



Floods are a reminder of the fragility of humanity, Archbishop of York, Dr Sentamu

The floods that have forced thousands from their homes in the north of England are a reminder of the fragility of humanity in the face of the ungovernable forces of nature, the Archbishop of York, Dr Sentamu, said this week.

Church Times - After visiting “heart-rending scenes” in York, Dr Sentamu told Radio 5 on Tuesday that, far from shaking his faith, the impact of natural disasters “creates a bit of humility”. “We can arrogantly assume that we are the masters of the universe,” he said. “Nature . . . is to be treated with great respect. . . We are not above it. . . There is a lot of energy on our planet, and that energy sometimes cannot be harnessed whatsoever.”

His visit last year to the islands of Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji, where some islands had been completely submerged, was evidence of global warming, he said. “We have contributed to some of all this stuff.”

Thousands of people were moved from their homes in York, Leeds, Manchester, and surrounding areas this week, after heavy rainfall caused rivers to burst their banks and entire streets to be submerged. In Lancashire, every river was at a record high. Across the north over the past week more than 6700 homes have flooded.

In Littleborough, in the diocese of Manchester, where the River Roch burst its banks, prompting the evacuation of 100 homes, St Barnabas’s

sheltered 20 care-home residents on Saturday. The Vicar, the Revd Ian Bullock, said on Tuesday that the response to his request for supplies had “sky-rocketed”.

On Sunday and Monday night, he joined others in giving out food parcels in the town, including helpings from big pots of stew. He had been contacted by “countless volunteers. . . The community spirit has been absolutely phenomenal.”

More at - <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/1-january/news/uk/praise-and-reproaches-as-the-north-endures-deluge>

Primus Chillingworth comments on The Columba Declaration and ecumenical relationships in Scotland

In the first of two major comments on the recent Columba Declaration on relationships between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England, the Most Reverend David Chillingworth stated: “The Church of Scotland and the Church of England announced the Columba Declaration on the morning of Christmas Eve. Because the

launch has been so public, this has stirred considerable feeling and concern in the Scottish Episcopal Church. Therefore I need to make an initial personal comment about potential feelings and concerns from a Scottish Episcopal Church perspective.

“On Christmas Eve, the Scottish Episcopal Church issued the following statement. It recognises that the two national churches in Scotland and England will have questions of common interest and concern which they may wish to explore. But it also suggests that the Columba Declaration goes further than this – entering areas which are properly the concern of the Scottish Episcopal Church as the church which represents the Anglican Communion in Scotland.”

A spokesperson for the Scottish Episcopal Church says “We have noted the announcement today about the Columba Declaration agreed between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England.

“We welcome the opportunity for the further ecumenical discussion referred to in today’s press statement and look forward to being able

to consider the full text of the report when we receive this. We fully understand the desire of the Church of Scotland and the Church of England as national churches to discuss and explore matters of common concern. However certain aspects of the report which appear to go beyond the relationship of the two churches as national institutions cause us concern. The Scottish Episcopal Church, as a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion, represents Anglicanism in Scotland, and we will therefore look forward to exploring the suggestions within the report more fully in due course.”

Primus Chillingworth continued -

“I think that the first surprise in the announcement of the Columba Declaration is how little it says about the shared concerns of two churches which have a particular status in the national life of England and Scotland. Clearly there are constitutional issues which are common to the Church of Scotland and the Church of England. But there is little mention of them. Nor is there any discussion of one further matter which concerns the Church of Scotland and its ecumenical partners in Scotland. That is the issue of territoriality – the question of how the

Church of Scotland and its ecumenical partners will together sustain mission and ministry across the whole of Scotland.

