



**Image of the day**

**Climate change challenge to churches**

## Reports

### Australian Primate attacks GAFCON plan

**Archbishop Geoffrey Smith, the Anglican Church of Australia's primate, has strongly criticized GAFCON Australia's plan to form a non-geographic diocese for disaffected conservative congregations that "will be forced to leave the Anglican Church of Australia," calling the plan divisive and unnecessary.**

In a July 26 letter to the church's house of bishops, Smith wrote, "It feels like the life of our church is being undermined from within. Rather than 'making every effort' to stay together, a way is being prepared for a quick exit. We haven't even had the conversation yet, and the Gafcon boat out of the Anglican Church of Australia is being readied for departure."

GAFCON's plan, announced during an online gathering of its supporters on July 19, follows on from the group's pledge last December in Commitment 2020 to set up such a diocese, akin to the one currently established in New Zealand, "if a sufficient number of clergy and churches disaffiliate from the ACA."

At the online gathering, GAFCON Australia's president, Bishop Richard Condie of Tasmania, said "With great sadness and regret, we realize that many faithful Anglican clergy and lay people will no longer be able to remain as members of the ACA if changes allowed by the Appellate Tribunal majority opinion take place in their dioceses. We



## **Archbishop Geoffrey Smith, primate of the Anglican Church of Australia**

love these people and don't want them to be lost to the Anglican fold.”

Condie was referencing the November 2020 decision of the Australian Church's highest court to allow the use of a liturgy developed in the Diocese of Wangaratta for blessing same sex relationships. The tribunal ruled on narrow grounds that the Wangaratta liturgy was permissible, but stressed that the Australian church's traditional doctrine of marriage remain unchanged. Subsequently, Archbishop Smith emphasized that the decision does not permit the church's clergy “to officiate at weddings other than those between a man and a woman.”

Smith, a moderate conservative who became primate only after a long-deadlocked election process (Condie was among the losing candidates), urged restraint and mutual

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respect as the church looked toward taking decisive action on the matter at its General Synod, then scheduled for June 2021, but since postponed indefinitely because of ongoing pandemic restrictions.

In his letter to his fellow bishops, Smith pointed out that the church's doctrine of marriage remained unchanged, and that no bishop of the church had "departed from the doctrine of our church."

"Despite the forecasts, there has not been a flood of same-sex blessings following the Appellate Tribunal opinion. Not a flood, not a trickle. Not a drip," he added.

"In other words, faithful, orthodox Anglicans can continue with confidence as members of the Anglican Church of Australia. To suggest or insinuate otherwise is not to speak the truth."

Conservatives in the Australian church, though, point out that the Diocese of Gippsland, at its June 2021 synod revised its version of "Faithfulness in Service," the document that outlines standards for clergy conduct, to eliminate bars to ministry for clergy in sexual relationships outside marriage, a move similar to action taken by the Diocese of Newcastle in October 2019, which was also upheld by the Appellate Tribunal.

Closer to home, in October 2020, Smith refused to license the Rev. Sorel Coward, a transgender woman who is married to another woman, to officiate in his Diocese of Adelaide. Coincidentally, Archbishop Smith had preached at Coward's ordination to the priesthood 25 years earlier when

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she was living as a man named Simon and married to the same wife.

Responding to Coward's online criticism of his pastoral insensitivity, Smith sent her a letter, since released online. In it, he followed his own counsel of postponing judgment on the matter.

"The General Synod is due to meet next year and is very likely to have before it motions concerning same-sex marriage generally including the licensing of clergy," he wrote.

"I understand that it was not your intention to be in a same-sex marriage and that the situation has come about due to your transition. My understanding is that the Church is still in the process of decision making concerning same-sex marriage however that marriage situation has come about. In my view, granting you a [permission to officiate] at this time would be to get ahead of where the Church currently is on these matters, and for that reason would not be appropriate for me to do.

