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Bishops take the knee

BISHOPS across the country led Anglicans in 'taking the knee' to mark the death of American George Floyd and to highlight injustice in British society.

The Bishop of Leicester, the Rt Rev Martyn Snow, led others in kneeling for eight minutes and 46 seconds, the length of time that a US police officer knelt on Mr Floyd's neck.

Bishop Snow said: "I am deeply shocked by the appalling brutality we have seen against black people in America and I stand alongside those who are suffering and peacefully calling for urgent change, as well as committing to make changes in our own lives and the institutions we are part of.

"Structural and systemic racial prejudice exists across societies and institutions and we must act to change that, as well as addressing our own unconscious biases that lead us to discriminate against others." Earlier this year he led the General Synod in a vote to apologise for racism in the Church.

The Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani, said: "We must stand up and share our abhorrence of that racist brutality but also act in our own areas to address the culture of discrimination we live in this society too."

Meanwhile the Bishop of Coventry, the Rt Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth, and the Bishop of Warwick, the Rt Rev John Stroyan 'took the knee' in front of the Charred Cross in the Cathedral Ruins.

In Manchester hundreds of people joined in a 'Protest through Prayer' event as a form of action in solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter organised by the Archdeacon of Manchester.

This week the Archbishop of Canterbury said: "The racism that people in this country experience is horrifying. The Church has failed here, and still does, and it's clear what Jesus commands us to do: repent and take action."

The Bishop of Loughborough, page 7



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THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Dozens of people from churches across Ipswich have come together to sing a song about unity and hope. Members of 43 Christian church denominations from the town have recorded themselves singing along to the song *The Blessing* by Elevation Worship.

Performers who were involved in the project include members of Hope Church Ipswich, Rushmere Baptist Church, Trinity Praise Centre, Waterfront Churches and Holly Lodge Baptist Church, among many more.

The project was organised by the Rev Amy Key and her husband Matt, of St Augustine's Church in Ipswich, and aims to bring hope and comfort to the community during the Coronavirus lockdown. Matt said: "We were hugely inspired by *The UK Blessing*, which quickly went viral. It has had more than three million views. There was lots of talk about churches working together and being there for their community, so we thought it would be wonderful to replicate it in Ipswich as a message of hope to our town's residents."

The pair contacted more than 60 church leaders, representing 75 churches of all denominations across Ipswich, to put forward a representative to sing a part of the song, which was then edited into one single video. The Rev Amy Key added: "The response has been absolutely amazing. We have 58 singers, ranging from teenagers to the older generation and a mixture of ethnicities, genders and

churchmanship, so it is a great representation of the churches in Ipswich. The feedback has been unanimously positive and encouraging. It has created a real sense of support, even from the churches who could not take part as they did not have a singer. Everyone is excited about being part of something bigger than any one individual or organisation."

Bishop Mike Harrison said: "It's entirely right, good and proper that as churches we come together to bless Ipswich, truly seeking the good of Ipswich and its people in God's strength."

Diocese of Gloucester



The Diocese of Gloucester has teamed up with Play Gloucestershire to support their Bags of Play project. The local children's charity has distributed 1,500 Bags of Play to children in need across the county, as part of their emergency response to the Coronavirus crisis. Play Rangers and volunteers have filled the bags with soft foam balls, skipping ropes, balloons, chalks, paints, scrap and more to offer some playful respite to the children most in need.



Diocese of Derby

The Diocese is calling for prayers after a massive clean-up operation is continuing as millions of people across northern India try to rebuild their lives following the devastation left by Cyclone Amphan.

Two weeks ago, many of the diocese's partner dioceses in North India, including the Diocese of Kolkata, were badly hit, with streets flooded and blocked by trees, church buildings and community projects devastated, and many people left homeless and without food and water.

The cyclone came on top of the challenges already being faced due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

Many people in Kolkata earn their living as daily labourers, and have lost their livelihood because of the lockdown. Children receiving education through diocesan and CRS schools are now at risk of being trafficked into child labour and child marriage.

The Diocese of Kolkata, in partnership with the Cathedral Relief Service, has enabled a relief programme to reach out to the neediest people – 4,500 families have already been helped, but more help is needed in this 'desperate' situation.

Diocese of Portsmouth



Inspired by the extraordinary fundraising accomplishments of Captain Tom Moore, 94-year-old former Church Mission Society missionary Canon John Harwood is embarking on a fundraising challenge of his own. Harwood is planning to do 94 walks – one for every year of his life – from his home in Nile St, Emsworth in Hampshire, to his local church, St James, Emsworth, a total distance of 47 miles, nearly double the length of a marathon.

Mr Harwood, who has never previously completed a marathon or long distance event, is managing to complete two walks every day and so far has raised more than £2,000 for CMS people in mission based in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Europe and the UK. After completing walk number 32, Canon Harwood said he was relishing the challenge. He said: "I've not had any blisters but I do have to sit down to take a rest mid-walk." He expects it will take another month to reach his total of 94 walks. To officially mark each of his walks, he deposits a numbered slip in the rectory letterbox at St James' Church.

Canon Harwood, who served as CMS missionary in Nigeria and Sierra Leone for 10 years, explained that although he retired many years ago the work of CMS continues to inspire him. He said: "I am thrilled by CMS's ground-breaking mission pio-

neers like Rachel Karanja, who is utilising renewable energy technology to benefit local communities in Kenya through the Greenspan Biotechnologies project. I hope the money raised by this walk will help raise up many more entrepreneurs."

The challenge has captured the imagination of John's local community who have donated generously to support his effort and offered their encouragement with comments such as "Inspirational", "CMS is lucky to have you" and "the Racing Rev".

Alastair Bateman, CEO of Church Mission Society, said: "John's effort is a great example of the energy, commitment, and faithful dedication characterised by CMS missionaries throughout our history. All of the CMS community is with you - praying for you, walking with you [in spirit] and willing you on, as you take on this epic challenge."

A list of playful suggestions from the Play Rangers – who are normally out and about in parks and open spaces across the county – is also included, further helping the children to be creative and active.

The Diocese has purchased 250 of these bags and distributed them to the most vulnerable children through their school network.

Bishop Rachel Treweek said: "I am so pleased we have been able to support and get involved with this project as play is so important for children's mental health and wellbeing. We hope that the children who receive these play bags will have some great fun, getting creative with all the art and crafts materials to choose from."

Play Gloucestershire's Director of Play Pip Levett said: "Children always need to play, but especially now. Play is so thera-

peutic in times of crisis and we hope that our 'Bags of Play' bring some joy and happiness to families in Gloucestershire".

Pictured: Cathy Pascoe, Children and Families support manager at Kingsholm Primary School in Gloucester.

Diocese of Chester

The Diocese of Chester hosted a webinar to mark World Environment Day and to help parishes explore Eco-Church, an award scheme run by environment charity Arocha, which encourages parishes to be mindful of the environment.

Invited guests include representatives of Arocha, Ruth Richards and John Smith, who provided a potted history of the charity and explained why the Eco-Church award scheme was established.

Anne Draper from St James

the Great, Audlem, described what steps her parish has taken to achieve the silver Eco-Church award. Although much planning had gone before, Audlem have demonstrated how quickly a parish church can register and achieve Eco-Church accreditation.

Diocese of Liverpool

Volunteers from churches across Knowsley are enabling local grassroots charity SHARe Knowsley to continue to provide practical, emotional and social support for asylum seekers and refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SHARe Knowsley is a local ecumenical group that provides a welcome and befriending service to asylum seekers and refugees who are housed there.

Margaret Roche, who has supported the charity since it was founded over four years ago, said: "The impact of Covid-19 has meant a significant change in operations".

The group had to stop their weekly drop-in service at Prescott Methodist Church and face-to-face English lessons at the Old School House in Huyton. These services are now being carried out remotely.

Despite this, SHARe Knowsley has seen "more than a 300 per cent increase" in people they are now supporting after putting out flyers to all of the Home Office properties in Knowsley and setting up a new 'Drop-Off' Project.

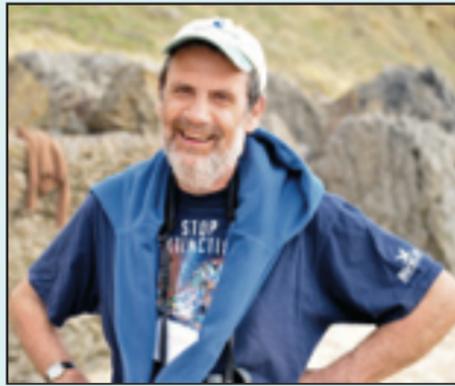


A Rocha trustee wins prestigious international award

A TRUSTEE of the A Rocha Christian environmental charity has won a prestigious global environmental award

Dr Simon Stuart, a trustee of A Rocha International from 2000 to 2009 and again since 2017 has been announced as the winner of the 2020 Blue Planet Prize, along with Prof David Tilman of the Universities of Minnesota and California.

A committed Christian, Dr Stuart is a member of Holy Trinity, Combe Down, in Bath. He said: "Receiving the 2020 Blue Planet Prize is the greatest honour of my life. I have had the rare privilege to spend my entire working life following my passion to promote the conservation of nature. It's an even greater privilege when my passion is also a major part of my Christian calling.



"We stand at a critical moment in history – will we listen to the evidence and start living within the limits set by our planet? Will we take our God-given responsibility to care for everything he

has made seriously? I plan to use the profile gained from winning this award to promote a harmonious, sustainable future for people and nature."

Now in its 29th year, the prize was created by the Asahi Glass Foundation to recognize significant contributions to the resolution of global environmental problems.

Each recipient is presented with a certificate of merit, a commemorative trophy, and ¥50 million (Japanese yen) (£365,000) in prize money.

Dr Stuart is the Director of Strategic Conservation at Synchronicity Earth and Former Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission.

He led the development of the categories and quantitative criteria for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

and contributed significantly to the expansion of the number of species assessed. This strong scientific basis has established the Red List as the most reliable data on species extinction risk. He warned that the decline in the number of amphibians indicates that not only their habitats but also the surrounding ecosystems are deteriorating.

Peter Harris, co-founder of A Rocha International said: "Simon has been an inspirational figure in the conservation movement for decades."

Andy Atkins, CEO of A Rocha UK, said: "For many Christians who care passionately about nature and the wider environment, Simon Stuart is a role model of how to combine rigorous and detailed scientific analysis with a broad vision for global change."

Communal worship is set to follow in weeks after limited reopenings

THE GOVERNMENT has announced that churches will be allowed to reopen, for private prayer only, from 15 June.

The Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick confirmed the decision last Sunday following discussions between the Government and representatives of major faiths through the Places of Worship Taskforce, which the Communities Secretary has chaired.

The move 'recognises the spiritual and mental health benefits for people being able to pray in their place of worship', and that for some this cannot be replicated by praying at home.

New guidance is to be published to ensure that the limited re-opening of places of worship can be done safely and in line with social distancing guidelines.

However, Faiths minister Lord Greenhalgh was not able to say when the guidance would be published, but he suggested that the return of communal worship could follow in weeks rather than months.

Fresh from announcing that places of worship will reopen for private prayer from Monday 15 June, he told a Religion Media Centre webinar that his taskforce was now working out how to open all places for congrega-

tional worship, as well as wedding services. He accepted, however, that some groups would not be reopening even when they were allowed to do so.

