
CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

SUMMER 2017



CHURCHES AT THE HEART OF BREXIT DEBATE



[Cytûn's Working Party on Wales and Europe](#) met with the First Minister of Wales on June 7. This was a special meeting in the company of the general secretaries of the national councils of churches of the nations of Europe (the counterparts of Cytûn in those countries). A very lively and open discussion followed regarding the implications of the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and the plans of the UK Government at the time about achieving this. A number of Mr Jones' comments gave a flavour of the [Welsh Government's White Paper on Brexit and devolution](#) which was published on June 15.

The following day a General Election was held with an unexpected outcome (see page 2). As this Bulletin goes to press it is not entirely clear how the changes in the UK Government and the Parliamentary situation will affect the process of leaving the EU. The

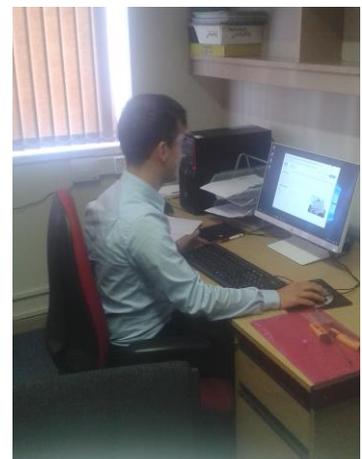


Cytûn Working Party is already arranging to meet with some of Wales's new MPs, from all parties. This follows a similar series of meetings with Assembly Members from all parties during the previous months.

All the AMs we met, including the First Minister, have encouraged us to continue with our work as churches in this area. They have unanimously suggested that the churches seek ways of reconciling people who voted different ways in the referendum and who still feel strongly about the subject, and find ways of listening to local communities about their aspirations and fears for the future. Churches, we were told several times, are in a unique position to ensure a balanced, civilised and open conversation about these matters.

To this end we are keen to invite Cytûn groups and other local inter-church groups to host meetings to listen to their areas. We have received a number of invitations already, but we are especially keen to visit more areas where the majority of people voted to leave the EU. Please contact Cytûn's Policy Officer (details on the back page) to find out more.

In the mean time, in the midst of all these developments, we have been glad to welcome Chiron Hooson, an internship student from Cardiff University, to compile a detailed report on the first year of the Working Party and the responses of other churches throughout Europe. This report will be available to churches and publicly on the Cytûn website by the end of the summer.



Statistical update: Crimes against Christians in Wales

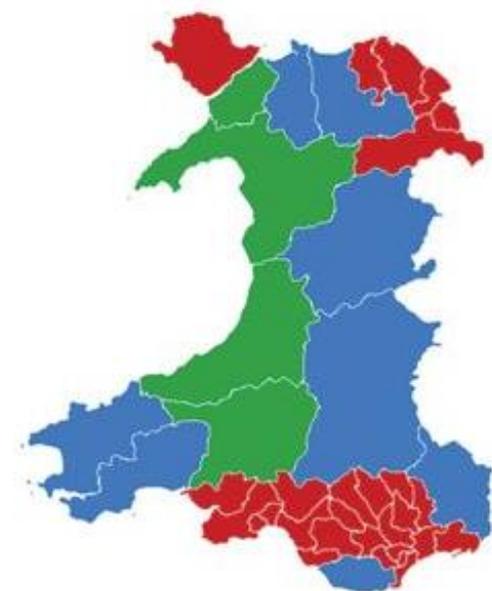
I have received responses to Freedom of Information Requests to every Welsh police force asking for the numbers of religious hate crimes, disaggregated by the victim's religion, reported since 2007 when the Racial and Religious Hatred Act (2006) came into force. I also asked for information about the outcome of reporting these crimes. Only two out of Wales' four police forces had been recording the precise religion of victims before this April. Only a minority of cases was data available even then. As of April 2017 the police in England and Wales have to ask alleged victims of religious hate crime what is their religion, in order to improve the quality of information on attacks on people of all religions. (People can choose whether or not to disclose their religion.) This is due to the UK government's Counter-Extremism Strategy, which was published in October 2015.

This is of interest as there is room to suspect that there are a number of attacks against Christians, especially from ethnic minorities. (Many people from ethnic minorities in Wales recorded Christian affiliation in the 2011 Census.) It is also known that some mistakes were made in recording victims' religion in some English police forces.

I have also received responses to Freedom of Information Requests to all Welsh police forces asking for the number and type of crimes reported to be against Christian clergy and lay workers since 2007. On the whole attacks on Christian clergy and workers or on Christian buildings are not reported by Christians themselves as hate crimes. As in English police authority areas, the annual number is significantly higher than the number of hate crimes against Christians. I hope to produce tables based on the data once it has all come in shortly.

Dr. Carys Moseley

GENERAL ELECTION 2017



Although only four Welsh constituencies changed hands on June 8 – and in one of those the new MP is returning having lost his seat two years ago – commentators believe that a great deal has changed in terms of party politics in Wales.

