz Hughes of Whitehouse was runner-up, and stood again last year without success.

Dr Patterson left the full-time ministry in 1991 to become director of Restoration Ministries, a non denominational, Christian organisation committed to peace and reconciliation based in Northern Ireland.

"I believe that women make a major contribution to Church life, and when one group is not as well represented in leadership as the others, there is something missing," said Dr Patterson. "Women have so much to offer, and I would like to see a woman elected as Presbyterian Moderator.

"However I believe that women in the Church have a hard road to walk at the moment, and I find that painful, even 40 years after my ordination." A service to celebrate the Church ministry of women and the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Dr Patterson will be held on

Friday at Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church in Dunmurry.

Members of the presbyteries will vote for the moderator next Tuesday and the winner by a straight majority will be announced that evening by Church House in Belfast.

The Moderator-designate will be installed at the Opening Night of the General Assembly on June 6, when the current Moderator Dr Ian McNie, from Ballymoney, will step down.

The new moderator will be the 177th to hold the top post since the election of the Very Reverend Dr Samuel Hanna in 1840.

The Presbyterian Church has over 230,000 members belonging to 545 congregations throughout Ireland.

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/female-cleric-laments-lack-of-women-at-top-of-presbyterian-church-as-three-men-shortlisted-for-moderator-34399782.html>

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Opening the Door of Mercy conference

A special one-day conference entitled “Opening the Door of Mercy” will be held on Saturday, 5th March 2016 at Moran’s Red Cow Hotel, Dublin.

Speakers include His Excellency, Archbishop Charles J. Brown, Professor Michael Conway and Ms Susan Gately. The organisers state, “It is hoped that this day, during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, will nourish, encourage and enable those who are members of Ecclesial Movements, Associations of Lay Faithful, Apostolates, Christian Organisations and, of course, other parish groups to continue living out, in our daily lives.”

Challenging talk by Methodist President

The President of the Methodist Church, the Rev Brian Anderson, gave a challenging talk to members of the Ballynafeigh, Knockbreda, Belvoir and Cairnshill Circuit on Sunday evening 24 January. Brian talked on I Peter 3: 15: ‘Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for



The president and members of staff clearly enjoyed the evening.

the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.’ In other words, always be ready to talk about your faith, but do so with tact and circumspection.’

The text was further illustrated by a drama performed by members of the Knockbreda Youth Group. It was a lively evening with a worshipful atmosphere and members of the congregation left challenged, but in a positive frame of mind, reinforced by a pleasant supper and chat after the service.

Cork tractor run proves popular



The Rev David White, curate of Bandon, who led off the tractor run at Bandon Co Cork.

Bandon Union of Parishes in the Diocese of Cork held a Tractor Run on the afternoon of Sunday, 24th January. About 130 tractors took part and drew participants from across West Cork and farther afield. Bandon curate, the Reverend David White went into a special period of tuition and training in tractor driving so that he could lead off the tractor run.

The 23 mile route looped from Bandon via the villages of Ballinadee and Ballinspittle.

Registration and refreshments were in the Old Still at Bandon Mart. Tractor runs have become popular events nationwide and have a strong social aspect as well as being occasions for fundraising. Proceeds for the event will support Bandon Union of Parishes and Bandon Area Special Children (BASC).

Holy Land pilgrimage opportunity

If a Holy Land pilgrimage is on your 'must do' list, why not make it happen in 2016?

There's still time to book with a group led by Revd Canon David Humphries, rector of St Molua's, Stormont.

David has been leading pilgrimages since 1995 and, in conjunction with McCabe Travel, offers you the chance to meet the people of the Holy Land and see the places frequented by Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Here are some of the memories shared by previous pilgrims:

- *“Just to have been in the Holy Land is a moving experience that brings the Bible to life in a way no simple words or pictures ever could.”*



- *“I was deeply touched at the Garden Tomb, the Shepherds’ Field and on the Sea of Galilee in a storm.”*
- *“My first impression of Jerusalem was of a noisy, bustling, dirty city, but through the Damascus Gate and into the walled city is the real Jerusalem. Hiving with people, small narrow streets and alleyways; little shops selling everything under the sun, and the smell of spices, herbs and coffee.”*
- *“Little churches celebrating events in the life of Jesus, visiting church of all kinds – some simple and quiet, some ornate but all built to the glory of God.”*
- *“Walking up the Kidron Valley after a sandstorm, discovering Absalom’s Pillar,*

being on the Sea of Galilee and having Holy Communion beside the sea.”

It's a 10 day trip and this year's departure date is 24 May. Booking closes at the end of January. David can be contacted through McCabe Travel of London (020 8675 6828).

Canterbury: Caricature and prejudice can lead to 'violent persecution and genocide'

The Archbishop of Canterbury has warned of the dangers of caricature and prejudice, saying they can "lead to violent persecution and genocide" in a statement on Holocaust Memorial Day.

He urged followers to "take responsibility ourselves", particularly in speaking out "against those who would diminish others through caricature and cheap political point scoring". Justin Welby's comments will be widely interpreted as a call to resist Islamophobia, as he urged followers "not just to remember but to act". In a post on his Facebook page, Welby said the memorial day was "a searing indictment of our collusion in the evil of others through our silence".

"In the world we inhabit, the searchlight of an active media illuminates the dark recesses of the caricature, simplistic criticism and ridicule that leads inexorably to the dehumanising and degrading treatment of others," he wrote.

