

## Church replaces sold £1m Old Master with photo

**A church in Wiltshire has sold a 500-year-old painting for about £1m, the latest in a series of sales by cash-strapped parishes to raise urgently needed funds to maintain their ancient buildings.**

Christ Blessing, by the Flemish artist Quinten Metsys, has been sold by Holy Trinity Church in Bradford on Avon. It has been replaced by a photographic replica.



Metsys is best known for An Old Woman, nicknamed The Ugly Duchess, which is in the National Gallery.

According to The Art Newspaper, the Church Buildings Council, a body of the Church of England, one of whose roles is to monitor sales of ecclesiastical objects, though consulted at first, failed to realise the sale was taking place in August.

Another sale, on which the council was not consulted, was in July, when St Andrew's Church in Donhead St Andrew, Wiltshire, sold a Flemish panel for £20,000.

Also in July, St Stephen Walbrook, a City church designed by Sir Christopher Wren, sold an altarpiece to a US buyer for more than £1.8m. The council appealed and the work could be delayed from going

[Churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:Churchnewsireland@gmail.com)



overseas if the government issues an export stop to give UK buyers the chance to raise money.

## Church bodies criticise military recruitment of under-18s

**The Church of Scotland and the Bishops of the Church in Wales are among the signatories of an open letter to the Ministry of Defence calling for an end to the recruitment of under-18s.**

The signatories, which also include the Unitarian Church, Quakers, Catholic, Baptist, and Methodist groups, call on the MoD to raise the recruitment age as a "fitting memorial" to the thousands of young soldiers killed in World War One.

The letter has been made public on the same day that Child Soldiers International released new analysis of MoD figures which demonstrates plummeting enlistment levels among 16-year-olds and rising drop-out rates from training. The research finds that:

- Last year just 880 16-year-olds enlisted in the Army, 40 per cent fewer than the year before (1,470) and just a quarter of the number enlisted a decade earlier (3,600).

- The dramatic fall in intake has been matched by rising drop-out rates. Of all the 16-year-olds recruited by the Army last year, figures just released show that nearly half (410) left during training.

- The number of 17-year-olds has also fallen steadily, with about a third as many joining the forces last year (1,550) as were enlisted a decade earlier (5,035)

- Non-officer armed forces recruits enlisting in Scotland and Wales in the year 2011/2012 were, on average, six months younger than those enlisting in England. Secondary schools and colleges in Scotland and Wales also received disproportionately high numbers of visits from armed forces compared to their equivalents in England.

Despite publicly denying any plans to review the recruitment age policy, the MoD's recent response to the Defence Committee's inquiry on the Education of Service Personnel revealed that it has instructed the Army to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of its recruitment of minors. This study could lead to the end of a practice which leaves the UK with the joint lowest legal recruitment age in the world.

Former Minister for the Armed Forces Nick Harvey welcomed the review, but expressed reservations about its scope. "I am pleased that the MoD has agreed to conduct a review of this policy but it must be independent, transparent and thorough. The time is right to look at under-18 recruitment again. It should not be limited to just the financial costs of training and recruitment, but must seriously examine the personal costs borne by recruits who enlist at this age – including in relation to their long term welfare and employability" he said.

Richard Clarke, Director of Child Soldiers International, said "It's time for the MoD to recognise what more and more young people and their parents are realising –

that enlisting at 16 is not in their best interests. Army training does not give young people what they need to succeed in today's economy, especially in terms of qualifications. During the First World War the minimum age for recruitment and conscription was 18, with deployment at 19. To be recruiting 16-year-olds a century later makes no sense at all."

The longer duration of training for minors and their greater likelihood of dropping out makes recruiting them extremely costly to the taxpayer. In 2010-11 the annual cost was approximately £90 million more than if only adults were recruited; the latest drop-out figures will have driven this excess cost upwards.

## Quaker group wins Stonewall award

The Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship (QLGF) has been named Community Group of the Year by Stonewall supporters for their long-standing commitment to equality.

At the Stonewall Awards ceremony yesterday (7 November) the group was presented with a cheque for £5,000 – provided by The Inclusive Foundation and supported by Square Peg Media – to continue their work to promote equality and religious freedom.

