



## Christian persecution 'at near genocide levels'



**The report comes less than two weeks after bombings at three churches in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday**

**The persecution of Christians in parts of the world is at near "genocide" levels, according to a report ordered by UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt.**

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**The review**, led by the Bishop of Truro the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen, estimated that one in three people suffer from religious persecution.

Christians were the most persecuted religious group, it found.

Mr Hunt said he felt that "political correctness" had played a part in the issue not being confronted.

The interim report said the main impact of "genocidal acts against Christians is exodus" and that Christianity faced being "wiped out" from parts of the Middle East.

It warned the religion "is at risk of disappearing" in some parts of the world, pointing to figures which claimed Christians in Palestine represent less than 1.5% of the population, while in Iraq they had fallen from 1.5 million before 2003 to less than 120,000.

"Evidence shows not only the geographic spread of anti-Christian persecution, but also its increasing severity," the Bishop wrote.

"In some regions, the level and nature of persecution is arguably coming close to meeting the international definition of genocide, according to that adopted by the UN."

The foreign secretary **commissioned the review on Boxing Day 2018** amid an outcry over the treatment of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who faced death threats after being acquitted of blasphemy in Pakistan.

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Its findings come after more than 250 people were **killed and more than 500 wounded in attacks at hotels and churches in Sri Lanka** on Easter Sunday.

Mr Hunt, who is on a week-long tour of Africa, said he thought governments had been "asleep" over the persecution of Christians but that this report and the attacks in Sri Lanka had "woken everyone up with an enormous shock".



**The Moderator of PCI says he had, “A very special time this week among RAF Chaplains, hearing about the challenges of their ministry and being inspired by their wonderful influence for good.”**

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He added: "I think there is a misplaced worry that it is somehow colonialist to talk about a religion that was associated with colonial powers rather than the countries that we marched into as colonisers.

### **'Atmosphere of political correctness'**

"That has perhaps created an awkwardness in talking about this issue - the role of missionaries was always a controversial one and that has, I think, also led some people to shy away from this topic.

"What we have forgotten in that atmosphere of political correctness

is actually the Christians that are being persecuted are some of the poorest people on the planet."

In response to the report, the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Marie van der Zyl, said Jews had often been the targets of persecution and felt for Christians who were discriminated against on the basis of their faith.

"Whether it is in authoritarian regimes, or bigotry masked in the mistaken guise of religion, reports like the one launched today remind us that there are many places in which Christians face appalling levels of violence, abuse and harassment," she said.

The review is due to publish its final findings in the summer.

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## Mass cancelled in Sri Lankan capital due to threat

Sri Lanka's Catholic churches have cancelled Sunday mass in the capital Colombo for a second week, citing foreign intelligence warnings of threats to worshippers.

The decision comes in the wake of the deadly Easter bombings on churches and hotels.

Sri Lankan security forces have said they were maintaining a high level of alert as intelligence reports indicated the militants were likely to strike before the beginning of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which is due to begin on Monday.

And the US ambassador to Sri Lanka said this week that some of the Islamist militants behind the Easter bombings that killed over 250 people were likely to be still at large and could be planning more attacks.

“The security situation has not improved yet,” Colombo Archdiocese spokesman Edmund Tillekeratne said on Friday.

Colombo's Archbishop, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, said on Thursday that a “highly reliable foreign source” had warned of an attack on a prominent church. He also requested that all private Catholic schools in and around the capital remain shut for now.

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## **Bombardier sale: Local Presbyterians express ‘deep concern’**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s Presbytery of East Belfast has expressed its ‘deep concern’ at the news that Bombardier is to sell its aerostructures business, which is based in East Belfast, and says it will pray for that the right outcome is secured.

The Clerk of the Presbytery of East Belfast, Rev Albin Rankin, Minister of Stormont Presbyterian Church, said, “The proposed sale of the aerostructures business of Bombardier in Northern Ireland has created much uncertainty among the 3,600 workforce and could have a huge impact on and generate massive economic difficulties for the community and the economy of the city, especially the immediate area of East Belfast.

“The Presbytery of East Belfast, through its 23 local congregations, will continue to offer prayerful and pastoral support to families and individuals who are impacted by this announcement, many of whom are members of our congregations. Everyone affected by this announcement will be facing considerable anxiety, which will also cause uncertainty for businesses and retailers in the area.

