

In response to a cover story in *the Spectator*: '*Holy Relic – The Church of England as we know it is disappearing*' published 4 February 2021, William Nye, Secretary General, Archbishops' Council of the Church of England has responded with the following Letter to the Editor (for publication). The letter reads as follows:

Sir,

As a longstanding and loyal reader of the Spectator, I was disappointed in your cover story about the Church of England.

I was amazed to read the ludicrous claim that the parish system is being dissolved like the monasteries, repeated without even a cursory check on whether this could possibly be true. We read of a supposed central take-over of independent dioceses and an imaginary national plan to roll out cuts and sell assets to fund more managers. The old canard that the Archbishops decided to suspend public worship last year at the height of the first wave of the pandemic, rather than the Government, did not even get a rudimentary qualification.

No one from the Spectator called the Church of England to ask whether any of these things were true.

This matters because truth matters. It matters because this kind of misinformation is damaging and demoralising to clergy and laity in every corner of England who have been worshipping God and serving their neighbours in extraordinary new ways, despite the restrictions we have all faced during this pandemic.

There is no national plan to roll out cuts to clergy or to buildings. We need our clergy and our lay volunteers - all are part of the people of God - and we need our church buildings, which are a precious resource for the whole nation. Some dioceses are having to adjust the balance of stipendiary (paid) clergy and other ministers; and to shift where clergy are deployed, following movements in the population. Yet we rejoice that we have seen an increase in the number of people coming forward to be trained and ordained as clergy. This year the number of people being ordained into stipendiary ministry will be 43% higher than eight years ago.



Keith Blundy

Nor is there is a national drive to close churches. Yes, a small number of church buildings do close every year after a complex process in which alternatives are carefully explored. Yet we rejoice that we have also been reopening churches, and planting new congregations. In the last five years, we have planted or reopened or revived over a hundred churches – in towns and cities across England, in places such as Blackpool, Preston, Rotherham, Wigan, Dudley, Goole, Stockton-on-Tees, Mansfield, Swindon, Hastings, and Plymouth.

These are challenging times but facts and perspective are important. The Church of England has been worshipping God and serving our neighbours for many generations. I am confident that we will continue to do so, bringing the Gospel of Christ to every community for many generations to come.

William Nye

Secretary General, Archbishops' Council, The Church of England

Read more

- [The Archbishop of York: 'The Church of England still needs Clergy'](#) (printed in the Church Times 5 Feb 2021)
- [A statement from the Acting Bishop of Chelmsford](#)

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