



Converted Preach to Converters

Several Canadian papers picked up a story from Wales. (See *Globe and Mail*, Wednesday March 8, 2006 – p. A14, “The converted preach to the converters”, by Hamida Ghafour, London).

As related in the *Globe*, Rev. Hmar Sangkhuma has come from his home in Northern India to serve a parish in Wales where there is a shortage of clergy. Rev. Sangkhuma comes from an area which had originally been evangelized by missionaries from Wales. The account focuses on the change in church participation in Wales, and the reality of someone from a mission church now being needed in the land where the missionaries once originated.

In the Canadian context, there does not seem to have been the collapse of vocations such as described in the story, and which we have anecdotally discovered in conversations with our colleagues in British theological colleges.

However, this doesn't mean that similar situations are not occurring in Canada. Among Roman Catholics, parishes are being served by priests from Vietnam, the Philippines and African countries, as well as from Europe and Latin America. There is no reason to anticipate that this won't happen (or isn't happening) in Canadian Protestant and Reformed congregations.

The reality is that Europe is no longer the center of Christianity in the world. Various studies and books have noted this, but it seems to be a hard message to get through. The majority of Christians in the world live in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This has been a dramatic change since 1900.

See for example

- John Taylor, “The Future of Christianity” in John McManners, ed., *The Oxford History of Christianity* (Oxford: 1990, revised 2002)

- Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: 2002)

This is a reality we all need to remember.

Stuart Macdonald, for the Centre for Clergy Care and Congregational Health © 2006

Please note: All rights reserved. May be copied and distributed for educational purposes only. Publication by media should cite the Centre. For any other requested use, please contact the Centre at clergy.care@utoronto.ca.