

Archbishop Calls For Church To Reach Out on Knife Crime

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Dr. John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, has today urged the Church of England to reach out to young people involved in knife crime.

Speaking at the Church's General Synod in York, Archbishop Sentamu used his presidential address to urge the Church to face outwards in its work: "Our call is to reach out to our neighbours with God's message of love in Jesus Christ. To be a servant in the Church of God, you too are volunteered. The call is addressed to people who are not expecting to be invited – and not those who have become their own good cause!"

"We are called to reach out to people who are desperately searching for identity, meaning and belonging. When crime involving the use of knives by young people is on the increase, we can stem the tide by our outreach to young people.

"Attempting to change the behaviour of young people by tough talk will not solve it."

During his address the Archbishop referred to his conversations with former gang member from Birmingham life had been transformed through the Christian Gospel:

"He said to me: 'what you must do is to get us, young people, to feel better about ourselves. Help us to achieve confidence about ourselves without needing the dangerous prop of a knife. Help us not to judge ourselves in the eyes of others. Stop viewing us through the eyes of failure. Help us to overcome self-loathing. Your job is to stop the merry-go-round of our culture of immediacy by providing us with hope and long-term solutions to our longing for belonging. To us all the brave talk and actions of adults towards young people are similar to the gang culture. We are not all bad."

Dr. Sentamu also used his speech to re-affirm his support for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams.

"It has grieved me deeply to hear reports of the ungracious personalisation of the issues through the criticism and scapegoating of Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Rowan Williams exemplifies that quest of holding together holiness, truth, love and unity.

The accusations and inferences of what has been said by some are not only ungenerous and unwarranted but they describe a person I don't recognise as Rowan. He demonstrates, in his dealings with others, the gift of gracious-magnanimity.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in the current contested debate on sexuality, is a model of attentive listening, interpretative-charity, and exemplifies a Christian - occupying the seat of St Augustine."

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For more details, please contact Arun Arora, Archbishop's Director of Communications, 07738 354491