



Image of the day
Former Belfast Chorister completes London Marathon

Image of the day - Stephen Bell (In black 40910) was a chorister at Belfast Cathedral and a member of the Inst school choir. He now conducts the Northampton Male Voice Choir. He completed the London Marathon raising funds for the Choir's support for the prostate cancer charity. Stephen's late father was Rev Canon John Bell of Drumbo Parish in Down diocese.

Reports

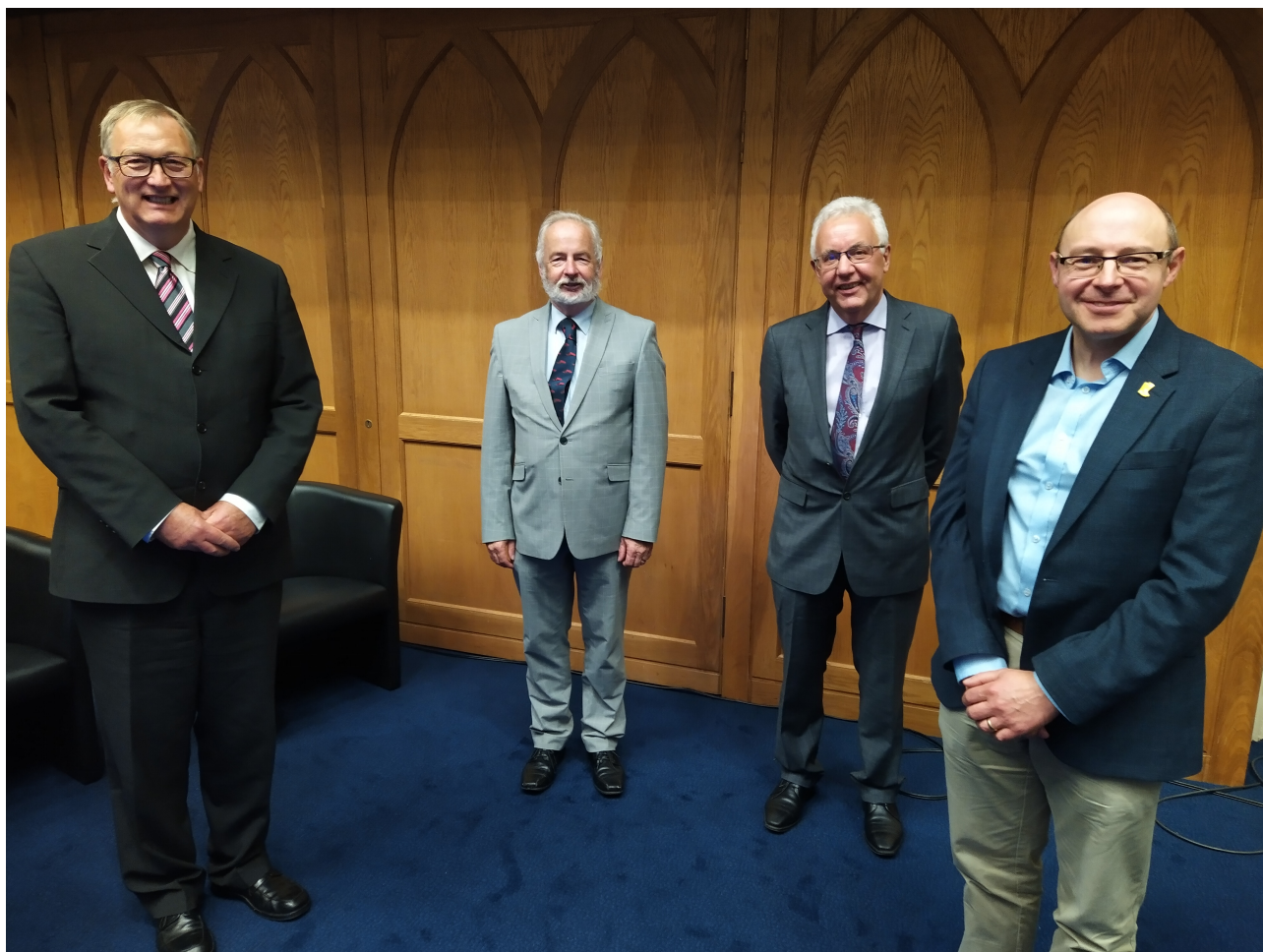
First 'Rural Chaplain' is appointed by Presbyterian Church in Ireland

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has announced the appointment of it's first 'Rural Chaplain'.

