

Wales' Church schools threatened by transport cuts

Going to a church school could be an “unrealistic dream” for many if proposals to stop funding pupil transport go ahead.

The Revd Edwin Counsell, education advisor for the Church in Wales, is warning that families would be denied the chance to send their children to a church school and that church schools themselves would be seriously disadvantaged by local councils withdrawing funds for school



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buses.

So far one council, Neath Port Talbot, has already decided to withdraw free transport for secondary school pupils who go to a faith school. Two others, Bridgend and Conwy, are also considering the measure. A public consultation is due to begin in Bridgend next month about proposals to save the authority more than half a million pounds a year.



In Flintshire, the council has also decided to withdraw the funding unless pupils can prove their beliefs with a baptism certificate. Wrexham council has withdrawn funding for free transport for all schools that are not the closest to where they live.

There are 162 Church in Wales schools, including three secondary schools and one secondary school which is a joint Church in Wales and Catholic school.

Mr Counsell said, "I am deeply concerned that this short-sighted attempt to save money will have a huge

impact on the ability of parents in Wales to make an informed choice to send their children to a Church school. In the longer term, decisions like this could seriously disadvantage the Church school sector.

“Church in Wales schools are firmly established within the education system in Wales. Unfortunately, we can't provide a Church school in every community, so children may have to travel a little further if their families make that choice. The Learner Travel Measure (2008) encourages local authorities to make transport available to the nearest suitable school to a pupil's home, with Welsh

medium and denominational schools available as realistic choices.

"The Measure asks that denominational provision should be a realistic choice; but these proposals will make it an unrealistic dream for many parents seeking the best for their children.

"The proposals that are starting to come forward from some local authorities are trying to use that piece of legislation in a way that it was never intended - yes, it is at their discretion to transport children to Church schools, but there is a clear expectation that they should go the extra mile for all children."

Church schools: Statement by the Abp of Canterbury

Lambeth Palace has issued a statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury following an interview published in The Times on Friday.

In the course of a wide ranging interview for The Times today on the subject of tackling poverty, the Archbishop of Canterbury was asked about the role of schools. He praised the work of church schools especially in areas of highest deprivation, and stressed the importance of home, family and excellent school leadership.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has issued the following statement regarding selection criteria for church schools:

'I fully support the current policy for schools to set their own admissions criteria, including the criterion of faith. Nothing in my wider comments to The Times on this subject should be seen as "revealing" any changes nor dissenting from current policy.'



*The Most Revd Justin Welby,
Archbishop of Canterbury*

CNI note: The Times article can be found at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3921739.ece> but it requires payment to read the full report]

Christian Aid calls for greater financial transparency from FTSE companies

The UK should require the mining, oil and gas companies listed on the London Stock Exchange to reveal more about their finances across the world, UK-based churches' global development agency Christian Aid has told MPs who are investigating the country's extractives industries.

In written evidence to the House of Commons Business, Information and Skills Committee, the charity reminds MPs that David Cameron himself has argued that rich countries should use their power to help poor countries reap the benefits of their natural resources.

Joseph Stead, Christian Aid's Senior Economic Justice Adviser, said: "Financial transparency is a powerful weapon against serious crime - and the UK can and should require it of all the companies which seek the advantages of a listing on the London Stock Exchange.

"Several hundred mining, oil and gas companies are listed, according to a 2012 estimate by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. That puts the UK in a powerful position to influence major firms' behaviour across the world, in ways that help millions of people living in poverty."

He added: "When companies publicly reveal information such as who's really in charge and what their profits and tax payments are in each country where they work, it becomes far easier to spot who is paying bribes or failing to pay their fair share of tax. That is vital, if poor countries are to get a fair share of the profits made by companies exploiting their natural resources.

"The UK Government has already taken a brave and hugely significant step forward, by deciding to create a public register of who owns millions of companies in the UK.

