



**Image of the day - choristers at Norwich Cathedral gave Dippy the dinosaur a brilliant welcome**

## Reports

### Presbyterian Church disappointment at UK overseas aid cut

Following this week's (13 July) House of Commons defeat of an amendment that would have prevented the UK government from cutting its overseas aid budget, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Right Reverend Dr David Bruce and PCI's convenor of its Council for Global Mission, Reverend Dr Liz Hughes, have expressed their 'deep concern' and 'outright dismay' at the cut, saying that the effect on 'people who are struggling, far outweighs even the damage done to this government's standing and reputation.'

In a joint statement, Dr Bruce and Dr Hughes said, "The value and support that international aid can bring and the difference that it can make is unquestionable. We very much regret and share the deep disappointment of many in our Church, and our aid development partners, that the UK government has broken its promise on overseas aid. In going ahead with its planned overseas aid cut from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of gross national income (GNI), it is a far cry from 2013 when the UK became the first G7 nation to achieve the United Nations' target of spending 0.7 per cent of its GNI.

"While some may say it is only a cut of point zero two of a per cent, or 'just £4 billion' we want to express our outright dismay at what seems to be the UK's diminishing commitment to supporting the poorest people on the planet.



## The Moderator

It is a reduction that will affect millions of lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable and marginalised people, especially during the biggest global humanitarian disaster in a century, which cannot be right.”

Dr Bruce and Dr Hughes concluded by saying, “Alongside keeping your promises, this is first and foremost about caring for our global neighbours, which is a gospel imperative. As we have said before, it is a basic humanitarian value as well, shared by people of all faiths and none, and this should include secular governments. As the Financial Times reported this week, the ‘UK risks becoming an outlier as the only G7 country to reduce its aid commitments...’ The effect of this cut in overseas aid on

people who are struggling, far outweighs even the damage done to this government's standing and reputation.”

## **Bishop of Winchester resigns amid claims of financial mismanagement**

The Bishop of Winchester has resigned after facing an unprecedented no-confidence motion, amid “upset” over alleged financial mismanagement and the loss of staff.

Dr Tim Dakin, 63, apologised to “those I have hurt or let down” as he announced he would retire in February, after almost a decade in the role, which is among the most senior in the Church of England. The Bishop of Southampton, Debbie Sellin, has stepped in to cover his duties until then.

Worshippers had raised disquiet over the loss of about 20 clergy and other staff posts, alleged poor governance, monetary woes and changes to pastoral structures, prompting one critic to call it the “North Korean diocese”.

Between 20 and 30 senior church figures within the diocese reportedly planned to table a vote of no confidence at his next diocesan synod. Signatories to a draft motion cited “allegations of poor behaviour and mistreatment”.

Bishop Dakin said he realised that the “painfully difficult” steps taken to stabilise the church finances during the pandemic “continue to cause upset”.



## Archbishop laments C of E clergy shortfall in face of lay-offs

The Church of England's future is threatened by a lack of clergy, according to the Archbishop of York, despite leaked plans revealing a move to cut the number of rural vicars.

Giving his opening presidential address to the General Synod last week, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell said that a shortage of clergy would hinder the advancement of the Church.

**'There is an arrogant elite at the top of the Church which is deaf to the loyal volunteers'**

His comments come amid fears that the parish church is in danger of "collapse" in countryside areas. Last year, rural parishes were struggling to pay their vicars, with clergy and wardens urging the Archbishop of Canterbury to "act now to save the village church".

In January, an internal Church document was leaked suggesting that the pandemic had provided an opportunity for "radical change" that could result in the loss of the parish church model.

The document said that most dioceses intend to "prune [the] number of clergy and diocesan staff" amid fears that the number of paid priests could be cut by up to 20 per cent and replaced with volunteer clergy.

The Archbishop of York, who is leading Vision and Strategy – the Church’s plans for staying sustainable – is facing criticism from parishioners after calling for increased clergy numbers despite what was said in the leaked document.

Speaking before General Synod, he said thanked clergy and lay leaders for their perseverance in difficult times, adding that he was “deeply, deeply sorry if anything that has been said from the centre ever caused anyone to doubt this”.

Parishioners across the country have insisted that the archbishop is “dooming the parishes to failure” after angry parishioners pointed to plans outlined in the leaked document. “What people want are properly trained, properly resourced clergy,” one said. “The turkeys won’t be voting for Christmas.”

The parishioner, who did not want to be named, added: “Churches can run themselves like they used to if you don’t despoil them of their assets and strangle the life out of them.

