

Britain's "dark days" are like the 1930s, new archbishop says



Justin Welby made the comments in his last service as the Bishop of Durham

He told a packed congregation that he thought we had moved on from the decade of the Great Depression, when unemployment in Britain reached 3.4 million, yet churches are organising food distribution centres as people cannot feed themselves.

“It is a huge challenge,” claimed Dr Welby, who will be formally confirmed as the next Archbishop at St Paul's Cathedral, in Central London, on Monday.

“Whether we go into a triple-dip or not, whatever does happen, it's going to go on being pretty dark economically. Children are going without sufficient food which I found particularly shocking and distressing.

“This was something I had thought would have been eradicated by now.”

Dr Welby made reference to the food distribution centres set up in the North East to help struggling families.

His comments are likely to be embarrassing for the government.

They may remind many of those by a previous Bishop of Durham, Dr David Jenkins, who in the 1980s claimed that some schoolchildren in his diocese did not have shoes.

The intervention shows that the former oil executive, who also sits in the House of Lords, may be as outspoken as his predecessor.

Dr Welby is taking the helm whilst debate rages about issues including same-sex marriage and women bishops but he said he was “optimistic” that they could find a way through.

“Everyone is aware that there are significant divisions within the Anglican Communion over issues such as how we go about consecrating women bishops and issues of sexuality, and finding the way forward in those issues is a massive challenge,” he said.

Adding: “It’s about finding a way forward for these massive challenges. The church at a national level has to be outward-looking and a body that is engaging, not looking inwards and consumed by its own problems.... I am optimistic that we can make progress...

"Change is always happening, and my natural instinct of moaning about it does no good. The church may be still but the world around us moves. Culture and expectations of morality change, economics brings destruction or renewal, often both."

He will be enthroned at Canterbury on March 21.

He said: “I am apprehensive, thoughtful, excited and extremely conscious that it is a great privilege to have been asked to do the job.”

Hayley Dixon - The Telegraph