



US bishop who was a refugee defends Trump's travel ban

An Iraqi-American bishop has defended attempts by President Donald Trump to introduce a travel ban on refugees, Madeline Teahan reports in The Catholic Herald,

Chaldean Catholic Bishop Bawai Soro, based in El Cajon, California, who arrived in the US as a

refugee more than 40 years ago, said in an article for the San Diego Tribune that coming to America was not a right but a privilege.

He wrote: “Being delayed as a refugee is not a new thing. All the previous administrations, since President Carter, delayed numerous refugees and migrants not only for months but also for years. If Americans really believed that coming to America was a universal human right, I assure you that by now the US population might have reached three billion, instead of only 325 million.”

He added: “If America needs to build a wall and vet refugees, then it must be so. If a simple house is to be secured, doesn’t the owner of the house lock the doors at night? What happens if thieves know the door is unlocked? Open borders and easy-going immigration policies are what could inflict the US with the fire that has been burning in the Middle East for centuries.”

Bishop Soro explained that he had fled Iraq for Lebanon in 1973 just as Saddam Hussein tightened his grip on power as de facto head of the country.

He continued: “While in Lebanon, the civil war started and tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians

got stuck for years, enduring unemployment, poverty and dangers of war. Yet most refugees were thankful to stay in Lebanon while tolerating such conditions for the purpose of reaching America. Most of us waited not for three months but for three years; I know a family who waited 15 years. Ultimately it all paid off when in 1976 the US resettled these Iraqi refugees in the land of the free and home of the brave.”

Bishop Soro’s stance is in contrast to the US Catholic bishops’ conference, whose officials have roundly condemned the president’s executive order. The order, which suspended the entire US refugee resettlement programme for 120 days and banned entry of all citizens from seven majority-Muslim countries for 90 days, was blocked by three federal judges. A new order is expected to be introduced next week.

Bishops condemn attempted murder of police officer in Londonderry

The two bishops in Derry issued a joint statement condemning the attempted murder this week of a police officer in the city. The Bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown, and the



Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Ken Good, said the incident showed a callous disregard for the lives not only of the officer who was targeted but of the officer's neighbours in Culmore.

In a joint statement they said -

"We are appalled at this latest attempt to murder a PSNI officer in our city and relieved that the attack did not succeed.

"There can never be any justification for such a crime. It was wrong. It was evil. And it showed a callous disregard for the lives not only of the police officer targeted by the bombers but of the officer's neighbours too.

"Today's incident also shows a blatant disregard for the people of this city who have expressed their desire – repeatedly and overwhelmingly – for an end to violence. This attempted murder is, therefore, an attack on all of us.

"Our people want to move forward – together – to a better and brighter future. The bombers seem intent on taking us backwards and keeping us apart. They must not succeed.

"We, as church leaders, offer our prayers and support to the officer who was attacked this morning. And we urge anyone who has information about this attempted murder to share it with the PSNI."

Challenge of tensions in Communion highlighted by Anglican Secretary General in Dublin lecture

The Anglican Communion is healthy but it also faces many hurts and challenges and the Anglican mission is being distorted by conflict over human sexuality, according to its Secretary General, Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon. Dr

Idowu–Fearon was speaking to ordinands, staff and guests at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute on Wednesday of this week where he gave a lecture entitled ‘Global Anglicanism – Where Are We Now?’

If numbers are a sign of health, the Archbishop said, there is good news for the Anglican Communion. He referred to a collection of essays edited by David Goodhew, *Growth and Decline in the Anglican Communion: 1980 to the Present*, which highlighted that from 1970 to 2010 the Anglican Communion as a whole grew from 46 million people to 86 million people. However, he pointed out that the patterns of growth and decline were uneven with the Global South experiencing extraordinary growth, but not everywhere, and the Global North experiencing significant decline, but again not everywhere.

Focusing on the unity and integrity of the Anglican Communion, the Secretary General said that all churches experienced some challenges whether it be economic decline and escalating differences between rich and poor, political instability or increased environmental fragility. He said there is massive displacement of people, violent persecution of religious



Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, Canon Dr Maurice Elliott; the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon and Archbishop Michael Jackson.

minorities, especially of Christians and inter religious tensions are growing.

