

The Church will emerge “renewed and changed” from the crisis of the global coronavirus pandemic, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have said.



Archbishop Stephen and Archbishop Justin pictured in December 2019 at Church House, Westminster.

In a joint address to members of the Church of England's General Synod, Archbishops Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell said that a time of trauma, loss and struggle in this country and around the world, Christians have proved to be a "people of hope".

The address came at the start of special, one-day sitting of Synod in London, with reduced numbers, to make a rule change to enable it to meet remotely during pandemic restrictions.

Archbishop Justin acknowledged the multiple challenges and crises we are facing including hunger, poverty, domestic violence and climate change.

He said churches have played a vital role serving their communities and bringing hope through the gospel. But the Church itself will, he said, emerge changed.

"We do not know what kind of Church of England will emerge from this time except that it will be different," he said.

"It will be changed by the reality that for the first time all churches have closed - first time in 800 years. It will be changed because for the first time we have worshipped virtually."

He continued: "Out of these times we will see renewal - not because we are clever but because God is faithful.

"We will see a renewed and changed Church emerging from the shocks of lockdown.

"It is a Church that at the most local has fed so many, been in touch with the isolated through the heroic efforts of all who take part in it, of clergy and laity and those who even weren't near the church before these times.

"It is a Church which has continued to pray and to offer worship through our Lord Jesus Christ, even if in new and unusual ways."

Archbishop Stephen spoke with emotion about the impact of pandemic.

"I hate this Coronavirus," he said.

"I hate it not only because so many have died, but because so many people have died alone, unable to hold the hand of a dear beloved.

"I hate it because our health service has been stretched to the limit. I hate it because so many are bereaved and could not sit next to a family member at a funeral or embrace each other.

"I hate it because weddings and baptisms and ordinations have been postponed or have gone ahead without the parties that have meant to be

with them. I hate it because children's schooling has been disrupted. I hate it because so many people have been so ill, crying out in pain, so many isolated, lonely, fearful, depressed.

"I hate it because behind locked doors terrible things have happened. I hate it because the poor and the disadvantaged have been hit the hardest. I hate it because it has left so many people across the world feeling hopeless as if life itself has been taken from us."

But he said he was also thankful for the faithfulness of all who have served others during the crisis and risen to the challenge.

He added: "I am thankful that despite all the horrors of a Covid world we are learning a new commitment to Christ and how to be a humbler, simpler, church and we are putting Christ at the centre of our lives and learning very, very, very painfully what it really means to be a church that is dependent on Christ alone.

"And I am filled for longing: I long for us to be a more Christ-centered and Jesus-shaped church witnessing to Christ and bringing the healing balm of the Gospel to our nation for this is our vocation."

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