

Motion No.11

Secunder: The Revd James Boyd

Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery

Your Grace, Ladies and Gentlemen, to put this in context let me share with you a story of a girl called Rebekah. She is 14 and choosing her GCSEs, she loves history and geography and English but hates maths and languages. Her favourite subject is history so naturally she is choosing it as one of her GCSEs. A few weeks ago, at a recent open day in school she discovered that they would cover topics like the Irish Civil War, Partition and ‘The Troubles’ right up to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Remember this is history – she is covering the Troubles in history.

Let me share another story. Shirley is 17 and when she arrives home from school on a cold January day, she finds the normally quiet and mundane house that she shares with her family a hive of activity. The police are there, loads of her relatives are there along with her mum and her siblings. Yet her father is nowhere to be seen. He couldn’t have been because he had just been shot by IRA and his supposed crime – a civilian delivering milk to the local police station – apparently this made him a legitimate target. A few hours later he was pronounced dead. This wasn’t last week nor last year – it was 30 years ago – 11th January 1993.

The relationship between these two – Rebekah and Shirley – they are mother and daughter.

One is studying the events and one has lived through them. One can’t remember the awfulness of those days of violence and the other can be vividly transported back to the scene when something as simple as the first snowfall takes place, because her dad was murdered on the first snowfall of the year. One sees only the violence of a police drama as what it is, and for the other time freezes because someone has been shot in the head.

I share the story of Rebekah and Shirley, with their blessing because I live this reality with them daily. I love them with all my heart for they are my wife and daughter.

Yes, we now live in relative peace, and no-one wants to return to the violence of the past. However, we need to deal with the legacy of the Troubles – the trauma that it has on lives to this day – we the Church need to help others not simply to survive but rather thrive.

Just like the ninety-nine sheep who feel the safety of the sheepfold and the shepherd many in the North experience a relative safety with the shaky peace that we have. However, we need to chase after the individuals, the ‘one’ who feels they are outside of the safety of the sheep pen.

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The one who still feels the pain and does not have the words nor actions to deal with it, who feels that they are lost, forgotten and sidelined.

There may be no right or wrong answers to this because everyone has felt and will feel the effects differently. There may be many voices sharing the way forward, but paramount is this truth – we cannot leave the victims voices silent any longer. I believe the heart of this motion will serve to diminish the neglect that so many have felt for years. I even dare to dream that what comes out of it will be a church standing in the gap for those who feel the acute trauma to this day.

I have great pleasure in seconding this motion and urge fellow members of Synod to endorse it.