



Morsheda (above), a young mother of four lives in fear of the Brahmaputra River in Bangladesh. She has no land, few assets and no savings. No matter how hard she works, every year the floods damage her home, leaving her and her children struggling to cope.

Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and not just the ones next door or at the end of the street. Christian Aid Week is about asking people, and over 20,000 churches across Britain and Ireland, to join with Christian Aid and to love every neighbour.

A Soul for the Union? Faith-based perspectives on the EU Referendum

The keynote speaker at an evening event in The Agape Centre, Belfast, on 13 June 2016 is Ben Wright of Theos Think Tank.

Responders giving a N.I. Perspective are Colin Harvey (Professor of Human Rights Law, Queen's University Belfast) who will respond with reference to Human Rights and Constitutional issues, and Esmond Birnie (Chief Economist PWC in Scotland and N.I.) who will respond with reference to Economic and Financial issues.

The event is organised by Contemporary Christianity who state, "This evening will explore issues of sovereignty and subsidiarity, business and bureaucracy, security, migrants and other national and local challenges we all face in making a decision on how to vote. It will encourage and help in making an informed response and not just one that thinks of self-interest!" There will be an opportunity for questions to Ben, Colin and Esmond.

Contemporary Christianity also state, “The Referendum is a democratic opportunity; the outcome will influence our relationships for years to come. Politics is inherently spiritual since God gives us the responsibility to govern within His sovereignty.”

Ben Wright first joined the Theos think tank as an intern in September 2013 and graduated to a researcher in early 2014. He read Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Cambridge and also has an MSc in European Studies from the LSE European Institute. He is the author of the Theos reports A Very Modern Ministry: Chaplaincy in the UK and A Soul for the Union.

The Agape Centre, ia at 238 Lisburn Rd., Belfast, BT9 6GF, which is served by Metro bus route 9.

Northern Ireland's top performing schools are Catholic

Northern Ireland's most successful schools are all Catholic, according to new league tables based on exam results.

The top 11 spots in the annual review, compiled by the *Belfast Telegraph* newspaper, reveal that

Catholic schools outshine state-controlled schools when it comes to A-levels sat during the previous year.

The top performing grammar was St Dominic's High in west Belfast, where 94.9% of pupils received three passes at A-level. The top non-grammar was St Colm's High in Draperstown, where 88.1% achieved the top grades.

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown told *The Irish Catholic* he was not surprised by the results.

“All the evidence from all around the world is that there's something about Catholic education that works especially well,” he said. “There's something about the context of Catholic education and the content of Catholic education that makes it work,” the bishop added.

The context of Catholic education, he continued, tends to entail “a strong emphasis on community” and “a strong sense of learning being a social experience rather than being a solitary experience”, along with “a big emphasis on high expectations for all”.

Distinctive to the content of Catholic education, he said, is its “inspirational ideology”, which involves such elements as “a vision of human

dignity, the importance of justice, and the ability of everyone to be forgiven”, all combining “to have subconsciously pushed teachers to have high expectations for their pupils”.

Warning that Catholicism’s sociological context and theological content would make it hard for anyone else to replicate, he nonetheless suggested that the North’s non-Catholic schools would benefit from embracing “the importance of ensuring that all young people are given high expectations of themselves”.

“At present there seems to be an assumption that as long as the top end is doing well, the education of the rest is not terribly significant,” he said.

Sean Rafferty, head of St Louis Grammar in Ballymena, also one of the top 11, said the results are something “which I think the Department of Education should be looking at, they should be asking what is the magic ingredient which is making all the top performing schools in Northern Ireland Catholic schools.”

Methodist and C of I leaders urged to make ‘active, constitutional

provision for Covenant partnerships'

Speaking to the General Synod of the Church of Ireland on Saturday, the Rev Barry Forde encouraged the Church to make 'active, constitutional provision for Covenant partnerships' so that it was clear to members of the Methodist Church and of the Church of Ireland 'how such partnerships might actually look and work on the ground'.

Mr Forde was proposing the report of the Covenant Council – a report which highlighted key areas needing to be addressed to help Irish Methodists and Anglicans work out their Covenant relationship and the steps that needed to be taken to address them.

Issues included putting into place policies and protocols to enable interchangeability of ministers to work in practice; looking at how the Churches could work together in the area of Methodist local preachers and Church of Ireland lay readers; considering how the Churches' theological colleges might continue to grow together and asking what areas of mission across the island might be better served by the Churches working together.