“While we welcome Bombardier’s stated commitment to finding the right buyer and the Government’s response that it will work with potential buyers to take the business forward, this is still a deeply unsettling and worrying time for those most affected. We will of course be praying that the right outcome is secured that jobs are also secured.

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“Presbytery calls on all of its congregations to engage in prayer for individuals and families who are experiencing the stress and pressure of the present economic conditions and employment uncertainty. We recognise the challenges presented by a global economy and encourage all who have the influence, or means, to further intensify their efforts to seek the creation of new employment opportunities, support local enterprise, and bring inward investment to our area, our city and our country.

“Once again we would also urge all political leaders, as a matter of urgency, to return to government. While we welcome the recent announcement that talks between the political parties are to resume, Presbytery would respectfully remind our politicians that representation can only take place when they are engaged fully in the due process of government.

“As a presbytery, we encourage all elected representatives to provide the leadership that is needed at this particular time, especially in the key areas of employment, education and health, as we continue to pray that God will, bless and guide all who ‘seek the prosperity of the city’ (Jeremiah 29:7)”

## **Exhibition of C of I’s historical architectural drawings**

An exhibition of the Church of Ireland’s historical architectural drawings – entitled *A Visual Window to an*

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*Ecclesiastical World* – will be launched by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, next Tuesday evening (7th May) at the Architecture Gallery, in the Irish Architectural Archive, 45 Merrion Square, Dublin.

Admission is free and the exhibition will be open to the public Tuesday to Friday (10am–5pm) until Friday, 30th August. The exhibition is curated by Dr Michael O’Neill FSA and draws on his extensive research into the Church’s architectural history, which has included the digitization of over 8,000 drawings to safeguard them for future generations.

The Church of Ireland’s churches, cathedrals and glebe houses have made an indelible impression on the Irish landscape. Spires, towers and pinnacles punctuate the skyline while in subtler ways the residential aesthetic of the glebe houses provide visual indicators of the former pre-eminence of the Church of Ireland – the Established or state Church until 1871.

Whilst many of the churches no longer function as places of worship, and the surviving glebe houses have either passed to private ownership, or have simply disappeared, an extensive collection of almost 9,000 original drawings (plans, elevations, sections and details) continues to document this ecclesiastical world, providing an important resource for understanding the architectural, liturgical, social and cultural development of the Church of Ireland through the centuries. The collection also covers many churches and indeed rectories which are still in use and occupied by the Church.



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Created for the most part under the auspices of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (1833 onwards), which had succeeded the Board of First Fruits (founded in 1711), the materials were initially accumulated in the diocesan registries to which they related, while others passed directly into the custody of the Representative Church Body (RCB), the charitable trust created after Disestablishment in the 1870s. Over the decades, these have been carefully accessioned and arranged in the RCB Library, founded in 1931, which is the Church of Ireland's record repository.

There are 860 drawings of the cathedrals of Christ Church and St Patrick's in Dublin as well as the diocesan cathedral of St Canice's in Kilkenny, while a further 300 drawings are of glebe houses, but the majority (some 7,600 drawings) show varying aspects of the parish churches throughout the island. Some are the work of distinguished architects such as John Semple, James Pain, Joseph Welland, William Farrell, William Atkins, Lanyon, Lynn & Lanyon, J. Rawson Carroll, and W.J. Barre and are beautiful artworks in their own right, as well as in utility.

However, being outsize and clearly working drawings, many of which were in fact drawn on tracing paper, they are also fragile and cumbersome to handle. To reduce the wear and tear, but also to showcase them to a wider audience, the drawings have been systematically digitized and catalogued in the Library, and are now freely available to view online at <https://archdrawing.ireland.anglican.org>

*A Visual Window to an Ecclesiastical World* is arranged chronologically and thematically, aiming to guide the viewer through a representative selection of the overall collection

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and literally open a window to the past, telling the story of who designed these buildings – why and when they were built (or rebuilt). Dr Michael O’Neill FSA has digitized and catalogued the entire collection. This is one of the Church of Ireland’s events commemorating the 150th anniversary of Disestablishment, and represents a most positive collaboration between the RCB Library and the Irish Architectural Archive which will house the exhibition between May and August, with a series of lectures planned for Heritage Week later in the year.

