

## Queensferry Crossing a symbol of inclusion and hope, Moderator



**The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has blessed the Queensferry Crossing.**

Right Rev Dr Derek Browning said bridges were “symbols of inclusion and hope”.

He accompanied First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Her Majesty the Queen, who formally opened the new bridge this morning.

The £1.35billion structure is 1.7 miles long and spans the Firth of Forth and connects Fife to Lothian.

The Queen formally opened the Forth Road Bridge on September 4, 1964 - 53 years ago to the day.

Dr Browning attended the opening as a two-year-old.

"It is a tremendous privilege to be involved in this wonderful event," he said.

"Bridges are about connecting, they overcome barriers, bring people together and span divides.

"For people of faith, bridges remind us that faith is also called to connect people, overcome barriers and span divides.

"Bridges help us to be people of possibility, reaching out in faith across chasms of fear, loneliness, intolerance and prejudice, and to do this in the name of Jesus who did the same things.

"In a world where people are often isolated, we should not build walls, we should build bridges.



## **Dr Browning welcomes HM The Queen**

"We should not shut out, we should welcome in.

"If we want to be true to our faith in Jesus, be part of a bridge that reaches out."

The Queen, who was accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, cut a ribbon to cheers from the watching crowd then travelled by car across the bridge, which took six years to build.

She then made a speech and unveiled a plaque to declare the crossing formally open.

The Queen said the bridge, which sits beside the Forth Road Bridge and the Forth Rail Bridge, would be an "important link" between the Lothians and Fife.

"The three magnificent structures we see here span three centuries, are all feats of modern engineering and a tribute to the vision and remarkable skill of those who designed and built them," she added.

The event featured a fly-past by the Red Arrows and a flotilla of 90 boats travelled under the bridge as the national anthem was played.

## Thinking Aloud with Johnston McMaster at Agape



If you are looking for someone with something wise to say about faith and politics, you can't go wrong with Rev Dr Johnston McMaster.

McMaster, a Methodist minister and popular author who worked for many years in adult education for the Irish School of Ecumenics, will be the speaker at the Agape's Centre's series 'Thinking Aloud: Faith in the Public Square'. The events are described as informal discussions over coffee.

The first event, 'Ethics in Public Life: Faith as Resistance and Transformation,' is Monday 11 Sept, 7.30-9 pm, at the Agape Centre, 238 Lisburn Road, Belfast.

[See Agape's website for more details about this and future events.](#)

## **Making of deacons in Down and Dromore**

This year's ordination of deacons in Down and Dromore took place in the recently refurbished Ballyholme Parish Church. Bishop Harold ordained four deacons for internships in Down and Dromore and the preacher at the service was Canon Dr Christina Baxter CBE.

Christina is well known to the diocese and has spoken at both the Bible Week and the Clergy Quiet Day. She is an Anglican theologian and

was Principal of St John's College, Nottingham, for 15 years, retiring in 2012.

The deacons ordained on Sunday 3 September 2017.

Andrew Irwin was ordained to serve in Donaghcloney. Andrew is a 'Portadown boy' and I graduated in Computer Science from QUB. Before training for ordination he worked across various roles for a few years whilst getting more involved in his church and other organisations.

William Jeffrey was ordained to serve in Killaney and Carryduff. Born in Newtownards, William grew up in Dundonald and Holywood. Prior to his full-time training at CITI, he worked for almost 33 years as a Northern Ireland Civil Servant.

Myrtle Morrison was ordained to serve in Craigavon. She is originally from Cork and joined Church Army in 1985. She has been Evangelist in Charge of St. Saviour, Craigavon since December 2000.

Maithrie White-Dundas was ordained to serve in Ballyholme. Maithrie was born and raised in Sri Lanka and took the part-time study route to ordination alongside her career as a lecturer and academic.

## Funeral details for Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor revealed



Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor's funeral will take place on Wednesday 13 September at Westminster Cathedral, the archdiocese **has announced**.

The cardinal's body will be received into the cathedral at 10am on Tuesday 12 September with short service before lying in state throughout the day. At 5pm, Cardinal Vincent Nichols will celebrate Solemn Vespers of the Dead, at which Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham will preach.

At noon the following day, Cardinal Nichols will celebrate at the Requiem Mass and burial of Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, at a ticket-only event. Archbishop George Stack of Cardiff, who served as an auxiliary bishop under Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, will preach.

Three weeks later, on Wednesday 4 October, the Cathedral will celebrate a memorial Mass at which all will be welcome to attend.

The parish church of Our Lady of Grace in Chiswick, West London – where the cardinal spent much of his retirement – **has also announced** it will receive the cardinal's body at 8pm next Sunday (10 September), followed by rosary and Compline.

At noon the following day, Bishop Mark O'Toole of Plymouth will celebrate Mass at the church, before his body is transferred to the cathedral.

## **Massive collapse in number of Anglicans in Britain, new survey shows**

The number of Anglicans in Britain has collapsed by 50 per cent in under two decades, according



to figures released today, Ruth Gledhill reports in Christian Today.

The latest British Social Attitudes survey's data on religion show that the number of people in Britain who describe themselves as having no religion at all is also at its highest ever level.

More than half, 53 per cent, of the British public now describe themselves as having 'no religion'.

This is up from 48 per cent in 2015.

Figures released earlier from the same survey showed that that religious people are becoming more socially liberal on issues like same sex relationships and abortion.

This is in sharp contrast to the Church of England, where the conservative evangelicalism currently in the ascendancy is resolutely committed to an interpretation of the Bible opposed to same-sex marriage.