They were proceeding within Public Health England guidelines and the earliest date that change could happen would be 4 July.

Full guidance would be published as soon as possible, after a taskforce meeting yesterday (Thursday) and virtual round tables with faith groups. Lord Greenhalgh's role was to ensure that the guidance was ready and that people were engaged, so that it could be

quickly adopted by all faith groups, whatever the size of their place of worship, when the time was right.

Asked by *The Church of England Newspaper* how soon services could resume he said: "When it comes to collective or corporate worship that's a decision that won't be taken any earlier than 4 July, so my mission as faith minister is to come up with the guidance as soon as we possibly can."

Many places of worship are in financial difficulties because of the coronavirus, with a loss of income from activities and continuing costs.

He was asked whether the

government could help them, perhaps by removing VAT on building repairs. Lord Greenhalgh said finance was frequently a concern at round tables and he would look at the suggestion.

In the webinar he was asked why places of worship were not classed as important as "essential", like shops, which had been allowed to open earlier. Lord Greenhalgh said it was a great achievement that places of worship would open for private prayer on 15 June, the same day as non-essential shops. He said there is no indication that the government did not see faith as absolutely critical to the life of this country.

Archbishop lays down his crozier



THE ARCHBISHOP of York, Dr John Sentamu, accompanied by his wife, the Rev Margaret Sentamu, laid down his crozier of office on the high altar of York Minster last Sunday, 7 June.

On Monday Archbishop Sentamu concluded nearly 15 years in his role as Archbishop of York. He has served in ordained ministry within the Church of England for 41 years. The Archbishop will continue to live in the North of England, and has said he will continue with his work on the case for income equality and sustainability.

The Dean of York said: "In the simple and symbolic act of laying down his crozier, Archbishop Sentamu brought his ministry as Archbishop of York to a close. In current circumstances we have been unable to fulfil our hope to gather together for a service. However, in households and communities across the Diocese of York, the North and Nation, those whose lives have been graced by Sentamu and Margaret give thanks for their witness to the joy, simplicity and compassion of the good news of Jesus Christ."

Government due to announce Sunday trading extension

THE GOVERNMENT is expected to announce an extension to Sunday trading hours in order to stimulate the economy.

This has sparked criticism from Chief Executive of Christian Concern, Andrea Williams, who pointed out that the government is relaxing the Sunday trading laws whilst maintaining 'strict rules that hinder church ministry'.

Williams said that 'churches can easily be made as safe as supermarkets'.

"Churches should be allowed to do so if they so wish. We call on the government to recognise the vital importance of church ministry and the principle of church autonomy from the state. The government should urgently rescind its restrictions on church ministry.

"This restriction on church ministry is unprecedented. The government should not be criminalising prayer meetings, church services or sacraments.

"The government should allow

churches to make their own decisions about what kind of ministry to host in their buildings, rather than continuing to impose highly restrictive constraints."

USDAW general secretary, Paddy Lillis, commented that while the trade union 'appreciates the desire to help the retail sector, this attempt to undo a long-held and respected compromise on Sunday trading is misguided'.

"The last thing the retail industry needs is longer trading hours, there is no economic case for this and it will put extra pressure on the retail workers who have worked so hard throughout this crisis.

"Retailers have mixed views over the benefits of opening longer on Sundays and we have repeatedly demonstrated that it would be bad for business. Opening for longer will increase overheads but not necessarily take any more cash through the tills. The fact is that customers will not have more to spend just because the shops are open for longer."



Church bells to ring out on third anniversary of Grenfell

CHURCH bells across London will ring 72 times at 6pm on Sunday to mark the third anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire, in a coordinated effort to ensure the victims of the tragedy continue to be remembered.

Over 80 churches across the Capital, including St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Southwark Cathedral will join the bell ringing, as will St Clement, Notting Dale, the parish in which Grenfell Tower stands.

The 72 peals will mark the beginning of two minutes' silence, observed in the local community and elsewhere in memory of those who died.

The Bishop of Kensington, the Rt Rev Dr Graham Tomlin, has invited churches further afield to join in the act of remembrance.

Churches across the Kensington Area, under the leadership of the Bishop of Kensington, were instrumental in offering support immediately following the fire in 2017, and in supporting the community's wellbeing



and cohesion in the three years that have followed.

Bishop Tomlin worked closely with the community in the after-

math of the fire and undertook a series of interviews that culminated in the publication of a report, "The Social Legacy of Grenfell". This sought to identify the societal issues that Grenfell brought to the fore and posed an agenda for change in wider society, to improve community cohesion and wellbeing.

The Bishop said: "Nearly three years ago, the tragedy at Grenfell Tower left us wondering how this could happen in a 21st century city like London. We are now facing a very different tragedy in the form of Coronavirus, but

we continue to ask similar questions. As we try to make sense of what we are living through today, let's not forget that hun-

dreds of families are still trying to make sense of what happened on that day in June 2017.

"Life has not moved on for the families and friends of the 72 victims – they still mourn the loss of their loved ones and seek justice.

"On Sunday 14 June bells will ring across our nation; bells of remembrance, of sympathy and support for those whose lives were changed forever that day and of hope that nothing like it will ever happen again. I invite as many churches as possible to join in ringing their bells, and those who listen to join in the silence that follows to remember this tragedy that affected our national life so deeply."

Grenfell United, the bereaved families and survivors group, said: "It means a lot to our families and the community that across London bells will ring out in memory of 72 loved ones lost at Grenfell. Thank you to all faith communities across London that stand with our community in North Kensington to pay respect and show that 72 lives are forever in our hearts."

News In Brief

Synod to Zoom

AN INFORMAL virtual meeting of members of General Synod has been planned for Saturday 11 July.

The meeting has the support of the Synod's Business Committee after it was confirmed that the residential meeting due to take place in York in July had been cancelled in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The term of the current General Synod has been extended for a year with planned elections to the General Synod postponed until next autumn.

The timetable includes a presentation followed by questions on a response to Covid-19.

Footballing first



A NEW joint venture between the charity Oasis UK and Crystal Palace FC Academy will provide a comprehensive education programme for young footballers.

Shinnel Paras, 26 and a graduate in Business Studies, has been appointed to head the pioneering project, designed to help young footballers fulfil their potential on and off the pitch.

Crystal Palace FC is investing £20m in a state-of-the-art Category 1 footballing centre as part of its training facility in Beckenham.

Church advertises for a journalist

A KENT church is advertising for a full-time journalist, in what is believed to be the first appointment of its kind.

The Bishop of Tonbridge said that the decline of local newspapers meant that the link with local communities was being lost.

The advert placed by St Margaret's in Rainham says: "Half of the stories you produce will focus on the local community – its people and groups, schools and new housing. The other half will focus on telling the story of the church, its people, purpose and history."

The Rev Nathan Ward, the vicar of St Margaret's, said: "We know that there are some fantastic things going on in Rainham which we need to celebrate and also some real challenges people are facing."

Bishops express concern for homeless policy

THE BISHOPS of Salisbury and Southwark have backed an open letter urging the government to extend the 'Everyone In' policy on the homeless.

The Museum of Homelessness (MoH), together with the Haringey Migrant Support Centre has written to the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick MP outlining their concerns with government plans to end the Everyone In policy, highlighting weaknesses in the current strategy to end homelessness.

In response to Covid-19, the Government launched the new scheme, which required local authorities to house rough

sleepers in emergency accommodation. They also announced £3.2 million in funding for local authorities to protect those who are homeless.

But the campaigners are calling on government to ensure that all homeless people will benefit from an extended Everyone In policy, including people with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' who make up a large proportion of the rough sleeping population but who are currently not set to be provided for under the plans.

In addition, they are calling on the government to urgently clarify what will happen to the large numbers of people who

are becoming newly homeless because of the ongoing economic impacts of Coronavirus.

They outline grave concerns regarding winter provision, which is set to be vastly reduced due to public health requirements this year. The church halls and community centres usually used to house the majority of people who are rough sleeping will no longer be an option due to public health measures. Without action now this could be a humanitarian disaster, leaving people sleeping rough at significant risk of exposure during the colder months.

Concern grows over Covid-19 imbalance

THE NEW report from Public Health England has sparked calls for action to reduce the imbalance of the impact of Covid-19 on minority groups.

The report revealed that death rates are twice as high in the most deprived communities. People from BAME communities are three times more likely to die from Covid-19 and more likely to be admitted to intensive care. Disproportionate numbers of BAME NHS and care staff have died.

The Shadow Health Secretary John Ashworth said that the report 'confirmed what we already knew: BAME people

are more at risk from this horrific disease.'

However, he added: "The report utterly fails to offer any meaningful action. This is a glaring abdication of responsibility, adding insult to injury in a week when thousands have taken to the streets to demand justice for BAME."

The Bishop of Loughborough, who has called for a comprehensive public enquiry following this week's report, echoed his comments. The Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani is also urging the Government to outline what steps will be taken to tackle racial prejudice more widely.

Mr Ashworth said: "As the brutal racist and sickening killing of George Floyd reverberates around the world, we stand in solidarity in condemnation – and we demand that systemic inequalities are confronted. Black lives matter. But that must be more than a slogan politicians tweet when convenient. We need bold action."

Meanwhile the Bishop of Loughborough said: "I welcome the delayed Public Health England (PHE) Disparities in the risk and outcomes of Covid-19 report which highlights what was already widely known - that the Covid-19 virus has laid bare

and highlighted existing inequalities within society, chiefly longstanding systemic inequalities.

"Once again many who are most marginalised are bearing the heaviest cost, amongst them people of BAME heritage" she said.

She added that the Government must outline clearly what steps are to be taken to tackle racial prejudice more widely and to challenge the culture of discrimination.

"I support the call from the coalition led by the Ubele Initiative for a full and comprehensive public enquiry into these disparities," she said.



Call for peace after attacks in Turkey

A CHRISTIAN TV station has called for peace and justice in Turkey following an outbreak of attacks on Christians there.

"We are deeply concerned by the recent rise in threats and attacks against Christians and minority communities," said Melih Ekener, the channel's Executive Director.

After an increase in attacks on church buildings and threats against Christians and minorities in Turkey, SAT-7 TÜRK has amplified their calls for peace and justice.

"We are also advocating for God's peace and tolerance at this time."

SAT-7 TÜRK's news outlet first reported an arson attempt on the Armenian Church in Bakırköy, Istanbul, on 10 May, sharing news from the Armenian Patriarchate that no damage or injury was caused.

This attack was followed by the vandalism of a second Istanbul church on 23 May, in which the building's cross was removed.

The Association of Protestant Churches issued a statement: "We reproach these acts directed against Christians and minorities, which are intended to create an environment of hatred and to make people feel insecure in their own homes and places of worship."

Irish language ruling prompts backlash

A PETITION for a grave memorial to bear an Irish Gaelic inscription has been granted on the grounds there is an accompanying translation.

Margaret Keane was buried in the burial ground of St. Giles, Exhall, but a request by her daughter for the gravestone to include the phrase "In ár gcroíthe go deo", was only authorised on the grounds that the memorial also carried the translation, "in our hearts forever".

Margaret Keane and her husband were both born in the Irish Republic but had made their life in the United Kingdom. They remained proud of their Irish heritage and were active in the work of the Gaelic Athletic Association both in Coventry and nationally.