‘We have had the wonderful shop window moment of confirming interchangeability at both Synod and Conference,’ Mr Ford said. ‘We have had the participation of bishops and presidents at the installation and consecration of the other, and there are signs and pockets of life in different places – Monkstown, Movilla, Maghaberry, chaplaincy in Belfast, Primacy in Bangor, the relationship between the Church of Ireland Theological Institute and Edgehill Theological College.....but we have to make sure that there is substance behind the show.’

C of I expresses solidarity with persecuted Christians

The Church of Ireland General Synod unanimously adopted a motion at its meeting last week, expressing solidarity with persecuted Christians across the world.

Kilkenny rector the Rev Patrick Burke said people thought of the days of martyrdom as being in the early church but added that it occurred today and genocide was taking place today against Christians.

“Our lack of action against genocide in the past is a dark stain. We can do nothing about the

past but we can do something about what is going on at the moment to help Christians,” he said.

The Bishop of Clogher the Rev John McDowell said that the Irish inter-church meeting this year would have its theme persecuted Christians.

Bishop of Down and Dromore the Rev Harold Miller said there was a need to recognise that they lived in a generation where many people were choosing to die for their faith in Jesus Christ and we should stand by them as we stand by other persecuted people.

The Dean of Ross, the Rev Christ Peters, said the issue really got to the heart of justice but was often just given lip service.

He said the statistics of persecution were horrific.

“As a Church we should be very concerned about this. While there might be very little we can do, we can at least pray,” he said.

Trevor Sargant, from Cashel, Ferns and Ossory diocese, said that the scale of the issue was important to know – 165,000 Christians were killed for their faith last year and there are currently 200 million being persecuted.

“While there was an enormous need to pray, people could do more than that and suggested organisations like Church in Chains which make it easy for people to do something practical including writing letters.”

Mr Burke said that it was a statistical fact that Christians are most likely to suffer persecution for their faith.

The Synod motion said Christians are among the most persecuted body of people on the planet and it expressed solidarity with “our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world who are persecuted for their faith and commits to supporting them in prayer”.

Holy Spirit helps people live as brothers and sisters, says Pope

The gift of the Holy Spirit gives Christians the grace they need to conduct themselves as children of God and brothers and sisters to each other, Pope Francis said on Pentecost.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christians are freed from “the condition of being orphans into which we had fallen” because of sin, the Pope said on

May 15 during Pentecost Mass in St Peter's Basilica.

“We were made to be God's children,” he said. “It is in our DNA.”

Looking around, the Pope said, one can see signs of how many people really do feel like orphans: feeling alone and sad even when surrounded by people; trying to free oneself from God; “spiritual illiteracy,” which makes people incapable of praying; and in the difficulty people have in seeing others as brothers and sisters, children of the same God.

“Strengthening our relationship of belonging to the Lord Jesus, the Spirit enables us to enter into a new experience of fraternity,” Pope Francis said. “By means of our universal brother — Jesus — we can relate to one another in a new way; no longer as orphans, but rather as children of the same good and merciful Father. And this changes everything!”

Reciting the Regina Coeli prayer afterward with visitors in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis focused on how the grace of the Holy Spirit helps Christians concretely live out their love for God and for others.

“Love for a person, including for the Lord, is demonstrated not with words, but with actions,” he said. When Jesus tells his disciples, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments,” he is telling them that their entire lives should reflect that love.

“Being Christian is not principally about belonging to a certain culture or adhering to a certain doctrine, but rather binding your life, in every aspect, to the person of Jesus and, through him, to the Father,” Pope Francis said.

Cathedral and choral

Enjoy a fabulous ‘feel good’ evening of popular **American classics in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin**, in aid of Bishops’ Appeal, and show songs performed by the Midwest Young Artists Conservatory, Chicago, conducted by Allan Dennis, with special guest, Irish Tenor Paul Byrom. The evening features the best songs from Broadway musicals, Hollywood films and theatre stages, celebrating melodies that have become timeless treasures. Thursday June 16 at 8 pm. Ticket price \$15. - See more at: <https://www.topattractionsireland.com/index.cfm/christchurchcathedral/select-tickets/?attractionid=97#sthash.yWP6z0TG.dpuf>

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News briefs

A **“Festival of Peoples”**, the celebration of the diversity of ethnic identity gathered within the one family of the Archdiocese of Dublin was held in the Pro-Cathedral on Pentecost. **Most Rev. Diarmuid Martin**, Archbishop of Dublin, in his homily said, “

“Those who were present at the Pentecost event, the Acts of the Apostles recall, each heard the Apostles speak in their own language. This event became a sign of how the Church of Jesus Christ would spread and enter into the lives and the culture and the heritage of peoples in any part of the world.