"This will help detect and deter criminals using UK companies to commit crimes including tax evasion, corruption and money laundering. It will also encourage other countries to create similar public registers, making it increasingly difficult for criminals involved with mining, oil and gas companies around the world to escape detection, when they evade tax and pay or take bribes."

Christian Aid's evidence to MPs also argues that the UK should require extractives (and other) companies listed on the London Stock Exchange to report their finances publicly on a country-by-country basis. This would mean reporting separate tax, profit and other data for each country in which they work.

The evidence states: "Country by country reporting will enable citizens to be able to see the full picture of what extractive industries are contributing – or not – to their societies and be able to demand accountability either from governments for poor contract negotiation, or companies for sharp practice."

Christian Aid estimates that at present, tax dodging by multinational companies deprives poor countries of \$160 billion a year – much more than they receive in aid.

Diocese's campaign to tackle poverty through Credit Unions

The Anglican Diocese of Durham has launched a major initiative to support credit unions in its area.

The Bishop of Jarrow, the Right Revd Mark Bryant, has launched a project to recruit 1,000 people to credit unions across the diocese and engage congregations much more in supporting the organisations.

Bishop Mark was speaking at the Durham Diocesan Synod at Durham Johnston School on Saturday (9 November), where he signed up to become a member of the Prince Bishops Community Bank.

The new Bishop of Durham Elect, the Right Revd Paul Butler, currently Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, has pledged to put alleviating poverty at the heart of his ministry when he takes up the post next year. He has done much in support of credit unions in his current role and signed up to Durham County Credit Union on the day he was announced as the next Bishop of Durham.

Bishop Mark said: "We know that in many parts of our Diocese, life is really tough and unfair. We know, for example, that if you live in the centre of Stockton, you will die eighteen years before a woman living in the middle of Durham.

"We know we have parishes where more than 50% of the children are living in poverty and where nearly half the pensioners are living in poverty.



"Ways need to be found to work with people so that they can get back to the good bits of where they were before they hit the crisis which sent them to the food bank. People may need to be supported with debt advice or how to navigate the process of finding a job again

"In the past few months, Archbishop Justin has given a significant lead in this direction in all that he has

"Somebody was telling me the other day about how they regularly see going past their window families moving because they can no longer afford the rent on their houses and how it seems to take families almost a week to move because they have to move everything with a pushchair and dustbin bags. The person that was telling me about this said that it was just like pictures of refugees that we see on our television screens and this was happening in Hartlepool.

"There is a real imperative for us through our local churches to see how we can best serve the most vulnerable members of our community.

"The past year has been the rise of food banks right across our Diocese. It has been wonderful to see so many people supporting these projects and to see the extraordinary generosity of people when food bank members are collecting outside of supermarkets.

"We need to be clear, however, that, wonderful as these food banks are, it is extraordinary and simply scandalous that they are needed at all as especially as we are told that 33 per cent of us coming to food banks are coming simply because the benefit payment system has let them down. We need to be clear that food banks are not the final answer.

had to say about credit unions. There are a number of credit unions in our own Diocese and it is good that there are already parishes engaging with their local credit unions, for example in the North Wearside team in Houghton le Spring and in Easington Colliery where the credit union comes weekly to the local lunch club.

"They are doing sterling work but a lack of resources means that they simply cannot do as much as they would like to do and it means that they are often not able to be in places where they are needed most.

"That is why in 2014 we are committing ourselves across the Diocese to recruit 1,000 more members for their local credit unions and to encourage members of congregations to offer volunteer support for these credit unions.

"In some of our parishes there will be people with the skills and expertise which are exactly those needed by credit unions as they seek to expand their influence and we will be rolling out a scheme early in 2014 to enable parishes to build links with their credit unions.

"I hope we should get to a situation whereby the question for church goes in the diocese will not be why should I join my credit union but rather why am I not joining it?"

Lesley Richardson, Manager of the Prince Bishops Community Bank, said: "It is exciting that the Church is joining up with the bank, it will give extra credibility to credit unions and community banks.

