



St. John's World

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Newsletter of St. John's Methodist Church, Amersham

Christians face harassment in 143 countries, according to major new research.

Christians face harassment in 143 countries, according to major new research. The latest Annual Pew Report uncovers a record increase in restrictions on religion imposed by many governments around the world. It also finds violence and harassment against religious groups are on the rise.

Release International, which supports persecuted Christians around the world, has welcomed the report, but adds that the Pew Report has omitted North Korea, and also that it is behind the times on China where persecution is intensifying.

'The report reinforces the excellent new review of Christian persecution by the Bishop of Truro which has now been accepted by the government,' says Paul Robinson of Release International. 'Release also welcomes this latest Pew report, but the sheer breadth of their investigation means it is behind the times. From our own findings, we would say that insufficient emphasis is placed on the growing restrictions in China and the severe persecution of Christians in North Korea.'

The Bishop of Truro's Review for the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) found that Christians were the most persecuted religious group in the world today.

In contrast, the annual Pew Report is wider in its focus, looking at restrictions on all religions.

It states: 'Religious restrictions have been rising around the world for the past decade.' 52 governments, including China, Indonesia and Russia, are now imposing high or very high levels of restrictions on religion.

CHINA

The Pew Report notes that by 2017 the Chinese government had 'ramped up' efforts to arrest and deport Christian missionaries. Also that China is restricting the number of religious groups who can register with the government to hold worship services.

Release International adds: 'But since 2017, there have been increasing reports that even registered Chinese Christian churches are being shut down by the government.'

ISLAM

The Pew Report states that since 2015, Islam has been the most common state religion around the world. In the Middle East and North Africa, most governments favour Islam over other faiths.

It is here where growing numbers of countries are restricting religion. According to the Pew Report: 'The number of countries [in the region] where people experience the highest level of hostility towards religion has risen by almost 50 per cent.'

The survey of 198 countries also finds religious restrictions and violence are spreading to Europe. It cites a case in the United Kingdom in 2016, where a Sunni Muslim man killed an Ahmadi Muslim shopkeeper because he had 'disrespected the Prophet Mohammed'.

Religious terrorism is growing in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa. According to the Report: 'The Middle East and North Africa has seen the highest levels of religious violence by organised groups.'

That violence has spread from just four countries in 2007 to 11 of the 20 countries in the region by the end of the reporting period in 2017. Organised groups spreading religious violence include Isis, Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Hamas.

Among the most populous countries in the world, Egypt, India, Russia, Pakistan and Indonesia have the

highest restrictions on religion, according to the report.

Another region to experience 'a sharp rise in government laws and policies restricting religious freedom' is Sub-Saharan Africa.

The report singles out Nigeria as a country with one of the largest increases in religious violence by organised groups since 2007.

In Central Asia, Turkmenistan continues to deny visas to foreigners suspected of missionary work. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have all imposed restrictions on Christian literature.

And in the Asia-Pacific region, according to the Report, 86 per cent of countries' governments were found to be intimidating religious groups in the region.

See also article on page 3:

Asia Bibi calls for blasphemy reform.



St. John's Methodist Church

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'Our halls and rooms are also used by other groups - please contact Hall Bookings for availability'

Through the week at St. John's

Sun 11.00 am Morning Worship

Mon	4.45 - 5.45pm 7.00 - 8.30pm	Rainbows Guides
Tues	5.30 - 7.00pm 7.00 - 8.30pm	Brownies Guides
Fri	5.30 - 6.45pm 6.30 - 8.00pm 7.30 - 9.30pm 8.00 - 10.00pm	Beavers Cubs Scouts Explorers
Sat	9.30 - 11.30am 3.00 - 4.30pm	Open Doors Coffee Lounge (Term time only) Messy Church (Monthly except August)

St. John's World

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Word-search

D	U	M	N	R	O	C	M	O	N	D	R
S	N	A	E	E	S	I	A	R	P	C	P
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P	A	C	F	G	D	R	R	C	D	A	N
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October brings us Harvest, and Psalm 65 expresses it perfectly: "You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with corn, for so you have ordained it... You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance... the hills are clothed with gladness, the meadows are covered with flock and the valleys are mantled with corn; they shout for joy and sing."

