

Faith Digest: Church of England rejects female bishops

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Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, at the Church of England's General Synod.

Church of England rejects female bishops. Many of the 470 members of the Church of England's three-tiered General Synod—bishops, clergy and laity—were stunned when the House of Laity couldn't garner a two-thirds majority in favor of women bishops. The vote to allow women bishops failed by just five votes, after easily passing the bishops and clergy. Both the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and his successor, Justin Welby, had urged the General Synod to vote for women bishops, 18 years after the church opened the priesthood to women. About 3,000 women priests serve in the Church of England—roughly 40 percent of all clergy. The church cannot consider the matter again until at least 2015, when a new General Synod comes into being.

{mosimage}Judge blocks Nativity displays in Santa Monica. A federal judge denied a bid by churches to force city officials in Santa Monica, Calif., to reopen spaces in a city park to private displays, including life-sized Christmas Nativity scenes. The city shut down the six-decade tradition last year after a dispute between religious groups and atheists, who overwhelmed the city's auction process for display sites, winning most of the 21 slots. William Becker, an attorney representing a group of Christian churches, said he would appeal.

Kenyan church leaders oppose marriage law. Church leaders in Kenya insist proposed new marriage bills will weaken marriage by allowing cohabitating couples to register as married. One bill would bring Christian, Hindu, Muslim, civil and customary marriages under one law, and another

would give spouses and children more rights to property. The twin bills were approved by the cabinet Nov. 9 and are scheduled to be debated by Parliament before Christmas.

Anti-Jewish incidents decline. Anti-Semitic incidents in the United States dropped by 13 percent in 2011, according to a report released by the [Anti-Defamation League](#), which tracks assaults and other attacks on Jews. There were 1,080 incidents against Jews last year, according to the ADL, the lowest tallied by the nonprofit civil rights group in two decades. The league's annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents for 2011 included 19 physical assaults, 731 cases of harassment and threats, and 330 incidents of vandalism. The report highlighted particular concern about anti-Semitic bullying in schools and cyber-bullying by students.

Woman files complaint against Muslim barber. A Toronto woman has lodged a complaint against a barber who refused to cut her hair because he is Muslim. Faith McGregor requested a man's haircut at the Terminal Barber Shop in downtown Toronto. Co-owner Omar Mahrouk told her his Muslim faith prohibits him from touching a woman who is not a member of his family. All the other barbers in the shop said the same thing. She filed a complaint with Ontario's [Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario](#) because the incident made her feel like a "second-class citizen." McGregor is not seeking monetary damages, but wants the tribunal to force the shop to offer men's haircuts to both genders.

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