



Image of the day - Queen's University Belfast

C of E urged to cease ‘celebration’ of slave traders

The Church of England should stop “unconditionally celebrating” slave traders with statues, an anti-racism report has concluded.

The Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce was set up last October after the murder of George Floyd in the US, with the aim of greater racial justice and equality in the Church of England.

The report, published yesterday to coincide with Stephen Lawrence Day, warns that a failure to act could be a “last straw” for many of ethnic minority backgrounds, with “devastating effects” on the future of the Church.

‘Failure to act now will be taken as a last straw for many, that the church is not serious about racial sin’

The report sets out almost 50 actions to implement, including hiring “racial justice officers” in all 42 dioceses and ensuring at least one ethnic minority candidate on every job shortlist.

The report also calls for 15 per cent of General Synod as well as all local church councils to be black by 2030, and for a “racial justice Sunday” once a year.

The taskforce criticised the Church over potentially offensive monuments. It said: “The protests following the killing of George Floyd, and in particular the tearing down of the

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Colston statue in Bristol, highlighted issues surrounding the Church of England's consideration of its own contested heritage.

“The Church of England has taken little action in addressing the historic slave trade and its legacy since it made an apology at General Synod in 2006 for its involvement in the trade.

“Regarding monuments and the built environment, deciding what to do with contested heritage is not easy.

“While history should not be hidden, we also do not want to unconditionally celebrate or commemorate people who contributed to or benefitted from the tragedy that was the slave trade.” Rather than attempting to erase the past or rewrite history, the report calls for a “healthy revision of memory and history in a way that will provide scope for education and formation”.

“Decades of inaction carry consequences and this inaction must be owned by the whole church,” it said. “A failure to act now will be seen as another indication, potentially a last straw for many, that the church is not serious about racial sin.”

The conclusions come on the day the Board of Deputies (BoD) publishes its own report “to learn more about the experiences of black Jews, Jews of colour and Sephardi, Mizrahi and Yemenite Jews... and make recommendations for how our community can do better”.

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The BoD concluded that rabbinic training organisations should encourage under-represented ethnic groups to apply for communal roles, and that Jewish schools should ensure that their secular curriculum engages with black history, slavery and colonialism legacy.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, said last year that statues in Canterbury Cathedral are going to be looked at “very carefully”.

In the Church of England, one in 25 serving clergy is from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Of the 42 diocesan bishops, the only one from a black background is Guli Francis-Dehqani, the Bishop of Chelmsford.

Archbishop Welby, and the Archbishop of York, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, said they would implement some recommendations immediately.

UUP motion calling for a ban on conversion therapy passes

Following the Northern Ireland Assembly voting in favour of a UUP motion calling for a ban on conversion therapy, Doug Beattie MC MLA said:

“I am delighted that we were able to bring this issue to the floor of the Assembly. Since our motion was announced we have seen a swell of vocal support across all sections of the society for a ban on this harmful practice. So-called

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“conversion therapy” has no place in our society. To suggest that our LGBTQ+ population are in need of a fix or cure is fundamentally wrong.

“The Assembly had an opportunity to send a message to those who have been subjected to this disgraceful practice that we hear them and will right this wrong. Conversion therapy has a devastating impact on the lives of those who have undergone it and many still suffer from poor mental health for years afterwards. Conversion therapy exists in an environment where a culture of shame is cultivated. This culture creates a problem and offers a solution through conversion therapy. We cannot look away from the devastating effect of shame on LGBTQ people. Quite simply, shame is a killer. Lives have been lost after people

[Portstewart strand](#)



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were driven to a helpless and hopeless place.

“Deirdre Hargey gave her support to a ban. We now need to see legislation brought forward imminently. Conversion therapy must be banned before the end of this mandate.

“There is no attempt to restrict any religious liberties or freedoms and those attempting to frame the motion in this manner are missing the very point of what we are trying to achieve and are doing the Christian faith a huge disservice. This motion was only ever about protections for our LGBTQ community against a coercive, subversive, harmful practice with the stated intent of changing a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity.

