



Members of the Mothers' Union deliver their petition to 10 Downing Street.

Mothers' Union march on Downing Street for victims of domestic violence

Members of the Mothers' Union in Great Britain have delivered a petition to 10 Downing Street –

the official residence of the UK Prime Minister – calling for changes to child maintenance rules for victims of domestic violence. Current regulations say that unless child maintenance payments are made direct to the parent with responsibility for bringing up the child, a four per cent levy is imposed under what is known as the “collect and pay” system. This “could force survivors of domestic abuse to engage with a former partner, the very perpetrator who carried out the abuse against them,” the Mothers’ Union said.

“Figures show that one in three applicants to the Child Maintenance Service has experienced domestic abuse,” the MU’s social policy manager, Rachel Aston, said. “Under this system survivors of abuse will pay an automatic four per cent levy, equivalent to an average of £130, which may not sound a lot to some but may be a tipping point for a mum who then struggles to pay for her child’s school uniform and PE kit for the year.

“The new system puts pressure on women to use the family-based arrangement, or direct pay, which may result in continuing contact with an abusive ex-partner.”

The campaigners left the Mothers' Union's Westminster headquarters, Mary Sumner House, at lunchtime yesterday (Friday) and marched past the Houses of Parliament and Whitehall before arriving in Downing Street.

Earlier, Mothers' Union members from around the world lit candles and took part in a "Global Moment" to stand alongside and support and pray for the millions of women who suffer domestic violence in its many forms, which has reached endemic proportions in many parts of the world.

"Mary Sumner, who founded the Mothers' Union 140 years ago, refused to accept injustice for women," the MU's CEO, Bev Jullien, said.

"Similarly, in this generation, women, families and communities are suffering because of practices that fuel prejudice and result in hardship for thousands of vulnerable women."

Today's activities form part of a major Mothers' Union campaign, to shine the light on gender based violence [GBV] with the clear message that "It's Not OK". The campaign will highlight the many forms that GBV takes from controlling behaviour by a partner to rape as a weapon of war.

Globally, the campaign will call on governments and leaders to ensure that national, local and customary laws prohibit all forms of violence against women. The campaign will also call for survivors to have access to justice and support services, and that perpetrators are prosecuted.

“I have been in that position, and it can be hard to manage on a limited income,” one mother told the MU. “My ex told social services that he gave the children pocket money and this amount was promptly taken from my support. I lost out and he thought it funny.” Another mother said: “I know how long it takes in many cases of relationship breakdown for any chance at respectful communication to take place and it is certainly not right at the beginning when maintenance arrangements are needed.”

The march and presentation to 10 Downing Street took place on the first of this year’s 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence.

Church21 Parish Development Conference planned for March 2017

Church21 is holding a Parish Development Conference at the Emmaus Retreat Centre, Swords, Dublin, on Saturday March 25 2017.



Church21 is about enabling parishes to develop:

- A clearer sense of direction.
- A clarity of focus on priorities.
- A commitment to collaborative leadership.
- And confidence for the future.

The process recognises that each parish is at a different stage of development and allows the parish to evaluate its own needs and to set its own agenda. Sharing the journey with other parishes offers a creative stimulus and an added degree of motivation.

The Conference runs from 10am-4pm. Subjects covered will include:

- Getting from A to B.
- Harnessing frustration.

- Turning dreams into reality.
- Stepping Stones of Parish Development.

The Rev Ian Coffey, Director of Leadership Training at Moorlands College, and internationally renowned speaker, will be the facilitator.

Participants will also be learning from churches that have embarked on their own journeys of development in very different contexts.

It is requested that in addition to the ordained leader, at least four people will attend from each parish attend and that, ideally, one will be under 45 and one under 25. The subsidised cost is £15 / €18 per person including coffee and lunch.

For further information [download a flyer](#) or see the CHURCH21 website: www.church21.ie. To book please sign up on the website or contact the CHURCH21 Administrator Tessa Marsden on 071 9147007 by Friday February 24 2017.

Northern Ireland survey of faith based organisations

NICVA (The Northern Ireland Council of Voluntary Associations) is currently delivering



infrastructure support to faith based organisations in Northern Ireland.

They are circulating a short survey to faith based organisations in order to understand the needs of these organisations and the work that they do with the wider community in Northern Ireland.

The survey will close on Friday 2nd December and all respondents will be entered into a prize draw to win one of three Amazon Fire Tablets.

Link here for survey : <http://bit.ly/2fX57Cb>

For more information see:

<http://www.nicva.org/programmes/faith-based-engagement>

Senior Anglican Bishop To Preside At LGBT Eucharist

A senior Anglican bishop is set to preside at an LGBT Eucharist in January to "offer a safe space" to gay worshippers.

