



CT-eNews

December 2019

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Reflection of the Month: Unity in our ethnic diversity: it's on God's agenda

Over the last 10 years, it's been an enormous privilege to serve the church here in the UK as the general director of the Evangelical Alliance (EA). When I arrived on 1 April (yes that really was my start date) in 2009, I did so with some trepidation, but also a deep conviction that it was God who had called me to this role.



As I look back on the last 10 years, I am deeply thankful to have had the opportunity to see first-hand what God is doing through His church here in the UK. Despite rumours that the church in the UK is finished, I've discovered God's people at work and doing some amazing things. I thank God for the food banks, the night shelters, the debt counselling, the Street Pastors and the work among the young, the old and pretty much everyone in between. I thank God that in 2019, people from all backgrounds are coming to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last 10 years carry so many highlights, but there is one that stands out and indeed was to have a profound impact on my life and ministry. The September 2010 EA council meeting was made up of around 80 senior leaders from across the spectrum of the evangelical world; women and men who were leaders of churches, heads of agencies and key influencers in the areas of business, politics, education and media. The EA council meets twice a year to discuss, feedback on and shape the work of the Evangelical Alliance, as well as to explore key issues influencing the Christian and indeed the wider world.

The focus of the 2010 council meeting was unity, but I was not prepared for what I now believe was a historic moment for the EA and perhaps the wider church in the UK. Early in the afternoon, the council was addressed by Bishop Wilton Powell of the Church of God of Prophecy and Pastor Agu Irukwu, Senior Pastor of Jesus House and leader of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in the UK (Pastor Agu is now also CTE's Pentecostal President).

Their challenge to us was simple but profound; if we were serious about unity, it had to be a unity that crossed all ethnic expressions of the church and refused to accept any divides. Here was a call for unity in the midst of diversity, a unity as expressed in the great John 17 prayer of Jesus. As Bishop Wilton and Pastor Agu took their seats, the room fell silent in what could only be described as a God moment. The council responded to the challenge, kneeling together in prayer and calling out to God. There was a recognition that so much of our unity to this point, whether nationally or indeed in the context of local congregations, had overlooked the vibrant diversity of the UK church.

That moment proved to be the first step in a personal journey, but also one which had a significant impact on the Evangelical Alliance. Way back in 1846 when the EA came into existence, it was John 17 which motivated evangelical Christians to travel from across the UK and many different parts of the world to explore the formation of an Alliance. For the last 10 years, as the general director, I feel as if I have been ambushed by this prayer. Just hours before he will hang on the cross, Jesus is with his close friends. The crowds have gone, and he is praying for them. The prayer is simple

yet enormously challenging. (John 17:23) "I in them and you in me that they might be brought to complete unity, then the world will know that you have sent me and love them even as you have loved me".

Put simply, unity amongst God's people is important because it's on God's agenda – it is vital to Him. It seems that this unity (oneness) He has called us to carries a missional imperative "Then the world will know". This kind of unity is beyond doctrinal remit or mutual appreciation and love. It seems as we read the prayer of Jesus, we are called in some mysterious way to participate in the unity of the Godhead, out of which we discover our true identity and unity in love, in truth, in mission. It's a unity that is impossible independent of God. We pursue this unity, not because of political correctness, demographic trends, church growth or missional success – we do so because it's right. It's in God's word and it reflects God's heart.

The last 10 years have seen me embarking upon an amazing journey of discovery, as I've developed some wonderful friendships with ethnic minority leaders across many traditions of the church. Rev Yemi Adedeji, a Nigerian leader, has become my friend and my guide on this journey. I've been blessed, encouraged and challenged as I have explored the church beyond my safe majority-white expression. I've had painful conversations where my own blind spots and insensitivities have been graciously exposed, and I have had to say sorry. As an Alliance, the formation of the One People Commission (OPC), with Rev Yemi as its director, was one of our early steps. The OPC has profoundly impacted virtually every area of the Alliance's work.

As I step down from the general director's role at the end of 2019, I'm so thankful for the privilege of exploring the unity which is on God's heart, and particularly as expressed across all ethnic parts of the UK church.