MU Mums in May project at Castle Archdale

June Butler, the All Ireland MU President, was met at St Patrick's Church by Mrs Irene Boyd (Diocesan MU President), Dr Margaret Knox (Branch Enrolling Member), the Rev Charlie Eames (Diocesan MU Chaplain), Mr Norman Noble (parishioner and member of Lisnarick Development Association) and the rector.

Norman met up at the current Church, the nearby ruins of the older Chapel of the Mullies, the Courtyard further into the forest park and then at Old Castle Archdale, giving a very insightful and informative talk at each location. A lovely floral arrangement had been prepared by Irene Armstrong to welcome June to Castle Archdale.

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June's Walk is part of the MU "Mums in May" project - an All-Ireland Fund of the Mothers' Union supporting new and on-going projects. For example, the fund has provided clothing and food for those who have been forced to leave their homes due to domestic violence, school books and uniforms for struggling families, help for families enduring food poverty.

She is planning walks in each diocese in support of the Fund - a total of 252 kilometres!

A "JUST GIVING PAGE" has been set up for this initiative, so that MU members and friends can easily sponsor June's walking extravaganza and support the ministry of Mums in May.

Simply log on to www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MumsinMay21 to donate to the All-Ireland Mums in May Fund

You will also find more information about this important ministry of the MU at <http://mothersunion.ie/mums-in-may-2021.html>

A Jew from the Holocaust helps save the world today — unbelievable true story

Sixty thousand Jews lived in Thessaloniki, Greece on the eve of the outbreak of World War II — A living and vibrant Jewish community. Most of the porters in the port of Thessaloniki were Jews. The port of

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Thessaloniki was even closed on Saturday. Great rabbis lived there as well, Sue Hirsch writes.

The Nazi terror brutally rose against this glorious community.

Hitler took Greece by storm to secure his southern wing before launching Operation Barbarossa and the Nazi offensive against Russia.

[Ballintoy Parish Church and Rathlin Island West light](#)



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Out of 60,000 Thessaloniki Jews, about 50,000 were exterminated in Birkenau in a very short time.

Few survived.

Among the survivors was the Bourla family.

After the war in 1961 a son was born to the Bourla family. And they named him Israel — Abraham. (Albert).

Albert grew up and studied veterinary medicine. He received his doctorate in reproductive biotechnology from the Aristotle University of Salonika Veterinary School.

At the age of 34 he moved to the United States. He married a Jewish woman named Miriam and had two children.

In the United States, Bourla was integrated into the medical industry. He progressed very quickly and joined the Pfizer company where he became 'Head of Global Vaccines'.

From there, he soon became the CEO of Pfizer in 2019.

Throughout the past year, Dr. Bourla led the company's efforts to find a vaccine for the new coronavirus in a super effort.

The vaccine that will save the lives of millions of people around the world was led and pushed by a Jew — the son of Holocaust survivors. From Thessaloniki.

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His vaccine will also reach Germany, where thousands have died from Covid-19, and the vaccine will also save lives there.

And this is why Israel is becoming the first country to receive the vaccine. In memory of Albert's grandparents.

To cap this incredible story, Pfizer executives, including its CEO Albert Bourla, won't "cut the line" to get a COVID-19 vaccine, Bourla told CNBC on Monday, saying "I'm 59 years old, in good health, I'm not working on the frontline, so my type it is not recommended to get vaccination now."

He is waiting his turn ... in order to save as many other people whose lives are in greater jeopardy.

What a Mensch!

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Service of Consecration -

of Revd Canon Dr. Ian Ellis, Rector of Rossorry Parish as Bishop of Clogher in St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen, Monday 26th April at 7.30pm. Attendance at this service is by invitation only due to Covid-19 restrictions but can be viewed online at www.enniskillencathedral.com

Bible Society NI zoom online conversation-

Wednesday 28th April – to discuss how has engaging with the Bible been for you and for those in ministry during

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Covid-19. More information and how to register available from [@biblesocietyni](#) on social media platforms; on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or from the website; www.biblesocietyni.co.uk

Media review

Evangelical Alliance: We want both better church care for LGBT people as well as protection for ...