Rev Kenny Hanna, minister of Second Dromara Presbyterian Church in County Down, has been appointed to the post.

PCI's new Rural Chaplaincy Pilot Scheme, which will be for an initial three year period, has been developed by the Church's Council for Mission in Ireland, which provides operational management and support to PCI's Home Mission, Irish Mission, deaconesses and centrally managed mission projects of the Church. It also supports the provision of a chaplaincy service in universities and colleges, the healthcare system, the prison service and the armed forces.

Speaking after the close of Monday's business, Very Rev Dr Frank Sellar, convener of the Council for Mission in Ireland,



Very Rev Dr Frank Sellar (left), convener of the Council for Mission in Ireland, and Rev Kenny Hanna (right), minister of Second Dromara Presbyterian Church in County Down, who has been appointed to the post of Rural Chaplain

said: “Our Rural Chaplaincy Pilot Scheme and the appointment of our first Rural Chaplain a very welcome and a very positive development.

“For many years we have provided a wide range of traditional chaplaincy services, in hospitals, prisons and the armed forces, for example. As a denomination whose congregations are part and parcel of rural communities across the countryside, the Scheme will enable the Church to be better able to address the significant challenges facing the farming community at this particular time.

I am, therefore, delighted that we have been able to appoint Kenny to this position. He comes from farming stock, with a warm pastor's heart and he can often be found in livestock marts in Saintfield, Rathfriland, Hilltown and Markethill. I know his heart for Christ, and for rural and farming families, and I pray God's richest blessing upon him, and his family, as he prepares to take up his new role."

The Pilot Scheme will cover four of PCI's nineteen regional presbyteries, the Presbyteries of Down, Iveagh, Newry and Armagh, which includes most of County Down and all of County Armagh.

The main function of the new chaplain, a post which was advertised during the summer, will be to provide a chaplaincy service to the rural, especially farming communities, in the four presbyteries, which includes prioritising the pastoral and spiritual needs associated with geographical isolation and social isolation of those working in the agri-sector.

In an area that reaches from Comber to the north, along the western shores of Strangford Lough, and down the coast to Ardglass and on to Warrenpoint, it also takes in the towns and villages as far west to Benburb, to the southern shores of Lough Neagh. The chaplain will also be tasked with making connections with Presbyterian congregations in the district, and working in collaboration with other agencies and service providers in the rural community.

Speaking about his appointment and his upcoming new role, Mr Hanna said: "I have been minister in Second Dromara Presbyterian Church for over 10 years. This has been a long

and warm relationship which makes leaving difficult, as we will miss our church family, and the wider community, who have made us feel so at home, in this beautiful part of County Down.

“As I embark on a new adventure with Jesus, serving Him as Rural Chaplain, I am very grateful for this opportunity and so thankful to God for His call to me, a farmer’s son and part-time farmer from the Mourne, to serve Him in this way.”

Mr Hanna said that an important part of his new role will be to visit local churches across the four presbyteries, some 70 individual congregations and linkages in the denomination. He also stressed that he would not be working in competition with local churches, but rather in close partnership with them.

“I hope to encourage presbyteries, local congregations, ministers and Christians in the good gospel work they are doing, cast a vision for rural chaplaincy, and encourage prayer for the work across our rural communities. I am both excited about the many possibilities and nervous at the mammoth size of the challenge ahead.”

Mr Hanna concluded by saying, “What gives me great hope, however, is that Jesus, my Good Shepherd, promises to go ahead of His sheep, to save us, lead us and guide us (John 10:27). I look forward to pointing others to the blessings of life in Him. As a minister of rural congregations for 20 years, I passionately believe that the local church is God’s way of reaching communities for Christ and so I hope I can support

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what is already happening and help seed new gospel work that local congregations can take ownership of.”
Courtesy of Farming Life.

Mothers' Union All Ireland President's 21 in 21 finish line is in sight



Mothers' Union All Ireland President, June Butler, (centre) has been walking 21 kilometres in each of the 12 Church of Ireland dioceses to raise funds for Mums in May 2021.