Steve Clifford has been General Director of the Evangelical Alliance UK since April 2009, and steps down from the role this December 2019. He also previously chaired the Hope 08 campaign, the international youth festival Soul Survivor, and March for Jesus International.

[View this reflection on our website...](#)



The resource book **[Im]possible Dream** captures the lessons learnt by Steve Clifford and Rev Yemi Adedeji as they explore the practical challenges of unity across all ethnic expressions of the church.

It is packed with case studies of people who have walked this journey at a local, as well as national, level, including CTE staff members Joe Aldred and Lucy Olofinjana.

[Order your copy of the book now.](#)

General Election 2019: let's pray and engage

Revd Paul Goodliff, CTE's General Secretary, encourages us to be prayerful and actively engaged, rather than succumbing to cynicism...



The 2019 election is like none other that I can recall, and the impact of Brexit upon British politics partly accounts for that. We are so dominated by this one issue, admittedly one of huge importance and long-lasting significance, that other domestic issues are skewed. The financial crisis of more than a decade ago, and the ensuing austerity, has had a significant impact on our society. Add in the influence of social media, possible illicit meddling by foreign powers, the strange character of American politics at present, and a global growth in populist politics, and this election looks to challenge even the most experienced of pundits.

How might Christians respond? First by getting engaged, and certainly by voting. The privilege of a democratic system is to be prized. I hope that all those who vote for their favourite couple in BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* will also make the effort this week to vote for their preferred candidate in their constituency.

Second, by challenging ourselves when we succumb to the cynicism that labels all politicians as corrupt self-servers. Most politicians are dedicated public servants, who – despite the human toll from long hours at work, time away from home, and the more recent online threats and abuse – stay in that role election after election (if voted for!) because they genuinely want to serve the common good. We might not always agree with the way that they interpret the common good – which is why we have different political parties and policies – but for most MPs and candidates their motivation is not primarily governed by a simple hunger for power or personal gain. Rather than being cynical, why not pray for them, and let them know that you are doing so? For many MPs that makes a world of difference at the end of a stressful week.

Thirdly, take the time to check the facts. One characteristic of politics worldwide, which Britain is not immune to, is the discounting of truth and the temptation to say whatever seems most palatable to the electoral base. And some find more sinister causes behind the withdrawal from truth-telling. For Christians, truth is important. Jesus says it sets us free, referring to the most important truth which we proclaim – that Jesus Christ is Lord. However, truth generally is the only ground upon which to build trust, and trust is important if the social contract between the governed and those who govern is to be maintained in good order.

The government appointed through the ballot box on 12th December might not be the one you personally voted for, but the Scriptures still require us to pray for them.

Let us also hold our new government to account for its promises, and encourage it to legislate in ways that do not simply serve the five-year electoral cycle. That will, most importantly perhaps, include issues around the care of our most vulnerable (be they the very young, or the very old), and the care of the planet, together with generous concern for the poorest of our fellow human beings wherever they live. For when our compassion starts at home, but travels no further beyond, we have missed something

of the universal gospel of Jesus Christ and the costly call to see everyone as created in God's image.

[View this piece on our website](#), and access Election resources [on CTBI's web page](#)...

Churches Together in England statement on the Fourth Presidency



On Friday 22nd November, a statement on the Fourth Presidency was released by CTE, and is [available on our website](#). A statement was also released by Quakers in Britain on the same date, and is [available on their website](#).

CTE's statement reads as follows:

Churches Together in England (CTE) is the national ecumenical instrument, supporting and encouraging the diverse range of churches in England to work together in unity.

CTE is represented by six Presidents from the major traditions of our forty-nine Member Churches. They meet regularly to discuss matters concerning the Churches in England, and together seek to serve as a sign of our unity.

Upon the Fourth Presidency becoming vacant, Quakers in Britain (formally The Religious Society of Friends) made its nomination, and with the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain and Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England), they appointed Hannah Brock Womack, an active Quaker, to this role.

Over recent months CTE has been engaging with the reality of living with diversity, acknowledging that although so much unites us as churches, we remain in disagreement over certain issues. Prompted by Hannah's recent equal marriage, an ongoing process of discussion, listening and prayer has begun, recognising that churches hold different views regarding human sexuality, and that for many this is a very emotive and painful subject.

