

## Braniel and Gilnahirk churches join forces for Streetreach

**Painting fences, tidying gardens, picking up litter...**



This summer, young people from 5 local churches in Braniel and Gilnahirk joined forces to do Streetreach. Between 30 June and 3 July the

young people got to meet and make new friends, work together in garden projects and to practically put their faith in action.

On the last day there was a BBQ celebration in the local community centre when 70 people from local churches and the community came along to hear what the young people had been up to.

Susan McFarland, leader of Braniel Community Church, said: "It was so good to be able to partner with other churches in this initiative and for our young people to work together. The young people caught the vision behind Streetreach and despite the weather not been to kind to us, they put on a smile and worked hard. The feedback from young people, parents and the community have been very positive."

## **Christians urged to "build generous forward looking country"**

The Church of England's General Synod has called on all members of the Church to "play their part" in the "common task of building a generous and forward looking country". The call came following an emergency debate on a motion added to the Synod's agenda by the

Archbishops of Canterbury and York in response to the recent referendum in which the UK voted to leave the European Union.

“It is perfectly clear that the result and the referendum campaign exposed deep divisions in our society, of which we were aware already,” the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said. “They are especially complex because they are divisions, in part, about our identity as a nation, whether in England or other parts of the UK. And identity is always more difficult to deal with than issue-driven politics. . .

“The result has released a latent racism and xenophobia in all sectors, and challenges the prevailing consensus of tolerance and acceptance, thus threatening other areas of welcome liberalisation. And . . . we are going to face a period of profound uncertainty.”

The Archbishop said that tackling inequality in the UK was essential to respond to the fears and anxieties that had arisen during the campaign. He said that an increase in child poverty was one of the signs that “inequality is growing in our land.”

He added: “Greater equality seeks the common good, and opens opportunities for aspiration in all households. The shock of Brexit must be one

that forces us into a juster and a fairer society, and a more equal one.”

The Archbishop called for a renewed commitment to education, public health, and housing; and “a forward foreign policy that is based in development and love for the poor, those caught in conflict and suffering around the world.”

He concluded: “The outbursts of the last two weeks may pass, but the signal has been set at danger for our cohesion, and the Church must respond with a fresh effort in integration.”

The motion adopted by the Synod commended “the work already carried out by the Church in bringing communities together” and suggested that each diocese appoint “a champion . . . to assess what more the Church could do and to make recommendations for creating stronger and more constructive links between local communities.”

**Report on EU referendum debate at Synod**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2016/07/synod-approves-motion-to-build-a-'generous-and-forward-looking-country'-in-the-aftermath-of-the-eu-referendum.aspx>

## **C of E vicar says Brexit vote is not just a cry of ‘incoherent rage’**

A vicar has publicly challenged the Church of England hierarchy over the EU referendum by warning against dismissing the vote to leave as just a cry of “incoherent rage” by disadvantaged communities.

The Rev Graeme Buttery, of St Oswald’s Church, Hartlepool, said people in the town, who voted heavily to leave, felt they were being listened to for the first time in more than 40 years in the vote last month.

Speaking at the Church’s General Synod in York, Fr Buttery said it “beggars belief” that some people seemed surprised that [people in towns like Hartlepool](#) had voted as they did.

He said that despite high levels of European investment locally, the era since the UK first joined what became the [EU had seen the collapse of every key industry in the area](#) with, at best, transient jobs taking their place.

[...] “Well, since we joined the European Union the shipyards have sunk, the coalmines have

collapsed, the steel works have rusted and the chemical works have dissolved.

“The jobs that came were lasses’ jobs.

“And even they didn’t last because three or four years ago the phone calling company that had set up in Hartlepool decided to downsize and move to India, Hartlepool lost 600 jobs in one day.

“In a community of 95,000 that is not clever and no number of grants from the European Union can make that right anywhere near quickly.

## **Historic Church of England diocese runs out of cash**

A historic diocese in the Church of England has frozen clergy stipends, abandoned rectory repairs and is planning to rent out unused vicarages to private tenants in a bid not to run out of money.

The diocese, founded by St Augustine in 604 and one of 10 dioceses that date from the seventh century or before, has for “some years” been “spending more than it has received in income,”

according to the Bishop of Rochester, James Langstaff.