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain, said: "I'm delighted to hear this news. QLGF fully deserves to win this in the year same-sex marriage became legal in England and Wales. They are a wonderfully close-knit community of men and women who have supported each other faithfully on the long journey towards greater equality for homosexual people in our society." The Friends Homosexual Fellowship, the precursor of QLGF, first met in 1973

## Scots congregation gets own church after 30 years

**A Wester Ross congregation is rejoicing after successfully acquiring its own premises in the village of Plockton after effectively being homeless for 30 years.**



A question mark hung over the future use of the Church of Scotland building in the middle of the picturesque village after the Kirk decided to put it up for sale at offers over £90,000 earlier this year.

If sold to a private developer, Plockton would have been without a church building – but thankfully the Free Church congregation was successful with a bid of £90,100.

The Free Church had been holding services in the church for 30 years, and hope to gain entry to the property in the New Year.

Minister Rev Roddie Rankin said: “We are absolutely delighted with the news and are pleased we have been able to keep the church as a place of worship for everyone in Plockton and the surrounding areas.

“For the last three years we have been the only people using the building, and it’s great that we can finally customise and adapt it for our own use.

“We are certainly under no illusions at the amount of work required ahead, but look to the future with excitement.”

To help fund the deal, the Free Church congregation are seeking planning permission to erect two flats on what was formerly part of the old manse garden in Plockton, and hope to sell the land in the near future.

The A-listed Church of Scotland building dates from 1827 and was designed by Thomas Telford. The congregation also has services in Kyle each week, as well as a monthly service at Achmore.

## Gay marriage in Scotland backed in principle by MSPs

**Legislation to introduce same-sex marriage in Scotland has been approved in principle by parliament, after MSPs voted on it for the first time.**

The Scottish government's [Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill](#) passed the first of three parliamentary hurdles by 98 votes to 15 with five abstentions.

Ministers said the move was the right thing to do, but the Church of Scotland and Catholic Church are opposed.

Religious and belief bodies would "opt in" to perform same-sex marriages.

Same-sex couples in Scotland currently have the option to enter into civil partnerships, and there has been an

indication that the earliest gay marriage ceremonies could take place by the start of 2015, if the legislation is passed.

The Church of Scotland, however, has released a statement affirming its conviction that marriage is a union between one man and one woman.

Reverend Dr Alan Hamilton, Convener of the Church of Scotland's Legal Questions Committee, said: "Until any future General Assembly of the Church of Scotland decides otherwise, that remains our position.

"But our commitment to care for all people, gay and straight is no less. We stand against homophobia."

Reverend Hamilton went on to add that support for the bill is not unanimous in Scotland, despite an overwhelming number of MSPs voting in favour - 98 votes to 15, with five abstentions.

He argued that public opinion was not reflected accurately in Parliament, and that there is a "spread" of different views among the general public and those within the Church.

Reverend David Robertson, minister of St Peter's Free Church in Dundee and director of the Solas Centre for Public Christianity, reminded the Scottish Government that their own consultation on gay marriage showed that 64 per cent of the 77,500 Scots who responded said they were opposed to a change in the law.

"The Scottish Parliament, without due consultation of the Scottish people and with the electorate not actually having the opportunity to vote, have made this fundamental change in Scottish society," he said.

"This is a very sad day for Scotland and for Scottish democracy."

He warned that the passing of this initial stage of the bill would only be the beginning of social change in Scotland, irrespective of public opinion. "There will soon be demands for further change," he said.

The Church of Scotland also raised fears that clergy will be forced to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies as a result of the threat of court action claiming discrimination.

The Reverend Hamilton has said the Church will seek "robust and detailed legal assurances and protection for those who do not wish to conduct same sex marriages as a matter of conscience".

He has also assured that as the bill progresses, the Church of Scotland would continue to be a "constructive voice" in the national debate.

## Rowan Williams calls for law to ban benefit cuts

**State benefits should be fixed by law so no Government can cut them, former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Williams said this week.**

He said welfare handouts should be 'ring-fenced' so claimants would not have to worry about losing them or seeing them reduced.

And he called for benefits to be renamed to try to stop people criticising them.



Lord Williams, who stepped down from Lambeth Palace earlier this year, said that 'welfare has become a loaded word' and proposed that state benefits should in future be known as 'social



share'.