While remaining committed to the journey of unity we are on as churches from many traditions, the Member Churches of CTE, through the Enabling Group, have recently requested the Fourth Presidency Group to refrain from enacting its Presidency at this time, leaving the Fourth Presidency as an 'empty chair' for the current term of office. This empty chair represents the lack of agreement within the churches in England regarding human sexuality, and the reality that this dimension of the churches' pilgrimage together is not yet complete. CTE commits to continue listening to the voice of the Fourth Presidency Group and the churches they represent and is working with them to find ways to ensure that, during this period, their voice in the collective presidency is still heard.

In statements released today, the Revd Dr Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of CTE, and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain, said they were committed to continuing in conversation together, "knowing that God will hold us together in gracious love".

General Secretary of Churches Together in England, Revd Dr Paul Goodliff, says:

"CTE acknowledges the pain and sadness caused by this decision. We recognise and value the important giftings of the churches of the Fourth Presidency Group, and the significant contribution they make to our ecumenical family.

"The Member Churches of CTE are committed to continue walking together closely in our pilgrimage of unity and witness to our shared faith. Listening carefully and deeply to one another and to God, and offering Christ's love to all without condition, we will continually hold one another in prayer, seeking to maintain the unity of the Body of Christ which we receive as God's gift."

A statement from Quakers in Britain is available at www.quaker.org.uk/news

[Notes to editors and media contact information are available via our website.](#)

Cities host ecumenical service praying for those affected by cancer

Raymund Donnelly founded Pause for Hope in Liverpool in 2009, providing a space for those affected by cancer to come together in prayer. Here he shares their story, and offers support to others wanting to host a service locally...



When I was working as a thoracic surgeon I treated many people with cancer and, having a strong belief in the power of prayer, I brought together the various cancer charities in Liverpool for a service of prayer, hymns and music which we entitled Pause for Hope. Ecumenical from the first, it proved very successful and, since then, services have been held every year in one or other of the cathedrals in Liverpool.

The initiative continues to grow, with other places in England, Scotland and Wales now hosting services, and a first service in Northern Ireland being planned for 2020. It has clearly met a real need which people feel when faced with cancer.

Members of all religious dominations and faiths are welcome to the services, as well as those with little or no faith. It is an ideal vehicle for Churches Together to bring the different denominations together in common cause to pray with and for those who are, in any way, affected by cancer.

Pause for Hope is now in its 21st year, and every year it reaches the hearts and minds of so many people whose lives are touched by cancer. It brings comfort, consolation and hope to those who have cancer or have had cancer, or have lost loved ones to cancer. The uplifting nature of our services helps those attending to cope with the difficulties and distress that cancer can bring.

Rev Colin Marsh, Ecumenical Development Officer at Birmingham Churches Together, describes the impact the services have had in their city: "Pause for Hope has been an inspiration for all who have attended the service in Birmingham, now in its third year. The address by someone who knows the pain and suffering of cancer is a poignant reminder of the depth of hardship that cancer brings, but offers hope and light for dark moments. In true ecumenical fellowship, Pause for Hope brings us together in prayer and song."

The aim of Pause for Hope is:

- to bring together in prayer those affected by all forms of cancer, their loved ones and carers
- to remember dear ones lost to cancer
- to pray for those with responsibility for providing and allocating resources required in the investigation, treatment and care of patients with cancer
- to help those affected to understand that the prayers of the sick and those who look after them have great power with God
- to help those who don't have cancer, but have a great fear of the disease
- to reach out to those who are at home or in hospital as patients or carers, and unable to attend the Pause for Hope services.

And, importantly, we have to pray that the day will quickly come when all cancers can be prevented or cured. We must earnestly ask God to let our scientists see the cure for cancer in all its forms, and the harder we pray the sooner that day will come.

If you would like to organise a Pause for Hope service we can give you considerable help, including a model Order of Service with suggested prayers and hymns, as well as help on how to promote the service with posters and social media.

Find out more at www.pauseforhope.org.uk or email pauseforhope@gmail.com

[View this story on our website...](#)

Wetherby churches unite to feed 70 on Christmas day

Nic and Sally Sheppard tell us how Churches Together in Wetherby will be sharing a little Christmas spirit this year...