"If the Church's position on same-sex marriage changes or is further clarified and it becomes appropriate for me to reconsider your request, I will certainly do that."

In May, however, Coward was licensed by the Rt. Rev. John Stead of Willochra, in Smith's own province, and is now serving as a parish priest in Gladstone. The archbishop has not commented publicly on the matter.

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Condie outlined detailed plans for the GAFCON diocese in formation at the July 19 GAFCON Australia meeting, noting that it would be initially formed as a company led by a board of directors, and that former Anglican Church of Australia churches could join through an affiliation agreement. At a later point, the churches would become a diocese, and establish a synod to elect a bishop.

The diocese would then petition for recognition and endorsement by the GAFCON primates, the process used to form similar dioceses in the US, Canada, Brazil, and New Zealand.

## **Dr John Sentamu to succeed Dr Rowan Williams as Chair of Christian Aid**

**The Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu, the former Archbishop of York, will be the next Chair of the board of international development agency Christian Aid.**

Dr Sentamu – who has been outspoken on issues of poverty and justice in the UK and globally for many years - served as the Archbishop of York from 2005 until 2020. He was created by Her Majesty the Queen, Baron of Lindisfarne in the County of Northumberland and Masooli in the Republic of Uganda. He is a member of the UK Parliament, in the House of Lords.

Born in Kampala, Uganda, Dr Sentamu will be the first person of African descent to take up the position of Chair in Christian Aid's 75-year history.

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Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and current Chair, will stand down at Christian Aid's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November, having served two full terms of office.

Announcing the appointment today, Christian Aid's CEO Amanda Khozi Mukwashi said: "This is wonderful news for Christian Aid. Dr Sentamu brings with him a passion and energy for global justice, a deep love of the Church and a profound theological understanding that will be able to speak into the crises of climate change, Covid, conflict and debt that are affecting the world's poorest communities. We look forward to welcoming him to the Christian Aid family.

"I want to express my immense gratitude to Dr Williams for his friendship and leadership. He has been an incredible Chair, bringing his inimitable wisdom, grace and prophetic voice to support Christian Aid's work and the communities we serve. We will miss him."

Commenting on the appointment, Dr Williams said: "It has been a profound privilege to serve as Chair of this wonderful organisation for the past eight years. Through that time, we have appointed an excellent new CEO, launched a new global strategy and weathered the storms of a global pandemic, while continuing to stand together with the world's poorest and most marginalised communities.

"Christian Aid's work is far from being done, and the next few years will mean we must stand even more firmly for the dignity, equality and justice of all, needing the support of the Church and the British public more than ever, in light of cuts to aid and increasing national self-interest.

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“I am delighted to be handing over the reins to Dr Sentamu at this pivotal time in the organisation’s history and convinced there are few people who will be able to lead and speak out with the moral voice that is needed for such a time as this. I will continue to support both him and the organisation in the ongoing fight to end global poverty.”

Commenting on his appointment, Dr Sentamu said: “It is a great surprise and a delight to be invited to be a trustee and to chair the Board of Christian Aid. My first involvement with Christian Aid was in 1980, during Christian Aid Week, when, as an Assistant Curate at St Andrew, Ham Common, and Prison Chaplain at Latchmere House Remand Centre, I knocked on doors and left Christian Aid envelopes. The staggering response from the long street where I lived, as well as the prison officers, convinced me that the appeal for ‘Life Before Death’ spoke to the generous hearts of my neighbours.

“In 2004 I visited Herat Province, in Western Afghanistan, to see and encourage Christian Aid workers there. They blew my mind and I rejoiced greatly to discover that they had favour with all the people; and that Christian Aid workers had remained there for well over 25 years!

“To chair the Christian Aid Board, which is deeply committed to eradicating injustice, disadvantage, increasing mutual accountability and its prophetic voice in addressing issues of poverty and power, is a great honour and challenge for me. Please pray for me.”