Dr Michael Webb says: ‘As Chairman of the Irish Architectural Archive and as Chairman of the RCB Library and Archives Committee it is a particular pleasure to bring both organizations together for this exhibition. The Architectural Archive has the national collection of architectural drawings and is custodian of over 500,000 drawings of buildings from all over Ireland. The RCB Library has a unique collection of almost 9,000 drawings of churches, and rectories. It is wonderful to be able to display a selection of these drawings in the gallery which was specially designed for architectural drawings.’

Dr Susan Hood, Librarian and Archivist at the RCB Library, says: ‘This exhibition showcases in public for the first time some of the original drawings making up the collection at the RCB Library. It also marks the culmination of over eight years of hard work by Dr Michael O’Neill to catalogue and digitize the entire collection making it available for a worldwide audience through the Church of Ireland website. This painstaking and dedicated work (generously supported with church and other funding) demonstrates the Library’s

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capacity to digitize and share its unique holdings – literally opening a window to the past!’

## **Anglican Consultative Council asks Churches to adopt international safeguarding guidelines**

New guidelines to “enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion” have been approved by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). The guidelines were drawn up over the past three years by the Safe Church Commission, which was established following a request by the ACC at its last meeting in Lusaka in April 2016. In approving the guidelines, the ACC said that it was recognising “the failures of the past” and that it was “determined that every church in the Anglican Communion is a safe place for everyone.”

“It is a core gospel value that our churches should be safe”, Garth Blake, the senior Australian lawyer who chairs the Safe Church Commission, said, adding: “we should ensure that every one of our churches; every one of our family of churches, is a safe place for everyone, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults.”

As the Commission carried out its work they heard from a number of victims and survivors – a process that Blake described as “very confronting”. Recalling the conversations, he said: “in one case, one young woman was rescued from abuse and her rescuer abused her again.

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## **Garth Blake presents the Safe Church Commission Report to ACC-17**

“We heard of the harm that it did, and yet there was hope because there was some resilience. They were able to transcend the experience and not to be a victim but to move on with life and be a survivor, working towards being healthy again.”

The importance of the Commission and its work was stressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. At a press conference on the eve of the ACC meeting, he said: “one of the things of being in a Communion is that you learn not only from people’s successes, but also people’s failures and shames.

“The Safe Church Commission is at the absolute heart of mission or intentional discipleship. You cannot have a

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church that ill-treats children or vulnerable adults and therefore [this] report is crucial.

“Another thing that is crucial is the very complicated process of implementing that on the ground.”

He was referring to the nature of the Anglican Communion,



**Delegates to ACC 17 in Hong Kong**

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which is made up of 40 autonomous interdependent churches with no central authority.

“Of course there is no ability to enforce it but the consultative council has a strong moral authority”, Mr Blake said. “I believe that with the adoption and support of the Consultative Council and the reality of the problem, that there will be a strong motivation to implement the guidelines and come back and report how we are going.

“We are all on a journey together on this issue of creating a safe church. Some further on the way, some barely started, but it is something we all need to do together.”

The ACC is asking all member Churches and extra-provincial dioceses to adopt the new Safe Church Charter and implement a pre-existing Protocol, where they have not already done so. The Churches are also being asked to implement the guidelines and report back to the next ACC meeting in 2022. They are also being asked to appoint a representative who will be responsible for liaising with the Commission on the adoption of the Charter, implementation of the Protocol and the guidelines, and the development of future recommendations

Mr Blake said that the Commission is proposing a number of resources to help Churches fulfil the ACC’s request, including a programme of regional training over the next six years.

***The Safe Church Commission materials can be found on the ACC-17 page of the Anglican Communion***

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*website. They will be transferred to the Safe Church Commission page next week.*

## **Anglican Consultative Council changes the way the Communion “receives” ecumenical texts**



### **The Revd Canon Dr John Gibaut addresses members of the Anglican Consultative Council**

The Anglican Consultative Council has adopted new procedures for the official recognition of agreed statements from mandated ecumenical dialogues. The decision was taken this week by members at the seventeenth meeting of the Council (ACC-17) in Hong Kong.

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Previously, the Anglican Communion received such texts through the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, but Canon Dr John Gibaut, the Anglican Communion's Director of Unity, Faith and Order, said that the previous system had not functioned for more than two decades.