“Anywhere the Church exists and celebrates the Eucharist it witnesses to the unity of all humankind, symbolised and nourished by the One Bread, the One Cup around the One Table. The Eucharist is a sign of unity. Those who partake in the Eucharist witness to a faith which must constantly generate a new sense of the unity of humankind. Racism and xenophobia, ethnic intolerance and exclusive nationalism are all alien to a Eucharistic spirituality.

“Today’s celebration is a celebration not just of diversity but of welcome, of belonging and openness to all. The demographics of Ireland have changed remarkably in a very short period of time. One has only to walk through the streets around this Pro-Cathedral to see how deep-rooted and embedded ethnic diversity in Ireland has become.

“The roots of this demographic change had their origin to a great extent in an economic necessity

for labour at a time of prosperity. We needed workers. What we welcomed was not just labour; it was and is people, men and women, who contribute by their work and their cultures to a richer Dublin in many ways and not just through an economic input alone.

- See more at: <http://www.dublindiocese.ie/festival-of-peoples-pentecost-2016/#sthash.DABhCgQI.dpuf>

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Bishop Ken Clarke took part in worship on Sunday morning in **St Canice's Parish Church, Eglinton** and received a cheque towards the work of Sams in Paraguay where members from the church have visited on short term mission with Claire Holmes in Concepcion.

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On Saturday, May 14th 103 enthusiastic young people from **Tuam Archdiocese** went on the annual **DYC Pilgrimage** in ideal conditions. This year they were joined by the Papal Cross group from Elphin who were led by Bishop Kevin Doran and Permanent Deacon Frank McGuinness and chaplain to Summerhill College, Fr. Cryan. Fr. Shane Sullivan was homilist at Mass on the summit. Siobhán Bradley, diocesan youth officer and her team organized the event. Photos at

<http://www.tuamarchdiocese.org/.../diocesan-youth-pilgrimage.../>

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The **President of the Methodist Church in Ireland**, Rev Brian Anderson, conducted the service in **Donaghadee** Methodist Church on Sunday morning when members of the congregation became full members of the Methodist Church. The President also preached at the 4th Anniversary service of the New **Agape centre of South Belfast Circuit**. He commented, "It's a great example of a church engaging with the issues of its local community, while providing a place to grapple with Society and political tensions. It is an easy environment to preach in. And it is encouraging to see such strong team of leadership providing vision and action.

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Due to the previous success of **Car Boot Sales at Mullavilly Parish Church** (Armagh diocese), the Church has announced the dates of the summer series of 2016 Car Boot Sales. The sales will be held on the first Saturday of the month (4th June, 2nd July, 6th August and the 3rd September). All car booters are most welcome (£5 gate charge) with free entry for

buyers and visitors. The car boot starts at 0830 and will finish approx around 1300. Tea/coffee and refreshments are available in the church hall to relax and check all the bargains you have bought! Also inside the hall includes a craft sale (if you are interested in getting a table inside, please contact the rector, Elizabeth Cairns, on 07703333012

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The annual service marking **International Day against Homophobia** and Transphobia and LGBTAwareness Week NI 2016, was held on Sunday past in **St George's Parish Church, Belfast**. It was arranged by Changing Attitude Ireland at the start of this awareness week. CAI expressed thanks to Rev Brian Stewart, chamber choir and organist for hosting this service for the 8th year and to Adrienne Juliet Elson for the address. **Newry rainbow project** is holding an hour of meditations, readings and music in the **Dominican Chapel** tonight, Tuesday.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Church reform like 'beating one's head against a wall' says Church official

Irish Examiner

A leading advocate for reform in the Catholic Church has said trying to bring about about meaningful change is “like beating one's head against a ...

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/church-reform-like-beating-ones-head-against-a-wall-says-church-official-399672.html>

Dublin school criticised for linking 'voluntary contributions' with school tours

The Journal.ie

<http://www.thejournal.ie/dublin-school-criticised-voluntary-contributions-2765771-May2016/>

Criminalising abortion does nothing to prevent it

The Journal.ie

Rates in the developed world are at an all-time low.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/abortion-criminalisation-effect-on-rates-2767909-May2016/>