Dr Sentamu’s appointment follows a thorough global external search led by Jennifer Cormack – chair of the



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organisation's nominations committee, which ended in formal approval by Christian Aid's board this week. He will formally be welcomed as Chair by Christian Aid's sponsoring church denominational representatives in November 2021.

## **Coalition of Christian denominations and charities call on all churches to hold a 'Climate Sunday'**

**With only 100 days to go until COP26 - the critical international climate negotiations which the UK government will host and chair in Glasgow in November - a broad coalition of Christian denominations and charities is calling on all churches to hold a 'Climate Sunday' and commit to effective action themselves, before talks begin. So far, more than 1,500 churches across Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland are taking part and hundreds more, including several cathedrals, are planning to do so.**

This widespread take up of the initiative across diverse church traditions indicates a growing commitment by churches to act on climate change, and to demand that the government act too.

The Climate Sunday Initiative wants to see Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government bring out domestic policies before the international conference, to get the UK back on track with its own emissions targets. It is also calling on the government, in its role as chair of COP26, to seek faster

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and deeper global emissions cuts and the delivery of long-promised finance to help poorer countries adapt to the climate disruption which they are already experiencing.

There is deep concern among climate specialists within the churches and charities that the UK government is undermining its influence to deliver a successful COP26

outcome by failing to implement policies to achieve the UK's own emissions targets and by slashing the UK's overseas

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aid budget, so needs to take rapid action before COP to restore its own credibility as a 'climate leader'.

The Climate Sunday initiative is the broadest-based church response to the climate crisis in the UK in the run-up to COP26. Participating churches are asked to do three things: hold a climate-focused service to explore the science and theology around addressing human-caused climate disruption; commit to taking ongoing practical action themselves, and sign a joint call for the government to act - the Time is Now Declaration. A website contains a 'toolbox' of free resources, and enables churches to register their commitment. Typically, churches are committing to progress through one of three major 'church greening schemes' (see Notes). Many are 'speaking up' for the first time joining tens of thousands of other members of the public, organisations and other faith groups in signing the Time is Now declaration.

A key milestone of the campaign before COP26 will be a national Climate Sunday event in Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday 5 September 2021. This will celebrate the commitments made by churches so far, and to present the Government with a list of those commitments and the signatories of all churches who have signed the Time is Now Declaration. The final total of participating churches and commitments will be presented to the Government at the COP conference itself.

Andy Atkins, Chair of the Climate Sunday Coalition and CEO coalition member A Rocha UK, a Christian nature conservation charity A Rocha UK, said: 'The climate crisis is accelerating alarmingly; but we have the unique opportunity

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in rich countries to accelerate the solutions by directing Covid recovery funds towards building a new, green economy. At present the government is in danger of 'building back worse'. So, there has never been a more crucial time for UK churches to come together to pray, act locally and speak up nationally on the climate crisis and on the need to 'build back greener'

Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD, the biggest Catholic overseas relief and development charity in England and Wales, and members of the coalition said: "It's becoming a matter of integrity for churches to put their own house in order on this threat to people and nature. Local church communities across Britain and Ireland are also signalling loud and clear that they expect the Westminster government to show integrity too, and get the UK firmly on track to meet its own emissions targets before chairing the UN climate negotiations in November."

Hannah Eves, a member of the Young Christian Climate Network who are also supporters of the coalition, from Northern Ireland said: "It's five to midnight on the ticking clock to avoid catastrophic climate change. We're thrilled to see churches now acting on the concerns of my generation. But the grand statements we hear from the government are so often undermined by contradictory actions. Boris Johnson says 'We're committed to Net zero,' then launches a massive new road building programme for example. The whole world is watching. Our government needs to put its own house in order fast, to have a fighting chance of delivering a successful COP for the world and my generation."

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Climate Sunday initiative, organised by the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)'s Environmental Issues Network (EIN), is the UK's largest joint project planned by UK Churches on Climate Change.

The vision for Climate Sunday is to leave a lasting legacy of thousands of churches better equipped to address this critical issue as part of their discipleship and mission and to make a significant contribution to civil society efforts to secure adequate national and international action at COP26.