The new system was recommended by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO). Dr Gibaut explained that previously, texts would first go out to the provinces of the Anglican Communion who were responsible for making a judgement on the text before feeding back to staff at the Anglican Communion Office.

The Lambeth Conference would study those responses and the texts themselves, and then would discern whether each text was "consonant with the faith of the Church as Anglicans have received it". The texts would then be recommended to member churches of the Anglican Communion.

Dr Gibaut explained that since 1998, the Lambeth Conference had evolved into a different kind of Instrument of Communion, requiring a new mechanism for receiving ecumenical texts.

The ACC has decided that the reception process will shift from the Lambeth Conference to the Consultative Council. "When any ecumenical bilateral dialogue of the Anglican Communion has completed an agreed statement, it will first be sent to IASCUFO", Dr Gibaut said. "They will study the agreed statement and reach a common mind on whether it recognises the statement as being 'consonant with the faith of the Church as Anglicans have received it.'"



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## Anglican primates at ACC 17 in Hong Kong

At that stage, IASCUFO will prepare resources, advice, and draft recommendations to be taken to the next meeting of the ACC with a draft resolution for them to formally welcome the agreed statement and commend the text, together with IASCUFO's advice, to the member Churches of the Anglican Communion for study, reflection and response. The resolution would also set a time frame for responses.

An ACC reference group will meet with IASCUFO immediately prior to each meeting of the Consultative Council. This will provide an opportunity “for further reflection on ecumenical statements in the light of the provincial responses and any other considerations”, Dr Gibaut said. “The task of this enhanced commission will be to evaluate whether an agreed text has a sufficient level of

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consensus in the member Churches for a recommendation to be made to the ACC.”

Two more resolutions were passed in reference to the work of the Unity, Faith and Order department. The first was to welcome and commend the publication of the Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III), *Walking Together on the Way*, as well as affirm the continuing work of the Commission. The second was to welcome and comment the report of the Anglican-Old Catholic International Coordinating Council, Anglicans and Old Catholics serving in Europe, as well as renew the mandate for the council.

- ***[Click here to read the text of the resolutions](#)***

## **News briefs**

### **+++Divine Healing Ministries to celebrate 30 years -**

DHM write - “We would love to have you join with us for the special service on Tuesday 7th May at 8pm in St. Finnian’s Church, Cregagh Park, Belfast when we will celebrate 30 years of healing ministry at St. Finnian’s and the initial steps which led to the founding of Divine Healing Ministries.

“Bishop Harold Miller is the speaker and Br. David will share on some of the highlights of the journey of DHM from the early years at St. Finnian’s. Together we will give thanks for all that the Lord has done and for all He has promised for this next season.”

### **+++Presentation Sisters donate Cork land to charity -**

The South West Province of the Presentation Sisters are in the process of donating three acres of valuable land in Cork city to charity. The site of the Presentation Convent in

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Turner's Cross is set to be donated to the Good Shepherd Sisters in Cork who run Edel House, in order to "alleviate the housing crisis".

**+++ Bishop of Norwich** - The Queen has approved the nomination of The Right Reverend Graham Barham Usher, BSc, MA, Suffragan Bishop of Dudley, for election as Bishop of Norwich in succession to The Right Reverend Graham Richard James, BA, following his resignation on 28th February 2019.

**+++Degree and developing disciples in Cork** - Following three years of part-time study in the Irish Bible Institute (IBI), the Rev Cliff Jeffers, Rector of Fanlobbus Union of Parishes, Dunmanway, County Cork, completed a masters degree in transformational leadership, awarded by the University of York St John. The course and research, supported by the Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Continuing Ministerial Education Fund, is being followed up through an experimental ecumenical group in West Cork which is seeking to establish a fresh expression to develop discipleship among those who have disconnected from the established Churches.

**+++Maundy purse experience humbling** - Mr Jim Patterson, a parishioner of St Mark's, Ballysillan, Diocese of Connor, said he was 'very humbled' to receive a Maundy purse from Her Majesty the Queen in Windsor last month. Jim was nominated for the Royal Maundy Thursday gift by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and was accompanied to St George's Chapel in Windsor by his wife Rosemary, former Personal Assistant to the Bishop.

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Jim was one of 93 men and 93 women to receive the Maundy Purse this year. The number distributed correlated to Her Majesty's age.

Jim said the day at Windsor Castle had been 'absolutely brilliant.' "We had a bird's eye view of the Queen all the way through the service. When she smiles her whole face lights up," he said.