“All of these contexts challenge the faith and witness of the Church deeply, and call us to mission in new ways in uncertain contexts. At a time in history in which the life and witness of Christians as ministers of reconciliation is needed as at no other time, our mission is being distorted by the dispiriting and destructive dynamic of Anglican conflict over human

sexuality, between the provinces of the Anglican Communion, as well as within them. Our differences on this question can lead us to question the faith of one another, and can impede our common mission with one another to the world,” he stated.

He added: “The stakes around the internal health of wholeness of the Anglican Communion are not just about growing our 86+ million members around the world. It is about being the Church; it is about fulfilling the Great Commission in evangelism and the broadest mission of the Church, to be the sign and servant of God’s design for the world, which is to gather humanity and all creation into communion under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1.10). When we are faithful to this mission, we will naturally grow”.

He said that over the 20 months since his appointment as Secretary General he had reached the conclusion that in spite of the divisions in the communion, the Holy Spirit is faithful and continues to bless the life and mission of the churches of the Anglican Communion. He pointed to two defining moments in 2016: the gathering and meeting of the Primates in Canterbury in January and the

meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Lusaka.

The Primates meeting in Canterbury were well aware of all the perspectives on homosexuality in the Anglican Communion and Dr Idowu–Fearon said they did not try to change each others’ minds but tried to understand one another and appreciate their different contexts. At one point, he said it looked as if, for the sake of supporting mission in the different parts of the world, there was only one way forward: to split and become two or three smaller regional communions of Anglican churches. However, when it was put to a vote, the Primates unanimously decided to walk together. “In the power of the ever–surprising Holy Spirit, they bore witness to a costly unity grounded in their agreement with one another, but in a communion grounded in the Crucified and Risen Christ,” he said.

ACC 16 met under the theme of ‘Intentional Discipleship’ and the Secretary General said he was struck by the experience of love for one another in a community in unity and diversity. The meeting passed 45 resolutions which, he felt, reflected an Anglican Communion that is “robust, responsible and vigorous in its discipleship and mission”.

The Secretary General highlighted the work of Anglicans across the globe, their ability to work ecumenically and on an interfaith basis, and the links between Anglican dioceses which cross the globe. He added that one of the things they all have in common is the Five Marks of Mission which continue to inform the churches of the Anglican Communion.

Dr Idowu–Fearon concluded that despite its challenges, the Anglican Communion retains its integrity. “My series of snap shots of life in the Anglican Communion suggest that in spite of our external and internal troubles, which are unquestionably serious and painful, we are still the Church. In a world so divided by difference and disagreement, we bear painful and costly witness to our experience that communion in Christ can contain disagreement so that it loses its power to divide. As such, only by the grace of God, the Anglican Communion fulfils a particular expression of the mission of God, to gather humanity and all creation into communion under the Lordship of Christ,” he stated.

The Most Reverend Josiah Idowu–Fearon is a Nigerian Archbishop appointed in July 2016 as Secretary General to the Anglican Communion: a family of 44 churches in 165 countries, with 86m members. He is based in London, is travelling

widely at the request of member churches and is in demand as a speaker both in the UK and throughout the Communion.



Lyn Tembey (left) Worldwide President of the Mothers' Union and Bev Jullien, CEO of Mothers' Union, brought their members' petitions to Downing Street

Domestic Abuse law in GB to change following Mothers' Union campaign

Mothers' Union, which represents over four million members worldwide, has welcomed the announcement yesterday by Prime Minister

Theresa May that current legislation governing domestic abuse in England and Wales is to be overhauled.

In November, Mothers' Union submitted a petition signed by 4,500 of its members and supporters to Downing Street, calling for changes to the statutory Child Maintenance Service, so that survivors of domestic abuse are not forced to re-engage with their former partner, often the perpetrator of the violence against them.

Mothers' Union is campaigning for survivors to be exempt from the 'collect and pay' charges imposed for using the statutory Child Maintenance Service, as they may have no other option to receive or make payments for their children without further risk of control, abuse or violence.