Mrs Newey was against the suggestion that the words "in our hearts forever" should in English rather than Gaelic or that the words should be accompanied by a translation. She said this would over-complicate or crowd the memorial.

While Mrs Newey said that the use of Irish Gaelic is not

'The decision does not reflect any national Church of England policy'

intended as a political statement but is an important part of the Irish heritage of Mrs. Keane and of her husband, the judge questioned whether he could permit an inscription that would be 'incomprehensible to almost all its readers'.

He explained that not only would the message of the inscription not be understood but there is a risk of it being misunderstood, and that 'given the passions and feelings connected with the use of Irish Gaelic there is a sad risk that the phrase would be regarded as some form of slogan or that its inclusion without translation would of itself be seen as a political statement'.

"That is not appropriate and it follows that the phrase 'In ár gcroíthe go deo' must be accom-

panied by a translation which can be in a smaller font size."

The petition also sought a faculty for a memorial stone with a rough-hewn top bearing a Celtic Cross containing at its centre the emblem of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

However, the Church of England has said that 'the decision does not reflect any national Church of England policy'.

Pointing out that this was a judgment from the consistory court of the Diocese of Coventry, a spokesman said that 'the Irish language is an important part of the heritage of the Church of England'.

"Consistory court judgements may, with permission, be appealed to the Provincial Court of the Archbishop, in this case the Arches Court of Canterbury.

"The Irish language is an important part of the heritage of the Church of England. It was, after all, Irish speaking monks in Lindisfarne and beyond who played a central role in establishing the Church in what is now England," the official Church response stated.

Letters, page 6

Foreign Office appeal

THE GOVERNMENT is being urged to create a special budget to assist religious minorities uniquely affected by Covid-19.

The letter sent to Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad says that in recent months there have been new trends developing in the marginalisation of religious minorities 'that are closely related to the Covid-19 pandemic'.

The letter signed by parliamentarians including Lord Alton and Bishop Philip Mounstephen says: "In China, many Uyghurs and members of other Muslim-majority ethnic groups who were moved from the so-called 're-education camps' are subjected to forced labour, including forced transfer to other cities and regions, exposing them to the threat of contracting Covid-19.

"In Myanmar, Rohingya Muslims and Christians are displaced as a result of military attacks and are often denied access to adequate medical care," the letter says.

The letter also points out that 'frontline sanitary workers, who are predominantly from the Christian community, are at increased risk of contracting Covid-19 as they are not equipped with protective gear'.

They also raised concerns about Pakistan's failure to address minority concerns.

Coming out of lockdown in Bangalore

Vinay Samuel continues his diary from Divya Shanthy Christian Community Services

THE UNLOCKING of the 10-week long lockdown began on 8 June. Last week revealed signs of hope and continuing challenges.

Most of the migrants from the central and northern states of India have returned to their home states. Our State officials finally began ensuring trains, food and water to the travellers. Groups of young volunteers (pictured) from different faith backgrounds monitored the migrants departing at the railway stations and bus terminals and ensured they were adequately provided for as they began their journeys.

We surveyed those who had lost their jobs and found they were construction workers, domestic help and in the cleaning industry. Most are returning to work this week. Our fear of large-scale unemployment among these daily wage earners and low wage employees is alleviated to a significant extent.

We are also encouraged that those who ran roadside vegetable, food and other stalls returned back to their micro enterprises. These are all women who show creativity, enterprise and resilience.

The signs of hope we notice are in the attitudes and actions of the people who are finding ways to earn and care for their families.

More groups, particularly Christian groups from within our State, are also



working with migrant groups who are returning. They share their concerns and involvement through WhatsApp groups incessantly. A few pastors are among them. I am concerned that some keep asking when they can share the gospel, suggesting that their main concern is evangelism. This is likely to invite opposition from people from the majority faith in our area.

Some of the most vulnerable continue to be motorised (auto) rickshaw drivers. A large number live in our part of Bangalore with its affordable rents for low-income families. They live on their daily earnings, which have reduced by 60-70 per cent. We are finding ways to support them with school fees and a meal for their children.

Restaurants and hotels will open with a few services. Those who worked in this sector as daily wage/low-paid labour will still struggle to find employment.

Poor and low-income families have many needs. Colleen and I tend to focus exclusively on our service to them. We do not address the needs of the middle class and those comfortably well off. In the past three weeks I became very aware of the needs of the elderly lonely. We try to keep in touch with them by phone at least once a week. Some have no family in India and others have no family in Bangalore. They have been isolated in their homes for 10 weeks.

A civil servant in his early 80s who retired from a very senior position in the country broke curfew, drove and came to see me in the late evening last week. He did not feel he could share his fears with his only son who lives in the United States. After an hour of conversation on the state of the country, a glass of wine and a prayer he left for his home. I know more than 20 such people in Bangalore but cannot keep in touch with more than

two. Bangalore continues to be the home for pensioners and few ministries address their needs.

Our work of training pastors of growing independent churches among the Dalit people resumes this week. They have faced loss of income but their congregations have remained intact. They need advice and encouragement on how to minister to people who face much insecurity. Some will be part of the 30 million who economists suggest will fall back into abject poverty.

Since Easter I have been preaching about how Christ's resurrection and ascension has elevated humanity into heaven and eternity. Yet some of our people now face the prospect of losing some of the human dignity they achieved in the past decade as they slide into poverty.

They know they will have the fullest possible dignity when they reach heaven. However, they need human dignity both in time and eternity: that is what we believe the Gospel promises and we strive for as we minister.

New guidelines announced by the Government for churches restrict gatherings to less than 50 people. The suggested number is 25 and churches are encouraged to have services outdoors. Clergy should not administer bread and wine directly. The over-65s are discouraged from attending services. We are trying to find creative ways to follow the guidelines and also craft our meetings so that we can experience the fellowship the Holy Spirit makes possible.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our offices are closed due to the Coronavirus outbreak, but you can send an E-mail to letters@churchnewspaper.com.

Tweet at [@churchnewspaper](https://twitter.com/churchnewspaper) or leave a message on our Facebook page

If you are sending letters by e-mail, please include a street address. NB: Letters may be edited

Denigration

Sir, The Irish are an island people whose history seems older than history itself. For better or worse we have our own culture, traditions, and language.

A long time past our nearest neighbour invaded and subjugated, and over some hundreds of years laid waste much of that.

The absence of empathy displayed in a ruling by one of your QC, in the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Coventry, is a reminder of how your people denigrated ours, and how some still won't miss an opportunity to hinder our ways wherever they are found.

If five words of loving and respectful affection represent a threat solely because they exist in a language that your ancestors attempted to erase, as part of the tradition of a people that your ancestors sought to eradicate, and are such a threat to the order of your society then it is your society – and its values – which is broken. The Irish still stand, and we accept and respect guests and visitors, and we do what we can to accommodate and to get on together.

Though many of us are beyond masterful users of your language, we still have our own. Tá sí fós againn. It is still with us, battered and bruised admittedly, but for those of us for whom it is the preferred language it is the language in which we feel, love, and show our highest respect.

If being English can only be achieved by the denigration of things of Gaelic tradition, then please, if you do finally leave the European Union, it is better to also leave the places where Gaelic languages reside. Most people there do not wish to leave: please respect that they are your neighbours, not your property.

But whether you stay or go, tabhair meas do teaghlach Uí Catháin: give respect to the Keane family.

The Coventry Diocese decision is not alone racist, it is petty; it is not at all great, Britain.

Is mise le meas,
Fachtna Ó Rua,
Éire

Confused

Sir, In his letter under the title Evolutionary Theology (5 June), Colin Bricher seems to confuse changing the text of scripture on the one hand with developing our understanding of it on the other. Yes, Matthew does quote Jesus as saying that he has not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets (5:17), but of course he also quotes him as saying several times (later in the same chapter) with reference to the Old Testament, "You have heard it said ... but I tell you". If that's not an attempt to move his hear-

ers on in their theology I don't know what would be.

John Humphreys,
Tadworth

Integrated theology

Sir, Theology should be done in an integrated, bottom up-top down way, combining the insights of both Schleiermacher and Karl Barth, if it is not to ignore the lived reality of those at the coal face of human suffering.

Attitudes towards slavery demonstrate its evolutionary nature. Gregory of Nyassa defined slavery as an unpardonable offence against God as early as 370AD. His elder brother and fellow bishop, Basil, regarded the institution as damnable but necessary, for how otherwise were those of inferior intelligence and capabilities to live? Britain and the United States profited from this convenient and widely accepted understanding, until the Abolitionists returned to biblical first principles of what it means to be human (Gen. 1). In time, Apartheid was dismantled and Civil Rights enacted, though racism has tragically yet to be eradicated in the Christian west.

When it came to slavery, and to women, revelation and upbringing pulled Paul in opposite directions (Tom Holland). In his instincts and prejudices, Paul remained recognisably the product of his Pharisaic schooling and so he readily equated all same-sex relationships with idolatry. Even so, he preached the primacy of Love (1 Corinthians 13) and accepted that the Law of the God of Israel might be inscribed on the human heart (Romans 1:20), thereby adopting the Greek concept of natural law and enshrining the Stoic concept of conscience at the heart of his gospel.

His correspondence is not consistent but this is a feature of the Bible too. Jesus himself came not to abolish the Old Testament but to fulfil it and so a Spirit-driven theology will necessarily be progressive, in anticipation of a realised eschatology. It sadly took a painfully long time for the Church to follow Gregory's lead on slavery.

Serena Lancaster,
London W11

New fund

Sir, As a BAME community, we have been very moved by what is going on around the world and we have been coming up with practical solutions to combat structural racism and discrimination in our society.

The result has been the creation of a Minority Fund to help Young BAME individuals and Legal Centres across the UK fight against injustice.

We hope that our fund can carry on this energy that the Black Lives Matter movement has created before we get back to normal life.

Slydon Lungu,
www.minorityfunduk.org

Inappropriate advice

Sir, The latest advice from the WHO to wear a mask in all public places may be appropriate for city streets but it is wholly inappropriate for country areas. This will only result in resentment or refusal to comply and encourage people to ignore other laws which may be helpful.

Jonathan Longstaff,
Buxted, E Sussex

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND NEWSPAPER

Leader Comment

The Church must set an example on equality

The Black Lives Matter protests in cities throughout Europe was sparked by the death of a black American, George Floyd, at the hands of police. This proved to be a trigger for protest on behalf of black Americans in the USA. The feeling was that racism, and even institutional racism, is as serious an issue on this side of the Atlantic.

Britain likes to pride itself on the belief that it is one of the most tolerant and open societies in the world, and that attempts to vilify it in this way are motivated by other causes. But the weekend's protests have demonstrated that minority communities are finding their voice and highlighting the injustices that have for too long gone unnoticed.

And this does not just affect the streets of London or Bristol: the issue of racism is keenly felt across the nations of the European Union. Certainly there have been laws enacted to outlaw racial discrimination but the shadow of racial prejudice lingers on. And nor is it an issue for the wider society only. The Church has its own house to set in order.

As we marked the Archbishop of York laying down his crozier last weekend, the departure of Dr John Sentamu from one of the highest offices in the Church leaves a gap. It is, as our writers this week comment, somewhat inexplicable that the number of other Church leaders from the BAME community can be counted on less than the fingers of one hand. Perhaps it is time to examine the reasons behind this fact.