In 2014, one couple in Wetherby, West Yorkshire, decided to share their extended family Christmas Lunch with four folk, recommended by their Vicar, who would otherwise be on their own. It was a great success, and very quickly the Vicar asked whether, with more publicity, they would be willing to broaden the invitation and do it again the following year.

The decision was made to make it a joint church initiative using local volunteer cooks, servers, drivers and entertainers, making it a Christmas Day to remember for 33 people in 2015.



A significant spin-off has been the enthusiastic response from traders, schools and the wider community, with numerous donations of food, equipment, gifts and time being generously shared by many. The churches now take turns to host the event, but share resources and draw volunteers from each of the churches every year.

Each year numbers have grown. and this year we fully expect over 70 guests and 30 volunteers on the day. Other volunteers help with the many practical preparations. The young Uniformed groups make personalised cards and Christmas decorations, helping change some rather plain church halls into winter wonderlands!

All of the guests and some of the volunteers either live alone or have reason to find the day particularly difficult. Whilst the food is excellent and the entertainment enjoyable, the greatest satisfaction for both the guests and the volunteers is drawn from the friendly chat and very good company. Together, the churches are helping the community taste and share some Christmas joy.

[View this story on our website...](#)

Giving hope this Christmas

Looking for something to bless your community? The all-new [HOPE at Christmas magazine](#) is a great giveaway, written with non-Christians in mind. This 32-page magazine features Tom Hanks, 'the man behind the honours'; the new *Cats* movie; Alisson Becker: the world's best goalkeeper and Street Pastors 'keeping clubbers safe this Christmas'. And there's much more inside.

HOPE at Christmas is published by HOPE Together in partnership with [Hope for Every Home](#). Roy Crowne, executive director of HOPE Together says, 'Christmas is a wonderful time to share the joy of Jesus' birth. Carol singing on the streets; visiting people home to home; holding events in schools, sports stadiums, pubs, community centres and churches are all great ways to share the joy we find in Jesus. It's the season when people are most likely to accept an invitation to church events. Use *HOPE at Christmas* as a gift to give, as you invite your community to hear why Jesus came, or use it to start a conversation about what Christmas means to you.'



Entertainer toy shops

As well as co-publishing the *HOPE at Christmas* magazine, HOPE has partnered with Bible Society to produce a special Happyland edition of their children's booklet [With Love from God to You](#) telling the Christmas story. Each of The Entertainer toy shops has a pop-up nativity scene in its window at Christmas featuring the popular Early Learning Centre Happyland characters, which are also on the cover of the *HOPE at Christmas* magazine. Each family shopping in The Entertainer stores up to Christmas will receive the magazine and the children's booklet, while stocks last. Copies are also available from the HOPE shop – hopetogether.org.uk/shop.

Happyland nativity

To take the Christmas Story onto social media, a [Happyland Nativity animation](#) has been made by the [Speak Life](#) team. Featuring an angel on a rocket, the wise men on a London bus, as well as the biblical nativity cast, this three-minute animation is now available for churches to share on social media and to use at Christmas events.

'We are thrilled to have this joined-up set of resources to support churches as together we reach out into our communities to share the Jesus story this Christmas,' says Roy. 'Let's be prepared to share our faith with something to say, something to give and an invitation to offer. Plan follow-up opportunities for Christmas guests in the New Year and ask God to draw people to himself in this special season.'

[Find out more in the full article on our website...](#)

Reflections on CTE's Ecumenical Officers conference, Ecumenism Today

John Anderson, Methodist District Ecumenical Officer for Oxfordshire, shares his personal reflections on the recent conference which brought together National, County and Denominational Ecumenical Officers from across England. The conference was held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, on 14th and 15th October 2019.



Excerpts of John's reflections are available here, with [his full reflection available on our website...](#)

The conference brought together over 100 attendees, which included Denominational, County and National Ecumenical Officers or their deputies, with Rev. Dr. Paul Goodliff and Jenny Bond from CTE's staff. There were over 20 Methodist DEOs, including myself representing the Northampton Methodist District, which I think was the largest group...