Last weekend, she completed her final walk in Down and Dromore in the beautiful Silent Valley near Kilkeel.

June, who is a parishioner of Saintfield Parish in Down Diocese, set out on her first walk back in April. This latest hike was the 31st of 36.

A band of walkers and Bishop David McClay joined June at Christ Church Kilkeel on Saturday morning before they headed out to the Valley. This time the 8.6 km route and

required risk assessment was planned by Roberta and Gerald Macartney, Diocesan President and Chaplain.

Give and take part

Mums in May is an All-Ireland Fund which was established in 2012 in celebration of 125 years of MU in Ireland. The fund supports new and ongoing MU projects throughout Ireland as well as specific important overseas projects. It is replenished every third year so that MU can continue this important work. 2021 is the year.

The 21 in 21 challenge was issued to everyone in MU Ireland and there is still time for branches and members to take part. The 21 in 21 can be 21 yards, 21 laps, 21 furlongs, 21 kilometres, 21 miles or 21 something else...knit, sew, bake...the possibilities are endless!

You can sponsor June and the other MU members who take part through their 'Just Giving' page here:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MumsinMay21

Taxpayer should not foot bill for problem gambling, says Bishop of St Albans

The Bishop of St Albans, Dr Alan Smith, has accused the gambling industry of “running off with eye-watering profits” while taxpayers foot the multi-million-pound bill for dealing with the consequences of problem gambling.

He was responding to the publication, on Thursday of last week, of Public Health England's (PHE's) review of evidence for gambling-related harms, which found that they were directly costing the Government £647.2 million a year.

Dr Smith asked: "At a time when the NHS is under serious pressure, why is the public purse picking up the bill for the consequences of problem gambling? Reforming the gambling sector would reduce the burden on the taxpayer and allow money to be redirected to fixing those regional health inequalities by better funding treatment, research, and education."

The review found that people living in the north-east and north-west of England were significantly more at risk of problem gambling than people in the south, and might already be experiencing greater health inequalities. This, he said, "shows that levelling up is about more than simply pumping money into left-behind regions, but about reforming those sectors, like gambling, that disproportionately affect deprived communities.

"The Government has not been blind to these regional inequalities, which is why it established the three Northern Gambling Service clinics in Manchester, Leeds, and Sunderland in 2019. Despite the amazing jobs these clinics do, the lack of industry regulation is constantly working against them."

Dr Smith was a member of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Gambling Industry, and is a vice-chair of Peers for Gambling Reform, the largest cross-party group in the House of Lords, committed to implementing the

recommendations from the House of Lords Select Committee report Gambling Harm: Time for action.

The PHE review includes the most comprehensive estimate of the economic burden of gambling on society to date, suggesting that, in England alone, it cost at least £1.27 billion in the year to 2020. It includes the first estimate of the economic cost of suicide (£619.2 million), and provides an updated cost of homelessness associated with harmful gambling (£62.8 million). Harms included in the estimate range from financial, such as bankruptcy and employment issues, to family issues and health harms, such as suicide.

Former Church of Ireland premises in new £40m Northern Regional College in Coleraine

A significant milestone has been reached for the new £40m Northern Regional College in Coleraine

Demolition of the old campus has now been completed and an official Construction Notice has been issued to permit construction of the new campus building at Union Street. The campus will feature a fully accessible, state-of-the-art, 12,560m² four storey building, incorporating the former Church of Ireland premises on Brook Street, which will be fully restored to house a 80-100 seat Performing Arts Centre.

Karl McKillop, construction director with Heron Bros, explained: "We are proud to be involved in this prestigious

development and look forward to the next important steps in delivering this complex education facility and leaving a lasting legacy for Coleraine and the wider area.”

It is anticipated that over 100 new construction jobs will be created and a further 300 sustained during the building phase of the Coleraine campus. Along with these full-time jobs, over 1,000 weeks of employment and training will be provided through traineeships, apprenticeships and higher level apprenticeships (HLAs) across a range of construction related trades.

The Coleraine campus construction project is expected to complete in the 2023/2024 academic year.

The project forms part of a wider £85 million capital investment programme which will also see the development of a new campus for the College at Farm Lodge in Ballymena.