Belfast Newsletter

Commenting at the time, Amnesty International's Northern Ireland director ... and that churches will neither be compelled nor prevented from offering ...

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/letters/evangelical-alliance-we-want-both-better-church-care-for-lgbt-people-as-well-as-protection-for-religious-liberty-3209104>]

Coronavirus: Food bank need for NI children 'at historic level'

BBC News

BBC News NI Education Correspondent ... The trust operated 36 distribution centres across Northern Ireland in 2020-21. ... food banks across Northern Ireland operated by community and church organisations, for example. ... In Northern Ireland, the trust provided 45,134 food parcels in 2019-20 but that ...

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56845560>]



Justin Welby says Church of England has failed to tackle racism

The Times

The Church of England should not allow statues or memorials to “unconditionally celebrate or commemorate” slave traders, a report commissioned by ...

[[] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/justin-welby-says-church-of-england-has-failed-to-tackle-racism-fnw2djwwp>]

Justin Welby calls for start to public inquiry into handling of Covid

Guardian

Archbishop of Canterbury says investigation must be independent, with power to place witnesses under oath

[[] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/21/justin-welby-calls-for-start-to-public-inquiry-into-handling-of-covid?utm>]

Taoiseach signals possibility of return to church service attendances in person

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The Irish Times

He insisted that “the only motivation is to protect public health and save lives”. Covid-19 Vaccine Tracker: What's available in the Republic of Ireland and ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/taoiseach-signals-possibility-of-return-to-church-service-attendances-in-person-1.4543587>]

Churches and other places of worship to reopen to the public from next month, Taoiseach tells faith ...

Independent.ie

“In ordinary times would not apply such restrictions on people, but a global pandemic is such a context.” Daily Digest Newsletter. Today's news ...

[[] <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/churches-and-other-places-of-worship-to-reopen-to-the-public-from->



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[next-month- taoiseach-tells-faith-leaders-in-letter-40340880.html](#)]

Veterans' website to 'hunt enemy of suicide'

Belfast Newsletter

He now works as a Church of Ireland cleric in Coalisland.

“We know there have been seven suicides among serving or former members of the ...

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/health/veterans-website-to-hunt-enemy-of-suicide-3209113>]

Focus - ‘No place for famine and starvation in the 21st Century’

Christian Aid and other NGOs declare as 270 million face severe food shortages

States and donor countries are being urged by NGOs including Christian Aid to provide the additional \$5.5 billion needed for urgent food assistance to reach more than 34 million girls, boys, women and men around the globe who are on the brink of famine.

In a joint letter released this week, civil society organisations and NGOs including Christian Aid declare: ‘There is no place for famine and starvation in the 21st century.’ And yet, many millions of people are today going without the minimum of 1,200 calories needed to survive – barely half of the recommended daily intake for a healthy diet.

The main drivers of the international hunger crisis are conflict, weather extremes, transboundary threats such as

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desert locusts, economic shocks compounded by the effects of COVID-19, and access constraints. There is a toxic interplay between conflict, climate crisis and pandemics.

Up to 270 million people were acutely food insecure or at high risk at the outset of 2021, according to the World Food Programme. More than 34 million people are teetering on the edge of famine and the slightest shock will push them over into famine without urgent, immediate life-saving action.

In the DRC alone, 27.3 million people are facing acute food shortages - the highest number in the world. Christian Aid's DRC country director Moise Liboto said: "27.3 million people face high acute food shortages in DRC, due to protracted conflict, limited access to improved production capacity, and unfair distribution of resources including land and water, which, cumulatively, continues to drive population displacements and weaken the economy. Land degradation due to poorly regulated mining activities, weak disaster risk management systems, and the global climate crisis cause further instability, displacements, and suffering. Without urgent funding to respond to the immediate needs and address the underlying causes more sustainably, there are risks that their situation will worsen, and for yet more people to be affected."