"This is about helping people to understand how to manage their money. It will help keep them away from the doorstep lenders and get them away from the payday lenders. Signing up 1,000 people to credit unions would be phenomenal."

Archbishop speaks of 'unacceptable barriers' faced by disabled people

The Archbishop of Canterbury has become president of Livability, the national disability charity which works with churches to work with thousands of disabled people in the UK and overseas.

Archbishop Justin Welby's presidency will "help continue the close and historic relationship between the Church of England and Livability", says the national C of E press office.

Livability was formed after two older Christian charities, John Grooms and the Shaftesbury Society, merged in 2007.

In his inaugural letter to the charity, the Archbishop said that "disabled people have much to offer to our local communities, workplaces and to society in general".

But, he added, they face "real financial hardship and unacceptable barriers when trying to access education, training, housing, transport and the care they require."

The Archbishop and Livability share the belief that individuals, not just the government, are responsible for challenging the status quo, and that we should all strive to become more inclusive.

The Archbishop expressed a desire for churches to lead the way in this area and ensure that "disabled people's voices are heard and their wishes and opinions valued".

Livability's work with churches includes its recent initiative, Churches Inc., which aims to alleviate social exclusion and enable disabled people to fully participate in a meaningful way in all aspects of church and community life.

Dave Webber, chief executive of Livability, said: "We are delighted to welcome the Archbishop of Canterbury as Livability's new President. Disabled people are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our society. Having the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury will help us raise awareness of disability issues and help us support disabled people, and their families and carers, all over the UK and overseas."

* More information about Livability's work with churches can be found at: <http://www.livability.org.uk/church>

Moderator: War on slavery 'best way to honour Livingstone's legacy'

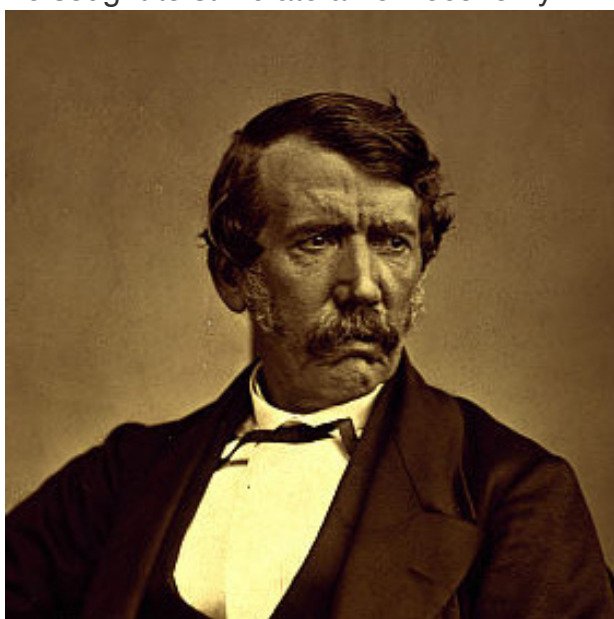
The fight against slavery and human trafficking is the greatest way to honour the legacy of David Livingstone, said the Church of Scotland moderator.

Speaking at a service in Glasgow Cathedral marking the 200th anniversary of his birth, the Right Reverend Lorna

Hood said the Victorian-era missionary and explorer was a fierce campaigner against slavery which he saw as Africa's "open sore".

She admitted that to modern eyes Livingstone might appear to be a flawed character, but that this was balanced by his strong virtues which he brought to the fight for abolition.

Ms Hood said: "Angry at the slave trade which he saw as the open sore of Africa, he sought to stimulate a new economy



David Livingstone

in central and southern Africa which would render the slave trade redundant.

"Indeed, his campaign against the slave trade became an unstoppable force. He was truly a man who had the courage of his convictions."

The service was followed by a debate organised by the Edinburgh-based charity EMMS International, which works with communities in the poorest parts of the world to improve lives.

James Wells, the charity's chief executive, said: "Livingstone was a member of EMMS

and I am sure that if he were alive today, he would be actively involved in many of the life-saving and life transforming projects that we support across the world."