In a letter to clergy, church wardens and parochial church councils, he says that he and the chairman of the diocesan board of finance are explaining “the financial difficulties which we face as a diocese”.

Langstaff says Rochester has been drawing on reserves built up over many years. The accounts for last year show a deficit between spending and income of £604,000.

Langstaff says: “This means that our present position is worse than expected because, while this has also been funded from reserves, those general reserves are now almost exhausted.”

## **Stop aid to Pakistani government unless it defends Christians, says Peter Tatchell**

The human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell has spoken out after the Pakistan government announced further restrictions on Christians' civil liberties.

Pakistan's education minister, Mohammad Balighur Rahman, has said that Koranic education will be compulsory for all schoolchildren.

Tatchell, a veteran activist best known as a gay rights campaigner, said: "This is the latest escalation of the country's bias against Christians, other minority faiths and non-believers."

He argued that the British government "should make overseas aid to Pakistan conditional on Islamabad's protection of the human rights of Christians and other minorities.

"If Pakistan's rulers do not comply, the UK should switch aid from the government to NGOs that do not discriminate."

Tatchell was speaking in the wake of a report from the British Pakistani Christian Association (BPCA), which detailed the many hardships Pakistani Christians face. These include frequent violence and prosecutions, as well as the kidnapping and forced marriage of Christian girls.

BPCA estimates that 86 per cent of Pakistan's Christian population work as sweepers,



domestic servants, or sewage workers, or in bonded labour – a form of modern slavery. Tatchell said the BPCA's report "reveals shocking inequalities, disadvantages and outright oppression of Christians and other minority faiths in Pakistan, such as Hindus and Sikhs. Atheists, secularists and humanists are also persecuted.

"Pakistan is a member of the Commonwealth. By failing to ensure equality for Christians, other non-Islamic faiths and non-believers, Pakistan is in breach of its human rights obligations under the Commonwealth Charter, as well as under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

Earlier this year, Tatchell said the prosecution of two Northern Irish Christians for refusing to bake a cake with a pro-gay marriage message was ["a step too far"](#).

Wilson Chowdhry of the British Pakistani Christian Association said the new requirement to learn verses from the Koran "is the latest of many instances where Islam is privileged and people of other faiths or no faith are disadvantaged or discriminated against.

“For example, 15 per cent of blasphemy allegations are laid against Christians who only make up 1.6 per cent of the population. This is evidence of their pariah status.”

Chowdhry echoed Peter Tatchell’s call for British government action. “Britain and America plough money into Pakistan,” Chowdhry said, noting that “£225 million pounds of Britain’s £445 million budget given to Pakistan last year was allocated towards holistic educational reform.

“This places Britain internationally as a de facto funder of state-sponsored hatred towards Pakistani Christians. I pray our MPs see sense and either terminate aid to Pakistan, their largest aid recipient, or insist upon improved human rights as a condition for continued funding.

“Removing this latest risible drive towards compulsory Koranic studies has to be a priority.”

Chowdhry pointed out that Pakistan’s constitution forbids religious indoctrination of non-Muslims. It states: “No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction ... if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own.”

## News briefs international



***Still image from a video produced by a drone camera inside New Zealand's Christchurch Cathedral showing damage caused by the February 2011 earthquake.***

A drone has been used to get up to date information about the damage to the interior of New Zealand's Christchurch Cathedral. The cathedral suffered extensive damage in the February 2011 earthquake. On-going aftershocks are causing more masonry to fall down, some weighing up to half a tonne.

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A diocese of the Church in Wales is using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), more

commonly known as drones, in a pilot project to map centuries-old churchyards. For hundreds of years, burial records have been confined to written registers, books, and hand drawn maps and plans. But cutting-edge technology is helping to produce a more interactive – and accurate record.

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Amnesty International has criticised Iraq's execution of five people following the suicide truck bombing in Baghdad at the weekend

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The visit by Michael Curry, the Presiding Bishop of the US-based Episcopal Church, to the Episcopal Diocese of Ecuador Litoral last week was meant to show that the people hard hit by the 16 April 16 earthquake and its aftermath are not alone.