We have inherited a garden – we must not leave our children a desert - Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop said at a meeting in the Vatican “The climate challenges we face must be addressed using the knowledge of science and the wisdom of religion.

“Thank you Pope Francis for gathering us as faith leaders and scientists today to launch this joint appeal ahead of the crucial COP26 conference in Glasgow next month.



“As governments, faith communities, businesses and individuals, we must safeguard and heal the home entrusted to our stewardship”.

Read more here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-10/pope-francis-faith-science-cop26-vatican-meeting.html>

News briefs

Dublin & Glendalough. Diocesan Directors of Ordinands

The Revd Suzanne Harris and the Revd Tom O'Brien have been appointed joint Diocesan Directors of Ordinands for Dublin & Glendalough. Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (DDOs) help people to discover their gifts and use them in the Church. More at -

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<https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2021/10/04/new-joint-diocesan-directors-of>

Armagh ordination



The Reverend Matthew Topley was ordained Priest by the Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev John McDowell, in St

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Anne's Church Drumglass, Dungannon on the evening of Sunday 3rd October.

Pipeworks: A Festival of Anniversaries at St Patrick's Dublin

The Cathedral will host two events on 16 October at 18.30 and 20.30, for the Pipeworks festival, Andrew Dewar: Dupré and his Legacy, and "Ave" : a short late night concert featuring a newly commissioned work from composer Anne Marie O'Farrell for harp, organ and 'cello, and dance accompanied by organ improvisation.

Presbyterian Church planting in Balbriggan



Josh McCance has been given a pathway as a student for the ministry of the PCI that will allow him to continue his church planting work in Balbriggan.

Christmas CDs by Belfast Cathedral Choir

Matthew Owens, Director of Music writes, "Delighted to share that, in just under four weeks, there will be two

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Christmas CDs released on the Resonus Classics label. The first is with Belfast Cathedral Choir, who were on fabulous form: <https://www.resonusclassics.com/a-belfast-christmas-belfast-cathedral-choir-matthew-owens-res10292>

“and the second is an organ solo disc that I recorded”
<https://www.resonusclassics.com/christmas-bells-organ-music-from-belfast-cathedral-matthew-owens-res10293>

“There's lots of terrific and attractive repertoire on both, and plenty of world premiere recordings. I hope that you enjoy them!”

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars



Tearfund's free harvest resources

“Our free harvest resources have everything you need to plan your church harvest services. You can download a

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service outline, children's resources, prayer points, and lots of small group ideas here 🙌 bit.ly/3o43G6p



Mission to Seafarers

“We have been shortlisted for this year’s Seatrade Awards for the ‘Investment in People’ category for our WeCare initiative. We are pleased to be recognised for the vital work we do to support seafarers and their families”. Find out more here: <http://bit.ly/39A4vvv>

Creative Centenaries

Making The Future and Ulster Museum, Belfast have developed a fantastic new digital resource turning the Collecting The Past Making The Future exhibition into a fully interactive online space . Immerse yourself in the past 100 years of Northern Ireland, reflecting on partition to present day and exploring what this means for the next 100 years... <https://bit.ly/3zWbNEk>

Perspective

Will the Brexit fallout lead to a 'united Ireland'? by Colm Tóibín:

With negotiations souring an already uneasy relationship to England, the Irish novelist surveys the mood of his nation, and considers the prospect of unification, Colm Toibin in The Guardian.

In late 2010, I sat in a discreet space in the lounge of a Dublin hotel with two British diplomats who were planning the first state visit of Queen Elizabeth to Ireland the following May and were consulting widely. The questions were the basic ones: What should she say? What should she not say? Where should she go? Where should she not go?

When I said she should visit a stud farm and get to see some horses, the diplomats were uneasy. Would that not seem too posh? I explained that following horses in Ireland was part of ordinary life. And also, if she didn't see some horses, people would think that she was not enjoying herself, and, oddly enough, despite 700 years of strife, most people in Ireland would want the Queen to enjoy her visit.

There was one word, I said, that, no matter what, she should not utter. The word was not Cromwell or paratrooper or Paddy or Mick or potato; the word was sorry. The Queen should not say that she or her government or her people

were sorry, even for the plantation of Ulster or the penal laws or the famine or the Black and Tans. The word “sorry” was debased. Everyone was always sorry. Very few people who said they were sorry really meant it. Nor should the Queen express remorse or apology. The Queen in Ireland should not say anything that she did not mean.