The collective action and commitments from local churches across Great Britain & Ireland will be presented to the UK Government at a Nations Climate Sunday Service in Glasgow on Sunday 5th September 2021. Further details

## A prayer for COP26

Lord of creation,  
during these 100 days,  
inspire creativity and boldness  
in our political leaders;  
inspire energy and fervour  
in every activist;  
inspire action and prayer  
in me.  
You are Lord of creation;  
remind us that we  
are its stewards.  
Amen.

about this event will be published shortly.

Climate Sunday has formal backing from CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund, The Salvation Army, A Rocha UK, Operation Noah,

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Climate Stewards, Eco-Congregation Scotland, Eco-Congregation Ireland, Green Christian, the Church of England, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Union of Wales, the United Reformed Church, The Church of Scotland, Churches together in Wales, the Union of Welsh Independents, The Church in Wales, World Vision, The John Ray Initiative, USPG, The United Reformed Church, The Salvation Army, Joint Public Issues Team, Churches Together in Britain & Ireland, Christian Concern for One World, Church of Ireland, Young Christian Climate Network, Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales.

## LINKS

Climate Sunday free resources: [www.climatesunday.org](http://www.climatesunday.org)

Time is Now Declaration: <https://thetimeisnow.uk/>

Church Greening Schemes:

Eco Church, run by A Rocha UK, for churches in England and Wales - <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>

Eco-Congregation Scotland - [www.ecocongregationscotland.org](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org)

Eco-Congregation Ireland - [www.ecocongregationireland.com/](http://www.ecocongregationireland.com/)

Live Simply - <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Livesimply-award>

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## **Christian Aid response to COP26 ministerial press conference**

**Responding to the press conference from the COP26 July ministerial this evening, Christian Aid's climate policy lead, Dr Kat Kramer, said:**

“It is very positive that ministers were finally able to meet face to face to make progress towards COP. While there has been little in the way of concrete outcomes from this meeting, it was a chance for real interpersonal engagement between ministers in advance of what will be crunch talks on the final nights of November’s UN climate talks. Diplomacy requires being in the room: to better understand each other’s positions and to move towards finding common ground.

"There are less than 100 days left before COP and it is incumbent on all countries, but especially those with the greatest responsibilities and capabilities, to make climate change a political priority, to put in place policies domestically, and to continue to engage with other countries.

"At a time when the host city flooded with unusual rains, and in light of the catastrophic flooding in China last week, the sheer peril of climate change should be at the forefront of all ministers’ minds. We are endangering our own life raft – our shared planet. It is the people on the frontline, in the most climate vulnerable countries who will suffer the most, although they have caused it the least ”

## People and places



### Capella Caecilliana in Armagh

On Sunday 15 August Capella Caecilliana will sing at 5.30pm Mass for the Feast of the Assumption in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, followed at 6.30pm by a free 30 minute concert.

This is an in-person appearance (their first indoors since 2019) to end their 25th anniversary season.



# AMERICA'S ULSTER ROOTS

Killinchy Parish Church  
Friday 6th August 7.30pm

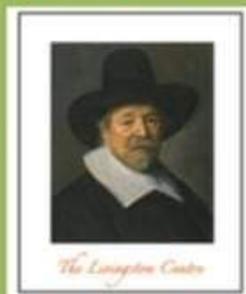


## LECTURE

**'The Impact of Ulster on American Independence and Beyond'**  
By Bryan Johnston of The Francis Hutcheson Institute

## ORGAN RECITAL

Dr Joe McKee, much acclaimed organist and BBC Radio Ulster Producer, will play The Reverend John Livingston Memorial Organ, ably assisted by organ scholar, Jack McCabe.