The idea of permanently guaranteed benefits, with a new name to make them more popular, came in an article in which Lord Williams condemned levels of poverty in Britain.

He attacked 'the scandalous and lethal inequalities of our society'.

Lord Williams also described Britain as 'a society with corrupt governance and low accountability'.

Lord Williams intervened in the continuing political row over benefits in a book of essays, published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, dedicated to the idea that poverty can be eradicated.

[Churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:Churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

The former archbishop said fixing state benefits was part of the answer, adding that the amount spent on welfare was 'a neuralgic point in a climate of austerity, but an essential one'.

## Archbishop of York reveals his poverty fear

**The Archbishop of York has warned of the growth of a 'new poor' who have jobs and work hard but still live in poverty.**

Dr John Sentamu, second in the hierarchy of the Church of England, told its General Synod that many people who previously enjoyed comfortable lifestyles were seeing their standard of living fall significantly.

Such people - who he called 'the new poor' - feel they are going 'down the social scale' through no fault of their own, he said. 'Unlike the chief executives, many hard-pressed people find that they are on a 'down escalator',' he said. 'That phrase captures more than just a shortage of money - it adds a sense of descending the social scale.'

Dr Sentamu added that many such people no longer believed that they could provide



a better life for their children than they had enjoyed themselves.

'Formerly, each new generation enjoyed a higher standard of living than the previous one,' he said.

'That was the progress that everybody was taught to expect. It was a source of hope.

'But now the gains are being reversed.

Many people believe their children will be worse off financially than they are.'

He added that while 'once upon a time, you could not really be living in poverty if you had regular wages', this was 'no longer so'.

Now, he said, 'you can be in work and still live in poverty', adding: 'Politicians often refer to hard-working families. They should speak instead of hard-pressed families.' -

## Church is one generation from extinction, warns ex-archbishop

**The Church of England is just “one generation away from extinction”, a former Archbishop of Canterbury has warned.**

Lord Carey of Clifton, who held the office from 1991 to 2002, said the existence of the country's centuries-old established Christian order was at severe risk unless more was done to attract young worshippers.



Lord Carey said the modern Church was too old fashioned and “not the most exciting place to meet new people”. He said the Church of England should be ashamed for not investing more in young people, and warned that every one of its 43 dioceses could disappear within 25 years if urgent action was not taken.

He was speaking at Holy Trinity Church in Shrewsbury, at the Shropshire Churches' Conference 2013. Addressing more than 300 churchgoers, he said: “I am convinced that churches can grow, must grow and should grow. But to sit in a cold church, looking at the back of people's heads, is perhaps not considered the most exciting place to meet new people and hear prophetic words.

“So we have a problem getting people to church because it is not something that is natural to people in their lives nowadays. There is a prevalent view that people don't want to hear what we have to say any more. How can we say that?

“One of the most worrying, most urgent groups we need to invest in is young people. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. We are one generation away

from extinction — if we do not invest in young people there is going to be no one in the future.”

The former archbishop spoke as one of his successors announced that a Roman Catholic religious order was to be placed at the heart of the Church of England. The siting of the new community at Lambeth Palace, the London residence of the Most Rev Justin Welby, is an unprecedented step towards healing the rift between the Churches after centuries of division following the Reformation.

## The Church of England: a church that's sick of itself

**Carey has been saying that the Church of England is "only one generation away from extinction" for years: the earliest reference I can find comes from 1999, when he was still archbishop of Canterbury, and made a speech with that exact phrase in it but even then it was old, Andrew Brown writes in The Guardian.**

He also said then that the country was "growing allergic to religion and even serious thought". This was his way of reflecting on the catastrophic failure of the "Decade of Evangelism" he proclaimed in the nineties, which had seen average Sunday attendance fall by nearly a quarter, while the average age of churchgoers for the first time rose away from that of the country as a whole.

The phrase is a piece of evangelical jargon that is meant to make youth workers feel important by stating the obvious as dramatically as possible. But this weekend, speaking at a Christian conference in Shrewsbury, something went wrong. Like a hypochondriac told by the doctor that he really has got cancer, the

former archbishop finds that the worries that have comforted him for years are suddenly, horribly frightening.