Bev Jullien, CEO of Mothers' Union, said, "We very much welcome today's announcement, and trust that the issue of safe access to child maintenance payments for sufferers of domestic violence will be addressed. Currently, one in three applicants to the child maintenance service have experienced domestic abuse and we strongly urge that the government puts the

safety and welfare of the survivors of domestic abuse at the core of its proposals for change.

Irish Inter-Church Meeting marks passing of former stalwarts

At the meeting of the Irish Inter-Church Committee on Thursday 23rd February 2017, the Co-Chairs – Most Rev Dr Brendan Leahy, Catholic Bishop of Limerick, and Rt Rev John McDowell, President of the Irish Council of Churches – expressed their condolences at the passing of two very faithful past participants in the Inter-Church Church Meeting: retired Church of Ireland Bishop the Right Revd Samuel Poyntz and Cardinal Desmond Connell of the Archdiocese of Dublin.

Alison Meagher of the Inter-Church Centre, Belfast reports -

Bishop Samuel Poyntz was Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (1978–1987) and after that, Bishop of Connor (1987–1995). He was Vice-Chair of the British Council of Churches from 1986–1990 and in that capacity led a British Council of Churches delegation to Israel/Palestine in 1989. He was President of the Irish Council of Churches 1986–1987 and Co-Chair of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. In this role he led

several important delegations to International meetings, including the first European Ecumenical Conference in Lausanne, ecumenical visits to Austria and France and an Irish Inter-Church delegation to Russia in 1987.

Cardinal Desmond Connell was Vice-President of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference between 1988 and 2004 and a member of its Commission on Ecumenism. He was a very active member of the Irish Inter-Church Committee from its earliest years and enjoyed warm personal relations with representatives of other churches. He had a deep personal commitment to promoting ecumenism and had a formative role in the evolution of the national ecumenical structures.

Bishop Poyntz and Cardinal Connell both made an important contribution to the future of ecumenism in Ireland by being pro-active in encouraging younger clergy to take up the work and study of ecumenism. Their keen understanding of the wider global context for ecumenism shaped and informed this engagement, while they brought an Irish perspective to international ecumenical engagements. Participants at the meeting noted that several current members owe a debt to the

leadership and encouragement of these two influential past members.



GB and Irish Children's Ministry Network conference in Dungarvan

The 2017 Children's Ministry Network Conference will be held in the Gold Coast Hotel in Dungarvan from February 27th to March 1st. The Network is sponsored by Churches together in Britain and Ireland and is made up of members from various reform traditions across England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

It exists to bring together all those with national responsibility for work with children in denominations and Christian agencies who are in sympathy with the aims and objectives of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

This Conference will draw on local experiences of Christian witness and faith nurture and, through conversations with local people, input from visiting speakers and visits to

contemporary expressions of worship and work among children, explore the influence of time and place on how each of us meet the challenge of nurturing children in the faith.

Young people gather in Budapest to explore past and future of Kirk



Young people from across the world gathered in Budapest to discuss the past and future of the Church of Scotland.

Young people from across the Church of Scotland met in Budapest this month to explore the beginning of the Reformation 500 years ago

and exchange ideas about how the Kirk can reform today.

Rev Aaron C Stevens, minister at St Columba's Church of Scotland in Budapest, recounts the experience.

"With the theme of 'Semper Reformanda: Always Reforming' the event was the latest meeting of the International Presbytery's 'Youth Presbytery' started years ago as one way to minister to youth while encouraging them to be more involved in the leadership of the church.

"Although the churches they represented are in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Lausanne, Paris Bochum, Brussels and Budapest, many of the young people are residing in those cities for their studies and come from even further afield, including the United States, Canada, Indonesia, New Zealand and Syria.

"One participant noted how some of them come from international families, making the gathering even more diverse. Young people from the Reformed Church in Hungary were also there to represent the Church of Scotland's local partner.

"As a way to make the theme of continuous reformation more tangible, the young people

rotated through three workshops: 'Bibliodrama and Changing of Names' (to reflect on reforming ourselves), 'Doodling and Local Change' (to reflect on reforming in our local church), and 'Reformation Then and Now: Making Signs about What to Keep, What to Change and What the Church Must Stop Doing' (thinking about church and change in the wider sense).