In comparing this conference to similar gatherings that I have attended in the past, I would highlight two differences. Firstly, the Salvation Army (S.A.) was very well represented. David Evans, the S.A. National ecumenical officer has been actively recruiting officers to champion the ecumenical cause at county level, and we heard of a new LEP being formed in Hull between the S.A. and Baptists. Secondly, one of the national level leaders who took a prominent part in the conference was Marcus Chilaka from the Redeemed Christian Church of God. His presence was a reminder of the growing influence within CTE of the Pentecostal tradition, and so called "minority" churches. We were made aware of the on-going conversations between the Church of England and the Pentecostal tradition. The question was floated at some point in the conference "who actually, these days, are in the minority?". Mary Asagba from Leicestershire attended the conference as the representative of the national ecumenical officer from the Assemblies of God.

The first session was hosted by Rev. Dr. Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of CTE and Rev. Sarah Moore, who is the URC leader within the ecumenical county of Cumbria

(Sarah is soon to move to a new role within Scotland). Cumbria was well represented at the conference, and throughout reminded us of what was already possible, especially within Anglican-Methodist relationships and interchangeability of ministry. Whilst no one is pretending that the Cumbrian situation is perfect, there was a lot of positivity which set something of a tone for the conference.

I remember attending an Ecumenical Officers conference in Leeds a few years ago when the Cumbria covenant was announced and explained by the then leaders of the three denominations involved. It was obvious that the three had developed a very good working relationship, but the cynics said "it will never last once these three have moved on". It was good to hear from Sarah that ecumenical relationships and working has grown, even though leadership has changed, and her opinion, and the opinion of others working in Cumbria, is that the ecumenical pattern is now "set in stone".

One of the factors within the set-up of Cumbria is the matching of Diocese, District and URC area/region boundaries. I wonder what could be achieved if we actively sought to re-organise our Methodist District and Circuit boundaries to match those of our ecumenical colleagues?

Paul Goodliff reminded us of the work in the areas of 'receptive' ecumenism and 'judicial' ecumenism. I tried to explain the former to a District Policy Committee when it was first announced, and it went down like a lead balloon (due no doubt to my attempts to explain what it was about). It was interesting to hear that the 'tag line' is now "help us to recover something we have lost". Judicial ecumenism is based around conversations comparing what we are allowed to do, rather than what we cannot do.

The second session consisted of seven very short reflections on the conference theme given by the national denominational representatives, interspersed with table debate on what had been said. I hope that CTE will produce a 'hard copy' of what each representative offered, because there were some very good things which I had failed to note down! What I did catch included:

Salvation Army: Are we brave enough to work together; work with the Holy Spirit; to trust? Do church leaders treat ecumenism as a mere 'tick box'?

Roman Catholic (from Pope Francis): "We are united in praying together; unity is not uniformity; unity is not absorption." We need honesty, humility, humour and hope.

Baptist: Lack of concern about systems, more about walking together and looking after each other in love.

URC: a reminder that the URC was created to die, yet will soon be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its creation.

The third session was "ecumenical opportunities in new housing areas". We heard from Paul Goodliff of how the churches were working together to cover the large amount of new housing being created in his hometown of Bicester, Oxfordshire. A number of resources were recommended:

- *Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas – personal reflections and a practical guide* by Penny Marsh and Alison Boulton, Grove Books EV113

- CTE has a new housing co-ordinating group, with resources available at www.cte.org.uk/newhousing
- Ali Boulton is now full time at the New Housing Hub and runs a Facebook group "[New Housing Hub](#)" as well as the web site www.newhousinghub.org

There was a discussion around the definition of "affordable housing", and the need for churches to get involved in the very earliest stages of a new build. There was some astonishment at the news from Oxford Diocese of the challenge set by the Bishop of Oxford to build 750 new churches in the next 10 years.

In the fourth session we split into denominational groups...

[Read John's full reflection on our website...](#)

Praying together in 2020

Pray in 2020 on the 20th of each month at 20:20 for 20 minutes. This is the invitation from HOPE Together to Christians of all denominations.



