



Trinity College Dublin Chapel

European Methodist Council's Actions on Refugee Crisis

At the European Methodist Council's recent meeting in Ruse, Bulgaria, the plight of refugees coming to Europe was high on the agenda. The meeting resulted in the following actions:

1. A pastoral letter from the co-chairs of the Council was sent to all member churches across Europe. The letter ended with the words:

“We believe that God also calls us to welcome those who arrive as our fellow pilgrims. We commit ourselves to immediate actions and the long-term perspectives that the issues raised by migration require. With a united voice, the European Methodist Council calls on our fellow citizens across the continent to join us in reflection and action.”

2. A European Methodist Children and Youth Council working group was set up to communicate monthly to share best practices of migrant ministries
3. A newsletter for Methodist people throughout Europe was developed to inform them

about the work being undertaken with refugees in different European countries and to encourage them to reach out to their new neighbours.

Read the newsletter

http://www.irishmethodist.org/sites/default/files/Refugee_Newsletter%202015_12.pdf

Read the Pastoral Letter in full

<http://www.irishmethodist.org/sites/default/files/Pastoral%20Letter%20regarding%20the%20current%20refugee%20and%20migrant%20situation%20in%20Europe-3.pdf>

The Lord giveth . . . and giveth, and so does the C of I pension fund

If you're an Irish firm seeking funds, your prayers could be answered by an unlikely celestial source: faith-based investors. Just make sure your company is squeaky-clean first

Sunday Business Post - Many Irish businesses are sure to have turned their hopes and hands skyward, appealing to a higher power for help in balancing the books. The prayers of David

Hourihane, however, were answered in a very real way.

Hourihane, a former Dublin corporate lawyer, was looking for investors into his €70 million Ireland Energy Efficiency Fund (IEEF), and €8.5 million of it ended up coming from an unlikely source: the retirement fund of Ireland's Church of Ireland ministers.

Therapy Dog Carol Service in Christ Church Cathedral

Every dog has its day – and that will certainly be the case in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, tomorrow, Tuesday December 8 at 1.15 pm when the annual lunchtime carol service in aid of Peata Therapy Dogs takes place.

The cathedral will be filled with the sound of barking as Peata dogs, as well as other dogs, will be welcomed to the service during which there will be a pet blessing. Many of the people who benefit from visits by Peata volunteers will also attend the service.

Peata is a voluntary organisation which provides a pet therapy service to caring institutions. Its

visiting scheme involves approved volunteers and their dogs who generally pay weekly visits.

Tea and mince pies will be served after the service courtesy of the Friends of Christ Church Cathedral.

Irish Baroque Orchestra to perform Handel's 'Messiah' in Dundalk

As part of The Drogheda International Classical Music Series, the Baroque Orchestra will perform Handel's 'Messiah' in the atmospheric surroundings of St Peter's Church of Ireland on Thursday, December 10th at 7.30pm.

Joining the Irish Baroque Orchestra is one of Ireland's most accomplished vocal ensembles, Resurgam Choir with four superb soloists, all considered masters of the Baroque Era, Roisin O'Grady (soprano), Roderick Morris (counter tenor), Peter Davoren (tenor) and Brendan Collins (baritone). The performance will be conducted by Guest Director, Mark Duley.

This performance is in association with Ruby Consulting and Drogheda Civic Trust. Tickets are €18/€16 concession, €5 children and students

and booking is through Droichead Arts Centre
www.droichead.com

Young people embracing Irish

Protestant secondary schools around the country, from Ashton School in Cork to Sligo Grammar School to Wesley College in Dublin, along with Wallace High School in Lisburn, Co. Antrim, are supporting the Irish language and the work of Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise.

There was a wide range of activities and great imagination shown in the applications submitted to the Bedell Competition – a competition organised by Cumann Gaelach an hEaglaise (The Irish Guild of the Church) to encourage the greater use of the Irish language among young people in the Church of Ireland and, in particular, post–primary Protestant schools.