The Rt Rev Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester, will celebrate the ceremony set up by Inclusive Church, a LGBT-affirming network of Anglicans, the group reports. It is thought to be the first time a senior diocesan bishop has led an LGBT communion and prompted concern from conservative Anglicans.

Simon Sarmiento, spokesman for Inclusive Church, said the regular services which are already held in the Manchester and Liverpool dioceses are about "reaching out to a group that largely feels people aren't reaching out to them".



Bishop Rachel Treweek is the first woman bishop to sit in the House of Lords.

He told Christian Today: "These things are not under the counter or peculiar in any way. It is purely a pastoral activity. It is all about safe spaces."

But Revd James Paice, from the conservative grouping GAFCON UK, said Treweek's involvement "is sending a very confused message".

He said, "We say one thing about morality but here we are celebrating something else." Paice, part of the GAFCON UK Taskforce, said although

the Church insisted it had not changed its teaching, the realities on the ground were different.

He added if the CofE was serious about sticking to teachings laid down in a landmark 1998 resolution on sexuality known as Lambeth 1.10, "then actually we should be doing other things than having LGBT Eucharists".

Inclusive Church's local representative in the Gloucester diocese, Revd Sue Greatorex, confirmed Treweek would preside at the Eucharist. She said of the services: "They are aimed at the LGBTI community to give them a safe space to be themselves and worship together."

She added traditional Anglican liturgy would be used.

The service, to be held at St Bartholomew's Church, Gloucestershire, on 15 January is one of a number of regular LGBT Eucharists already running across the UK.

Treweek's move comes as the Church of England is considering its next steps over

teaching on same-sex marriage. The Pilling Report in 2013, which Treweek advised on, recommended a form of "pastoral accomodation" where clergy would be allowed to offer services to welcome gay relationships. No such move has yet been made by the Church.

Pope concludes Jubilee Year with appeal for enduring Mercy

Pope Francis has concluded the Year of Mercy with a call on the Church and faithful to “identify and practise” new works of mercy.

In an act mirrored in churches around the world last Sunday, the Pontiff closed the Holy Door at St Peter’s Basilica to officially end the jubilee year, and reminded pilgrims in St Peter’s Square that “even if the Holy Door closes, the true door of mercy which is the heart of Christ always remains open wide for us”.

Pope Francis subsequently issued a new Apostolic letter to coincide with the conclusion of the jubilee year. Entitled *Misericordia et misera* (Mercy and misery), the text serves as a re-emphasising of theme of ‘mercy’ while urging all



to build on what was experienced over the past year.

“Many concrete signs of mercy have been performed during this Holy Year,” he writes. “Communities, families and individuals have rediscovered the joy of sharing and the beauty of solidarity. But this is not enough. Our world continues to create new forms of spiritual and material poverty that assault human dignity. For this reason, the Church must always be vigilant and ready to identify new works of mercy and to practise them with generosity and enthusiasm.

“Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God’s mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness. For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional. Mercy is always a gratuitous act of our heavenly Father, an unconditional and

unmerited act of love. Consequently, we cannot risk opposing the full freedom of the love with which God enters into the life of every person.”

He stresses: “Now, at the conclusion of this jubilee, it is time to look to the future and to understand how best to continue, with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of God’s mercy.”

Misericordia et misera is a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus’ meeting with the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11).

Catholicism is growing fast in Norway

Norway’s official statistics agency says the country’s Catholic community has added tens of thousands of members in recent years while the state Lutheran Church is declining.

Statistics Norway said yesterday (Friday) that the number of Catholics had jumped 42 per cent since 2012, to 145,000 this year.



Our Lady's Cathedral, Tromsø

Membership in Islamic groups also rose by 32 per cent to 148,000 in the same period.

The statistics showed Norway's tiny Jewish community had just 770 members at the start of 2016.

The changes reflect Norway's growing diversity amid migration from the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

The Lutheran Church's own statistics show it lost nearly 37,000 members in 2015. It remains

Norway's biggest religious group, with 3.8 million members, about 73 per cent of the population. Catholicism arrived in Norway in the year 900 with Anglo-Saxon missionaries.

News briefs

+++ New web site for Bishops' Appeal - Check out the new website at

www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org A spokesperson said - You'll find our latest news, as well as information about the disaster relief, development and advocacy projects that we support. The website is also the place to find resources for prayer, ideas for talks or sermons, and suggestions for teaching children about poverty and development. The website will give you ideas for fundraising and show you how you can donate so that we can continue to fund development projects around the world.

