

This blog is written by a member of the independent Commission. These views do not necessarily represent the views of the Archbishops' or the Church of England.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have today announced a new commission to explore what support families and households need to flourish in today's society.

This new Commission follows the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community, whose final report 'Coming Home' was published in February 2021. This new Commission will aim to build on that work, formally beginning its work in May and look to report in winter 2022.

The origin of the Commission lies in Archbishop Justin's 2018 book ['Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope'](#). Building on a key chapter, 'Family – Caring for the Core', the Commission aims to articulate and address the pressures and challenges facing families and households, whilst also highlighting the good and the positive in terms of what works well and how that can be built on, drawing on Christian tradition.

It will aim to offer practical and deliverable ideas on what enables families and households to thrive and prosper as the cornerstone of every community in our society.

In particular it will consider the enormous and far-reaching impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on families and households.

Working with others, the Commission will seek to gather examples of good practice and proposed innovative areas of action to support the work of the Church with families and households in new ways, and offer proposals to shape the trajectory of public policy relating to families and households in a holistic way.

The Commission will comprise between 10 and 12 members, each bringing specific expertise and experience in the area. The Commission will develop a number of work streams, each of which will draw on the ideas and expertise of a wide range of individuals and organisations, and will welcome contributions to its thinking.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "At the heart of any good society are our relationships with other people and the way we treat each other. When I wrote 'Reimagining Britain', I hoped to offer a big vision for our nation, but I knew it had to be rooted in the most important thing for any community: how we show our love for our fellow human beings.

"That is why I am delighted that the Commission for Families and Households has been set up, to help us understand how we can best live together in a way that considers everyone in the dignity and hope of God's light."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "Like God, the community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are at our best and our most creative and most fully ourselves when we discover who we are in community with others: in relationships; in family groups; and as interdependent communities. We, too, give and receive and create out of these networks of loving relationships.

"I'm delighted that this Commission will be exploring how we can best support families and households to be places where we can all flourish, and I will be praying for its work over the coming months."

President of Relate, Professor Janet Walker OBE, who will Chair the Commission, said: "With increased choice as to how we form relationships and live our lives, today's families and households come in all shapes and sizes. This diversity brings new opportunities as well as complex challenges.

"The coronavirus pandemic has reminded us just how important strong, stable family relationships are to the psychological, emotional, social and economic wellbeing of adults and children, and highlighted severe inequalities in our communities. While some people have enjoyed an increase in quality family time, others have experienced intense loneliness, isolation, anxiety, ill-health or loss.

"This timely Commission aims to address all the pressures facing families and households and to explore innovative ways to enhance resilience, reimagining what enables everyone to flourish, whatever their circumstances and background and wherever they live. I am excited and honoured to be chairing the Commission, alongside Bishop Paul, and colleagues with a wide range of expertise and shared values."

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who will Co-Chair the Commission, said: "Families and households are at the centre of our lives. But just what makes a good family in our times? And when one third of our households are a single person just what does it mean for us all to have healthy household life?

"I am honoured to have been asked to Co-Chair this Commission by the Archbishops. I much look forward to working with Professor Janet Walker and our fellow commissioners and to learn from all those who will share evidence with us. It is my prayer and hope that together we will be able to offer proposals for the good of all households and families that will help us build together the better society that all people seek."

The Commission is expected to report in November 2022.

## **Watch**

Watch these short videos streamed live from Canterbury Cathedral during Holy Week in 2021, where Archbishop Justin Welby explores the relationships, commitment and environment of the place that Jesus counted as 'home' for the last few days before his crucifixion.

## **Notes**

Professor Janet Walker OBE is Emeritus Professor of Family Policy at Newcastle University. Previously the Director of the Newcastle Centre for Family Studies, she directed over 50 multi-disciplinary research studies, and published widely on marriage and divorce, family mediation, relationship counselling, family communication, post-divorce parenting, domestic violence, crime and policing.

Bishop Paul is the Bishop of Durham. He is the lead bishop on families and households and sits in the House of Lords. His entire ministry has involved significant engagement with children and families in a wide variety of settings.

Full membership of the Commission will be reported at a later date.

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