Corn
Rain
Mud
Wheat

Abundance
Goodness
Riches
Pumpkins

Marrows
Water
Thankful
Food

Crops
Soften
Carts
Overflow

Praise
Care
Blessing
Meadows
flocks

The Methodist Conference, Birmingham, 2019

My first impressions of Conference, attending as a representative of the Northampton District, were the contrasts of joy and enthusiasm in worshiping God and moments of quiet dignity and contemplation.

The Representative Session, on Saturday afternoon, opens (as it has since 1780s) with the hymn 'And are we yet alive/to see each other's face?'

And indeed the Methodist Conference was alive at that point. Within this hymn, Charles Wesley has the words 'what troubles have we seen, what conflicts have we passed...' and memories of the year must have come to all representatives. The next verse gives assurance 'But out of all the Lord / has brought us by his love'.

The new President and Vice President are inducted at this opening session, with Conference affirming Rev Dr Barbara Glasson and Prof Clive Marsh by a dignified, silent Standing Vote. Both gave thoughtful addresses, touched with humour - their theme for the year is 'So What's the Story?'

Conference stood quietly the next day, Sunday, to affirm the ordinands to be received into Full Connexion, prior to their Ordination Services at churches in Birmingham and elsewhere. I noted nine hymns for the morning service, in various styles, music provided by a small group.

The Ordination Service in the Methodist Worship Book is appropriately formal. The congregation - filling the huge early 20th century church in Wolverhampton, where

Northampton representatives had gathered to support our ordinand - acclaimed to all ordinands 'They are worthy'. Laying on of hands and prayers complete the ordination.

Monday to Thursday lunchtime was occupied with opening worship each day, then by business and discussion groups. There was a further time of quiet as each of us received Holy Communion on Wednesday morning. In the hotel conference hall, each District had a table, covered with a white cloth and with space for each representative to spread at their place the A5 Conference booklet and two-volume agenda, the book of Memorials, the Draft List of Stations, the day's order paper and any notices of motion relating to resolutions on the reports being presented. Speakers had to be precise when referring to their page, resolution and paragraph numbers.

Another immediate impression was how much work and time had been put in by those, whether officers or staff, who run the various sections and committees of the Methodist Church. Business ranged from Finance to Ministerial Pensions to matters of God's love in the social gospel.



Wolverhampton Methodist Church

This came through strongly in All We Can; equality, diversity and inclusion; Marriage & Relationships; the 3Generate (young people) concern on climate change; and Action for Children and Methodist Homes.

At mealtimes, having spent hours at the same long table, people scattered to the queues for food or to catch up with colleagues from other Districts. Thus I found myself sitting with representatives from different places: the first lunch time I was opposite the President of the Methodist Conference in Ireland (as I discovered later); on another occasion I had a few words with the Bishop of Argentina; Joy Murphy, there with the Karibuni stall, introduced me to the Presiding Bishop of Kenya.

I met people from around the Methodist Connexion, including another 'Clove', all involved in work for the church and their communities in varying situations of caring and challenge - and with many stories.

*Ann Cloke
July 2019*

(Revd Anne Ellis and I were two of the members of Conference for the Northampton District. There were 306 members of Conference in all, who are the Trustees until the 2020 Conference. There are additional associate members.)

Asia Bibi calls for blasphemy reform

Asia Bibi, the Christian who spent eight years on death row in Pakistan on charges of blasphemy, has called for reform of the blasphemy laws.

Giving an interview in Canada, for the first time since her release from prison, Bibi told the Sunday Telegraph: "I pray to God that everyone falsely implicated in blasphemy cases should be released, that they get freedom and God helps them.

"There should be proper investigation mechanisms while applying this law. We should not consider anyone sinful for this act [blasphemy] without any proof, she added.