+++ Retreat and pilgrimage to Rome ends -

Clergy of Dublin & Glendalough formally drew their retreat and pilgrimage in Rome to a close on Thursday November 24 by going to the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in the company of Archbishop David Moxon, Director of The

Anglican Centre in Rome. As well as spending time in silent contemplation and reflection, members of the pilgrimage group were invited to reflect on their experiences over the past four days. The universal attitude was one of gratitude and solidarity built around a shared experience of prayer and exploration of Rome from Biblical and archaeological perspectives and from the viewpoint of mercy and engagement with the poor and the dispossessed. The retreat concluded with prayer and blessing, standing by The Holy Door which Pope Francis had opened at the beginning of the Year of Mercy. It was a poignant moment – both personally and corporately – as the clergy present allowed themselves to be equipped by God to go back into the world outside the church building in a Pauline sense of faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13).

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

CS Lewis' life celebrated in new Belfast space

BBC News

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-38070648>

McAleese still keeping the faith despite her tortuous studying of canon law

Belfast Telegraph

http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/mcaleese-still-keeping-the-faith-despite-her-tortuous-studying-of-canon-law-35240663.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks

‘The pope is on the phone,’ she said. ‘Like hell, he is,’ I replied

Irish Times

Irish born US Cardinal talks...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/the-pope-is-on-the-phone-she-said-like-hell-he-is-i-replied-1.2869000>

Premier

Report that the LifeSavers network of savings clubs and financial education in primary schools was formally launched across England yesterday with backing from the Archbishop of Canterbury (see above). The programme, a partnership between the Archbishop of Canterbury's Just Finance Foundation and the charity Young Enterprise, promotes financial education and savings clubs administered by credit unions in primary schools and is on course to reach 30,000

children by the end of 2018 after a successful pilot scheme. A launch event at Virgin Money's Gosforth Office in Newcastle was attended by the Bishop of Newcastle Christine Hardman and the Bishop of Huddersfield, Jonathan Gibbs.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Archbishop-backs-expansion-of-school-savings-clubs>

Guard/Times

Reports that former Labour minister James Purnell, who is the BBC's head of radio and education, is to take on responsibility for its religious affairs programming. BBC Director General Tony Hall has said Mr Purnell will add the role to his existing responsibilities following the departure earlier this month of Aaqil Ahmed, who was the corporation's head of religion and ethics, The Guardian reports. Mr Hall made the announcement at the Voice of the Viewer and Listener Autumn Conference. He told the invited audience that the decision meant the BBC was taking "one of the big issues of our times" seriously.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/nov/23/james-purnell-to-head-bbc-religious-affairs-programming>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/purnell-to-head-religion-at-bbc-njll6np8h>

BBC/Times/Ind/ITV/Guard/Mail

News items on report from Home Affairs Select Committee, HASC, on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA, criticising the handling of serious misconduct allegations at its offices. *Times* says Prof Jay, the IICSA chair, is to appoint a senior lawyer to look into the allegations in what amounts to an inquiry into an inquiry. The Anglican Church in England and Wales is one of IICSA's 13 investigation strands.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38095053>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/TP/edition/news/sex-hearing-under-investigation-amid-claims-of-bullying-70rmzsc2k?ni-statuscode=acsaz-307>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/home-affairs-committee-child-sexual-abuse-inquiry-sex-assault-claim-latest-a7437446.html>

<http://www.itv.com/news/2016-11-25/bullying-and-sexual-assault-allegations-within-national-child-sexual-abuse-inquiry-not-being-taken-seriously-enough/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/24/former-abuse-inquiry-lawyer-calls-for-clarity-on-alleged-sexual-assault>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3969614/Handling-bullying-assault-claims-abuse-inquiry-criticised.html>

Mail/Tel

Photo dominated reports that the Queen attended a Thanksgiving Service that also marked 60 years of the Duke of Edinburgh Award at Westminster Abbey yesterday. Over the past 60 years, more than 5.6 million young people have started the programme, and almost 2.5 million have achieved awards. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is available to all 14-24 year olds and is said to be the world's leading youth achievement award.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/fashion/people/i-have-to-be-seen-to-be-believed-the-hidden-significance-of-the/>

Asian Today

Reports that Amazon's Christmas TV ad featuring a real Vicar and Iman has gone viral being viewed over one million times. Amazon's advertising director, Simon Morris, is quoted as saying: "We wanted it to do well and be respectful to the religions that are featured in it."

<http://www.theasiantoday.com/index.php/2016/11/24/amazon-interfaith-2016-christmas-advert-viral-hit/>

Comment

Guardian: Chris Tuck, a member of the Victims and Survivors' Consultative Panel (VSCP) for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) writes that IICSA should be allowed to get on with the job.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/24/child-sex-abuse-inquiry-support-english-footballers>

Christian Today: Could Christmas ads teach Christians about the real meaning of the Season?