“Some will go wrong – but you need to trust and enable people. There is no trust in the diocese. No one loves the diocese. They love their local priest (sometimes) and their local church.” Another added: “There is an arrogant elite at the top of the Church which is deaf to the loyal volunteers ... It sometimes feels like banging your head against a brick wall.”

In response, the archbishop said: “I stand by my statement that we need more clergy and we are working to that end.

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“What is needed is faithful witness to the gospel, generous giving and then we will be able to support the Church in every parish, and also start new churches.”

## **German Churches offer support as floods death toll rises**

Representatives of Germany’s two main Churches have expressed their horror at the severe flooding in the south-western part of the country, in which rivers and streams burst their banks after long periods of heavy rain. So far, there are at least 100 dead in Germany, and more than a thousand are still unaccounted for.

The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, is on a visit to Washington. Speaking at the White House on Thursday, she said that the day was “characterised by fear, by despair, by suffering, and hundreds of thousands of people all of a sudden were faced with catastrophe. . .

“My empathy and my heart goes out to all of those who in this catastrophe lost their loved ones, or who are still worrying about the fate of people still missing.”

She called for a determined battle against climate change, it was reported. And she assured the German people that their government would not “leave you alone in this difficult, terrible hour”.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Trier, the Rt Revd Stephan Ackermann, whose large diocese includes some of the

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worst hit areas in Rhineland-Palatinate, where streets, houses, and entire towns have been completely under water, wrote on Facebook on Thursday: “It is with horror that I hear the news and see the pictures from the parts of our diocese affected by the storm and in the neighbouring areas.

“We are all concerned for the people who live and work in the affected places. My thoughts are with the deceased and missing, with their relatives, friends, and family. So many have been affected by damage and loss. And still the situation is confusing and dramatic.”

Church aid organisations, emergency chaplains, and parishes are working side by side with local authorities and the fire brigade in rescue efforts.

On the Facebook site of the diocese of Trier, two RC parishes were offering their parish residences as emergency accommodation.

The president of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, Dr Thorsten Latzel, expressed his “deep sorrow at the suffering caused by last night’s storm. . . People have died, houses have collapsed, cellars have flooded, firefighters have died trying to help. Together with many others, I pray for those affected and the helpers.

“At the same time, I am grateful for the help that is now being provided in a very practical way in our communities and churches: from neighbourly help with draining the water, to bread rolls and warm coffee, to pastoral support, for example through the emergency chaplaincy.”



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The president of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Bishop of Limburg, Dr Georg Bätzing, said: "I am deeply dismayed by the extent of the severe storms. Water is life. Here, water is death. My thoughts are with the deceased, their relatives, all the injured and victims of the floods. Many people are still missing — I sincerely hope that they will be found unharmed, and that all those in need, who have lost their belongings or the roof over their heads, will rereceive comfort, hope and help."

The chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, wrote: "My thoughts are very much with all the people who have been affected by the dreadful rains and the resulting floods these days."

## People and places

### Team on a Mission

A member of the Methodist Church's "Team on a Mission" reports - "Last week we were in Galway helping out in the United Methodist Presbyterian Church! We took part in a youth group, a student group, did a prayer walk, and led a Sunday service. We also got to explore some of the area around it! We wouldn't have had the amazing 10 days if it wasn't for Helen Freeburn who took care of us! We definitely saw God working and we are so thankful for the opportunity to go to Galway and the warm welcome we got from everyone there!"

## Worship in the woods at Carnmoney



For the first time in 16 months, the children from the ‘Faith Factory’ at Carnmoney Parish Church were able to gather together, not in the church, but in the Glebe House gardens on a beautiful sunny day.

The rector, the Rev Andy Heber said: “Using some fabulous All-Age material written by Engage Worship, the event was called ‘Worship in the Woods,’ and with the help of worship, teaching, games and a treasure hunt and refreshments, the children thought all about trees and what they can teach us about God and our relationship with him.”

The treasure hunt was particularly popular as the children searched for answers about trees in the bibles which were pinned to some of the trees in the extensive grounds, and in the process they found various bags of treasure too.

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Andy added: “Many parents stayed to watch while the event took place, enjoying the sunshine. It was so good to gather together once again, enjoy each other’s company and also see how much the children had grown!”

An outing for the children to Carnfunnock Park is planned for later in the summer before the Faith Factory will hopefully recommence in September.

## **Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars**

### **Norwich Cathedral welcomes Dippy**

“Our wonderful choristers gave Dippy the dinosaur a brilliant welcome earlier this week when they sang Rutter’s All Things Bright and Beautiful around our Diplodocus friend!”