Bibi also spoke about her time in a Pakistani jail. She said that her Christian faith had never faltered, and that when her daughters had visited her, she had never let them see her suffering. "I used to cry alone, filled with pain and grief," she added.

Bibi and her family are currently living in Canada, but they may be moving to Europe in the coming months.



KWAMKONO DISABLED CHILDREN'S TRUST

The Kwamkono Disabled Children's Trust supports the charitable work of Kwamkono Hostel in Tanzania by providing grants of equipment and funding so that the hostel can offer rehabilitation, education and training to young people which enables them to live independent lives.

In September 2018, the Amersham Circuit chose this charity as the Circuit Project for two years September 2018 – August 2020.

We are now embarking on the second year of the Project. During the first year, the circuit churches together, raised £1,688 from events including Harvest and Christmas collections, Coffee Mornings and sales.

At the Project's launch, each church was given a small box in which their congregations are invited to place small change. Smaller boxes were also available for use in homes.

As one of our Supermarkets says 'Every Little Helps' and the small amounts collected in these boxes has added considerably to the total.

The Project continues for a further year and it is hoped that we will be able to improve on the amount raised during 2019. Keith and Lesley Wright, two of the Trust's trustees, will be speaking at Chesham's First Monday Meeting at 2pm on Monday 4th November and it is hoped that they will be able to give more up to date information on the progress of the project.

All Circuit churches are welcome to attend this meeting. Also on November 16th St. Johns Methodist

Church is putting on a Quiz for the project and it is hoped that all churches will be represented at this,

Saturday 16th November, 6.30 for 7pm start.

There'll be a wide range of questions and marathon rounds to suit all tastes, and a ploughman's supper to keep you well-nourished! So come along, have fun and support a good cause.

Tickets cost £10. Tables of up to 8 people, or you are welcome to join a shared table.

For tickets and further details, speak to Helen George on 07703 568159 or email her at helengeorge75@gmail.com

We hope to see lots of you there. Please help to spread the word to others too. Everyone is welcome to come – the more, the merrier!

2020

Looking ahead to 2020 the Chess Valley Male Voice Choir has been booked for a concert at Chesham on the evening of Tuesday 12th May. This is a Circuit event and, again, we hope that all nine churches will be represented.

Details will be available for your magazines and notice sheets in the New Year.

Meanwhile, thank you for all the support given so far and keep putting your small change into those little boxes in your church and homes.

Pam Sitford and Helen George

Harvest Celebrations & Service of Thanksgiving

Sunday 22nd September at 11.00 am Followed by a Harvest Lunch

Speaker: James Boulton - CEO of Wycombe Homeless Connection

We invite you to bring your donations of personal and household items to support Wycombe Homeless Connection. Reg. charity 1156211



Rebuilding Lives

I owe my life to you. I honestly believe you were Godsent and I will always appreciate the kindness you showed to me. I had no self-worth or drive left and you gave me the drive and self-belief to get to where I am.

I've come a long way since I last saw you. My thought process is becoming more stable, I no longer think of taking anything to change the way I feel, and I'm starting to deal with a lot of the issues that brought me here in the first place. Please thank everyone who supported you when I was causing you grief. hope you're not traumatized by the whole experience.

Dates for your Diary

September

Sunday 22nd 11.00 am
Harvest Celebration - see details left.

Friday 27th - Sunday 29th
High Leigh weekend.

October

Friday 4th
12.30 pm Ladies Lunch.

Saturday 12th
3.00 - 4.30 pm Messy Church

Tuesday 15th
7.30 pm COTHA AGM At St. John's.

Tuesday 22nd
7.30 pm Church Leadership Team meeting.

Wednesday 23rd
7.30 pm Pastoral Meeting.

Saturday 26th
10.00 am - 5.00 pm Railway Exhibition.

November

Tuesday 5th
7.30 pm Church Council.

Saturday 9th
3.00 - 4.30 pm
Messy Church.

Sunday 10th
10.45 am Remembrance/Parade Service.



Open Doors Coffee Lounge

Every Saturday
9.30 to 11.30am. In
The Wesley Room

Come, meet old friends and make new ones