The Bishop of Loughborough makes a call in our edition this week for a review into the Church's record. She concedes it would be 'painful', but it is nevertheless incumbent on the Church to give a moral lead on this most sensitive of subjects. As we have been preparing this week's edition our reporters have heard from many of instances of racism within the Church. It is long past the time for such behaviour to end, and Christians to be setting an example. Speaking up on behalf the BAME community is right and honourable, and is perhaps the least that we can do, but there must be more demonstrable examples of *all* Anglicans being treated equitably. This is not simply an aspirational hope for church and society: it is indeed the teaching of the Bible that 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.

Striving for equality is at the heart of the Gospel message and proves that 'black lives matter'. Jesus is the role model for blacks and whites, returning to him will bring peace and love in a time of frustration and perplexity.

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Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani

We need to look at our own record

On Monday morning, two weeks since the murder of George Floyd, I, together with several colleagues, took the knee outside Leicester Cathedral. We knelt in silence for 8 minutes 46 seconds, the time it took Floyd to die as the police officer knelt on his neck. Ours was a representative action on behalf of the Leadership Team and the diocese at a time when we are mindful of restrictions on gatherings. We could have filled Cathedral Gardens many times over and I was conscious of being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses as we prayed for racial justice and equality.

Why should we take this action now and why are so many others – people of all colours and ethnicities – only now joining in protests and demonstrations in this country and elsewhere? Surely, the death of George Floyd, shocking though it was, is but one example of the discrimination that has long blighted society, its dehumanising toxicity impacting structures and organisations?

Well, in many ways present actions do come far too late and for that, repentance and reparation is required. But sometimes there are moments in history when one event becomes a turning point. Events converge and that moment becomes a catalyst for long and lasting change. A line is crossed and there is no going back. The moment when Rosa Parks took her seat on that bus in Alabama all those years ago in 1955 is another such example. Only time will tell whether Floyd's death will be such a moment but I hope and pray so.

Floyd's death came during a time when Covid-19 has laid bare existing inequalities within society, chiefly longstanding and systemic inequalities. The Public Health England report *Disparities in the risk of outcomes of Covid-19* has exposed that once again many who are most marginalised are bearing the heaviest cost, among them people of BAME heritage. Whilst further research is needed to understand the underlying scientific causes of why this virus impacts some more than



others, I am among a growing number of voices calling for a public inquiry into the evident disparities and asking Government to outline clearly what steps will be taken to tackle racial prejudice more widely and challenge the culture of discrimination.

Celebrating diversity has always been part of God's ecology. It was there from the start and will be there at the end. It is a Christian imperative, running like a thread throughout Scripture. Right at the beginning, the stories of creation (including the birth of humanity, male and female, made in the image of God), say something about God's love for diversity; God's self-expression is an act of glorious variety.

All through the Old Testament there are reminders about the value placed on all God's children, not just the

as well as a
**Government inquiry
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consideration within
the Church of
England**

people of Israel, and of the responsibility of those with power to respect the human dignity of all. Indeed in Genesis 18 Abraham is visited by God who appears in the guise of three strangers. A reminder that we encounter God in the face of those who are other and unfamiliar.

As the law was established, throughout the Pentateuch, the place of foreigners and outsiders was recognised (eg, Leviticus 19:33-4). The stories of Ruth and Naomi, of Esther, of King Cyrus of Persia who honoured the Jews in his kingdom, each demonstrate that respecting racial diversity and rejoicing in difference takes us beyond familial and tribal ties. The poetry of Isaiah dignifies those whom society undermines. The account of Jonah reveals a compassionate God showing love for the people of Nineveh despite the prophet's plea for judgement without mercy.

In the New Testament Jesus is of course the most profound example of one who reaches out to strangers, gentiles, outcasts, those who were considered different, acknowledging their humanity,

treating them with dignity and re-instating them to their rightful place within the community. The writings and theology of Paul, best known perhaps in Galatians, underline that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, "for all of you are one in Christ Jesus". All this takes us eventually to the vision of the New Creation in Revelation where all nations are brought together before the throne of God, equal before the Almighty.

Celebrating and respecting racial diversity is apparent across the whole vista of the Bible and today too the Holy Spirit inspires us to continue working towards a time when God's kingdom will show no partiality; where all colours and races are honoured and celebrated. That's why I believe that as well as a Government inquiry now is also the time for open and transparent consideration within the Church of England. Such a review may well be painful but is overdue. It will expose the extent of racism that has seeped into our structures and organisation, and will enable us effectively to address issues and move purposefully into a future with greater justice and equality.

Thirty years ago the opportunity to create a Commission for Black and Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns was squandered when the *Faith in the City* report led instead to a Committee that (despite great efforts and much hard work) simply had less power and impact than a Commission would have had. Enough is now enough. This time, let's not miss the chance to do the right thing, begin making amends and find a better way.

But a brief word of warning. When it comes to matters of justice and equality, it is in the end not possible to address individual causes in isolation. If we truly want to be a Church where diversity is celebrated, then we must find ways of addressing other pressing questions including those around class, gender, sexuality and disability. Until we grasp the nettle we will forever fall short of our true calling.





Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy

The last dance?

On Sunday 7 June, I watched with some emotion Dr John Sentamu lay down his crozier on the high altar of York Minster, marking his final act as Archbishop of York. This simple gesture not only brought to an end his archiepiscopal ministry, but it also marked the end of 25 years of history in the Church of England. The first black archbishop of York, he was also the last remaining of only two diocesan bishops from the global majority to ever serve in the Church of England.

I cannot claim to have known Archbishop Sentamu well enough to offer any meaningful assessment of his character. However, like many, I have loved his passion for a gospel preoccupied with issues of social justice, his enthusiasm for a Church confident in her mission, and his commitment to equip and release others in ministry. I was struck by his ability to command attention through the sheer force of his charismatic personality. I was often moved by his ambition to help the Church become less parochial. For that and more, I give thanks.

I recall watching images of his enthronement service in York Minster, alive with drums and dancers. It then seemed to augur a new season of hope for the Church, and usher in the change I had heard so many black, Asian and minority ethnic Anglicans speak of. At the time, I was not an Anglican and the thought of becoming one and serving as a priest in the CofE was not even a remote prospect in my mind. Looking back, I often wonder whether that moment might have unleashed in me a world of unsuspected possibilities. For the young black man I was then, he represented the kind of iconography that made it possible for me to one day imagine myself becoming a priest in the Church of England.

Fifteen years on, it seems like the drums have fallen silent and the dance has come to an end. While it is true that significant strides have been made in recent years with the appointments of more people of BAME heritage in some of the



We need to listen to the protest that demands more than simple access to the room. It demands a seat at the table and, more so, it requests an equal voice

senior roles within the CofE, the landscape remains tragically sparse. With

Archbishop. As I followed his ministry over the years, I was often struck by the sense of isolation and the loneliness he must have experienced as a singular BAME voice in an otherwise white institution. To me, he epitomises the experience of a host of people from the global diaspora who are continually expected to singlehandedly shoulder the burden of ethnic diversity and inclusion. As my friend Dr Elizabeth Henry says: "There is something perverse expecting those who are oppressed and excluded to be the architects of eliminating their oppression and exclusion."

In recent weeks, we have witnessed, in the global wave of people who have taken to the streets, some extraordinary acts of moral courage and selfless commitment to change, justice, and humanity. Both our Archbishops have boldly stated the part we, as a church, are to play in creating and fostering the environment that will allow us to bring to an end the structural and systemic expressions of racism that permeates every strata of the Church of England.

It is encouraging to hear an increasing number of senior Church leaders advocate radical change. As we heed their call to lament and repentance, we need to insist that these calls do not ring with the hollowness of countless similar calls in the past. We need to ensure that they do not sound in dissonance with the anguish and unrelenting protest from a host of black and brown lives dying to be heard in the pews and pulpits of our churches, in the chambers of our Synods, in the corridors of Lambeth Palace, and in the

House of Bishops.

We need to listen to the chorus of discontent rising from our theological institutions, towards our mission agencies, and in all our governance structures. We need to listen to the protest that demands more than simple access to the room. It demands a seat at the table and, more so, it requests an equal voice.

Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded a divided nation of the imperative for swift action. Over half a century later, I believe that Dr King's words have renewed significance for our Church. We would do well to heed his words and act swiftly to address and redress the painful legacy of the structural and systemic racism that continues to plague our institution. For, as he said: "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there 'is' such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action."

My prayer is that there continues to be an aliveness that persists and insists through the violence, devastation and loss, and thrives against the odds. I pray that we may be imbued with the audacity of living that compels us to build the true, the good, and the beautiful.

I pray that we may again hear the sounds of drums resonating with accents of hope, and join in the dance.

The Rev Canon Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, is BAME Mission and Ministry Enabler, Leicester Cathedral





Peterson Feital

I never experienced racism until I came to Britain

I was thrilled when Prince Harry announced his engagement to Meghan Markle. However, I was not prepared for the undercurrent of racism in British society that would soon become a tsunami, nor the torrent of racial abuse that Meghan was about to endure.

And over the last week or two this undercurrent of racism has exploded across the world following the death of George Floyd and the reaction of the American President to it.

This weekend campaigners tore down a statue in Bristol that was erected to remember Edward Colston, a prominent 17th Century slave trader, who has been a source of controversy in the city for many years. A Bristol MP had called for the statue's removal as early as 2018. Then, Thangam Debbonaire, the Labour MP for Bristol West, said the city "should not be honouring people who benefited from slavery".

Perhaps things are changing, even here in the UK, because in recent years the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Brexit has not helped any immigrant to feel safe – even if you are a royal. Indeed, many of us from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are now feeling a tangible and palpable fear.

Whilst this sense of not belonging in the UK is not new, especially for BAME individuals, it now seems that the issue of racism can no longer be avoided. However, what is terrifying is that the media is reinforcing behaviour and language that is unfortunately prevalent in society at large. It is normalising racist bullying against individuals and communities throughout the UK and is affecting our view of "the other".

Since the 1970s, sociologists, media psychologists and other researchers have been looking at ways of measuring the impact of the media opinion on public attitudes, especially with regards to race. One of the most influential research



Picture: Dave Hogan

studies in this field was conducted by the European Research Centre on Migration, and is entitled "Ethnic Relations, 'Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media'". The research investigated how narratives regarding race were presented, and then measured the rise in levels of racism instigated afterwards in the public and in large institutions. In Britain, it looked particularly at how institutions deal mostly negatively with race and fail in securing inclusion.

Last October Steven Spielberg released a documentary, *Why we hate* in which he explores with scientists, sociologists and historians how the media creates destructive narratives that feed on people's fear of 'the other', leading to devastating consequences. It raised for me the question: "who holds the media accountable?" and led me to conclude that institutional and public racism has not been challenged nearly enough.

Unfortunately, not all of us have the letter of solidarity that Meghan had from 72 female MPs supporting her in her suing of British tabloids for their misleading news and colonial undertone. This support for her is reassuring for us, but most of us are just

anonymous faces in the crowd and so more needs to be done – we need to start calling out on racism ourselves, in our own communities and workplaces.

The truth is that we foreigners are easily treated as a commodity.