## Corrymeela is hiring

Corrymeela is hiring - “We’re looking to appoint a Public Theology Manager who can illuminate the theological currents which are shaping our society and deliver programmes in response, which contribute to a more hope-filled and cohesive society”. Find out more here: [\[\[ \] https://www.corrymeela.org/about/recruitment/programme-manager-public-theology \]](https://www.corrymeela.org/about/recruitment/programme-manager-public-theology)

## Pointers for prayer

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee,  
that the course of this world  
may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance,  
that thy Church may joyfully serve thee  
in all godly quietness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord of the Church, we pray for our brothers and sisters throughout the world who acknowledge your presence and power in their lives. We pray for those who are laughed at or victimised because of their faith in you. We pray that you will give us strength to be true to our faith when it is questioned or belittled.

We pray for our church and our community and for a renewal of our vision and dedication to the work you have called us to do.

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Lord of all nations, we pray for the needs of this world.

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We pray for those nations where communities are broken by prejudice and hatred, where the fear of violence is never far away. We pray that where human endeavours to find peace and reconciliation seem so inadequate your power to draw people together will bring renewed hope for the future.

We pray for those who have knowledge and power in the fields of medicine and science. Let them not be corrupted by greed and ambition but grant them wisdom, integrity, humility and compassion to use the knowledge they have gained only for the good of all people.

**#PrayTogether**  
**#StaySafeTogether**

Heal those, O Lord, who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fears, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders...

Lord Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us Your peace...

*Continuation at [www.oikoumene.org/prayers](http://www.oikoumene.org/prayers)*



Photo: Albin Hillert / WCC

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Throughout the world-wide community of nations may there be a sense of responsibility for each other and a desire for equality and justice for all your children.

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

God of compassion, we pray for all those who are suffering with anxiety, stress, grief or pain and illness.

Long ago a woman believed she would be healed if she could just touch the clothes of Jesus. May we today believe that if we pray to you for those we know and love, your healing power will also flow into their lives bringing wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

In a moment of quiet our hearts reach out to you in prayer for the needs of those we love.

Grant us strength in our weakness, comfort in our sorry, peace of mind in our anxiety and stress and the renewed hope for life which only your presence and power can bring.

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Lord of time and of eternity, we pray for those who have died and are now with you in your kingdom ....

We thank you for the communion we share with all those who have gone before us and pray that our lives may reflect on earth the light that surrounds them in your eternal kingdom.

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Lord, be present among us this morning and may the transforming power of your Spirit work in us and through us today and throughout the coming week.

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Merciful Father accept these prayers, For the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Speaking to the Soul

**Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.**

Philippians 2:12-13 NLT

If you have given your life to Christ, confessed your sins and received his forgiveness then you have the gift of salvation. This is the amazing Good News that Paul was so desperate to share. But he was equally concerned that his readers should understand that they now had work to do. The situation is much the same as in marriage. Having a wedding and receiving the gift of marriage is just the start of the journey. You now have work to do. Lots of it!

Advertising always reveals a great deal about a society. These days we often hear products being promoted because they will offer us a quick and effortless route to making life easier, smoother, happier and more fulfilled. It's very tempting to speak of the Christian life in the same way. But it would be a lie. I have not the slightest doubt that living for Christ is the most wonderful and fulfilling life that exists here on earth. But nowhere does Paul ever suggest that following Christ requires no effort, pain or hard work.

I fully recognise that hard work doesn't sound very attractive, but we should never fear it. Jesus once invited his followers to take on his yoke, explaining "my yoke is easy and my burden is light". You don't see many yokes these days so I had better explain. A yoke is simply a wooden beam normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs. Jesus doesn't deny that his followers will have burdens to bear, but he makes the incredible promise that as they take his yoke they "will find rest" for their souls. (Matthew 11.28) I know exactly what Jesus means. Over the years I have seen many people working incredibly hard for God in this country and around the world and it has been beautiful to see their peace and contentment because they have done their work yoked to Jesus.

## QUESTION

What is the hard work that God is calling you to do?

## PRAYER

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that as we accept your yoke we find perfect rest. Amen

