

## St Paul's says 'please be nice and go home now' so it c...

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The Dean of St Paul's Cathedral has issued a statement this afternoon saying:

The Right Reverend Graeme Knowles, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, issued the following statement today (Friday 21 October):

*It seems a very long time since the protestors arrived around the Cathedral last weekend and I want to stress at the outset that we have listened to them and indeed developed a conversation with them.*

*We are delighted that the London protests have been peaceful and indeed there has been a good atmosphere generally between Cathedral staff and those dwelling in the tents around St Paul's.*

*There is something profound about protest being made and heard in front of this most holy place: a gathering together of those concerned about poverty and inequality facing the great Dome of this Cathedral Church.*

The Dean is clearly well practiced at making all the right noises. It's doing weddings that does that. Then:

*But it is about the practical and safety issues which this peaceful protest has raised which I need to address with you today.*

Yes that's what Jesus said at the feeding of the 5,000, of course.

But as the Dean said:

*It should be obvious to anyone approaching the Cathedral that the size of the camp and the consequent compliance issues which it inevitably raises, has increasingly put us in a difficult position.*

The cash is not flowing as it should, is I think a fair interpretation of that.

*As a result of that meeting, and reports received today from our independent Health, Safety and Fire officers, I have written an open letter to the protestors this afternoon advising them that we have no lawful alternative but to close St Paul's Cathedral until further notice.*

Oh, nonsense! You can handle royal weddings but not a few people on your doorstep. You're kidding no one.

*The Health, Safety and Fire officers have pointed out that access to and from the Cathedral is seriously limited.*

Open some side doors then - the ones without turnstiles.

*With so many stoves and fires and lots of different types of fuel around, there is a clear fire hazard. Then there is the public health aspect which speaks for itself. The dangers relate not just to Cathedral staff and visitors but are a potential hazard to those encamped themselves.*

Have there been any issues yet? Let's stop being patronising shall we? You survived the Blitz. A camping gaz stove is no big deal.

*The decision to close St Paul's Cathedral is unprecedented in modern times and I have asked the Registrar to implement emergency procedures whereby the building remains closed but fit for purpose until such a time that we can open safely. Our 200 staff and 100 volunteers are also being informed of this decision this afternoon.*

*I want to say two simple things at this point.*

1) *We have done this with a very heavy heart, but it is simply not possible to fulfil our day to day obligations to worshippers, visitors and pilgrims in current circumstances.*

Wrong. [Your duty is to the poor. See here.](#)

2) *That all of the Chapter are at one on this and recognise the complexities of the issues facing us at this time.*

You mean your sponsors aren't happy? [Not surprising, see the list here.](#)

*As you can see in the open letter, I am asking the protestors to recognise the huge issues facing us at this time and asking them to leave the vicinity of the building so that the Cathedral can re-open as soon as possible. So many people who visit this great Cathedral come here, of course, because they love the Gospel of justice, peace and reconciliation [which some of the protestors are embracing for a whole host of reasons], but also because they want to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of a place of prayer and pilgrimage.*

They also pay. A lot.

*Some will rightly say that the Church should be alongside those seeking equality and financial probity. We are.*

Pardon? Throwing them out is working alongside? Pull the other one.

*The debate about a more just society is at the heart of much of our work at St Paul's and indeed we hope to contribute to the wider debate in the very near future through a Report from the St Paul's Institute.*

Almost all the trustees are bankers - clearly an unbiased lot.

*But today is about our ability, practically, to carry on our mission with free and open access to this public space and treasured place and I hope that the protestors will understand the issues we are facing, recognise that their voice has been legitimately heard, and withdraw peacefully.*

And I suggest quite simply that there job is to stand firm. Now. And tell the Dean what he is.