It feels as though we are a visible 'good thing' when institutions choose to display our faces for the purpose of displaying 'diversity'. But, this is the issue: "diversity" only means "one can have a seat at the table", whereas "belonging" means "one who has a voice that is listened to and respected". Belonging means being allowed to be who we are individually and being respected with our differences.

I have come to realise that people think that diversity and

inclusion are the same. I saw the drawing illustrated below on social media, illustrating what diversity (here marked 'integration') and inclusion look like. I think, at best, most people believe that integration is the same as inclusion, which it clearly is not.

This narrative that "Britain will be overrun by migrants" who are "ready to steal jobs, drain the system, and stretch the waiting time for doctor's appointments" needs to be challenged. The truth looks very different. A simple search on the Global Citizen website gives some facts on immigration and migrants. We each have different stories, journey and scars. It isn't true to say that every foreigner is draining UK's resources. It would seem that individuals, organisations and institutions need to learn how to listen without bias.

I, for example, failed to listen to the Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, to whom I owe an apology. In 2016, Rose went on record in an interview for the BBC reporting institutional racism in the Church of England; I refuted that on twitter saying that I did not agree. I am ashamed of myself for doing this. I now realise I was in denial because I had never experienced racism until I moved to Britain. It took me time to realise that what I was experiencing was in fact institutional racism.

I did not want to believe that the country that gave William Wilberforce to the world, whose faith was the catalyst to set many slaves free, had forgotten his legacy.

So, what are the media and the Church institutions doing about such instances of racism? For the Church of England's part, when I spoke to senior leaders and managers I was told to just "keep my head down", and reminded that I did not want to get on the "wrong side of those who would ultimately write a report that would impact my future".

I appreciate that to report racism when you are talking

about it in the form of a one-to-one scenario with your boss is hard to quantify. But what is not right is that after disclosing this information through the appropriate channels, no one seemed to care.

In common with other victims of abuse I was led to believe that it was my fault, and that it was a personality issue, which to this day I believe was unfair and biased. The structure and safeguarding for people like me need to change because by not having someone to report to and to dialogue with just caused me even more pain.

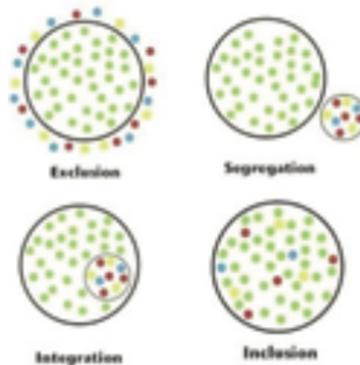
In a pastoral and theological sense, the Bible is very clear what the treatment of the "foreigner" is to be like. I could not put this in better words than the Associate Professor Jarvis J Williams, who asserts in an article written for *Christian Today* entitled "Jesus, Deliver Us from this Racist Evil Age" that: 'We believe in a Saviour who redeems, a Spirit who reconciles, and a gospel that is the antithesis of white supremacy.'

The article articulates that in Christ, every human has value, everyone is called to belong, and racism must be fought against.

The power to fight racism lies in the Christian community being able to model and shape acceptance and inclusion. Christ's example is clear; Jesus never placed institutions above people. He confronted and challenged religious structures that didn't offer a place for people to belong, regardless of their race. Therefore, this must be our measurement.

We must be a Church that operates like a family who welcomes, blesses and supports its members; which does not accept racism; and who calls out those who perpetrate it, providing a safe place for all to belong.

The Rev Peterson Feital is Missioner to the Creative Industries and Chief Executive – The Haven + London
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Tim Livesey

A development that needs our attention

I cannot remember a period of such uncertainty and distress for so many people. So many unthinkable events have unfolded in the last few years: our collective 'no' to continued EU membership; years of paralysis and recrimination in our house of elected representatives. Then as we emerged from a general election into what appeared to be the promise of a more stable political period, putting personal politics aside, Coronavirus turns our world completely upside down. Now we look on in shock and horror as mayhem and violent scenes of racial disintegration unfold in the United States.

This is a time of hurting, distress, self-doubt, uncertainty and fear for the future. Does anyone know anybody who is not feeling this? We are at risk in so many ways. Our collective capacity to think things through together – our differences complicating but also enriching our self-awareness – is imperilled. Inevitably, so too is our sense of perspective.

These are not easy times to be a political leader, or any other kind of leader. There are so many pressing and urgent concerns to deal with. How to prioritise, to find time, to be strong when strength is required, flexible when more time is needed? How to be compassionate as well as firm; to act decisively but also wisely, and with justice? How to know when, and to whom, to listen in the cacophony of social media comment and opinion, so much of it ill-considered and over-blown?

People in the Middle East will not be as shocked or ill-prepared as us. They have grown wearily familiar with much of the above, manifested in different ways, many of them violent, over decades. Which is not to say they do not experience the same feelings of distress, fear, loss of hope or expectation and uncertainty, which we are experiencing.

While the Coronavirus pandemic has turned our world upside down, there is another development that could be even more devastating



Amidst the maelstrom of events competing for our attention in broadcast and social media, this issue hardly features

They absolutely do. But they have had to live with it much longer. Lockdowns, isolation, police brutality, shamefully complacent or cruel executive orders and so much more

besides, is not exceptional: it's commonplace.

In the midst of this overwhelming confusion we need to pay careful attention to one particular development that requires of our political and faith leaders clear thinking and decisive action. Right now it may, at best, be writ small on your list of next things to focus on. Seen from Embrace the Middle East, and from the perspective of so many of our partners in the region, in particular in Israel and Palestine, it is anything but. Amidst the maelstrom of events competing for our attention in broadcast and social media, this issue hardly features.

In January this year

President Trump unveiled his long heralded, so-called, 'Deal of the Century', formally entitled From Peace to Prosperity. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu greeted it with unalloyed enthusiasm. "An opportunity such as this comes once in history and cannot be missed". It's not hard to see why. It completely rewrites the rule-book on issues such as land, sovereignty, the status of refugees, Jerusalem as well as the core principle of negotiation – participation and consensus. It has been roundly condemned by the Palestinian leadership and deplored by Christian leaders in the Holy Land, the UK and elsewhere.

Here's the rub: it has always been accepted that a resolution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine is dependent on a comprehensive settlement, agreed by both sides. We know how intractable and unsuccessful have been attempts to bring such agreement about over decades with disastrous consequences for millions of people, and prolonged anguish and suffering on both sides. The situation we face now is entirely different.

One party has interpreted the Trump plan as a green light to move ahead with proposals within the plan that should not,

Continued overleaf



Middle East changes

Continued from previous page

and cannot legally, morally, or in any other way, be justified unless there is mutual agreement between two peoples, or the parties legitimately representing them. That party is the newly formed coalition government of Israel led by Benjamin Netanyahu. The agreement signed by members of the coalition that came into existence on 17 May included a commitment to pass legislation paving the way to the unilateral annexation by the State of Israel of the lands conditionally earmarked under the Trump Plan for possible transfer of sovereignty. These lands are part of territory occupied by Israel following the Six Day War in 1967. It is illegal under international law to settle on occupied land, let alone formally annex it.

The land earmarked and subject, from 1 July, to the threat of annexation includes East Jerusalem, all but a minuscule fraction of the land settled illegally under international law (Israel disputes this but the international community has

been unwavering, until now, on this issue) on the West Bank, as well as the fertile and strategically significant Jordan valley. The US has already declared its support for Israel's claim to sovereignty over Syrian land occupied in the same war – the Golan Heights.

Why is this such an important moment demanding clear thinking and decisive action? If this annexation goes ahead hopes of a two-state solution go with it. Such a clear breach of international law will require a coordinated and firm response from the international community, led by the UN Security Council. The UK will have to be part of an international response that could have severe, and many Israelis believe, disastrous consequences for Israel. With the death of the two-state solution an entirely new problem arises – how the equal rights of Palestinians and Israelis can be guaranteed within a Jewish democratic state. No one knows the answer but everyone who follows this situation knows it cannot be ignored.

In short, amidst all the other



challenges of this dramatic and uncertain moment there is one that we should not ignore: not only for the sake of the millions of Palestinians and Israelis who will reap a whirlwind, but for the credibility of a fragile international order based on law and universally recognised rights. The current US administration may not

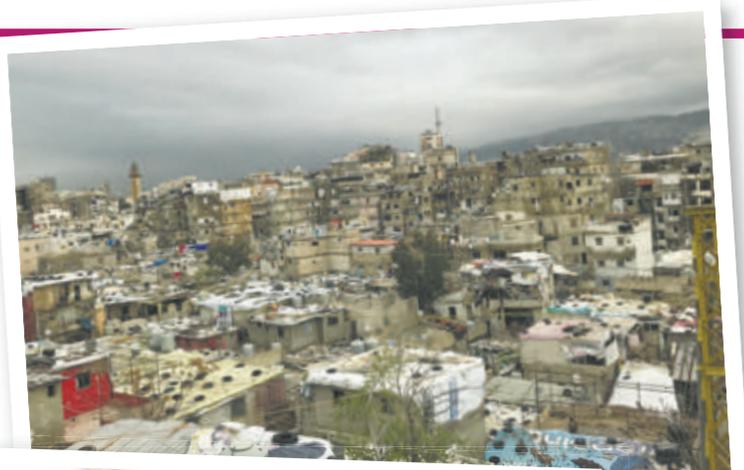
understand the importance of this pivotal moment; we must.

As Christians, we have been asked by our sisters and brothers in the Holy Land to say a clear, firm no to annexation. It must not happen. We have a small window of opportunity to make their, and our, voice heard. In doing so we will be standing alongside many

Jews in the UK, the US and elsewhere, as well as Israelis of Jewish and Arab/Palestinian descent who see through this glass darkly. They are clear that annexation is wrong. On this issue we must find a way to think straight and speak true.

Tim Livesey is CEO of Embrace the Middle East

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A culture war we don't need or want

We are importing a US-style culture war into Britain where it is neither needed nor wanted. And the storm of controversy over the George Floyd killing is an example of this. It is welcome that there are protests over the terrible death of George Floyd even thousands of miles across the Atlantic. But in the UK we must confront our own problems of racism against the backdrop of colonialism, rather than the different scars of segregation in the US.

And in confronting our own real problems of racism, let's dismiss the radical troublemakers (largely white) who are vandalising statues, defacing monuments, and attacking the police.

It is possible to be against racism – indeed, institutional racism – and still deplore mob violence on the streets. It is possible to regret the vandalism of a statue and simultaneously deplore the fact that philanthropists like Edward Colston have been honoured in Bristol without enough explicit recognition being given to how they benefitted from the barbarity and inhumanity of the slave trade.

But in the week that we say farewell to the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, it is worth marking the fact that the Church of England's own problem with racism is now even more conspicuous than ever. For too long the Church of England has been able to deceive itself that its problems of racism were nothing to worry about because it had a black Archbishop – John Sentamu one of the doughtiest and most prophetic campaigners.

But at February's General Synod, Justin Welby had to admit that the Church of England remained institutionally racist. To my memory, the Church of England first admitted that it was 'institutionally racist' in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry with the publication of the 'Seeds of Hope' report in 1991. Since then the Committee on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns has highlighted this problem roughly every five years or so.

And indeed there has been progress. One black friend has told me that he was called a 'monkey' in theological college in the 1950s and 1960s. The

Windrush generation was explicitly made to feel unwelcome in the Church of England. And back then it would have been impossible to imagine having an Archbishop who came to Britain seeking asylum from the repressive rule of Idi Amin, or a black woman as Bishop of Dover.