Watch here: [youtu.be/TGl1\\_dNIzXw](https://youtu.be/TGl1_dNIzXw)

### **Presbyterian Church to mark links with NI’s parliament with online exhibition**

The Irish Presbyterian Church is to acknowledge its significant role in housing the first parliament in Northern Ireland with a special event at Assembly College in south Belfast in September, Billy Kennedy writes in the News Letter

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The event is part of a series to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland acknowledging that Assembly College housed the parliament for 11 years after King George V opened the legislature on June 22, 1921.

Union Theological College, as Assembly College is known today, has created a special online exhibition to mark the centenary. It uses the college's own archive material to relate how uniquely a church college became a home to a parliament. Online visitors can read letters from Sir James Craig, Northern Ireland's first prime minister, requesting the possibility of using the building.

Sir James called for negotiations around an appropriate annual rent, which would facilitate relocation of the college and enable the training of the church's ministers to continue - the principal role of the college to this day. Handwritten minutes of meetings, photographs, reports from newspapers, including the Belfast News Letter, and other letters can also be viewed.

Joy Conkey, librarian of the College's Gamble library, and creator of the online exhibition, explained that it is a history few know about.

"Most people would associate Northern Ireland's parliament with the impressive building at Stormont, home of the current Northern Ireland Assembly. But very few people probably know that for the first decade of its life, while Stormont was being built, parliament met here," she said.

The Government of Ireland Act 1920 established a 'Parliament for Northern Ireland' and a 'Parliament for

Southern Ireland', based on the two-chamber Westminster model. The Gamble library at Assembly's College became the home of the Northern Ireland House of Commons, while the college chapel on the ground floor, was remodelled to accommodate the parliament's upper chamber, the Northern Ireland Senate.

Northern Ireland's first prime minister Sir James Craig made a tentative inquiry in a letter on May 2, 1921 "to ascertain whether the College could be made available for use as 'our new Parliament House'", Agreement was reached and the parliament's first sitting was in September that year.

The College negotiated an annual rent of £8,000, equivalent of nearly £402,000 today, higher than what the fledgling government had originally proposed.

## Media review

### **NI Troubles: 'Robust conversation' as parties meet Lewis over legacy**

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57858073>]

### **NI Troubles: Reaction to government plans to deal with the past**

BBC News: includes comment by two church leaders

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57853957>]

### **NI Protocol: Frost speech to put relations on a knife-edge**



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Tony Connelly, RTE

[<https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/0717/1235583-brexit-ni-protocol/>]

## **Pastor James McConnell dies aged 84 after long illness**

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57873316>]

## **It's time to rebel - the Church of England is abandoning its flock**

Daily Telegraph columnist

[ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/columnists/2021/07/13/time-rebel-church-england-abandoning-flock/> ]

## **It's the existing C of E parishes that need help**

Daily Telegraph comment

[ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2021/07/14/letters-transport-will-enforce-masks-already-minority/> ]

## **Church of England criticised over suicide of falsely accused priest**

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-57780729>]

## **Opinion**

## **Johnson and Lewis treat NI people like fools - Suzanne Breen**

**The Government's game plan is to bury the truth - Suzanne Breen writes in Sunday Life.**

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Immoral, iniquitous, obscene. There aren't enough adjectives in the dictionary to describe the denial of victims' rights that the British Government is championing.

It's not just that they don't give a hoot about those people who suffered so much in the Troubles. It's that they are attempting to dress up their outrageous amnesty as an act of reconciliation which strengthens peace.

How Brandon Lewis and Boris Johnson had the gall to stand in the House of Commons and come out with the guff they did last week is beyond me.

It is clearly not on Brexit alone that both men are prepared to treat the people of Northern Ireland like fools.

In order to prevent even the odd Army veteran standing in the dock, they casually discard the rights of thousands of bereaved mothers, fathers, daughters and sons to justice.

The so-called party of law and order has ensured that those who wreaked death and destruction can sleep easily in their beds, knowing that the knock will never come to their doors at 6 am.

The thought of that knock has kept so many victims going over the years. Even if they know the chances of it happening are slim, the fear it instils in the hearts of perpetrators provides some comfort.

If the statute of limitations was put to a referendum here, it would be overwhelmingly rejected.

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Boris Johnson and Brandon Lewis can be in no doubt about public opinion.

The Government's plans are in complete conflict with the Northern Ireland Office's (NIO) public consultation on legacy, which drew over 17,000 responses.