An estimated 30,000,000 people across the world are in slavery, according to charity the Walk Free Foundation. The UK is home to roughly 4500 slaves, many of whom work in drug farms or the sex trade.

Bow church wins architectural award

St Paul's Church, in Bow Common, was announced as the winner at a competition organised by the National Churches Trust.

The building, which is known locally as The Gate of Heaven, was built in 1960 and is a Grade-II listed building.

Fr Duncan Ross said the building celebrates the "enormous potential" of architectural space.

Fr Ross, who was incumbent at St Paul's from 1995 until last month, said: "The first surprise is always on first sight of the extraordinary interior of the church.

"What you find within is so much more than what is promised from the outside.

"The most common response on first encountering the interior is one word: 'wow'."

The competition was part of the Trust's 60th anniversary celebrations and was held in association with the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association and the 20th Century Society.

More than 200 churches were nominated for the awards by the public, parishes and architects.

The awards were open to church buildings or extensions to existing buildings from Christian denominations in the UK which opened after January 1953.

Sherry Bates, president of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association, said: "The judges sought uplifting architecture that celebrated Christianity and church buildings that best responded to changes in religious liturgy and practice."

Church of England discusses overhaul of 'rude and unchristian' Synod

The Church of England's parliament will debate overhaul of how it operates amid claims it has become dominated by parties and factions and "rude" and unchristian arguments

Daily Telegraph - The Church of England is considering overhauling its governing

body, the General Synod, because of fears it has created an image of a church constantly at war with itself.

Members of the Synod, which meets this week, say that it has become too much like Parliament, dominated by unofficial "parties" while debates are conducted in a "rude" and even unchristian way.

It follows claims in the wake of the collapse of women bishops legislation last year that the body had been hijacked by single issue factions able to exert influence out of proportion to their numbers in the pews.

Amid the anger over the outcome of that vote last November, there were calls for Parliament to step in or even for the Synod to be dissolved.

The issue of women bishops will be top of the agenda when the Synod is meeting for three days in London next week.

But members are also being asked to debate a motion calling for a review of how the Synod itself operates including the parliamentary way debates are conducted and whether the complex



system of electing members is now “fit for purpose”.

An official Synod briefing paper warns that members are now seen by many outside the Church as “rude and poor examples of Christians”.

The motion also questions whether the Synod should meet just once a year, instead of two or three times as at present, to encourage younger people with busy careers and families to stand for election.

It points out that almost two thirds of the House of Laity are over 60 – three times the proportion of the overall population.

A string of bishops have indicated that they will support the review which will be discussed on Tuesday. On Wednesday the Synod will give its first full consideration to new legislation to allow women to become bishops as part of a fast-track process.

Moves to overhaul the Synod began three years ago when the Rt Rev Nicholas Holtam, the Bishop of Salisbury – who was then a parish priest in London – wrote a newspaper article voicing his frustration at the formal and partisan way he saw it operating.

“He saw a place where complex and sensitive matters were debated in a parliamentary way in which arguments were won, but not settled, by majority,” a briefing note compiled by the Diocese of London says.

“He saw a place where party groups functioned in opposition to one another, questioning each other’s legitimacy to be truly Christian.

“He saw a place that was disproportionately old, affluent, white and male that did not reflect the population at large.”

It goes on to lament the way members of the Synod are now effectively elected because of their stance as liberals or

conservatives or as coming from the Anglo-Catholic or evangelical wings of the Church or because of their stance on women in ministry.

“When we are elected General Synod we literally have to tick boxes to define which church background we come from,” it complains.

“Is there anything we can change so that we stand to speak we all simply consider ourselves Christians?”

It goes on: “From the outside, on occasion, we can seem to be rude and poor examples of Christians.

“We have red lights, points of order, standing orders, divisions by houses and many other elements designed to help us avoid falling into anarchy.

“We need some process and order. What should that be?”