But even recently senior clergy have faced problems in the Church of England. In 2002, an anonymous evangelical clergyman interviewed by *The Church of England Newspaper* for a survey on who should be the next Archbishop of Canterbury described Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali as a 'Paki-Papist'. At that time there was a notable campaign against Bishop Nazir-Ali that was racist in intent.

In 2012 after Archbishop Rowan Williams' resignation, one of the Bishops anonymously briefed a journalist that John Sentamu was the wrong person to take over in Canterbury "... because he is quite tribal and the African chief thing comes through."

A retired bishop similarly commented: "There is something in Sentamu which retains his African views and approach, which can be at one time an asset and another time can be a problem."

Recently, a 29-year-old black clergyman, Augustine Tanner-Ihm, tweeted excerpts from a rejection email he had received after applying for a curacy position. The email stated that "the demographic of the parish is monochrome white working class, where you might feel uncomfortable."

We owe it to Archbishop Sentamu, to this young clergyman, and to the many people (especially the young) who are rightly impatient for racism to finally end, to bring change to the Church of England. While overt racism is dying away there are no signs that we are paying attention to most subtle forms of prejudice.

There must be no place for lazy and dismissive stereotyping. And we must be conscious and deliberate in our approach. We cannot just hope for the best. If we want to have a church that is the body of Christ we must actively reach out, nurture black vocations and then purposefully value the ministry of people from ethnic



minority backgrounds.

In the space of a few years, the House of Bishops became a

place where women are suddenly numerous. Let us do more than just hope and pray

that there is a similar revolution as far as race is concerned. Let us make it so.



The dangers of the safety-first approach

It now looks unlikely that children will return to school in decent numbers until September. I have been saddened by the timidity of the government, the unions and sadly so many teachers and parents. As a primary school governor, I admire the hard and dedicated work of teachers in the past few months combining the new discipline of online teaching with child care responsibilities for key workers' children. But I despair of the reluctant approach across the board to welcome back as many children as possible into the classroom.

It is a matter of assessing risk sensibly. In many areas of the country there is very little community transmission of the virus. Children seem to be extremely safe, and are therefore probably unlikely to pass the virus to teachers or parents. Sadly the overwhelming approach to balancing risks emphasises the priority of 'safety' above all other factors.

The safety-first approach to risk assessments has over the years led to fewer adventurous activities, and a reduction in school trips and experiences and less contact sports at a younger age. This has been damaging to boys' education because young boys struggle when they are tethered to desks.

And the safety-first approach discourages children from learning how to successfully manage risks for themselves. I believe this approach to safety makes people more anxious and less able to cope with the exigencies, emergencies and disasters that life throws at all of us.

It is time to reject the emphasis that is placed on 'safety' in favour of living life with the rewards of well-taken risk. As Christians, we know that when we take up the cross, we leave 'safety' behind us in pursuit of an open adventure. This does not mean that we take 'silly risks' but we accept that everything entails a risk, and that the 'safety first' approach is joyless and life-limiting.



Collect of the Week First Sunday after Trinity

*God of truth,
help us to keep your law of love
and to walk in ways of wisdom,
that we may find true life
in Jesus Christ your Son.*

The "law of love" is so simple yet utterly profound. It is the final command that Christ gave his disciples, indeed the only command that he gave them during his final hours with them – that they are to love each other as he has loved them (John 13:34).

Jesus called this his "new commandment" as it brings together the two Mosaic Laws of loving God with all our "heart, soul, strength and mind" and "loving our neighbours as ourselves" (Luke 10:27). In so doing, he is calling us to love to a new standard – his standard. We are to love as he loves us. In doing so, the whole world will know that we are his disciples.

So why do we find this so difficult?

Why can't this "law of love" be something that we all keep as our daily goal and mantra? Because our disagreements and differences get in the way. Because we have differing understandings about what we perceive to be right and wrong – because we have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge and think that we, and we alone, know the truth.

But knowledge is one thing, wisdom is quite another. We need wisdom to know how to deal with difference, and wisdom to know how to respond to situations that are beyond our control. So, it is only when we live with both grace and wisdom that we will find true fullness of life.

How can we then set our hearts to focus on loving and our minds to focus on seeking wisdom in such a way that builds bridges and not barriers?

THE REGISTER

Friday, 12 June 2020

Newark (The Episcopal Church): The Rt Rev Carlye J Hughes
Ankole (Uganda): The Rt Rev Sheldon Frederick Mwesigwa
Bible in a Year: Day 164 – Ezra 1-3, Psalm 133, I Corinthians 8

Saturday, 13 June 2020

Newcastle (Australia): The Rt Rev Dr Peter Stuart
Newcastle (England): The Rt Rev Christine Hardman
Day 165 – Ezra 4-6, Psalm 134, I Corinthians 9

Sunday, 14 June 2020

Pray for the Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma). The Most Rev Stephen Than Myint Oo - Archbishop of Myanmar and Bishop of Yangon
Day 166 – Enjoy hearing the Scriptures read aloud in church

Monday, 15 June 2020

Ngbo (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Godwin A. Awoke
Antananarivo (Indian Ocean): The Rt Rev Samoela Jaona Ranarivelo
Jalingo (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Foreman Nedison

Day 167 – Ezra 7-9, Psalm 135, I Corinthians 10

Tuesday, 16 June 2020

Niagara (Canada): The Rt Rev Susan Jennifer Anne Bell
Antsiranana (Indian Ocean): The Rt Rev Theophile Botomazava
Jamaica & The Cayman Islands (West Indies): The Rt Rev Howard Gregory
Day 168 – Ezra 10, Psalm 136, I Corinthians 11

Wednesday, 17 June 2020

Niassa (Southern Africa): The Rt Rev Vicente Msossa
Aotearoa (Aotearoa NZ & Polynesia): The Most Rev Don Tamihere
Day 169 – Nehemiah 1-3, Psalm 137, I Corinthians 12

Thursday, 18 June 2020

Nicaragua (Central America): The Rt Rev Sturdie Downs
Argentina (South America): The Most Rev Gregory James Venables
Argyll & The Isles (Scotland): The Rt Rev Kevin Pearson
Day 170 – Nehemiah 4-6, Psalm 138, I Corinthians 13

Please send any items for inclusion on this page to cen@churchnewspaper.com or to The Church of England Newspaper, 14 Great College Street, London, SW1P 3RX

APPOINTMENTS

New Dean of Bristol

The Rev Canon Dr Amanda (Mandy) Ford, Canon Chancellor and Director of Discipleship and Ministry in the Diocese of Southwark has been appointed Dean of Bristol following the appointment of the Very Rev Dr David Hoyle MBE as Dean of Westminster.

The Rev Gareth William Atha,

Vicar of the Elloe Stone Parishes (Lincoln) has been appointed as Vicar of the Benefice of Pickering with Lockton and Levisham (York).

The Rev Elizabeth Anne Cox,

Non Stipendiary Minister in the Benefice of The Six in Sittingbourne, with special responsibility for Stockbury, and of Chaplain at HMP Swaleside (Canterbury), to be Priest in Charge of St Barnabas and St Mary Magdalene, Gillingham, in the Diocese of Rochester.

The Rev Christopher Mark Davey,

Area Dean Braintree (deanery); Priest in Charge: Coggeshall w Marks Hall (St Peter-ad-Vincula, St Nicholas' Chapel); Cressing All Saints; Stisted All Saints w Bradwell juxta Coggeshall and Pattiswick (Chelmsford), to be Priest-in-Charge of Framlingham with Saxstead, Framlingham with Saxstead (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich).

The Rev Ruth Katherine Donegan-Cross,

Assistant Curate, St John and St Luke, Bilton, Harrogate, Diocese of Leeds, to be Incumbent, Holy Trinity in Ward End w Bordesley Green, Diocese of Birmingham.

The Rev Frances Eccleston,

Bishop's Interim Minister and Area Dean of Loughton (Sheffield), to be Priest in charge of Holy Trinity, Whaley Bridge and St James, Taxal (Chester).

The Rev Elizabeth (Liz) Claire Hassall,

Rector of the Benefices of Coxwold and Husthwaite, and Crayke with Brandsby and Yearsley (York) has been appointed as Priest-in-Charge of the York City Centre Group comprising York St Olave, York St Denys, York St Helen with St Martin, and All Saints Pavement (York).

The Rev David (Dave) Hendra,

Assistant Curate, Holy Trinity Leicester, to be Associate Priest within the Mitre Benefice (Interim Post for 18 months) (Norwich).

The Rev David Hildred,

Permission to Officiate in the benefice of All Saints, Darfield (Sheffield), to be Team Rector of Kidderminster East (Worcester).

The Rev Elizabeth Ann Peachey

Assistant Curate, Knowle Parish Church, Diocese of Birmingham, moving to Permission to Officiate, Diocese of Birmingham.

The Rev Elise Michelle Peterson,

Curate, Vale of Roding, to be Vicar, Rainham w Wennington (Chelmsford).

The Rev Catherine Sigrist,

has been appointed to the role of Priest in Charge of the King's Wood Benefice (Canterbury).

The Rev Nathan Wilson,

Team Missioner in the Ashford Town Parish, to be Children and Young People's Ministry Adviser for the Diocese of Canterbury.

The Rev Canon Stephen Wright,

Priest-in-Charge of the Quidenham Group Benefice, to be Bishop's Interfaith Adviser (Norwich).

RETIREMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

The Rev Margaret Baker,

Team Vicar, Rivers Team Ministry (Sheffield), to retire from 12 July.

The Rev Mike Bartlett,

will retire as Rector of the Redditch Christ the King Team on 31 July 2020 (Worcester).

The Rev Sandra Faith Emery,

Associate Priest of Minchinhampton with Box and Amberley Benefice (Gloucester), retired from 24 May.

LAY & OTHER APPOINTMENTS

The following people were due to be ordained Deacon at *Petertide in the Diocese of Worcester*. They will instead be licensed as Lay Ministers:

Claire Billington,

Lay Minister to St Leonard, Broughton Hackett; St Nicholas, Peopleton; St Kenelm, Upton Snodsbury and White Ladies Aston with Churchill and Spetchley.

Lindsey Coulthard,

Lay Minister to St Stephen, Barbourne.

Foluso Enwerem,

Lay Minister to Top Church, Dudley.

Jon Evans,

Lay Minister to Christchurch, Lye.

Jessica Fellows,

Lay Minister to All Saints, Worcester.

Christopher Henson,

Lay Minister to St John, Kidderminster.

Rosie Moss,

Lay Minister to St Nicholas, Warndon.

Kim Topham,

Lay Minister to St Leonard's Clent and St John the Baptist with St Saviour Hagley.

Carol Weston,

Lay Minister to Christ Church, Quarry Bank.

DEATHS

The Rev Brian Brown,

Non-stipendiary minister, Wallington (Holy Trinity) (St Patrick) Southwark 1985-1991; Curate, Wallington (Holy Trinity) (St Patrick) Southwark 1991-2000; Retired from 2000; Permission to Officiate Norwich from 2000, died on 27 May.

The Rev Canon David George Neville Clark,

Clergy with PTO: Coventry East (Coventry), died on 27 May.

