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IRELAND

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tomorrow
Persecution fears of India's Christians



Bishop's Tearfund challenge

Today, under the dome, a man of the cloth goes toe to toe with an Olympic medalist – neither prepared to give an inch!

Come join Peter Chambers, Bishop Harold Miller and 'A Voice' Choir on Monday 30 December to see who survives Tearfund's Olympic Challenge.

It's all happening at Victoria Square shopping centre, Belfast at 11.00 am – do some shopping and transform lives at the same time.

Joel Edwards to Speak in Dublin at Launch of New DVD Study

International director of the Micah Challenge, the Revd Dr Joel Edwards, will speak at the launch of *The Jesus Agenda*, on Wednesday 15 January 2014 in St Catherine's Church (CORE), Thomas Street, Dublin 8.

The morning will get under way at 10.30 am with tea/coffee with proceedings starting at 11:00 am. The session will be followed by a light lunch.

[The Jesus Agenda](#) is a new resource for churches. It is a film-based, nine week course that follows Joel Edwards on a journey across four continents exploring how Luke 4 is shaping and challenging individuals, churches and organisations today.

The DVD and study guide resource is produced in partnership with Christian Aid, Compassion and Micah Challenge, and is ideal for small groups. Groups will explore how the good news of the gospel and the liberating power of the Spirit should lead 21st century Christians to become advocates of the poor and vulnerable.

Rev Dr Joel Edwards, previously General Director of the Evangelical Alliance UK, is the International Director of Micah Challenge.

Attendance at the launch is free of charge but for catering purposes those planning to be there are asked to contact: T: 01 611 0801, E: dublin@christian-aid.org or see www.christianaid.ie

Muslim Foundation of Cork's Christmas greetings to Bishop



On Monday, 23rd December the leaders of the Muslim Foundation of Cork visited Bishop Paul and Mrs Susan Colton at The Palace to bring Christmas Greetings to members of the Church of Ireland.

The meeting was facilitated by the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Adviser, the Reverend Daniel Nuzum. I-r the Reverend Daniel Nuzum,



Sheikh Aula Tunji, Mrs Susan Colton, Bishop Colton, Sheikh Ihab Ahmed, and Sheikh Kamal Eltaib.

Sheikh Ihab Ahmed presents Bishop Colton with a Christmas Gift.

The exchange of greetings can be heard [here](#)

Faith survey

Church Army and Summer Madness are doing a survey looking at when and how people come to faith.

Obviously the more people who fill this in, the more information there is to help Christian organisations in Northern Ireland strategically plan their work. It only takes a few minutes and provides invaluable data.

<https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=iWVP5q19bM70vWP4GNmiMw>

Anger At Moving Of Memorial Plaques In Thurles

Anger has been expressed over the dumping of memorial plaques in St Mary's Graveyard, to make way for a plaque to commemorate the Korean War.

The badly worded inaccurate Korean war plaque, displaying grammatical errors, commemorates the death of 130 (*Should read 159 Irish Born, 30 soldiers, seven members of the Columban order and an Anglican nun.*) Irish born unnamed persons which have no known association with Thurles town, was unveiled on March 2nd last by Korean native Mr Kim Yong Ho. Later the



plaque was removed and re-erected more recently, displacing at least three small plaques previously erected by local Thurles residents, whose relatives are buried within the graveyard's confines.

No Korean War victims are buried in the grounds of St Mary's graveyard Thurles and indeed only one Tipperary soldier Sgt. TJ O'Brien a native of Ballyvisteau, Emly was killed in Korea, and his body was never recovered. The now displaced plaques, erected by relatives of persons actually buried in this area, now accuse local councillors of attempting to raise their personal profiles in time for local elections brochures, due for production before next May.

According to the inscription on the plaque, same was erected by an organisation calling itself "[Dúrlas Éile Eliogarty Memorial Committee](#)," whose members include Local Town Councillor's **Mr Jim Ryan**, **Mr David Doran**, and **Mr Noel O'Dwyer**, together with **Mr John Worth** (*President & PRO*) and **Mr Pat Walsh** (*Chairperson*).

Church of Ireland response

The local Church of Ireland community who share the grounds within the graveyard complex refused to comment on the removal of these memorials, other than to state that they had been contacted by concerned and angry individuals regarding this matter and had directed same to contact Thurles Town Council. They were also anxious to point out that they had in the past totally opposed the erection of this and other such plaques, which has by their presence destroyed and desecrated an area of immense historical importance.

The Church of Ireland Community also stated that the following written confirmation was received by them on the May 11th 2010, from North Tipperary Co Council via Thurles Town Council regarding planning permission, Quote; *"In reply to your e-mail, I wish to confirm that we have no record of any planning applications for permission to erect memorials in the grounds of St Mary's old graveyard, situated at St Mary's lane, Thurles, Co. Tipperary."*

The Church of Ireland community confirm that threats of legal action expressed in some complaints made, should now be addressed to Thurles Town Council, latter Administrators of this historic fourteenth century burial ground.

Owners of the plaques dumped claim that no permission or indeed request was ever received by the committee responsible for their removal, and also claim this is a final indignity to those who in the past were unable to afford a simple headstone marker

GB NEWS

First Ordinariate monastery will be founded on New Year's Day

The first monastery of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham will be founded on New Year's Day.

On January 1 2014 the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary will formally become the first autonomous monastery within the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, Mgr Keith Newton.