Ashton School, Cork, won first place this year and Maire Roycroft, on behalf of the Cumann, presented the Bedell Cup a cheque for €250 to the school. Sligo Grammar School came second. The Rev Doris Clements presented the prize to the school and Wesley College came third this year.

Each school submitted a newsletter detailing the activities they had organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge and the entries contained reports and photographs of events, art competitions, céilí, and demonstrated great creativity, energy, participation and commitment by teachers and pupils alike. Ashton School also coordinated with a local parish to participate in an Irish language service for St. Patrick's Day.

The Bedell Competition will run during Seachtain na Gaeilge 2016. Details will be sent to the schools shortly.

New journal tells how Orange Order helped with famine relief

Material showing the role played by Orange Order leaders in famine relief is among the contents of a new history journal which has just been produced by the Institution.

News Letter - The bi-annual publication is designed to "highlight and preserve aspects of Orange history", according to the Order, and emphasises the magnitude of the organisation in Ireland and beyond.



Orange Order director of services, Dr David Hume (right), and Grand Lodge archivist David Cargo with the first edition of the Journal of Orange History

The contents of the debut edition include details about the changing make-up of Scottish Women's Orangeism, the links between Orangemen and the First World War naval confrontation the Battle of Jutland, as well as anti-famine work done by brethren.

Its publication follows the opening earlier in 2015 of both east Belfast's Museum of Orange Heritage, and a similar venue in Loughgall.

Dr David Hume, the editor of the journal, said:
“All cultural movements can only survive in a rapidly changing world if they hold on to their history and have a strong and verifiable history to hold on to.

“The journal is a major effort to ensure that our history is well researched, can be robustly defended from an academic point of view, and lays foundations for the future preservation of our heritage.”

The first edition is sponsored by the Friends of Schomberg House museum support group, and costs £3 (plus postage and packaging).

It can be obtained from the Belfast museum, which can be reached on 028 90 701 122, or ordered via www.grandorangelodge.co.uk .

Two Holy Doors to open in Armagh Diocese for Year of Mercy

The Primate of All Ireland has issued a special pastoral letter to the faithful in the Archdiocese of Armagh for the Year of Mercy.

In it, Archbishop Eamon Martin announces he will be opening two Holy Doors on 13 December, one



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in St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh and the other in St Peter's Church in Drogheda, home of the national shrine to St Oliver Plunkett.

These two Holy Doors will be sealed again on 13 November 2016, one week before the close of the Holy Year.

In his pastoral letter, the Archbishop extends a two-fold invitation to all to come on pilgrimage to the Holy Doors at Armagh and Drogheda; and to enter fully with their families and parishes into the spirit of the Jubilee Year.

“Pope Francis has described the Holy Year of Mercy as an ‘extraordinary moment of grace and

spiritual renewal'. I pray that anyone who enters through the Holy Doors in our diocese will experience, in a profound way, the love of God who consoles, pardons and instils hope," Archbishop Martin writes.

The Primate also sets out some practical suggestions for what people can do in the Year of Mercy. These include receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation as well as undertaking the spiritual exercises for the indulgence associated with the pilgrimage to the Holy Doors.

"We all know ways in which we could be more open to God's mercy in our lives – perhaps by turning away from selfishness and sinful habits. We also recognise ways of being more merciful towards others – with someone who has hurt us, or with those less fortunate than us who cry out for the love of Christ. By crossing the threshold of the Holy Doors, may we all find the strength to embrace God's mercy in our own lives as well as becoming more merciful people ourselves."

He reminds the faithful that the theme of the Year of Mercy is *'Merciful like the Father'* and that we are all called on to show mercy because mercy has, first of all, been shown to us.

“I encourage everyone to learn about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and to put these into action in daily life,” he suggests.

The corporal works of mercy are: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.

Archbishop Martin emphasises that the Door of Mercy opens both inwards and outwards.

The Year of Mercy challenges us to go out and bring the wonderful invitation to mercy to all God’s people, he states.