The NIO document, published in July 2019, says: “The clear majority of all respondents to the consultation argued that a statute of limitations or amnesty would not be appropriate for Troubles-related matters.

“Many were clear that victims, survivors and families are entitled to pursue criminal justice outcomes, and such a move could risk progress towards reconciliation.”

An accompanying NIO press release quoted a government spokesman pledging that it would “move forward sensitively and with as much consensus as possible”.

Fast-forward two years and the Tories are pushing ahead with an amnesty which every political party and victims' group in Northern Ireland opposes.

The Prime Minister said that veterans in their 70s and 80s “face the threat of vexatious prosecutions”, but the witch-hunt claim is total tripe.

Since 2011, four republicans — Gerry McGeough, Seamus Kearney, Declan Duffy and Joseph Magee — and two loyalists — Robert Clarke and Robert Rodgers — have been successfully prosecuted and jailed in legacy cases. Not one former member of the security forces has.

Over recent days, we have seen unprecedented numbers of individual victims coming forward to lambast the Government.

Eugene Reavey, who lost his beloved brothers Brian, John Martin and Anthony at Whitecross, said families had been retraumatised.

Kathleen Gillespie, whose husband Patsy was turned into a human bomb, fought back tears as she said that “ordinary common people” had been pushed to one side.

Julie Hambleton, whose sister Maxine was blown to bits in the Birmingham pub bombings said that, like other bereaved families, hers was “incandescent with rage”.

It is not just prosecutions which the Government is ending. It plans to stop legacy inquests, Police Ombudsman investigations and civil litigation by families.

This is the state shutting down all avenues for the airing of its squalid little secrets in public.

Its proposals are likely in contravention of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, but a legal challenge will take years.

There's nothing accidental about any of this. Buying time — to bury the truth and the bereaved — has long been the gameplan.

Courtesy Sunday Life 18.07.2022

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## Pointers for prayer

Lord God, raise up faithful pastors, priests, deacons and church leaders who love you more than all. Give to each of us the skill to be a shepherd in some small way, the will to be shepherded by other leaders, and to trust the Good Shepherd over all.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you sent your Son to be the Messiah, and to build your church. As members of His kingdom, fill us with joy for His resurrected presence, His loving rule, and His kingdom yet to come.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Holy Spirit, give us confidence when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Guard us from evil. Shepherd us with your rod



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and staff. Shower goodness and mercy upon us all the days of our lives.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Lord Jesus Christ, you are our peace, granting access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit, making us citizens with the saints in the household of God.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Lord Jesus, the apostles gathered around you and reported all that they had done and taught in your name. Help us see the good we do in your name and rejoice in being a helpmate of yours.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Lord Jesus Christ, you invite us not only to work with you, but to rest with you. Though the desires of this world tire us, touch us, that we may be healed. Hear our prayers for those in need of your healing \_\_\_\_\_.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

The love of God has won. The new life has begun.

Amen

## Speaking to the Soul

**Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God.**

**Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.**

Philippians 1:3-5 NLT

I love this Philippian letter because it is so full of bubbling joy. That's particularly remarkable because Paul is in prison as he writes these words! Paul had three spells in prison which we know about and we can't be sure which one this is, but many people think that he was in Rome at the time. His life was on the line and on a number of occasions he speaks as if his end might be very close. But nothing can stop his torrent of joyfulness.

Paul is particularly grateful for his Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi. He was there when the church in that city was founded and he only has to think about them to feel joyful. Christian fellowship is always an amazing and miraculous gift. The only reason we have a relationship with our Christian brothers and sisters is because of our relationship with Jesus, and it is constantly strengthened by his presence with us. There is much to be joyful about but it is all too easy for us to focus on the negative side of church life. Paul wasn't at all unaware of the problems in the Philippian fellowship, but they were insignificant alongside the blessing of their unity in Christ.

The partnership that Paul enjoyed with the Christians in Philippi had a very specific purpose. Their focus was to share the Good News about Jesus. Churches exist for many purposes including worship, fellowship and service but, if we are to remain faithful to Jesus' Great Commission, we are always under an obligation to share the Gospel as widely as possible. The people of Philippi, like our own society, would have had little or no knowledge of the Christian message and the only way they were going to hear it was if the church committed themselves to spreading it. What activity

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could possibly be more joyful than that – for the Philippian church or for us?

## QUESTION

What is the main focus of your partnership with other Christians?

## PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you for the blessing of my Christian brothers and sisters. Help me to work effectively in partnership with them and always with joy. Amen