## **News links to reports on faith, politics and education**

### **Irish charity sector is being drained by duplication**

Irish Times

Agencies are funded mainly by the State, but expanding payrolls are burning up that money

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<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/irish-charity-sector-is-being-drained-by-duplication-1.2717375?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Fsocial-affairs%2Firish-charity-sector-is-being-drained-by-duplication-1.2717375#.V4Lrc2z6k8A.twitter>

## **Government 'must address homelessness and religious segregation in housing'**

24dash

The Northern **Ireland** government's draft programme for government (PfG) framework must include good housing as a core outcome. A new poll shows ...

<http://www.24dash.com/news/housing/2016-07-06-Government-must-address-homelessness-and-religious-segregation-in-housing>

## **Vocal loyalist denounces Maze prayer vigil**

News Letter

A vocal loyalist campaigner has denounced a planned prayer vigil at the Maze site, which aims to foster forgiveness towards those who carried out paramilitary atrocities.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/frazer-slams-planned-forgiveness-vigil-saying-killers-must-repent-first-1-7461839>

## **Ind/Christian Today/Premier**

Further reports that fears that Sunday schools and the Boys and Girls' Brigades could be caught up in new anti-terrorism laws to root out religious extremism have been

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allayed following a personal intervention by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Archbishop Justin is reported to have met senior government ministers amid concerns that aspects of traditional Christian teaching could fall foul of a new test of 'fundamental British values'. The Government is expected to now drop the requirement for out-of-school groups involving children to register with councils.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/archbishop-of-canterbury-justin-welby-anti-terror-laws-christian-sunday-schools-a7129661.html>

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Government-to-ditch-plans-for-Ofsted-inspections-at-Sunday-schools>

### **Tel/Guard/Mail/Times**

Reports that the Church of England is planning to open scores of new schools under the Government free schools programme. Addressing the General Synod in York, the Bishop of Ely, Stephen Conway, chair of the Church of England's Board of Education, he said, "This is a moment to be bold and ambitious and offer more than an apologetic for church schools but a vision for education." He was speaking at the launch of the Church of England's Vision for Education, at the General Synod in York.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/10/church-of-england-plans-to-open-125-faith-schools-using-governme/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jul/10/church-of-england-bidding-open-free-schools>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3683804/Church-England-performs-U-turn-pledges-125-new-free-schools-four-years-saying-institutions-town.html>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/church-plans-huge-increase-in-free-schools-dmvmkgtmkh>

## **Mail**

Further coverage of Citizens UK and Unicef UK, backing for an amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill, being debated in Parliament today to press ministers for greater assurances on child refugees. The *Mail* claims that not one unaccompanied child refugee has entered the UK since the government made a pledge to take more, two months ago. The Bishop of Durham Paul Butler, a spokesman for Citizens UK, said, "Although we rejoiced when the government agreed to step up and resettle unaccompanied child refugees from Europe, we are disappointed that their words are not being put into action. This generous offer of sanctuary to unaccompanied children must not be allowed to fail due to bureaucracy and cuts."

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3683249/Not-ONE-unaccompanied-child-refugee-brought-UK-Europe-two-months-David-Cameron-promised-sanctuary.html>

## **Tel/Int Business Times/Times**

Reports about concerns raised at the General Synod in York that clergy who have been refused permission to officiate due to safeguarding offences are sometimes permitted to officiate at funerals as independent celebrants by funeral directors. The Bishop of Durham Paul Butler said he will ask his successor as lead bishop on safeguarding to raise the issue with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/10/sex-offender-priests-banned-from-churches-hire-themselves-out-to/>

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/sex-offender-vicars-still-work-freelance-funeral-ministers-warns-church-england-1569901>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sex-offending-vicars-hired-to-conduct-funeral-services-nscpv6vnl>

## **BBC**

Reports that the Department for Education has refused to publish a report, which said England's smallest schools cannot afford to provide free school meals. Restaurateur John Vincent, former adviser on school food, told the BBC the move was "undemocratic". It comes after the government scrapped extra funding to help small schools with food costs earlier this year. The department told the BBC it had taken the report's advice "on board". Executive head teacher Karen Holmes, of Saints Way Church of England Multi Academy Trust is quoted.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36753752>

## **Comment**

**Times:** Tim Montgomerie writes, "Faith shouldn't be a bar to the highest political office.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/comment/faith-shouldnt-be-a-bar-to-the-highest-political-office-9w8fvnfcv>

**Telegraph:** Jane Shilling writes "The Church of England? We don't know what it is anymore.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/10/the-church-of-england-we-dont-know-what-it-is-any-more/>



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