Cytûn has written to the new MPs who were elected for the first time, and also to those MPs who have been appointed to their parties' front bench. Alun Cairns MP has been reappointed as Secretary of State for Wales and Guto Bebb MP as Under-Secretary of State. Christina Rees MP continues as Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, Gerald Jones MP as Shadow Minister for Wales and Nia Griffith MP as Shadow Defence Secretary. Owen Smith MP becomes Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Liz Saville-Roberts becomes Plaid Cymru's Parliamentary Leader. We look forward to

working with them and all other MPs representing constituencies in Wales.

How about asking your local Cytûn Group or congregation to write to your new Member of Parliament to welcome them, promising to pray for them as they fulfil their responsibilities, and inviting them to attend one of your events over the summer?

THE QUEEN'S SPEECH

Following the election, on June 21 the new session of the Westminster Parliament began with [the Queen's Speech](#). As expected, the principal measures relate to the UK's departure from the EU. There are eight such measures in all:

- The Repeal Bill, which will repeal the European Communities Act 1972, incorporate most EU laws (although not the Charter of Fundamental Rights) into UK law, and “where appropriate” into devolved legislation. It is said that there will be consultation with the devolved nations about this, although their exact role in the process is not clear. The [Welsh Government's White Paper on Brexit and devolution](#) expresses concerns about this process and suggests improvements to it.
- A Customs Bill, to allow the UK to collect customs duties when we leave the EU Customs Union.
- A Trade Bill, to allow the UK to adopt an independent trade policy on exit.
- An Immigration Bill, allowing the Government to repeal the “freedom of movement” provisions, and to make EU citizens subject to UK immigration law. The UK Government announced on June 26 its “offer” regarding EU citizens already in the UK, subject to negotiation with the EU. This is of particular concern to churches, not least because we have many members who are EU citizens.
- A Fisheries Bill, allowing the UK to control fishing in its territorial waters. It may implement also the Conservative manifesto commitment to withdraw from the [London Convention 1964](#), which allows mutual access to each other's fisheries for a number of European countries including the UK. Fisheries are a devolved matter and it is not clear how the National Assembly's role in this matter will be honoured.
- An Agriculture Bill, to establish UK support for agriculture and the environment after we leave the EU. This will include replacing the EU frameworks for these matters on a temporary basis with a very similar UK framework. The UK Government says that devolved administrations will be “consulted” about this, but the Welsh Government has indicated in its White Paper that it believes these matters to be already devolved, and that therefore the consent of the National Assembly will be required.
- A Nuclear Safeguards Bill, to replace the provisions of UK membership of Euratom.
- An International Sanctions Bill, to allow the UK to impose its own sanctions on other countries after it has left the EU.

Three further measures in the Queen's Speech have a Brexit dimension:

- The Travel Protection Bill, which extends the ATOL scheme for holidaymakers to online bookings and to cover matters currently covered by EU law; and
- The Data Protection Bill, which will reform the Data Protection Act 1998 and will replace some EU protections with UK alternatives.
- The Space Industry Bill, which will deal with the fact that some European Space Agency programmes (such as [Galileo](#)) are restricted to EU members.

Many of the other matters announced are relatively uncontroversial, or implement budget measures agreed by the previous Parliament.

In the section on equalities, however, there is reference to [A Review into Opportunity and Integration](#) (the Casey Report) of December 2016. This concluded that some religious communities were isolated from mainstream British life, and the UK Government is proposing an “integration strategy” to address this, and to establish a statutory Commission on Extremism. The [Evangelical Alliance](#) has expressed concern about how “extremism” may be defined.

Cytûn welcomes the fact that suggestions made in some press reports, and [during the election campaign](#), that the Government might seek to alter human rights legislation in this Parliament have not been taken forward.

NEW LAWS FOR WALES

On June 27 the First Minister announced the Welsh Government's legislative programme for 2017-18. It includes five bills:

- The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) Bill that will make it illegal for alcohol to be sold below a set price, based on its strength and volume. Some Cytûn members, notably the Salvation Army, have been [calling for such legislation](#), due to evidence of a link between drinking harmful levels and availability of cheap alcohol.
- A bill to stop landlords and estate agents from charging unfair, up-front fees to tenants and prospective tenants in the private rented sector. This has been welcomed by campaign groups such as [Shelter Cymru](#). Cytûn member [Housing Justice Cymru](#) said "we broadly welcome this ban. However, we recognise there may be some cases of small scale landlords where there may be a need to charge costs that are proportionate. This may apply to churches that rent out a property as an income stream. In all cases there should be transparency and openness about charges tenants can expect to pay and it should never be exploitative."
- A bill that will pave the way for 30 hours of free childcare a week for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. The bill will support the [pilot schemes](#) beginning in September and enable the childcare offer to be rolled out in full by 2020 by creating a national system for applications and eligibility checks.
- Legislation to reform the regulatory controls for registered social landlords in Wales. This is designed to address a technical change made by the Office for National Statistics, [reclassifying RSLs to the public sector](#). The bill aims to enable the ONS to reconsider the reclassification and return them to the private sector.
- Legislation to reform local government in Wales. The Welsh Government says "The bill will create greater transparency in decision making and ensure greater collaboration through mandatory regional working arrangements." This follows a [series of consultations](#) in which Cytûn took part, and we look forward to responding to the detailed proposals. Local churches engage with local government regularly, and value open and transparent relationships with their local councils.