"History shows clearly that, unopposed, this can lead to violent persecution and genocide.

"But we're not called to be passive observers and silent accomplices to discrimination. We can take responsibility ourselves."

Welby directed his strongest exhortations to those with influence.

"We all need to show true leadership and integrity when given the power to shape the opinions of others. It's incumbent upon those who take political office or those who have influence in the media, to speak up for the defenceless and the marginalised, and not to pander to popular prejudice."

Welby's comments come after David Cameron announced Muslim women could face deportation if they don't learn English. On Tuesday chief inspector of schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, said he fully supported head teachers who instilled a ban on the face veil. He warned

that schools would be marked down by Ofsted inspectors for "inappropriate wearing of veils".

As well as in "public discourse", Welby also said we must take responsibility for prejudice as individuals and families.

Pope Francis: 'Patch up family feuds during the Year of Mercy'

Let the Year of Mercy be the time to end all family feuds, to forgive each other and let bygones be bygones, Pope Francis has said.

"I think about so many brothers and sisters who are estranged from their families; they don't speak to each other," he said during his weekly general audience in St Peter's Square yesterday.

"This Year of Mercy is a good occasion to meet up again, to embrace each other and forgive each other, to leave bad things behind," he said.

During the general audience, St Peter's Square circus performers performed a series of tricks and acrobatic leaps to entertain the Pontiff and the faithful.



Circus members greet Pope Francis after their performance during Wednesday's general audience in St Peter's Square

Following their performance, the Pope said: “I greet the circus performers and I thank them for their very welcome exhibition. You are champions of beauty: you make beauty, and beauty is good for the soul.”

The Pope continued a series of talks dedicated to divine mercy, looking specifically at how God has always been faithful and merciful toward his people.

God never ignored the Israelites’ cry of suffering and he sent Moses as a “mediator” on his behalf

to free his people and lead them to salvation, the Pope said.

“We can do this work, too, during this Year of Mercy, of being mediators of mercy with works of mercy” that bring people together, foster unity and offer people comfort and relief, he said. There are “so many good things people can do.”

“Mercy can never remain indifferent before the suffering of the oppressed, the cry of those who are exposed to violence, reduced to slavery, condemned to die,” he said.

Such suffering has existed throughout history, including in today’s world, he said, and that can often make people feel “helpless, tempted to harden their hearts and think about other things.”

God, however, is never indifferent, as he always fixes his gaze upon those in pain and intervenes by helping people become aware of and involved in the lives of those who suffer and are oppressed, he said.

In remarks to pilgrims from Iraq and other nations in the Middle East, Pope Francis again highlighted that God is not deaf to the plight of those facing “injustice and persecution.”

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

NI MP welcomes exemption of Sunday Schools from state inspections

News Letter

Sammy Wilson MP - I welcome the assurance given to me by the Education Minister in the House of Commons today that Sunday schools, church youth organisations and summer camps will not be subjected to inspections by education inspectors in order to ascertain if what was being taught was appropriate.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/sammy-wilson-it-is-right-to-exempt-sunday-schools-from-inspection-1-7181634>

NI Justice Minister to appeal abortion ruling

News Letter

Stormont's Justice Minister is to appeal against a landmark High Court ruling on Northern Ireland's restrictive abortion laws amid concerns it has inadvertently paved the way for terminations on demand.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/ford-to-appeal-against-abortion-ruling-1-7182501>

BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35416155>

Storm Jonas batters down 100 year old church wall

UTV Ireland

A 100-year-old wall at St Finbar's **Church** in Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan, collapsed on Tuesday night following torrential rain. An 100-year-old wall ...
<http://utv.ie/News/2016/01/27/Heavy-rain-causes-church-wall-collapse-in-Monaghan-52945>

ITV/Premier - The Bishop of Newcastle, Christine Hardman, took her seat in the House of Lords yesterday, the second female CofE Bishop to do so. She was supported at the ceremony by the Archbishop of York John Sentamu.

<http://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/update/2016-01-26/newcastle-bishop-takes-up-house-of-lords-seat/>

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/Society/Second-female-bishop-joins-House-of-Lords>

BBC/Guard - More than a quarter of people in Britain witnessed a hate crime in the last year, a new poll suggests. Of the 2,007 people polled 27% had seen a hate crime, with 20% witnessing abuse based on religion and 25% on race or ethnicity. The research, carried out by Censuswide, coincides with Holocaust Memorial Day on Wednesday. More than 3,000 events are taking place across the UK to mark the event, which has taken place each year since 2001.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35415988>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/27/one-in-four-uk-seen-racial-hate-this-year-holocaust-memorial-day-survey-finds>

Tel - Faith groups should have no barriers to open more free schools, a charity has said. The New Schools Network, which helps establish new free schools, says the rules for free schools limiting the number of places allocated on grounds of religion should be scrapped. According to current rules, if a faith group wanted to set up a free school it could only give priority to applicants on the grounds of religion for 50 per cent of its places.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/leaguetables/12123645/End-limits-on-faith-free-schools-says-charity.html>

Christian Today

Report on comments by Justice Secretary, Michael Gove that his Christian faith informs his prison policies. He was speaking in reaction to comments by Philip Davies who sits on the Justice Committee.

Comment

Christian Today: Women bishops one year on: Why it's still a cause for celebration.