

Faith Digest: Christians accused of hate crime for witnessing

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Christians accused of hate crime for witnessing. A Muslim community police officer accused two Christian preachers from the United States of a hate crime after they handed out evangelical tracts in a predominantly Muslim area in England. Arthur Cunningham and Joseph Abraham complained to police in Birmingham that Police Constable Support Officer Naeem Nagutheney stopped them in a Muslim neighborhood, told them they could not preach there and accused them of committing a hate crime by trying to convert Muslims to Christianity. Birmingham police authorities said the officer “has been offered guidance about what constitutes a hate crime and advice on communications style,” but they insisted he had acted “with the best of intentions.”

Evangelical scientist leaves genome institute. Francis Collins, who helped decode human DNA and build bridges between scientists and religious believers, will resign as director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, effective Aug. 1. Collins, an evangelical Christian, has headed the National Institutes of Health-affiliated center since 1993. Collins, 58, accomplished much in the field of genetic research, from mapping human DNA, which he called “the book of human life,” to identifying genetic risk factors for diabetes and other diseases. Collins’ best-selling 2006 book *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, was credited with forging common ground between evangelical Christians and scientists.

British clerk files suit over gay partnerships flap. A Christian government clerk in Britain has taken her town hall bosses to court for threatening to fire her because she refused to register civil partnerships for same-sex couples. Lillian Ladele says she was bullied by officials at London's Islington Council after she told them she objected on religious grounds to same-sex civil partnerships. In testimony before an employment tribunal in London, Ladele likened forcing her to preside over such ceremonies to force-feeding a Muslim "unclean" food. Ladele has registered births, deaths and marriages at the town hall 16 years and had been allowed unofficially to opt out of civil partnership rites. But that changed with the British government's introduction of the Statistics and Registration Act, which removed the opt-out option last December and made her subject to local council orders—including registering gay and lesbian civil partnerships.

Where's the beef? Not in coach class. British Airways has taken beef off the menu for thousands of economy class passengers on long-haul flights due to concerns it might offend Hindus. Britain's flagship airline announced in-flight choices now are restricted to fish or chicken dishes, and beef is no longer an option, at least for this summer. British Airways' second-largest long-haul market is to India, where Hindus, who make up the majority population, shun beef because of their religious beliefs. Economy-class passengers will be given the choice of a fish pie or chicken option. However, in the airline's business and first-class cabins, it will be business—and beef—as usual.