Tel/Times/Guard

Reports on the Church Commissioners [latest annual report](#) and results released today which show the total return on their investments in 2015 was 8.2 per cent. Reports focus on the fact that the Commissioners list Google's parent company Alphabet Inc, among its 20 most valuable equity assets and note that Google has

repeatedly been accused of failing to pay its fair share of tax. Caroline Spelman, the Second Church Estates Commissioner is quoted from earlier in the year. The *Times* has a quote from a spokesman from the Commissioners saying "we do intend to engage with Alphabet". The *Guardian* features the report's fears of a looming global economic slowdown with governments relatively powerless to shore up growth and quotes comments made in the document by the First Church Estates Commissioner, Sir Andreas Whittam Smith.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/16/church-of-england-invests-in-google-despite-criticism-of-its-tax/>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/millions-of-pounds-put-into-google-by-church-370v8wlbq>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/may/16/church-of-england-sells-investments-fearing-market-slowdown>

Guard/Int Business Times

Reports previewing a safeguarding item for next week's House of Bishops agenda on the [Elliott Review recommendations published in March](#) which include training for senior clergy on how to deal with disclosures. Article notes that the Bishop of Crediton, Sarah Mullally, asked by the survivor to receive the review's

recommendations, has been working with the

national safeguarding team on an implementation plan and has offered an unreserved apology to the survivor for the failings of the Church towards him.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/15/church-of-england-senior-clergy-must-be-retrained-sex-abuse-disclosures-sarah-mullally>

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/church-england-clergy-need-systematic-retraining-dealing-sex-abuse-reports-1560174>

Mail/Premier

Further coverage of remarks made by Lord Carey in favour of Brexit. The former Archbishop of Canterbury said that while many Christians were inclined to stay in due to the "fundamental religious impulse for unity", he believed the EU was "causing the very division, conflict and unhappiness" it was created to cure.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3592099/Big-guns-Boris-Hitler-row.html>

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Lord-Carey-backs-Brexit>

Guard

Reports that the C of E is creating guidelines so 10,000 rural churches may be used to provide wireless internet access to local communities. The article notes that the Diocese of Norwich is already providing a broadband service from 47

across the county through a company it owns called WiSpire. Each church provides wireless internet coverage within a 2.5-mile (4km) radius. In February, Sir Tony Baldry, who chairs the Church Buildings Council, met rural affairs ministers and offered the use of the spires and towers.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/15/church-offers-spires-fast-broadband-rural-wireless-internet>

Mail

Brief diary item (scroll down) highlighting last week's story about the C of E's advertisement for a National Young Vocations Adviser, which did not have an occupational requirement to be a Christian.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3592015/Andrew-Pierce-Government-exile-rising-Sadiq.html>

Tel

Report that the Chapter of York Minister has approved Zen Buddhist Meditation, which take place every other Friday for an hour and a half's silent meditation. It was the idea of the Revd Canon Dr Christopher Collingwood, the Minster's Canon Chancellor, who is quoted.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/15/york-minster-brings-in-zen-buddhism-quietly/>

Mail

Reports that parishioners of a church in rural Herefordshire have long believed a rumour that their altar cloth once belonged to Queen Elizabeth I. It was kept at St Faith's church Bacton in an old wooden frame. Now, experts at Historic Royal Palaces have concluded the exquisitely-embroidered cloth of silver is so lavish, it is likely to have come from a dress worn by the Tudor monarch herself.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3591423/Incredible-fabric-silk-dress-belonging-Queen-Elizabeth-wall-tiny-rural-church.html>

Sun/Exp/Tel/Mail/Christian Today

Further coverage of BBC's religious output and reports that it is too Christian.

Includes comments made by Aaqil Ahmed, the BBC's head of religion and ethics, saying that the number of hours of religious broadcasting produced is measured against the religious make-up of society and Christianity remains the cornerstone of output but it is regularly assessed.

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/7152516/BBC-too-Christian.html?redirect=true>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/670544/BBC-Too-Christian-More-Muslim-Sikh-Hindu-programmes>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/15/bbc-is-too-christian-and-could-broadcast-muslim-prayers-to-refle/>
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3591301/BBC-says-airs-Christian-content-produce-shows-Muslims-Hindus-Sikhs.html>

Tel

Feature about an Assyrian priest, Father Martin Hermis Dawood, who leads prayers at the Virgin Mary Camp in Baghdad every Saturday. He fears that Iraq's Christian population could be gone within five years in the face of ISIS.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/15/iraqs-ancient-christian-population-could-be-gone-within-five-yea/>

Ind

Article explaining what is Pentecost and why it is celebrated.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/pentecost-2016-whitsun-whit-sunday-what-is-it-when-why-celebrated-christianity-christian-peter-a7030141.html>

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May 17

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