"We were told that distributing the Maundy Money was the only job she will not let anyone else do as long as she is able, as she sees it as part of her Christian duty."

**+++Bishop to get out of jail -** It was announced earlier this week that Heather Cook, a former suffragan bishop in the Diocese of Maryland, will be released from prison later this month after serving just over three and a half years of a seven year sentence stemming from a December 27, 2014 traffic accident in which she struck and killed a cyclist and fled the scene. In 2015, Cook pleaded guilty to four charges associated with the accident, including vehicular manslaughter, texting while driving, driving under the influence of alcohol, and leaving the scene of the crash. Cook was sentenced to seven years in prison but has earned an earlier release through good behavior and participation in prison programs. Cook will be on supervised probation for five years following her release.

**+++German churches to lose millions of members -**

Germany's Catholic and Protestant churches may lose half their members by 2060, according to a study. A drop in membership is expected to lead to a major budget shortfall. The number of members belonging to Germany's two main churches will drop by half by 2060, putting severe financial strain on the religious institutions, according to a study

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published Thursday. The main reasons for declining membership in the German Catholic and Protestant churches include adults leaving the church, fewer baptisms and an aging population, researchers at the University of Freiburg said.

**+++Internships at Willowfield** - Apply now to join the Willowfield Church Internship Programme.

Being part of the intern programme provides opportunities to join others in the daily and on-going work of the church: train with the team as you develop your skills, sharpen your focus, discover your gifts and continually put what you learn into practise.

The new Intern Programme will begin on Monday 12 September 2019. There will be a number of intern streams to choose from, which will allow you to focus on one particular aspect of ministry alongside the general day-to-day work of the church.

These include: worship, youth, outreach, kids & creative. Places are limited so early enquiry is advised.

Closing date: 26 August 2019.

If you are interested in finding out more about this life changing programme, please visit the website:  
[www.willowfieldchurch.co.uk](http://www.willowfieldchurch.co.uk)

or contact James Myles on (028) 9045 3041 or 07880 874965 or [james@wpcabelfast.co.uk](mailto:james@wpcabelfast.co.uk)

Willowfield Parish Community Association and Willowfield Parish Church operate side by side under common leadership. We exist to build congregations, teams and

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individuals who will encourage and support one another in taking God's Kingdom of grace into our community and city. "Our greatest desire is to see lives changed by the redeeming love and power of Jesus."

**+++Food for thought -** "Ask God what he wants from you and be brave! To follow Jesus is not a decision taken once and for all, it is a daily choice" - Pope Francis

## **Today in Christian history**

**May 4, 1923:** Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, editor of the British journal *The Expositor* (which included articles by many leading scholars) and of a 50-volume *Expositor's Bible* (published 1888-1905), dies.

**May 4, 1493:** In the bull "Inter caetera," Pope Alexander VI sets the boundary between Spanish and Portuguese lands in the New World.

**May 5, 553:** The Second Council of Constantinople convenes under the presidency of Eutychius, the city's new patriarch. The council, loaded with bishops from the Eastern church, attacked Nestorianism (a "heresy"—many have questioned that anathema—that overemphasizes Christ's dual nature as God and man). Nestorian Christians exist to this Day.

**May 5, 1525:** Frederick III, the elector of Saxony also called "Frederick the Wise," dies. An avid collector of relics and a supporter of modern scholarship (he founded the University of Wittenberg), Frederick protected Martin Luther after the Diet of Worms condemned the reformer.

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**May 5, 1813:** Christian existentialist Soren Kierkegaard is born in Copenhagen. The Danish philosopher believed no philosophical system could explain the human condition; the experience of reality was what mattered, not the "idea" of it. His most famous and his first book, *Either/Or*, sought in part to explain why he suddenly broke off his engagement.

**May 5, 1816:** The American Bible Society (ABS) organizes in New York to distribute the Bible throughout the world. The organization has distributed hundreds of millions of Bibles in thousands of languages worldwide.

**May 5, 1925:** Dayton, Tennessee, teacher John Scopes is arrested for teaching evolution in his classroom. (He volunteered to admit violating a recent statute prohibiting such teaching so that the law could be tested in court.) The resulting trial—the first "trial of the century"—led to public mockery of fundamentalist Christians, driving them into a more self-contained subculture

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