And Christian Aid's South Sudan country director James Wani said: "Food shortages have escalated across South Sudan. Floods, conflict and Covid-19 are a deadly trio, but the deadliest driver is continued violence and armed conflict. To combat this, what we need in South Sudan is rapid action to halt the march towards famine, including an expedited

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scale-up of food and nutrition in communities already grappling with famine, and a massive renewed effort to implement the 2018 peace agreement.”

In conflict-affected northern Nigeria meanwhile, the localities of Abadam, Dikwa, Guzamala, Kukawa and Marte in Borno state face the risk of famine should the situation further deteriorate.

Text of the open letter:

An open letter to States and their Leaders from the civil society organisations working with and for the 270 million people facing hunger, starvation or famine all over the world:

Every day, we bear witness to suffering and resilience. In Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, DRC, Honduras, Venezuela, Nigeria, Haiti, CAR, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Sudan and beyond we help people who are doing all they can to simply get through one more day. Every day, we work with people who are fully capable of producing or earning enough to feed themselves and their families.

These people are not starving, they are being starved. These girls and boys, men and women, are being starved by conflict and violence; by inequality; by the impacts of climate change; by the loss of land, jobs or prospects; by a fight against COVID-19 that has left them even further behind. Every day, we see that it is women and girls who suffer the most. Every day, we share stories and evidence of hunger, starvation, and increasing humanitarian needs. Yet this does not prompt urgent action or sufficient funding. The

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widening gap between the great needs we face and the limited assistance we are able to provide threatens to steal what hope remains.

We cannot allow all hope to be lost. It is human actions that are driving famine and hunger and it is our actions that can stop the worst impacts. We all have a part to play. But you, as Leaders, States and main duty bearers, have a unique responsibility. We call on you to take action now.

We call on you to provide the additional \$5.5 billion needed for urgent food assistance to reach more than 34 million girls, boys, women and men around the globe who are a step away from famine. This assistance must begin immediately and reach as directly as possible the people most in need, now, so they can take action to feed themselves today and in the future. All countries should contribute their full and fair share, without diverting resources from meeting other pressing humanitarian needs. We plead with you to enhance your efforts and work with all parties to end conflict and violence in all its forms.

The UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire must be immediately heeded. Humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach communities without barriers or impediments so we can urgently support those most in need. We urge you to invest in alleviating poverty and hunger, in giving people the tools they need to build more resilient futures for themselves, sustainably adapt to climate change and guard against the shocks of COVID-19. This will help to prevent future conflict and displacement. This will prevent future hunger and famines.

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There is no place for famine and starvation in the 21st century. History will judge us all by the actions we take today.



Pointers for prayer

Almighty God,
who hast given thine only Son
to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin,
and also an ensample of godly life;
Give us grace that we may always
most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit,
and also daily endeavour ourselves
to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning

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when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it...
...Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,

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until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT

Trusting is something we do all the time. We trust mechanics, electricians, gas engineers, teachers, police, judges, doctors, nurses – the list could go on and on. But the fact is that our trust in them can never be complete, because they are human. They will have good days but, sadly, they will have some bad ones as well. And occasionally, and mercifully this is rare, there are some people who are completely untrustworthy and let us down completely.

God is different. When we trust in God we can rely on him completely. We can trust him with the whole of our heart and be confident that he will never let us down. Proverbs is an amazingly practical book that is concerned with how to live life to the full, and the writer is clear that trusting God is the most crucial issue. Every detail of our lives in our families, work and leisure turns on this and so he encourages us to make sure that God is at the centre of all of our decisions, with the result that God will show us the right way to go.

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This doesn't mean that God's guidance comes to us immediately and, at times, that can be very frustrating. We would like guidance to work like a slot machine where we put in our request and get a complete answer instantly. God doesn't work like that because he wants a dynamic, daily relationship with us that is built on trust. But as our relationship with God deepens, our trust in him grows, and we can live a life that is absolutely confident that God will guide us even when deep fog has descended on us and we can't see the way to go. Whatever challenge you are facing at the moment you will never make a better decision than to trust God.

QUESTION

In what aspect of your life are you seeking God's guidance at the moment?

PRAYER

Thank you, living Lord, that you are completely trustworthy. Help me to lean more and more heavily on you day by day. Amen



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