“The second area of interest is what it tells us about how the Church of Scotland appears to see ecumenical relationships within Scotland. That is part of how we read and understand the context in which we find ourselves in Scotland today. Scotland is changing rapidly. Whether or not it becomes independent at some stage in the future, Scotland is becoming a more distinct place – more sure of its own identity. The Scottish Episcopal Church is a church which prioritises ecumenical and interfaith relationships. My reading of our context in Scotland today leads me to the conclusion that the Scottish Episcopal Church should work to develop our relationship with other historic, Scottish-rooted churches – primarily the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church. Our history as Episcopalians in Scotland is interwoven with the history of Scottish Presbyterianism and of Scotland itself. The Columba Declaration turns the Church of Scotland towards the Church of England in a way which to me seems to be a misreading of our context. The ecumenical family of churches in Scotland needs the leadership

and active involvement of the Church of Scotland at this critical time in our national life.

“But the aspect of the Columba Declaration which will cause most concern to the Scottish Episcopal Church is the potential involvement of the Church of England in the ecclesiastical life of Scotland. The Church of England is not a Scottish Church nor does it have any jurisdiction in Scotland. The Anglican way is to recognise the territorial integrity of each province – they are autonomous but inter-dependent, The important question is whether, within that understanding of the relationship between provinces of the Anglican Communion, it is proper for the Church of England to enter into this agreement about ministry and ecclesiastical order in Scotland.. That is a matter which will have to be explored in future dialogue between the Scottish Episcopal Church and both the Church of Scotland and the Church of England.” - CNI will carry the second of Primus Chillingworth’s comments in tomorrow’s issue.

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Cardinal sought the release of UVF murderer to further cause of peace

The Catholic Primate, Cardinal Tomas O’Fiaich pressed the authorities for the release of the prominent UVF murderer Gusty Spence claiming he could help pressure loyalist paramilitary groups to work for peace for peace.

Irish News - Spence, a former soldier with the Royal Irish Rifles, was sentenced to 20 years behind bars in 1966 for the murder of a young Catholic barman, Peter Ward at a Shankill Road pub. Shortly afterwards, the UVF was proscribed.

State papers show that Cardinal Ó Fiaich raised the issue of the treatment of prisoners at a meeting of Catholic churchmen with the then Secretary of State, Douglas Hurd at Stormont House on December 3, 1984.

The previously confidential documents released this week show the Cardinal had told the Secretary of State that he recommended the release of Spence who was freed in 1984.

"He himself visited members of Protestant paramilitary groups in prison and had recommended the release of 'Gusty' Spence. He



Former UVF leader Gusty Spence along with William 'Plum' Smyth, Gary McMichael David Irvine and David Adams announcing the loyalist ceasefire in October 1994

thought that the release of Spence could influence Protestants to give up violence," the documents revealed.

The prominent loyalist, who died in 2011, would go on to read the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) ceasefire statement a decade later in October 1994.

On his release from prison he became a leading member of the UVF-linked Progressive Unionist

Party (PUP) and was involved in the peace negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement.

He also set up the Shankill Activity Centre, a government-supported initiative to provide training opportunities for unemployed young people.

Roy Garland who wrote the biography, Gusty Spence, from Hardman to Peacemaker said, while he was "not surprised" by the development, he thought that Spence may not have even been aware of the intervention.

"I knew they were in contact and were in fact good friends and would have exchanged letters and Christmas cards, but he never mentioned that the Cardinal lobbied for his release. He may not even have been aware of it", Mr Garland said.

"It doesn't really surprise me though, while no one would try and paint Gusty Spence as an angel he was a force for good and change from within loyalism and had certainly helped bring peace and stabilise loyalists within the prison.

"I do know he had spoken to republicans as well including Billy McMillan (Official IRA), who he had met in prison.