HOPE's executive director Roy Crowne says, "Through Prayer 2020 we are asking God to work through all that is done in 2020 – personal witness; church outreach plans in villages, towns and cities; stadium events – evangelisation in all its many forms. Already this is catching the imagination of Christians around the world. 2020 is such a significant year and Prayer 2020 will be a key part of the year."

Prayer 2020 [bookmarks](#) and [business cards](#) are available to remind you to pray – they are ideal inserts for Christmas cards! In the New Year, HOPE Together will be providing more Prayer 2020 resources that churches can use: a video to inspire prayer, monthly reminders on social media, plus suggestions for prayers to pray...

Continue reading about Prayer 2020 [on our web page...](#)

You can also visit the [visit Hope's Prayer 2020 web page](#).

HOPE Spaces – prayer spaces in community places

Alongside Prayer 2020, HOPE Together is encouraging churches to host [HOPE Spaces](#) – prayer spaces in community places.

HOPE Spaces were devised by HOPE Together's assistant director Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf. She said, "The Talking Jesus research tells us that 41% of practising Christians say that a spiritual experience or an experience of the love of Jesus was a key influence in their coming to faith. The HOPE Spaces project began as a response to the question: 'How can we help more non-Christians experience God for themselves?'"

HOPE Together is working with 24-7 Prayer to invite churches to create HOPE Spaces where people can pray and experience God for themselves. Rachel added, "Any church or group of local churches could run a HOPE Space, in a village high street, an empty shop or a church building.

"Several cathedrals are interested in getting involved," says Rachel, "as they are such natural places of prayer for a wide range of people, many who aren't practising Christians. But they need something big, to work in their huge spaces. In response to this the HOPE prayer wall was created."

The HOPE wall was first used in Durham Cathedral as part of Durham's Lumiere Festival. Many people prayed for the first time using specially-designed [HOPE prayer cards](#). The HOPE Wall is now touring the country as part of the HOPE Spaces prayer project.

[Visit the Hope Spaces web page.](#)

[You can also view this article on our website...](#)

Reflections on evangelism and mission



From Kernow to Cumbria: Missional relationships and loosening structures

Ben Aldous, CTE's Principal Officer for Evangelism and Mission, recently reflected on how the most fruitful mission-shaped endeavours almost always have some key themes we can learn from...

This past week has seen an epic amount of travel as I started at Churches Together in Cornwall, speaking as part of the filling station, and ended in Cumbria at the Fresh Expressions Threads day, arriving home at past midnight on the Saturday. Being away is tough some weeks on my little family, but I'm beginning to build up a bigger picture of what is happening across England, and how the most fruitful mission-shaped endeavours almost always have some key themes, as well as some other bits and pieces...

1. Relationships, relationships, relationships
2. Structures follow mission not the other way around
3. Genuine listening
4. Fragility and weaknesses are vital

*Continue reading Ben's reflection **[From Kernow to Cumbria: Missional relationships and loosening structures...](#)***

Telling the story

Ben has also recently shared his excitement at hearing stories of God at work in traditions other than his own...

I have a distinct childhood memory of visiting my grandmother on Saturday mornings. She was a *Telegraph* reader, not because of politics but for the crossword. Once that was completed, usually in collaboration with my father, she would be on to reading the obituaries. She often told me she loved reading a succinct rendering of people's lives. And when I used to buy the papers, I always made that part of my reading habit.



I love hearing people's stories. It was part of the joy of parish ministry in Cape Town, sitting with people who had led both extraordinary and yet at the same time often mundane lives, and being about to see the sacred ordinary within. I heard stories of people making incredible journeys across the continent of Africa with little in the way of resources, and other stories of people living in the same house their entire lives. When I started getting interested in contemporary classical music, it was as much the lives of composers themselves as their music that fascinated me and continues to do so.

As I reflect on my role with CTE, I see that increasingly this love for stories and people's remarkable lives is a vital component of ecumenical mission...