In addition, there will be consultation on two further legislative proposals:

- The government is seeking cross-party support for legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment (smacking of children), with the intention of introducing a bill in 2018-19. This is an issue on which faith communities have a range of views, and Cytûn will work to enable churches and Christian organisations on all sides of this debate to contribute to the consultation process.
- A Continuity Bill "to protect Wales' interests" during the Brexit process, if the UK Government does not "respect the devolution settlement". Cytûn's [Wales & Europe Working Party](#) will continue to monitor these matters closely.

Cytûn's Policy Officer, Gethin Rhys, commented "With only five bills proposed for 2017-18, the Welsh Government clearly wants to keep the Assembly timetable clear for Brexit related issues. It is surprising that there is no mention of implementing the Diamond Review on student funding nor the Hazelkorn Review of post-16 education in Wales.

"Other measures which are included in the Government's [five-year programme](#) which have been postponed include strengthening the Welsh Language Measure and legislation enabling the protection of community assets."

Cytûn convenes regular meetings of the Laser Group of church and society officers (paid and voluntary) of our member churches and organisations, and sister Christian movements such as the Evangelical Alliance and the Children's Society, and these meetings monitor Welsh legislation in detail. Further information can be obtained from the Policy Officer (see back page).

Dementia friendly churches

A recent consultation by Welsh Government on the [Draft national dementia strategy for Wales](#) enabled Cytûn in our response to draw attention to the large number of churches across the denominations who are aiming to become Dementia friendly, intentionally seeking to welcome and include those who live with dementia and their carers in their church life.



Five groups of churches received funding from Bangor University to establish activities such as memory cafes, dementia accessible services of worship and visits to care homes. The project followed a conference led by a retired priest studying dementia and spirituality at Bangor. The projects cover the St Asaph Diocese of the Church in Wales.

Rev Bob Friedrich, who is taking a PhD in the subject, has selected a cross section of churches for the project. He said: "This is a wonderful opportunity to work with churches to help them offer specific projects which will meet the needs of their local community while they become dementia-friendly."

Sarah Wheat, engagement officer for the diocese of St Asaph, said churches could offer "important settings" for dementia support. "The buildings, the services, the hymns are often still familiar to people with dementia and with volunteer support can provide invaluable spaces and facilities," she added.

Amongst many other examples we heard from were:

- Bethesda Baptist Church, Rogerstone, which has a dementia champion who has been running [dementia friends](#) information sessions for church members and for members of our Welcome and Pastoral teams. More of these sessions are planned, with the aim to become a dementia friendly church in the future.
- The Gwent Hills and Vales Methodist Circuit has appointed Graeme Russell as a dementia champion, who has been holding sessions for local churches, not only in the Circuit but also in Caerleon & District Churches Together and the URC and Baptist Churches in Cwmbrân.
- [Tŷ Croeso](#) is the churches' agency in Clydach and district, which arranges regular 'teas and hymns' sessions for those living in local residential homes, including those with dementia. The work is carried out on an ecumenical basis.
- Albany Road Baptist Church, Cardiff, runs the '[Forget me Not](#)' café for those with dementia and their carers, and is talking to local businesses about becoming a dementia friendly community.
- Methodist Church charity MHA has some homes in Wales, and at the MHA home in Aberystwyth, [Hafan Y Waun](#), there is a specialist unit and day centre which looks to support those with dementia. Churches of a number of denominations locally visit the unit and its residents and lead worship there.

Cytûn has also been involved at each stage of consultation on Social Care Wales' [Good Work – Dementia Learning and Development Framework](#) for social care practitioners at all levels. We contributed thoughts to all sections of the package, with a particular emphasis on recognising the spiritual and faith needs and choices of those with dementia and their families, and we are pleased to see these acknowledged in this resource.

The social enterprise Pictures to Share recently launched a Welsh and English language resource especially for those working with people with dementia in Wales, called [Hen Wlad fy Nhadau](#), which may well be useful for churches and other organisations seeking to engage in this kind of work.



Good Neighbours My World Depends On Us

22 - 29 October 2017

OWW invites you to explore how we can become good neighbours locally and globally.

More about the theme can be found on the [Theme page](#) of our [new Website](#).

The key component of this year’s theme is to raise awareness of:

- how our everyday lives, actions and decisions impact upon our global neighbours – often adversely;
- what we need to do to improve that impact by being good neighbours.

and how we publicise the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals to draw attention to the needs of our global neighbours.

Our Partners:



OWW is a member of:



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