I did not know at that time that Tony Blair had not, in 1997, personally seen his own statement of remorse for the Great Irish Famine before it was released. It “was hastily written by aides because they could not reach him to approve it, newly released classified documents reveal,” according to the Guardian report. What we believed were the prime minister’s words were read out by the actor Gabriel Byrne at a televised commemoration event in County Cork.

“In all the circumstances events could not have turned out better,” the British ambassador to Ireland, Veronica Sutherland, cabled at the time. “The statement, which focuses on undeniable facts, is widely perceived as the apology long sought by many Irish people.”

At the time, I found what I believed were the prime minister’s words to be disheartening. The speech felt formulaic, manufactured, insincere. But there was, nonetheless, something sweet behind Blair’s intention and those of his officials and his ambassador who seemed to believe that “many Irish people” had “long sought” this “apology”. It seemed to me that many Irish people had many other things on their minds in 1997, one of the early years of the Celtic Tiger, when many Irish people were busy paying mad prices for property.

The diplomats who were preparing the Queen's visit, unlike Tony Blair, planned things carefully; they put an immense amount of thought into every word the Queen would say in Ireland and every image of her that would be shown. It wasn't as though such close attention to Ireland was new, but it had been sporadic. It was there during the negotiations for the Sunningdale agreement in 1973, but not in the aftermath. It was there too in the run-up to the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985. It was there in the negotiations, perhaps Tony Blair's finest hour, that led to the Good Friday agreement in 1998. It was not there during Brexit and its aftermath.

On 18 May 2011 the Queen spoke with great delicacy and tact in Dublin Castle. She did not apologise for anything. She merely said something that happens to be true: "With the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all."

With the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all- Queen Elizabeth

The body of the Queen's speech made clear something that might be important for anyone thinking about Anglo-Irish relations after Brexit. The Queen described the closeness between the two islands that prevailed despite political problems. "Many British families," she said, "have members who live in this country, as many Irish families have close relatives in the United Kingdom. These families share the two islands; they have visited each other and have come home to each other over the years."

None of this was ever going to change after Brexit. Irish soccer fans will still support English teams; Irish people still have cousins in England and go to England looking for work; Northern Irish people will still see Scotland as close to home. England still represents freedom for many Irish people.

But there has been an interesting change. Up to now, there was an image spread of the former colonies including Ireland. It suggested that we were somehow hot-headed and given to soft patriotism and nationalist sentimentality, that we could not be trusted in negotiation, that we spoke with a forked tongue. Now, all of these qualities have been taken over by Whitehall itself. But it is worse on this occasion. We, at least, were actually colonised. The United Kingdom, such as it is, was only ever colonised in its dreams, and by the EU, of all things. Dealing with the UK now, as Lloyd George said about Eamon de Valera, is like trying to pick up mercury with a fork.

In Ireland now, Brexit is still viewed with disbelief. It is hard to think of any real advantage that has been gained from it. Slowly, its implications are becoming clear in the most ordinary ways. There is a feeling in the Republic that someday soon Britain will wake up from this bad dream and benefit from some daylight.

Yet while we, in southern Ireland, take our easy relationship to England for granted, we do not have a similar relationship to Northern Ireland. In 1986, when I walked along the border in Ireland to write a book, I felt like a stranger much of the time in the north. Their hatreds were not mine, nor indeed

their education system or their health service, not to speak of their police and the British army

In Fermanagh, I attended the funeral in a small, rural church of a part-time UDR man who had been murdered by the IRA, with the killers escaping across the border into southern Ireland. As I followed the ceremony, I realised that I had never been at a service in a Protestant church before. Then, when the sermon began, I heard a tone that was new to me. The clergyman read out the names of all those who had been murdered by the IRA in this border community since the Troubles began. He did this starkly, stopping briefly after each name. Many of those named were family, friends or neighbours of those in the congregation. As the clergyman wondered how many more names would be added to the list, the response was a stunned, troubled silence.

I wished that his sermon could have been used in full on southern Irish radio. When I went back to Dublin and told people about the sermon, they nodded in sympathy. But by that time the Republic of Ireland's interest in the north was, like that of the British government, at most sporadic.