The Rev Andrew Herbert Redding Thomas,

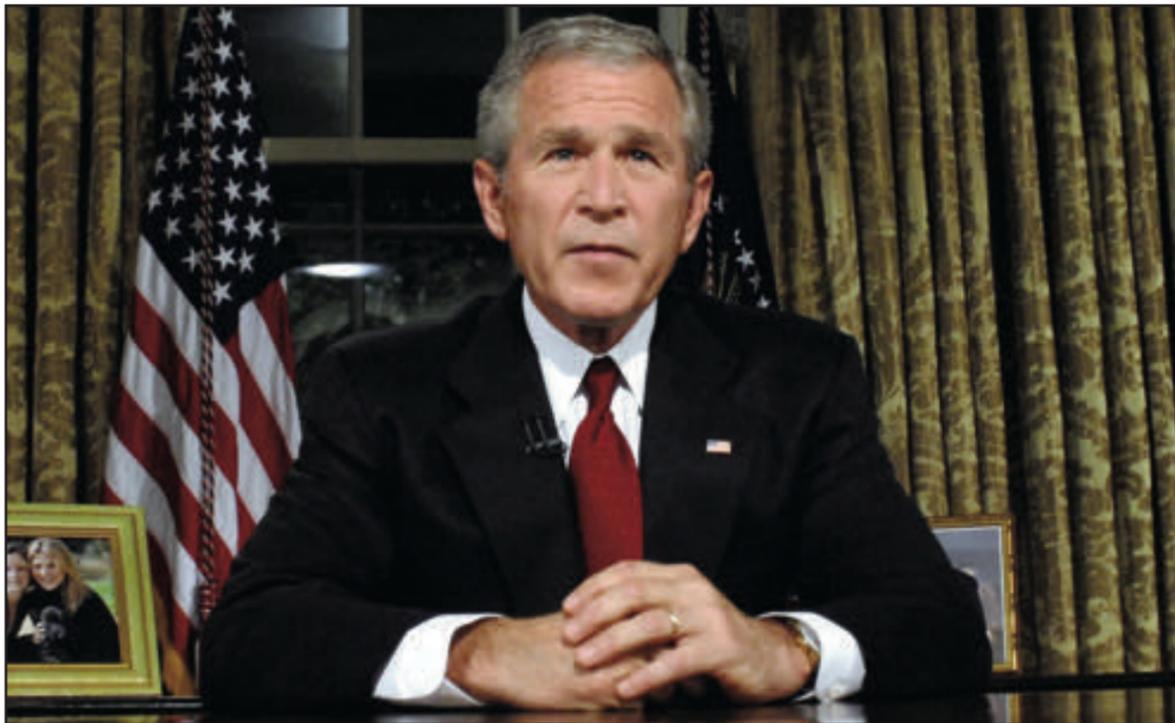
Curate, Cromer (St Peter and St Paul), Norwich 1969-1972; Holiday Chaplain 1972-1976; Rector, Grimston (St Botolph) w Congham, Norwich 1976-1983; Rector, Roydon (All Saints), Norwich 1976-1983. Curate in charge (of a CD, LEP, Proprietary Chapel, etc), Ewell St Paul Howell Hill (Conventional District), Guildford 1983-1989; Vicar, Howell Hill (St Paul), Guildford 1989-1995; Rural Dean, Epsom, Guildford, 1993-1995; Team Rector, Beccles (St Michael the Archangel) (St Luke's Church Centre), St Edmundsbury and Ipswich 1995-2004, Priest in charge, Worlingham (All Saints) w Barnby and North Cove, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich 1998-2001. Retired 2004-2020. Permission to Officiate St Edmundsbury and Ipswich 2004-2016. Permission to Officiate Norwich 2004-2017, died on 29 May.

The Rev Canon Owen George Vigeon,

Clergy with PTO: Coventry East (Coventry), died on 20 May.



Identifying evangelicals



WHO IS AN EVANGELICAL?
Thomas S Kidd
 Yale, hb, £22.50

Eighty-one percent of white evangelicals in America are said to have supported the election of Donald Trump, a man who has been married three times and has referred in crude terms to affairs with women as well as being a proven liar. Thomas Kidd, Professor of History at Baylor and author of numerous works including an acclaimed biography of George Whitefield, has written this short introduction to American evangelicalism that explains Trump's appeal to some evangelicals but also argues for greater clarity about who actually is an evangelical.

Kidd identifies himself as a #NeverTrump evangelical. He sees the experience of being born again in Christ and the felt presence of the Holy Spirit as key marks of an evangelical. With this goes an emphasis on the authority of the Bible and the cross of Christ and on activism that the historian David Bebbington described as marks of evangelicalism and which Kidd also accepts but which he points out were also present in the older, Reformed Christianity.

Evangelicalism became a force in America during the 18th century Great Awakening in response to the ministry of such people as Whitefield, John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards. In these early days it faced opposition from established churches, Congregational in New England, Anglican in Virginia. This led many Baptists and other evangelicals to support the separation between church and state in the American constitution. Kidd underlines the irony of later evangelical attempts to impose their ideas on the American people in such ways as stopping a Sunday postal delivery, banning the teaching of evolution from schools, or imposing prohibition in the light of the stand evangelicals took at the Revolution.

Part of the problem was that although America had no established church, features of non-denominational Protestantism, such as the use of the King James Bible in schools, were part of the general culture. Supreme Court decisions banning prayer and mandatory Bible readings in schools were seen as an attack on what had been understood as a Protestant establishment.

These decisions encouraged the rise of the 'Moral Majority'. Another factor was an attempt to deny tax exemption for private schools that did

not meet a minimum standard of enrolment by minorities. Bob Jones University was stripped of tax exemption in 1976 because of its prohibition of inter-racial dating. Other issues such as abortion and homosexuality drove evangelicals to support the Republicans although it took time for abortion to become an issue for them.

Kidd sees Eisenhower as a key figure in forging the alliance with the Republicans. He was not personally devout but he was respectful of religious faith and had a good relationship with Billy Graham. Evangelicals were at first strongly anti-communist and later opposed to what they saw as a threat from Islam. They gave support to Nixon, Reagan (a great favourite) and George W Bush (pictured) although only Bush could really claim to be a believer. It has to be admitted that

the vast majority of evangelicals voted for Donald Trump and there is little doubt that this has damaged the evangelical 'brand'

they did not get as much as they hoped from these leaders in contrast to Trump who has certainly delivered on conservative appointments to the Supreme Court.

Kidd is critical of a number of the positions taken by white evangelicals and regrets that many were at least lukewarm on civil rights but one of the aims of this book is to correct the rather simplistic understanding of evangelicalism present in sections of the media. Large numbers of African Americans, Latinos and members of immigrant groups are evangelical and do not share the

political agenda of white evangelicals. They have produced such outstanding preachers and leaders as Tom Skinner.

More care needs to be taken in identifying evangelicals. People who tell pollsters they are evangelical have not all been born again or embraced an evangelical spirituality. Many self-identified evangelicals do not even go regularly to church. In any case pollsters are finding it difficult to come up with accurate results since few people are ready to respond to their surveys.

When all this is said Kidd is ready to admit that the vast majority of evangelicals voted for Donald Trump or at least against Hillary Clinton and there is little doubt that this has damaged the evangelical 'brand'. After 80 years the Princeton Evangelical Fellowship has dropped that name and Timothy Keller prefers to be known as 'orthodox' rather than evangelical. Evangelicalism is not going away but it desperately needs to find new leaders of higher calibre than the likes of Jerry Falwell Jr if it is going to be a positive force in American life.

Paul Richardson



SUNDAY SERVICE

Trinity 3 - Sunday 21 June

Genesis 21:8-21
 Romans 6:1b-11
 Matthew 10:24-39

Christianity is not a hobby or a pastime, like fishing or gardening. Faith in Christ is not a lifestyle choice, like owning a pet or keeping to a diet. Worship of God is not an entertainment option like watching sport or going to a concert. Meditation on God's Word is not a technique for psychological wellbeing. Prayer is not an emotional crutch. Church is not a social club. Let's not mislead other people about this, least of all be unclear in our own minds. The Christian life is much bigger deal.

In his pre-mission pep talk to his disciples, Jesus demands total commitment in this life but offers eternal security. It's life and death. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," verse 28. Jesus' commission to go out in fearless testimony is matched by his promise of divine advocacy, verse 32.

From this spiritual perspective, he bluntly lays out the gritty reality of the gospel front line in verse 34. "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Because Jesus requires people to put him first, the other relationships in people's lives will come second, and that, inevitably, will cause fallout. "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me," verse 37.

He calls his disciples to call more disciples who are willing to take up their cross and follow him. Again, he speaks in terms of life or death. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." It's all or nothing with Jesus; in death we find life. Life is on offer, but life is demanded.

Paul's description of our salvation in Romans 6 is equally as challenging. Though when sin increased, grace increased all the more, more sin is not instrumental in procuring more of God's grace, verse 1. Not when unity with Christ is the mechanism of our redemption. Not when the means of grace is death to sin.

'Atonement' is a word originally conceived by the Bible translator William Tyndale as 'at-one-ment.' Our 'at-one-with-Christ' status frees us from sin and gives us victory over death. We are buried with him in his death so that, "Just as Christ was raised from the dead though the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life," verse 4. United with him in his death, our sins become his to bear and he paid the price for them. United with him in his resurrection, his life becomes ours to live and he has secured our hope for us. Our resurrection has already happened in Jesus, so it is guaranteed in the New Creation.

The death Jesus died, he died to sin, once for all, verse 10, so those who live for him must be dead to sin, verse 11. We must actively and decisively avoid rebellion against God. We must turn from wrongdoing and hate every evil thought that enters our heads. It's not an easy call and we all fall far short, but God's grace is sufficient.

Every year celebrity novices pair up with professional dancers and we watch their progress. Our salvation is like dancing with a perfect professional partner. But then rather than being scored on our own faltering footsteps, being scored on the perfect steps of an undisputed champion. Yet the beauty of it is that we move together, we are locked together and move as one. Now try to imagine that multiplied by the number of people in the local church, the universal church and all believers in history.

Our movement with Christ is dying and rising. In death we find life. We die with him and we rise with him. We die to sin and we rise in righteousness. It's a very big deal.

The Rev George Crowder is Vicar of St John, Over (Diocese of Chester) and Regional Director of Church Society (North & Midlands).

HYMN SELECTION

Traditional

All my hope on God is founded
 Praise my soul the king of heaven
 Take my life and let it be

Contemporary

In Christ alone
 Teach me to dance

Kids

What sort of king



Steve Parish reviews the opening film in Canada Now's online festival, showing on Curzon Home Cinema, and a quirky Russo-Chinese adventure film available on various digital platforms plus DVD and Blu-ray

An intriguing insight into the Guest of Honour

In *Guest of Honour* (dir. Atom Egoyan), church minister Greg (Luke Owen) meets Veronica (Laysla De Oliveira) who wants a funeral service for her father Jim (David Thewlis). His connection to the church was slight and Greg asks what she knows of his "spiritual path".

Flashback shows Jim's career as a food inspector, an English émigré to Canada – it's four minutes of Thewlis finding fault but culminating in a new restaurant's joyfully getting its big green pass certificate. He's then reviewing recordings of happy times with Veronica as a child (Isabelle Franca) and his Brazilian wife Roseangela (Tennille Read).