"National Youth Assembly member Kearstin Bailey commented: 'I'm so thrilled with how everything has turned out! Everyone is loving it and has really gotten something out of it-it's been wonderful to see the group bond and discuss so much.'

"Ryan Whitlow, of the Scots Kirk in Lausanne, said it succinctly, "Yo, it was great."

"The weekend gave youth a chance to express a variety of opinions and closed with the youth leading Sunday worship at St. Columba's Budapest.

"With pastoral support they had selected the hymns, written the prayers, chosen the scriptures and prepared a reflection. And while the young people were thanking the congregation for hosting them, the church was thanking them for leading worship.

"The event lasted from Friday evening to Sunday noon, but, based on the enthusiasm generated, the impact will be unfolding for quite some time."

[Visit the St Columba's Church of Scotland website.](#)



Conference on growth and decline in the Anglican Communion, 1980 to present

A day conference is taking place today, Friday, based on a new academic study into growth and decline in the Anglican Communion over recent decades. The conference, at the University of

Roehampton in southern England, follows the recent publication of a new book, "Growth and Decline in the Anglican Communion – 1980 to the Present."

The publication was prepared by an international team of researchers based across five continents; the study provides a global overview of Anglicanism alongside twelve detailed case studies of Anglican churches in Australia, Congo, England, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, South America, South India, South Korea, and the US.

It was edited by the Revd Dr David Goodhew, director of ministerial practice at Cranmer Hall, part of St John's College at Durham University.

Publishers Routledge say: "This book is a critical resource for students and scholars seeking an understanding of the past, present and future of the Anglican Church. More broadly, the study offers insight into debates surrounding secularisation in the contemporary world."

Speakers at the conference include Professor David Voas, professor of social science at University College London (UCL); Dr Emma Wild-Wood, lecturer in world Christianities at the Cambridge University Faculty of Divinity; the Rt churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Revd Dr Graham Kings, mission theologian in the Anglican Communion; and study editor the Revd Dr David Goodhew.

“The essays in this book invite readers to further discourse on growth and decline within the respective provinces of Anglicanism in particular, and within Christianity in general,” Professor Jesse Mugambi, from the University of Nairobi in Kenya, said. “The book is worth reading as a whole, and informative in its wide range of contributions.”

News briefs & Upcoming events

+++ Clogher Diocesan Communications

Officer - Clogher Diocese has appointed a new Diocesan Communications Officer. He is Brian Donaldson, who lives near Enniskillen, who took up the part-time role this week. Brian has just stepped down as a full-time journalist with The Impartial Reporter, the regional weekly newspaper covering Fermanagh, South Tyrone and the Border counties, where he had been on the staff for over 40 years. Brian is not new to the Diocese, being a member of Rossorry Parish Church where he is currently People's Churchwarden and he has covered church

affairs including the Diocesan Synod for the newspaper over many years.

The Bishop of Clogher, the Right Revd John McDowell said about the appointment: 'In addition to a lifetime's experience of regional journalism, Brian also brings deep knowledge of farming life and a close involvement in his home parish of Rossorry to his new role. I cannot think of anyone better suited to help the Diocese in its communication task.'

Brian will be continuing to provide the farming content for The Impartial Reporter each week in addition to his diocesan role. About his new role, Brian said: 'I'm delighted to have this opportunity to support the Clogher Diocese through various means of communications including the diocesan magazine each month as well as helping to promote the work of so many committed people in parishes throughout the diocese.' He and his wife, Diane have three children, Adam, Connor and Emily, all in their 20's.

+++ Armagh Clerical appointment - the Revd Gary McMurray, currently Rector of Aghavea Parish in the Diocese of Clogher has been appointed to St Matthew's Richhill. The date of the Service of Institution is still to be confirmed.

+++ GFS Festival Service - Armagh diocese on Sun 26th February at 3.15 pm in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh

+++ Synod Secretary on radio - Hazel Corrigan, the new Lay Secretary of the C of I General Synod (Southern Province) was interviewed on KCLR-Live, the Kilkenny/Carlow based radio station's morning programme, earlier this month. You may listen to interview here: Click here – [KCLR link](#) -to hear the interview. Hazel's interview begins at the 35th minute of the excerpt.

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