Recalling the recent Synod on the Family, he said the participants had spoken about the importance of ‘accompanying’ those who may have lapsed from practising their faith, and those who may feel excluded from the Church community.

“We emphasised that the Church must start “from the real life situations of present day families, all in need of mercy, beginning with those who suffer most.”

Diocese hires graffiti artist for the Year of Mercy

The Diocese of Brentwood has commissioned a piece of graffiti art for the Year of Mercy.

The graffiti, by 17-year-old Joe Rose, spells out the word “Merciful” with “Like the Father” underneath. It covers the previously bare wall of a former air-raid shelter on the site of Brentwood’s cathedral.

The artist said he wanted to incorporate liturgical colours into the design to give it “more meaning” while using traditional graffiti letters.

Fr Martin Boland, dean of the cathedral, said: “The word feels as if it is dancing and alive. It’s a bold and fresh take on the motto.”

Fr Boland said the words “Like the Father” remind us to “imitate the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to be merciful”.

He added: “Joe has also managed to create another Holy Door by painting an image of the



Year of Mercy logo on a recessed door. This image has Christ, the merciful shepherd, carrying humanity on his shoulders. In the image, Christ and humanity look at each other and their look becomes one which is symbolised in Joe's work by the single and shared eye."

Catholic cathedrals around the world have been invited by Pope Francis to create a Holy Door for the Year of Mercy.

Win battle for ideas in Middle East using biblical basis says former General

Major General Tim Cross argues democracies must not fall to the same level as groups such as ISIS

Baptist Times - At a debate in Westminster, one of Britain's most senior former military leaders has criticised groups such as ISIS for carrying out 'beheadings and savage beatings as a rule of law'.

'Democracy cannot afford to do the same,' warned Major General Tim Cross. 'We cannot fall to the same level as the insurgents.'

'Liberal democracy must behave differently. We have to win a battle of ideas even if we have to win with one hand tied behind our back.'

This meant, he said, that Christians in the British military had to be 'rooted in a moral framework and an ethical code' which came from the Bible.

Major General Cross was speaking at a debate at Portcullis House on Monday, held by Bible Society. The event posed the question, '*Is the Bible a bridge or a barrier to democracy?*'

The Major General said, 'We have a moral duty to stop people getting slaughtered. I don't think we should watch as a brutal dictator slaughters people.'



Major General Tim Cross

Major General Cross served in the Balkan war and later briefed Tony Blair on Iraq, expressing his concerns prior to the invasion.

He added that God could not be viewed as being on one side or another in a war. His words came ahead of a Commons vote [2 December] on whether Britain should carry out bombings on ISIS targets in Syria.

At the Bible Society event in Westminster, Dr Mike Bassous, the General Secretary of the Bible Society in Lebanon warned that Christians in the Middle East had not experienced democracy positively, since the start of the civil war in Syria.

‘I agree that the alternatives to democracy are not much better,’ he said. ‘But my colleagues [in the region] say, “Give us back dictatorship”. For the Christian minorities who have experienced what democracy has brought to the Middle East, they would say, “Give us back dictatorship. We were happier then. We were safer then.”’

According to research by the Pew Center, persecution of Christians in the Middle East has led to many fleeing the region. It reports that less than half a million Christians remain in Iraq, and nearly a third of Syria’s 600,000 Christians have fled the country.

See also - in [Christian Today](#) - Comment article by Andy Walton on why we let Saudi Arabia get away with murder and includes ref to the *Spectator* article which highlighted comments by Archbishop of Canterbury in the Lords this week where he called for a "challenge" to the Gulf monarchies

and their propagation of a hard-line version of Islam from which terrorists could draw inspiration.
<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/as.bad.as.isis.why.we.let.saudi.arabia.get.away.with.murder/72548.htm>

New careers web site as Church of Scotland has largest number of trainee ministers in five years

The Church of Scotland is welcoming its largest number of trainee ministers in five years as it launches a new careers website, www.tomorrowcalling.org. Hundreds of parish ministers will reach retirement age in the next decade.