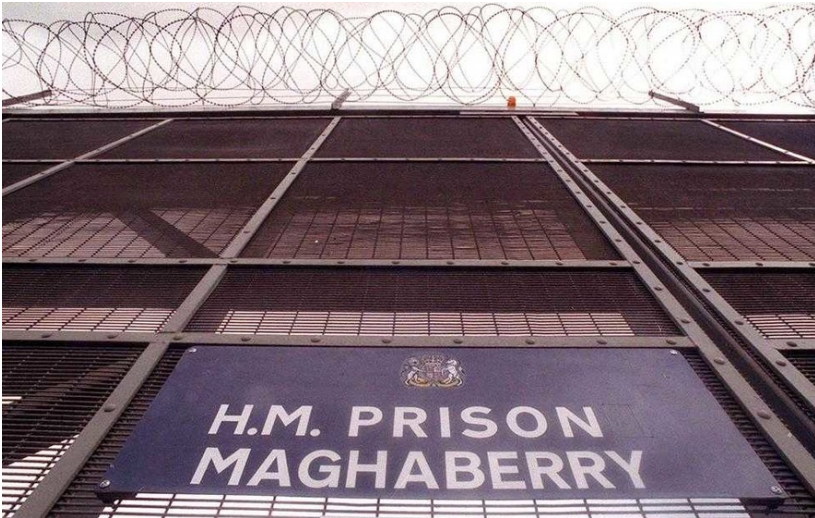
"On his release he encouraged others, including David Ervine and Billy Mitchell to get involved in politics and so in that respect you can see what angle the Cardinal was coming from", he added.

Quakers lose prison visitors contract

A recruitment company managed by former NI21 chairwoman Tina McKenzie is to take over the running of a family visitors' centre at Maghaberry prison which had previously been run by the Quakers community.

Irish News - The Quakers have provided services to the families of prisoners for decades through the darkest years of the Northern Ireland's Troubles including the period covering the republican hunger strikes and tense prison protests.

The Christian movement maintained the visitors' centre at Maghaberry for 26 years and, despite inspection reports condemning the jail as being



among the worst in Europe, the family services provided by the Quakers has been praised by successive prison inspectors.

However, earlier this month People Plus NI took over the running of visitor and family facilities at the top security jail.

The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO), which ran similar facilities at Hydebank and Magilligan prisons for more than 40 years, also lost its contract to People Plus. People Plus provides training for the 'Steps 2 Success' back to work programme on behalf of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Ms McKenzie, who failed to be elected after standing as a candidate for Basil McCrea's NI21 in the local council and European earlier this year, is managing director of the company that will now provide trainees to run the prison centres that provide support facilities for the partners and children of inmates.

Her father is former IRA man Harry Fitzsimons who spent years in Long Kesh and the Maze. Ms McKenzie, who resigned from the party executive on the night of the elections, has previously spoken of her memories of the prison regime and visiting her father saying how she thought it was "normal" to go on prison visits with her family.

A spokeswoman for the Quaker community said they were "saddened that after nearly 44 years of providing services at prison visitor centres, we are no longer able to be involved in the work at Maghaberry.

"It is well recognised that maintaining family bonds during imprisonment has a real impact on quality of life for all involved, and helps with rehabilitation and to cut re-offending.

"But it can be challenging - our goal was to provide practical and emotional support in a safe,

welcoming environment where all visitors were met with dignity and respect.

"Services included childcare, transport, refreshments, counselling, information and advice, all to make it easier for family members to keep visiting prison.

"Our priority remains the needs of these families and visitors. In our view, this needs to underpin the future of these services, both for the new provider and the Prison Service as commissioners of these services," she said.

"Quaker Service will continue supporting isolated prisoners, vulnerable families and young people through our other projects".

NIACRO Chief Executive Olwen Lyner said they were "obviously saddened" that the Visitor Centres will no longer be part of the NIACRO family of services.

"We do have concerns at the speed and management of the transfer arrangements with regard to staff and assets and believe there are lessons to be learned in ensuring the smooth transfer of such contracts for the future," a spokesman said.

"Our experience of delivering this service for several decades has proven to us that it is a critical service for the families and friends of people in custody, and that has been highlighted in several prison inspection reports over the years".

The prison service have defended the removal of the contract from the Quakers and NIACRO saying the contract was awarded "through an open and transparent procurement competition".

