



# The Burning Bush—Online article archive

## A hot reception for Dr. Paisley at The Diamond

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### Paisley heckled during rally at The Diamond

THE Rev Dr Ian Paisley was bundled into a car and whisked away at the end of Sunday night's pre-Twelfth open air rally at The Diamond, Loughgall.

Whereas in the past the Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church was embraced and feted by admirers, last weekend saw police minders unceremoniously shunting him into a car which ferried him away from a baying crowd.

There were cries of "traitor!" and "Landy!" as Northern Ireland's First Minister exited, having ignored questions shouted at him by hecklers.

At the outset of the rally, the Rev Kenneth Elliott, minister of Portadown's Bethany Free Presbyterian Church, asked those present to be respectful and desist from protests "during the preaching of the Word and the reading of the lessons".

"We hardly needed to be told that," one angry protestor said afterwards. "Most of us have been members of the Free Presbyterian Church for a very long time, so we know how to behave at a service."

Protestors also noted that Sunday night's message was "exclusively gospel-centred, unlike past years when it was almost exclusively political".

"The 'Big Man' has been coming here every July since 1966 and this is the first time I've ever heard him speak in this manner," said a spokesman for the protestors, who dismissed suggestions that his group had been in the minority.

"Monday's News Letter suggested 15 protestors - a figure they've since told us was provided by the police, incidentally - but that is pure nonsense," the spokesman said. "There were upwards of 100 protestors and even a good number of those who didn't join with us told us afterwards that they agreed with every point we'd made and with the relevance of every question we'd asked."

He continued, "As people who, in the past, followed Dr Paisley's leadership without reservation, it gave us no pleasure to have had to try and question him in this manner. But sometimes there are things that have to be done, however unpleasant."

**REFUSED**

"Before Sunday night's rally we stressed that we wanted nothing more than the opportunity to ask a some questions on matters which concern us. The reason that had to be done in so public a manner was that our phone calls and emails have been ignored and have gone unanswered."

"Unfortunately, just as he has refused to respond to phone calls and emails, he refused to answer when we tried to make our points in the flesh on Sunday night."


"He just ignored all of what was going on, which was bizarre. In fact, at one stage, when a protestor tried to ask why Dr Paisley had gone into Government with murderers and why, after everything he'd said in the past, he was now sharing power with those with blood on their hands, another Free Presbyterian minister defended him by telling us 'Martin McGuinness was never convicted of murder.'"

"I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Not only do we now have the DUP in government with Sinn Fein, we actually have a Free Presbyterian minister leaping to the defence of Martin McGuinness. All of this is a complete about-turn. Is it any wonder people are bewildered?"

The spokesman continued, "Watching Dr Paisley being bundled into his car by his PSNI minders was reminiscent of watching David Trimble making his exit, hounded by DUP supporters. In fact, you can go back a lot further than that, for some of us were there when the same thing happened to Brian Faulkner and, before him, Terence O'Neill."

"But I never thought I'd live to see the day when Free Presbyterians and DUP voters were shouting 'traitor!' at Ian Paisley as he was spirited away."

Asked if he felt Dr Paisley would be at The Diamond on Sunday, July 6, 2008, the protestors' spokesman replied, "I doubt it. Given what happened on Sunday night, I'd be very surprised if the organisers were to invite him. And, even if they did, I don't think he'd want to face another reception like that."



*Free Presbyterian Church Moderator, the Rev Dr Ian Paisley, who, on Sunday night, came in for criticism during the pre-Twelfth rally at The Diamond.*