The evidence for the danger that the church is in comes most clearly from surveys carried out for the Westminster Faith Debates by Professor Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University. The crucial figure is the change in attitude from older to younger people. Asked whether they thought the Church of England was a positive or negative force in society, a majority of those over the age of 40 had no opinion, though of those who did, most thought it was positive. That is the age group that Carey (78) grew up with. Anyone now 50 or 60 will have been in the target demographic for his youth work when he formed his ideas as a vicar in Durham.

But among younger people the picture is different. Indifference diminishes, and is partly replaced by a belief that the church is actively malevolent. Whereas only 12% of the over-40s regard the church as a negative force in society, this proportion nearly doubles – to 21% – among the under-24s.

This is almost entirely a result of the policies actively pursued by Lord Carey as archbishop of Canterbury and then passively continued by his successor, Rowan Williams.

Read the full article on [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk)

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/19/church-of-england-sick-of-itself>

## General Secretary wanted for Scots church unity body

See next page



## General Secretary wanted for Scots church unity body

Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS – the National Ecumenical body in Scotland) is seeking to appoint a new General Secretary to assist the implementation of its agreed ecumenical strategy. The post supports the Trustees of ACTS through appropriate and collaborative leadership of paid staff

This exciting post needs someone of vision who is able to assist ACTS to further its mission and activity in Scotland, in partnership with the ecumenical bodies in Britain, Ireland and further afield.

As well as your knowledge and experience of the ecumenical church scene, you will have good communication, public relations, management, organisational and administrative skills.

You will have a knowledge of theology sufficient to give credibility when meeting church leaders.

It is a genuine occupational requirement that the General Secretary is a lay or ordained member of one of the Churches of ACTS or CTBI.

**Closing date:** 6th December 2013.

**Interviews:** 23 January 2014 in Alloa. For further information, and to download an application pack, please visit the [ACTS website](http://www.acts-scotland.org/). <http://www.acts-scotland.org/>

## Press Coverage

### BBC

Mark D'Arcy says that Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, in his capacity as one of the key figures on the House of Lords' Parliamentary Commission on Banking, could

have a very influential role in forcing through changes to toughen up a bill on banking. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25037082>

### Guardian

50 years after CS Lewis's death, the Guardian discusses whether he should be seen as a gifted children's author or reactionary and dishonest Christian propaganda. <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2013/nov/21/cs-lewis-childrens-author-christian-apologist-narnia>

### Mail

Report that former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams says handouts should be ringfenced so claimants don't have to worry about them being reduced. The remarks were made in a book of essays published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation dedicated to the idea poverty can be eradicated <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2511518/Rowan-Williams-calls-law-ban-benefit-cuts.html>

### BBC/Mail/Mirror/Times/ Evening Standard

Continued coverage of the fallout over the Revd. Paul Flowers, the Methodist minister who was forced out as chairman of Co-operative bank during its near collapse and has since been filmed apparently buying hard drugs. The BBC notes that he resigned in the summer as



deputy chairman of the wider Co-op Group amid concerns about his use of expenses, while the Times focuses on the embarrassment of the Labour Party due to its uncomfortable proximity to the Co-op.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25046413>

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2511538/Co-op-bank-trawling-expenses-claims-Paul-Flowers-expos.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2511538/Co-op-bank-trawling-expenses-claims-Paul-Flowers-expos.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns\\_mchannel=rss&ns\\_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2511538/Co-op-bank-trawling-expenses-claims-Paul-Flowers-expos.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/paul-flowers-rehab-shamed-ex-co-operative-2836420>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article3928552.ece>

<http://www.standard.co.uk/panewsfeeds/flowers-quit-amid-expenses-probe-8953433.html>

### **Times**

The Charity Commission allowed Flowers to be a trustee to three charities, despite the fact it had been alerted to worries he had wrongly claimed £65,000 from a drugs charity.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article3928507.ece>

### **Evening Standard**

Julia Ogilvy, the daughter in law of Princess Alexandra, has become a prominent supporter of women bishops and has interviewed 12 female theologians for a book coming out next year.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/londoners-diary/women-bishops-debate-reaches-the-royal-family-8954567.html>