Plainly now is not a happy time, as we cut back to the funeral visit. Roseangela had been a churchgoer, but Veronica has one comment on Jim's life: "He made a lot of odd choices".

Veronica became a music teacher – until pupil Clive (Alexandre Bourgeois) asks her out while on a school orchestra tour, and she turns to tour bus driver Mike (Rossif Sutherland) to provide an excuse to avoid Clive. Later, she's accused of very inappropriate behaviour, and the film traces how things came to be, leaving an air of mystery over the truth of the allegations.

Explaining to Fr Greg that her father had to look after her long-lived pet rabbit when "I was in jail", the next twist is an accusation that her father had

FILM OF THE WEEK

been fooling around with her music teacher Alicia (Sochi Fried) – while Veronica learnt to play the glass harp (glasses of water) – during her mother's terminal illness. It may not be the worst of his guilty secrets, but it's Veronica's own secrets – why she felt she deserved to be in jail – that emerge.

The rabbit interest is renewed with a visit to an Armenian restaurant (putting Egoyan in familiar territory including a role as usual for his wife Arsinée Khanjian as the owner). When Jim returns to check on a previous contravention (fried rabbit ears is apparently a delicacy, and not just in Armenia), he is called on to make an impromptu speech, essentially as guest of honour for not closing them down.

The bonhomie changes when he drunkenly launches into a defence of his daughter's reputation – "Rumours grew like a cancer; not everything can be cured". It's mystifying to his audience, but also threatening.

Egoyan's narrative style, whether adapting novels (*Felicia's Journey*, *The Sweet Hereafter*) or to his own script (*Exotica*), often mixes mystery and psychological musings.



This is another that just takes ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances, and weaves a story round them to intrigue the viewer.

This has the bonus of a good soundtrack that includes Sergey Karamyshev's virtuoso version of Air on a G-String played on wine glasses. It also has a virtuoso performance by Thewlis, and – if awards season happens – he ought to feature.

The Iron Mask (dir. Oleg Stepchenko) is a Russian film, a fantasy blending a story of a fake Tsar (Yuri Kolokolnikov), a fake Chinese princess (Xingtong Yao), and a fake dragon – one alternative title is *The Mystery of the Dragon Seal*. It's a follow-up to *Viy* (2014) aka *The Forbidden Kingdom*, which was based on a story by Niokai Gogol.

The initial plot is told in animation, and much of it does feel cartoonish, yet the spectacular sets and some thrilling fight scenes (with a touch of humour) mean it's not dull. There's always a lot, maybe too much, happening in this 18th century tale.

Jackie Chan has a credit as producer and, aged 66, more than a cameo as an ageing master of martial arts, imprisoned with a man in an iron mask who claims to be Peter the Great, having been replaced at the Russian court by a double. In charge of the prison, the Tower of London, is eccentric soldier James Hook (Arnold Schwarzenegger, aged 72) who gives prisoners a chance to escape by letting them fight him.

The dragon story involves wizards going over to the dark side, and usurping a princess – again with a lookalike – and

oppressing the locals, ostensibly to feed the dragon with gold (and the occasional human sacrifice). The enforcers are giants with such superpowers as electricity, magnetism and sonic waves.

Jonathan Green (Jason Flemyng) is an English cartographer who got caught in bed with his aristocratic girlfriend Miss Dudley (Anna Churina). He fled to make maps for the Tsar, leading to her quest to find out why he hasn't come back.

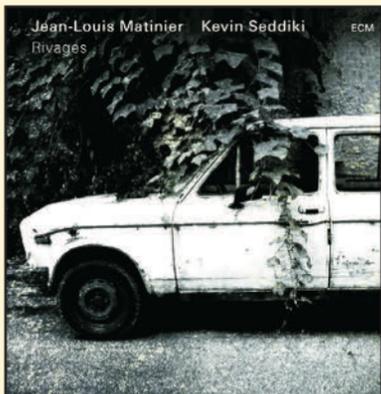
Cameos for Charles Dance and the late Rutger Hauer complement the mostly Russian cast. It's hard to know how this would have done with a theatrical release – the scenery, even the CGI, deserves a big screen (and was filmed in 3D) – but for an unusual and messy mix of fairy tale and swashbuckling adventure, it's still a ripping yarn.



Derek Walker

Music Choice

Jean-Louis Matinier, Kevin Seddiki
RIVAGES



There is a type of accordion music that is highly evocative of France; not a fast, folksy type, but a more romantic style. That is what we have here. It is not surprising, as Matinier was born in Nevers and played with the French National Jazz Orchestra for a couple of years around 1990. So this sound is authentic.

Matinier began his career in classical music before moving to jazz and then improvisation. He has collaborated with a variety of musicians, who have played instruments as varied as oud, saxophone, piano and bass.

Here he is playing alongside acoustic guitarist Kevin Seddiki, of French, Algerian and Italian descent, who has played a lot with fellow guitarist Al di Meola and who shapes, just, the lion's share of the music (his "Derivando" is a solo piece). His style is light finger-picking and the two of them describe their approach as creating "chamber music open to the world."

The two share a deep symbiosis, whether one is backing the other, or whether they trade lines. Nothing reaches five minutes long, so nothing is stretched out (it would be lovely if several tracks could continue their tranquil beauty for longer).



A few pieces are improvisations (such as the darker "Miroirs" and "Feux Follets") and can be a little directionless, but there is plenty of melody to offset this, with tunes like Fauré's "Les Berceaux" and "Greensleeves," although the latter is more of a jazz-style improvisation around the tune than playing it straight.

A blend of mood and melody comes out in tracks like the lovely "La Chanson d'Hélène" by film composer Philippe Sarde and their similarly beautiful joint composition "Reverie." The opening piece "Schumannsko," a piece based on both a Schumann theme and a traditional Bulgarian tune.

A year or two back, I covered an album (*Absinthe*) by Sting's guitarist Dominic Miller, who introduced an accordion player to several of the tracks and was disappointed that it took away from the purity of his previous solo album. By contrast, this duo work has the instruments pleasingly integrated throughout.

It is a beautiful release that leaves a physical peace in its wake.

Derek Walker





NT Live *This House, YouTube*,
James Graham

Trouble in the House

These are miserable times for theater, but perhaps TV might come to its rescue. Who knows what will emerge from this pandemic and how theatre will adapt? It looks pretty grim at the moment. Will we want to go to theatre if there is a risk that we could catch a deadly disease?

There are, though, signs of hope and one of the biggest signs is the phenomenon of the NT Live broadcast. Even during a good run at the National Theatre, the number of people who actually attend is relatively low. And those who do tend to be people who have money and are regular theatregoers. But when a production can be put on television and available to all, free of charge, then theatre is moving in a completely

different and more positive direction.

By the time you read this review, there's every chance that one million people will have tuned in to watch *This House*. Not only will a million people have tuned in, but they would have seen something of such quality and depth that when theatres open their doors again, surely, they will be the first people to buy tickets.

This House, written by James Graham, was on at the Cottesloe Theatre at the end of 2012. It was voted play of the decade in Bloomsbury Publishing's public vote and that vote is not at all misplaced. The play covers the period 1974 to 1979, from the general election that saw Labour



elected with a very small majority to the vote of no-confidence in James Callaghan's ailing government in 1979.

The genius is that the major players of the time are only experienced off-stage. Ted Heath, Jeremy Thorpe,

Margaret Thatcher and James Callaghan are all referred to, and their presence looms over the production, but we never see them. Instead, we spend most of the time in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the whips' office and we see the interaction between the two parties and the wonderful comedy and slapstick of those political times.

It's hard to single out the best performances, because they're all good. But Phil Daniels as Bob Mellish, Labour's chief whip, is a beauty. It has comedy and menace.

It helps that this production has so many echoes of recent political events. But what makes it so wonderful is that it isn't polemical, it isn't played to

make a particular political point. Instead it tells a story that talks into our own lives as well as to the events that we have lived through.

There is one further benefit. Plays are here today, gone tomorrow. They are live and when the production is over they might rarely be seen again. It has often struck me that all the work, money and creativity put into putting on a play is lost the minute it stops running. NT Live is bringing plays back to life and perhaps tells us that as we go forward, we should do this kind of thing much more often.

So, I hope that NT Live and other broadcasts from theatres show how much we cannot do without the stage. Theatre explains ourselves to ourselves and is the purest art form. Thank God that TV can help us to know this.

TV & Radio

Friday 12 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day. A spiritual comment and prayer to begin the day with Canon Stephen Shipley, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

Saturday 13 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day. A reflection and prayer to start the day with Rev Lynne Gibson, Radio 4

10.30am The Queen's Official Birthday. Huw Edwards introduces coverage of a ceremony marking the Queen's official birthday. Trooping the Colour is unable to be held as normal due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so a smaller event is being staged at Windsor Castle, BBC One

Sunday 14 June

5.43am Bells on Sunday comes from the Church of St John-the-Baptist, Great Gaddesden in Hertfordshire, Radio 4

6am Good Morning Sunday, presented by the Rev Kate Bottley and Jason Mohammad, Radio 2

6.05am Something Understood: Divine Recognition. Dr Sarah Golding looks to the natural world

Songs of Praise, BBC1



7.10am Sunday, religious news and current affairs programme, Radio 4

8.00am Religious service, BBC Local Radio Network.

8.10am Sunday worship. Cardinal Vincent Nichols celebrates Mass for the Feast of Corpus Christi live from Westminster Cathedral, Radio 4

10.45am Sunday Worship. First Sunday after Trinity. Youth minister Sarah Bradley leads a service from Holy Trinity Platt Church in Manchester. This service was filmed before the closure of all church buildings, BBC One.

11.15am: Sunday Morning Stories. Kate Bottley explores the value of kindness, BBC One.

11.30am Heart and Soul. Reflections on faith in a global crisis. For the final programme in the series, John McCarthy talks to people of faith about the very different world that is emerging and how best to cope with that, BBC World Service.

12noon Private Passions: Peter Stanford. For more than 20 years, in more than 20 books, writer Peter Stanford has grappled with religious belief. Music choices include Hildegard of Bingen, Jacqueline du Pre playing Bach, Mozart's Exultate Jubilate, the political protest singer Harry Chapin, and Jennifer Johnston's version of You'll Never Walk Alone, Radio 3

1.15pm Songs of Praise: Worship in the Great Outdoors. People who

find spiritual inspiration in the great outdoors, including the Yorkshire Dales, Cumbria and Perthshire, Cumbria and Perthshire, BBC1

3pm Choral Evensong, From York Minster (first broadcast 10 June 2009), Radio 3

Monday 15 June

0.15am Thinking Allowed. The Religious Right in the US. The religious right in the US - Laurie Taylor explores their route to political power, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

Tuesday 16 June

01.40am Black and British: A forgotten history. In part three of this groundbreaking series, historian David Olusoga explores the Victorian moral crusade against slavery, BBC Four

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

Wednesday 17 June

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

11.30am Miriam And Youssef, Radio 4

3.30pm Choral Evensong. From the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge (first broadcast on 30 June 2010), Radio 3

4pm Thinking Allowed. The Religious Right in the US, Radio 4

8pm Moral Maze. Combative, provocative and engaging live debate examining the moral issues behind one of the week's news stories, Radio 4



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