*Continue reading Ben's reflection **Telling the story**...*

'All that we ask is that you remember the poor'

*CTE's Pentecostal and Charismatic forum gathers twice a year to facilitate discussions between a wide range of our member churches. During their November gathering, the forum heard from Compassion International about their work around the world. Here Tim Robertson from **Compassion UK** explains more about their child development ministry, and how your church can get involved...*



This apostolic commission was to become a core practice of the new movement of early Christians, the Church of Jesus Christ. It reflected the heart of God, who right through history had always defended those who faced injustice, and now His Body were reminded that in all their activity the poor were not forgotten! They were to be the hands and feet of Jesus, challenging injustice, providing for those who had nothing, caring for the marginalised and bringing hope to the hopeless. The Good News needed to be actual, tangible, real good news for the poor! When we as the church

demonstrate grace, kindness, mercy and love to our communities, the kingdom draws near and hearts are opened.

Compassion International has for 67 years sought to do just that, not independently but embracing God's plan to extend His kingdom through the local church. As an International Child Development organisation, we only work in and through the church in villages, towns and cities across 25 developing countries in three continents – Africa, Asia and Central & South America. Currently over two million children are registered in over 7,000 projects overseen by local church partners in relationship with Compassion in those countries.

Our model is to impact a child in the early stages of life with a holistic child development programme that will give access to education, health care, socio-emotional support and spiritual growth. That child will very often be the catalyst for change within their family context, as siblings will also benefit and caregivers will often be empowered to lift themselves out of poverty through micro-financing, small business initiatives etc. As many families in a given area are impacted in this way, it leads to community transformation and the local church experiencing growth and expansion...

[Continue reading this piece on our website...](#)

For more information please visit www.compassionuk.org or call Tim on 07725 949407.

Tributes paid to H.E. Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira

Following the sad news that one of CTE's former Presidents, H.E. Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira, has passed away, CTE's General Secretary Revd Paul Goodliff shares:



"On behalf of the family of churches in Churches Together in England, we express our sadness at the news of the death of HE Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira who led the Churches of the Oecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox) until earlier this year.

"He had celebrated fifty years of being a priest in England and thirty years of being Archbishop in Great Britain, together with ninety years of his birth and baptism.

"We pray for him and all who mourn his death, confident that he will rest in peace and rise in glory at the day of resurrection."

[View this tribute on our website...](#)

Workshop: Christian Leadership for the Common Good



In a Divided Society, how can churches act for the common good?

A two-day training workshop hosted by [Sarum Centre for Formation in Ministry](#) in association with [Together for the Common Good](#), for ordained and lay people in Christian leadership from all denominations and church traditions. This workshop has been developed by Together for the Common Good (a Body in Association of CTE) to enable church leaders to focus on exactly these challenges, in engagement with one another.

This two-day workshop explores what 'the common good' means Biblically, theologically, in a society with severe divisions, and in practice in our cities, towns and villages.

The event enables Christian leaders to retreat and reflect. It gives opportunity to address: how can we enhance ministry in our localities at a time of polarisation and social fragmentation? In short, the workshop aims to enhance and refresh your ministry by enabling common good thinking and practice.

It is designed for people in church leadership, ordained or lay, across the Christian denominations and traditions – e.g. priests, pastors, vicars, lay leaders, chaplains. From whatever Christian background and context you come, you will be welcome.

Dates: Wednesday 15 January 2020, 11.00am – Thursday 16 January 2020, 4.00pm

Location: Sarum College, 19 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EE

Price: Non-residential £140; residential £200.

To book your place: Contact Jill Hopkinson at jhopkinson@sarum.ac.uk

[Visit the event web page for more information...](#)

Day conference: Towards a common vision, and principles of Christian law



Susan Durber and Paul Goodliff are coming together in February at Westminster Abbey to reflect on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and *Principles of Christian Law*.

This day conference on Saturday 8th February 2020, open to all, is hosted by the [Society for Ecumenical Studies](#) (SfES).

During the conference, **Revd Dr Susan Durber** (United Reformed Minister and Moderator of the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission) will be speaking about the process of analysing the churches' responses to the WCC Faith and Order text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. The process of analysis reflection is not yet complete, but Susan will reflect on the work she is doing as one of those receiving the responses and on the key themes that are emerging. She says: After the recent publication of the Roman Catholic response we are probably at the end of receiving responses and it is possible to begin to draw some tentative conclusions. There are things to say about mission, about how we might now understand 'visible unity', about steps forward and about the many steps still to take, and even some newly difficult challenges as we seek the unity for which Christ prayed.