Like many in the south, I was puzzled at the vehemence of Protestant opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985. One day the following year, when I had interviewed a Protestant survivor of a sectarian attack, I added a question about the agreement. He explained that his problem centred on the matter of arbitrary authority. The Dublin government suddenly had a say in the affairs of Northern Ireland, but no one in the north could vote to remove the Dublin

government. This opposition to arbitrary authority was at the very heart of Protestant identity, he emphasised.

Now, after Brexit, Northern Ireland may become subject to EU regulations on medicine, to take just one example, but has no democratic relationship to the EU and is not represented in the European parliament. Thus, arbitrary authority approaches from two directions – Brussels and Dublin.

The problem Northern Ireland has is serious. It has become low on everyone's priority list. The British government was prepared to negotiate a hard Brexit, despite the implications for Northern Ireland. It promised one thing and delivered another. While Dublin wants the Good Friday agreement, in all its ingenuity and sense of inclusion, to be preserved to the letter, there is no appetite in the Republic to take over Northern Ireland or become responsible for funding it or dealing daily with its factions. Dismantling partition would be a most dangerous process.

Over the past 50 years the policy of the Dublin government has been consistent. Dublin wants stability in Northern Ireland. It does not want territory, or trouble. Keeping the border open is a way to avoid strife at the border.

Supporting parity of esteem for Catholics is a way to make Catholics more confident and more at home in Northern Ireland.

But just as the Tories had Ukip barking at their heels, there is a spectre haunting Ireland. It is the spectre of Sinn Féin. In an Irish Times column in June questioning proposed legislation for an increase in police power in the Republic,

Michael McDowell, a former minister for justice, ended ominously with: “The constitutional privacy of the individual needs concrete expression and workable safeguards. You never know who may be directing police operations in the next few years.”

His readers would have known instantly that he was alluding to Sinn Féin.

The loud and looming presence of the party as the main opposition in the Dublin parliament brings with it discussion of a united Ireland. The three main politicians in government in the Republic – Micheál Martin, Leo Varadkar and Simon Coveney – are not given to rhetorical flourishes. They tend to use language carefully, even thoughtfully.

It is thus depressing to find Simon Coveney in 2017 saying that he wants to see a united Ireland in his political lifetime, and adding this year that his party was “very ambitious” about Irish reunification. And Leo Varadkar, earlier this year, saying: “I believe in the unification of our island and I believe it can happen in my lifetime.” And Micheál Martin last October insisting that his party was still committed to a united Ireland.

In this united Ireland of theirs, that will occur in their lifetimes, do they intend to foist the dysfunctional health system and the appalling housing crisis that exist in the Republic on the people of Northern Ireland? Do they want to import sectarian hatred and the politics of perpetual grievance from the north into the south?

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Their talk of a united Ireland “in my lifetime” is mystical blather, but it has the power to unsettle a fragile political environment. Also, it will do nothing to keep Sinn Féin at bay. It will do nothing either to solve the more pressing and immediate problem of sour relations at official level between Ireland and Britain after Brexit. It is another example of politicians saying something they don’t mean. When Tony Blair did it, his intentions were harmless, an example of bumbling goodwill. In Ireland now, however, stirring up emotion on the subject of a united Ireland in order to hold back the tide of Sinn Féin is what a speechwriter might call “dangerous and unhelpful”, or, as the Queen might put it, something that might be “done differently or not at all”.
Courtesy The Guardian, October 2, 2021

Poem for today

A Cool October Morning by Francis Duggan

On this gray October morning in the prime of the Spring
The birds on the bushes and trees chirp and sing
It has rained overnight and more rain on the way
Going by the weather forecast later on in the day
But with the warmer and drier weather of Summer quite
near
We need lots of rain at this time of the year
Yesterday it was warm and sunny and dry
But this morning the gray clouds of rain in the sky
Yet the parklands and paddocks looking lush and green
And the wildflowers of Nature everywhere to be seen
So much beauty in Nature for all to admire

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And of singing her praises how could one ever tire?
It has rained overnight and more rain on the way
That is going by the forecast much later today.



Speaking to the Soul

Bible verse, thought for the day and prayers - on site daily