The proportion of non-believers has increased gradually since the survey began in 1983, when the proportion saying they had no religion stood at just 31 per cent.



**Peterborough Cathedral is well-attended on Sundays, but fewer people than ever before consider themselves Anglican.**

The decline in religious affiliation is hitting the Church of England particularly hard, according to the survey. Just 15 per cent of people in Britain consider themselves Anglican.

This is half the proportion who said they were Anglican in 2000.

A lot of this will be the result of deaths of members of the baby boomer generation. But this signals problems for the Church of England, which is clearly failing to replace this older generation with younger members.

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Just three per cent of those aged 18-24 described themselves as Anglican, compared to 40 per cent of those aged 75 and over.

The figures in the survey contrast with the numbers claimed by the Anglican Communion, which claims membership of **more than 85 million members**. This is based on figures compiled by the World Council of Churches which puts **membership of the Church of England** at 25 million – even though far fewer than one million actually go to church each Sunday.

By contrast, the Roman Catholic church is remaining relatively stable.

The proportion of people describing themselves as Catholic has remained at around one in 10 over the past 30 years. Around one in 20 (six per cent) of people belong to non-Christian religions.

The fall in religious affiliation has been driven, at least in part, by young people. In 2016, seven in 10 of young people aged 18-24 said they had no religion, up from 62 in 2015 – a massive decline over just one year.

There has been a decline in religious affiliation among all age groups between 2015 and 2016, but among the oldest people, those with no

religion are in the minority. Four in 10 people aged 65-74 say they have no religion and this drops to 27 per cent of those aged 75 and over.

Roger Harding, head of public attitudes at the National Centre for Social Research, said: 'This increase follows the long-term trend of more and more of us not being religious. The differences by age are stark and with so many younger people not having a religion it's hard to see this change abating any time soon. The falls in those belonging to the Church of England are the most notable, but these figures should cause all religious leaders to pause for thought.

'We know from the British Social Attitudes survey that religious people are becoming more socially liberal on issues like same sex relationships and abortion. With falling numbers some faith leaders might wonder whether they should be doing more to take their congregation's lead on adapting to how society is changing.'

The 2016 British Social Attitudes survey consisted of 2,942 interviews with a representative, random sample of adults in Britain. Interviewing was carried out between 13 July and 30 October 2016.

The question asked to determine religious affiliation was: 'Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion? IF YES: Which?' The respondents were not provided with a list of religions.

The Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, said, 'In this modern world people are more willing to be honest and say they have "no religion" rather than casually saying they are "C of E".

'This honesty is welcome. Of course the latest BSA figures bring a continuing challenge to the Churches, to speak clearly of our faith into a sceptical and plural world. But saying "no religion" is not the same as a considered atheism. People's minds, and hearts, remain open.

'In the diocese of Liverpool we are asking God for a bigger Church to make a bigger difference. The "bigger difference" is crucial. People see the point of faith when they see the difference faith makes. So we seek to show that knowing Jesus makes a difference personally and makes a difference for society. I believe that by showing that difference more people will come to know God's love.

'God remains relevant. The Church remains relevant. We in the Church, and all who love the Church, need to keep finding ways to show and tell those who say they have "no religion" that faith – faith in the God who loves them still – can make that life-transforming difference for them and for the world.'

Humanists UK said the figures must raise fresh questions about the place of the Churches in the running of state schools and their other state-funded privileges.

Chief Executive Andrew Copson said: 'How can it be right that 97 per cent of young people today are not Anglicans, but some 20 per cent of the state schools to which their children will go belong to the Church of England? More generally, how can the Church of England remain in any meaningful sense the national legally established Church, when it caters for such a small portion of the population?'

As of last year, for the first time in history, the Church of England has more children in its state schools worshipping every week day during term time than worshippers in its churches every week.

Copson said: 'It is clear that the Church of England is experiencing an ongoing and probably irreversible collapse in adherents. This should just be its private concern, but the fact that its response to this has been to seek ever more power and public money, even as the case for such state support evaporates, makes it a matter of public interest.

'It is long overdue that the Government woke up to the demographic reality of today's Britain and recognises that ever-increasing state funding for religion, and public emphasis on the activities of religious groups, is the reverse of what the public wants.'

## **Bishop wants hijab removed from school uniform**

Campaigners have vocalised their disapproval for young children wearing hijabs in schools after a survey by The Sunday Times found that a fifth of 800 primary schools list the hijab as part of their uniform.

Church of England schools were also included in the study that found children as young as three are wearing the head scarf.



Michael Nazir-Ali, a former Bishop of Rochester, told The Times that Muslim headwear should not be a part of school uniform.

He added: "If there are difficulties, they can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis between parents and schools."

Opponents to the policy believe that allowing religious headscarves creates division in classrooms.

They have also questioned why the policy is in place because Muslim girls traditionally don't wear hijabs until puberty. According to The Times there are fears young children wearing hijabs sexualises them.

Gina Khan, a children's rights campaigner in Birmingham, told The Times: "Schools are allowing it because they are afraid of being



called Islamophobic and they have been told that this is a religious garment, but they need to support Muslim girls to have free choices, not to be set apart from other children."

According to The Times, 46 per cent of 72 primaries surveyed allowed the hijab in Birmingham, with 36 per cent in Luton and 34 per cent in Tower Hamlets.

Dame Louise Casey, a government official working social welfare told the paper she mediated a disagreement in Birmingham when a Catholic school felt pressured to allow a four-year-old girl wear a head covering.

According to The Times, The Department for Education said that it is up to schools to address the matter of uniforms.

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