Revd Dr Paul Goodliff, CTE's General Secretary, will also report on a new and unique ecumenical venture. 'Juridical ecumenism' attempts to find common ground in the canon laws, rules, norms and principles in each of a number of different church traditions — among them Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist and Pentecostal. A remarkable degree of conformity has been discovered in this cutting-edge approach to ecumenism, and it has opened up a new pathway in ecumenical studies and development. For more information about juridical ecumenism, [visit CTE's web page](#).

Date and venue: Saturday 8 February 2020, 10am to 4pm at Cheyneygates, Westminster Abbey, London SW1P 3PA. Nearest underground station: Westminster.

Cost: SfES members £10; non-members £20. The cost includes a light lunch.

Book: Please book by [clicking this link](#).

More information: [Download the flyer](#) or contact sfes.secretary@gmail.com

New report on support for children affected by domestic abuse

In November, Action for Children published a new report: *Patchy, piecemeal and precarious: Support for children affected by domestic abuse*. The report includes new analysis of government data, showing that, on average, 692 social care assessments a day in England feature domestic violence as an issue faced by children.



For the report, they commissioned new research from the University of Stirling looking at specialist support services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse across England and Wales.

The key findings were:

- Children faced barriers to accessing support in at least two thirds of the local authorities interviewed;
- In four of the 30 local authorities interviewed, there were no support services available at all for children affected by domestic abuse;
- In nearly two thirds of the local authorities interviewed, services for children were dependent on time-limited funding.
- We are calling on the next government to:
- Introduce legislation to combat domestic abuse, specifically recognising and addressing the impact on children and their needs, without delay;
- Tackle the current pattern of piecemeal and patchy provision of services for children and young people impacted by domestic abuse.

See the [*Action for Children blog*](#) for more details about the report (*Action for Children is one of CTE's Bodies in Association*).

And finally...

Advent and Christmas 2019

CTBI is collating a range of resources for Advent and Christmas, including the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, and those from Christian Aid, Church Urban Fund and Hope.

[*Access advent and Christmas resources on the CTBI website...*](#)



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020

The 2020 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a unique opportunity for mission and evangelisation, with plenty of opportunity to involve children and schools. Let's make the 2020 Week of Prayer, 18th-25th January, a moment of outreach and evangelism!



The booklet and further resources for 2020 are now available to download at www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

Working with refugees and asylum seekers – new safeguarding advice

New safeguarding advice has been issued for churches working with refugees and asylum seekers, produced jointly by charities Thirtyone: eight and Welcome Churches. [*Access the guidance here*](#), and read more on the [*Christian Today website...*](#)



**Guidelines for
safeguarding refugees
and asylum seekers**

Faith Communities Guide to Engaging with Police

A *Faith Communities Guide to Engaging with Police* has recently been published, including useful information about ways in which faith communities can engage with and support the local police. It includes practical guidance around the areas of addiction, youth violence and loneliness and more.



The guide includes many organisations, ideas and projects that can inspire and support faith communities to set up a project in partnership with the police and other statutory agencies. The guide was written by Marie Reavey, an Acting Inspector with Norfolk Police and Chair of the Christian Police Association's National Council.

[Access the guide here](#) or visit the [Faith and Police Communities website...](#)

National Sports Sunday 2020: Sunday 17th May 2020 - Save the date!



Does your local church or churches together group know what sports clubs are in your area? Since 2018, National Sports Sunday has been growing as an opportunity to mobilise Christians to see how they can best serve the community of sport, which has over 25 million people in it. Organised by a range of ministries, we provide resources to equip Christians to pray and consider what they can do.

Put the date in your diary now and visit the website to found out more:

www.nationalsportssunday.org.uk

Saints and Celebrities study day – papers available

Papers are now available from the Society for Ecumenical Studies 'Saints and Celebrities' study, which looked at contrasting perspectives from a Reformed and a Catholic view. It explored some of what the churches believe about saints today and what we can learn and receive from each other, in the context of celebrity culture.



[Find out more on the CTBI website...](#)

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