Media digest

St Teresa's Church in Dublin city centre: 'It's probably Ireland's busiest church'

Irish Times

'It's probably **Ireland's** busiest **church**,' says Fr Christopher Clarke, the prior of St Teresa's **Church** and Monastery on Clarendon Street in Dublin.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/it-s-probably-ireland-s-busiest-church-st-teresa-s-church-in-dublin-city-centre-1.2454677>

Lesson Learned: Ireland's Catholic Schools Can't Discriminate Against LGBT Teachers

TakePart

The bill, approved by parliament late Wednesday night, bans religious ... and hospitals from discriminating against LGBT employees, Gay Star News ...

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2015/12/03/ireland-lgbt-discrimination>

Guard/C Times

Report that the church has paid compensation to a survivor of clerical sexual abuse relating to London diocese and that an independent review of lessons learnt from the case is currently taking place. The article names the cleric, who was also a Chancellor in three dioceses. He died in 1990. Includes statement from the Church of England offering an unreserved apology.

http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/04/church-of-england-pays-35000-abuse-expert-canon-law-garth-moore?CMP=tw_t_a-world_b-gdnworld

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/4-december/news/uk/survivor-reaches-settlement-with-diocese-on-historic-abuse>

Ind

Report that Sharia courts in Britain are locking women into “marital captivity” and do nothing to officially report domestic violence, according to an academic who has gained access to Islamic divorce hearings. The findings are due to be launched in Parliament next month. Article notes comments by former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who in 2008 said some aspects of Sharia Law could help social cohesion.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sharia-courts-in-britain-lock-women-into-marital-captivity-study-says-a6761141.html>

FT

Interview with Kenyan conservationist Richard Leakey whose grandparents originally went to the country with the Church Missionary Society.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1ecd7040-99b0-11e5-9228-87e603d47bdc.html>

BBC Radio 4 Sunday *(from 27 mins 30)*

Bishop of Manchester, David Walker, contributes to a discussion on the importance and place of RE in schools

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06r0rmk>

Obsv

Article on report from The Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, which among other things, calls for a change in law to end mandatory Christian worship in schools (*see blog from CofE's chief education officer, Nigel Genders*)

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/dec/06/religious-teaching-school-assemblies-axe-report>

Editorial

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/06/faith-british-schools-hope>

Ind on Sun

Report on Great Ormond Street's chaplains who give solace to parents and patients of all faiths and none.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/campaigns/give-to-gosh/how-great-ormond-street-hospitals-chaplains-give-solace-to-patients-and-parents-of-any-faith-a6761976.html>

Ind on Sun

Feature on the importance of foodbanks as the benefit crisis bites focusing on a church run project in Fulham. Article includes comment and figures from the Trussell Trust.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/food-banks-in-the-uk-volunteers-face-a-growing-battle-as-benefits-crisis-bites-a6762011.html>

Mail on Sun

Report that MPs and peers have written to Britain's biggest cinema chain asking them to lift the ban on the CofE's Lord's Prayer ad. Article adds that the Church has formally complained of discrimination and the Mail has started a petition to support lifting the ban.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3347659/Amen-MPs-demand-Lift-ludicrous-Lord-s-Prayer-ban-cinemas.html>

Link to petition

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3347663/Sign-petition-calling-cinemas-lift-ban-Church-England-s-Lord-s-Prayer-film.html?>

[ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3347663/Sign-petition-calling-cinemas-lift-ban-Church-England-s-Lord-s-Prayer-film.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

S Mirror (*scroll down*)

Diary column mentioning Archbishop of Canterbury's annoyance at cinemas banning the Lord's Prayer prayer ad but noting the Church has £300,000 in movie house shares.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/nelsons-column-david-cameron-fewer-6957836>

S Exp

Report there is only four hours of Christian programming on BBC over Christmas. Article includes comment from Andrea William of Christian Concern and Stephen Green from Christian Voice.

December 7

<http://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/624548/BBC-Christmas-programming-four-hours-Christian-shows-slammed-Stephen-Green>

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