

St. Paul's dean resigns, cites protest controversy

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London, October 31 (ENInews)--The Rev. Graeme Knowles, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, resigned on 31 October as the fallout continued over the handling of an "Occupy London Stock Exchange" anti-corporate protest camped outside the church's doors.

"It has become increasingly clear to me that, as criticism of the cathedral has mounted in the press, media and in public opinion, my position as Dean of St. Paul's was becoming untenable," Knowles said in a message on the cathedral's website.

"In order to give the opportunity for a fresh approach to the complex and vital questions facing St. Paul's, I have thought it best to stand down ... to allow new leadership to be exercised. I do this with great sadness, but I now believe that I am no longer the right person to lead ... this great cathedral," Knowles said.

Criticism has centered on the cathedral's decision to close for one week and its support for legal action begun by the City of London Corporation (which governs the district) to evict the protesters. Last week, two clerics at St. Paul's, Canon Chancellor Giles Fraser and part-time chaplain the Rev. Fraser Dyer, both resigned, saying they did not want to see violence committed in the name of the Church of England.

When the protesters arrived on 15 October, Fraser welcomed them, but later the cathedral supported legal action. About 200 tents and hundreds of people have created a camp around the 17th-century landmark, protesting inequality in the banking and corporate systems.

On 29 October, an open-air interfaith service drew large crowds to the space. On 30 October, Knowles and the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, met protesters for a discussion in front of the cathedral.

Both men said they shared many of the protesters' concerns about the unfairness of the banking system, but were not happy with the camp so near their church.

On 31 October, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams expressed his sadness at the situation. He warned "urgent" issues raised by the protesters must be properly addressed.