Church had "deep hostility" to Margaret Thatcher's government, files show

The Church of England was accused of having a "deep hostility" towards the policy of Margaret Thatcher's government, newly released documents show.

Files released by the National Archives in Kew have unveiled Downing Street's reaction to a report commissioned by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie (pictured), in December 1985.



The Faith In The City report was regarded a landmark event, sparking intense public debate about the role of the Church in society and the impact of Thatcherism at a time of inner-city breakdown and perceived rising inequality.

It highlighted the Government's "dogmatic and inflexible" economic policies and the "unacceptable" effects of high unemployment.

The newly released files document how Brian Griffiths, the head of the No 10 policy unit, said it showed "a deep hostility to government policy and the philosophy on which it is based".

He also accused the Church of adopting a "Marxist analysis" of society.

"The essence of Marxist analysis is that economic inequality in capitalist society is the

result of class conflict, the bourgeoisie versus the proletariat," he wrote in a memorandum to Mrs Thatcher.

"The report analyses the problems of 'poverty', 'powerlessness' and 'polarisation' in similar terms; namely the exploitation of 'the poor' (15 million) by 'comfortable Britain' (the rest).

"There are many examples where the report goes out of its way to emphasise the structure of society being the cause of poverty."

Elsewhere, another member of the policy unit, Hartley Booth, was also unhappy at the Church.

He wrote to the PM: "The report is the unwitting dupe of the extreme Left.

"The Church should learn how Lenin intended that a prime target of attack in a capitalist society should be the police."

The Church of England declined to comment.

[News links to reports on faith, politics and education](#)

An Archbishop, a Taoiseach and an angry face-off over IRA violence and 'genocide'

The Journal.ie

Garret Fitzgerald said the New York meeting was the most tense he has as Taoiseach outside Ireland.

http://www.thejournal.ie/o-connor-fitzgerald-meeting-1985-2501285-Dec2015/?utm_source=twitter_self

Northern Bishops warn of 'nationalist alienation'

Irish News

State papers released

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2015/12/30/news/northern-bishops-warn-of-nationalist-alienation--366379/>

My list of people Northern Ireland would be a lot better off without

Belfast Telegraph

Ruth Dudley Edwards writes -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/debateni/ruth-dudley-edwards/ruth-dudley-edwards-my-list-of-people-northern-ireland-would-be-a-lot-better-off-without-34316665.html>

Gareth Malone's Great Choir Reunion – review: good telly and transformative, too

Guardian

The most affecting thing about the reunion was seeing the kids as adults, and hearing how

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much The Choir changed their lives. Plus, a look at 'a complicated cat' in Roy Orbison: One of the Lonely Ones. If it's hard to believe that the BBC series The Choir is 10 years old, it's harder to believe that Gareth Malone is 40. And as young as he looks now, it is actually shocking to return to that first series and see him again at 30: slight, hesitant, almost elfin. We have got used to his quiet doggedness over the years, but back then he was a compelling televisual presence mainly because one feared for him. "I felt like I didn't know what I was doing, if I'm honest," he says now.

In Gareth Malone's Great Choir Reunion (BBC2), the preternaturally boyish choirmaster is attempting to collect alumni from 14 series to form an all-star superchoir for old time's sake. There is a considerable amount of flashback footage to remind us how things were, and even with television's tendency to exaggerate accomplishments, Malone's achievements remain extraordinary. He didn't just get the kids of Northolt high school to sing, he took them to China to do it. He repeated his success at a boys' school, then with that town that wouldn't sing, then with the military wives, and on and on. Even in retrospect, it's pretty stirring: if you don't

get emotional watching the old stuff now, you will probably remember that you cried at the time.

<http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2015/dec/30/gareth-malones-great-choir-reunion-roy-orbison>

Filipino priest suspended for riding hoverboard during Christmas Eve mass

Independent

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/filipino-priest-suspended-for-riding-hoverboard-during-christmas-eve-mass-a6790231.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

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