Ten Sisters, formerly members of the Anglican Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, will profess their solemn vows at a Mass in the convent in Birmingham where they have been living since August 2013. Mgr Newton will preside.

The Sisters were received into the full communion of the Catholic Church on New Year's Day 2013. During the initial stages of their life in the Catholic Church, the Sisters have existed as a Public Association of the Faithful, following the Benedictine spiritual tradition and wearing the traditional wimple of the Benedictine order.

This new step – approved by the Holy See – establishes them formally as a stable religious community and gives them the chance to re-affirm their religious vows for the first time publicly, within the Catholic communion. At some future date, the monastery may seek to associate itself with a particular Benedictine family.

During the Mass on January 1, in accordance with Benedictine tradition, the Sisters will sing three times in English, the Suscipe: “Lord, establish me according to your word, that I may live; and do not disappoint me in my hope”.

As part of the ceremony, each Sister will receive a leather-bound copy of the Rule of St Benedict.

In order to give effect in civil law to their religious vows, the nuns will also make their wills and sign a deed of covenant ceding all their possessions to the monastery. Mgr Newton will appoint one of the nuns, Mother Winsome, as the first Reverend Mother for an initial period of three years. Subsequent Reverend Mothers will be elected in accordance with the constitutions of the monastery.

Mgr Newton said: “On the one hand, this occasion on January 1 is simply a formalisation and renewal of the vows which the Sisters have already taken as Anglicans, but it is also a new and exciting step, for the Sisters themselves, for the ordinariate and for the Catholic Church as a whole.

“The strength of their conviction of calling to the ordinariate and their bravery in leaving their home in response to it is inspiring. They are the praying heart of the ordinariate and our prayer is that their example and witness will lead to more vocations to the religious life.”

‘Church-going is still bigger than football



Church of England prelate [the Rev](#) Dr John Sentamu says churchgoing is often associated with words like “decline”, but it is still the biggest weekly gathering there is in Britain, outstripping

combined attendances at football games each week.

The Uganda-born Archbishop of York said that when one factor's in the global factor the churchgoing numbers are "simply staggering".

"The Church of England alone conducts an average of 1,000 weddings, 2,000 baptisms and 3,000 funerals every week," said Dr Sentamu.

"And then there are the schools, where in term one million children each day are educated in some 5,000 Church of England schools up and down the country.

"Over the Christmas period, people from churches support their communities in everything from food banks to domestic refugees, homeless shelters to hospital visiting. [Faith](#) lived out in love is faith at its best."

"Faith is woven so deeply into our society that those who seek to write it off are often confounded by the way the church is involved in all areas of life.

"The church is for life and it is also for Christmas,"

The archbishop said Christmas is a family time. "I will be with my family; not just my kith and kin, but my wider family," said Dr Sentamu, in a Christmas Eve festival message in The Sun newspaper. See also -

<http://www.itv.com/news/calendar/story/2013-12-23/archbishop-many-reasons-to-look-forward-to-2014/>

WORLD NEWS

Christians prepare to face increasing persecution in India

In national elections due in the next few months, observers warn that if a Hindu Nationalist government comes to power attacks on Christians in India will increase.

There has been a spate of attacks on Christians and Muslims in India in the last year. Mapping of the attacks on Christians and Muslims show that the worst affected areas are Gujarat and Orissa, where the upper-caste Brahmins hold significant economic power.



They use this power to enforce their ideology which is to reduce the "Dalits" - or lowest caste - and Christians and Muslims to be second class citizens.

In Kandhamal, Odisha, in 2008 attacks were

carried out on "tribal" Christians and the agencies that helped them, with 38 Christians killed, 18,000 injured and 50,000 displaced.

World Vision, a Christian relief agency, was forced out of the area.

Before that, in 2002, some 2,000 Muslims were killed over three days in Gujarat. The chief minister, Narendra Modi, described himself as a Hindu nationalist and was accused of condoning the attacks. He is the prime ministerial for the BJP party.

A seminar held recently in Delhi by the Centre for Religious Freedom to develop a Religious Freedom Support Group was encouraged to form groups that would respond to attacks at six levels:

- 1) Spiritual support providing spiritual and crisis counselling and prayer support
- 2) Media and information
- 3) Legal rights- providing details of making legal complaints nationally and to international for a
- 4) Developing good relationships with the police for protection and action
- 5) Developing good relations with community leaders so that churches can be seen as a benefit to their communities
- 6) Direct relief – providing contacts for relief support and places of refuge

Seminar participants were encouraged to see that issues of religious freedom could not be separated from issues of social justice and economic

empowerment, something which appears to go against the default position of many pastors in India.

One aid worker said pastors in her city held that their role was evangelism and left social action to agencies. This was held to play into the hands of those who wish to allow Christians to practice their faith as long as they do not do anything to address the social injustice that Dalits experience.

Research shows that the reason why attacks on Christians have increased in the last twenty years is because indigenous Christian mission groups have been addressing the social needs of the poorest of the poor - Dalits and Tribals.

These groups have been empowered by Christians through the gospel, education and social support who have therefore become the object of attack.

Attacks against Christians have become intense in the last 10 years in seven states, two in South India and five in the north.

"The Indian church will be better equipped to address religious freedom through the creation of these support groups to address the spiritual, legal, political, social and development issues that such persecution raises," said Rev Richard Howell, the General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, which sponsored the event.

Prayer for Today

All-powerful God, let the splendour of your glory rise in our hearts like the dawn, that the darkness of the night may be scattered and the coming of your only Son may reveal us as children of the light. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen