
From: NEWS from the Free Churches Group <paul.rochester@freechurches.org.uk>
Sent: 15 September 2021 15:53
To:
Subject: FCG News September 2021: Supporting new beginnings



Supporting new beginnings

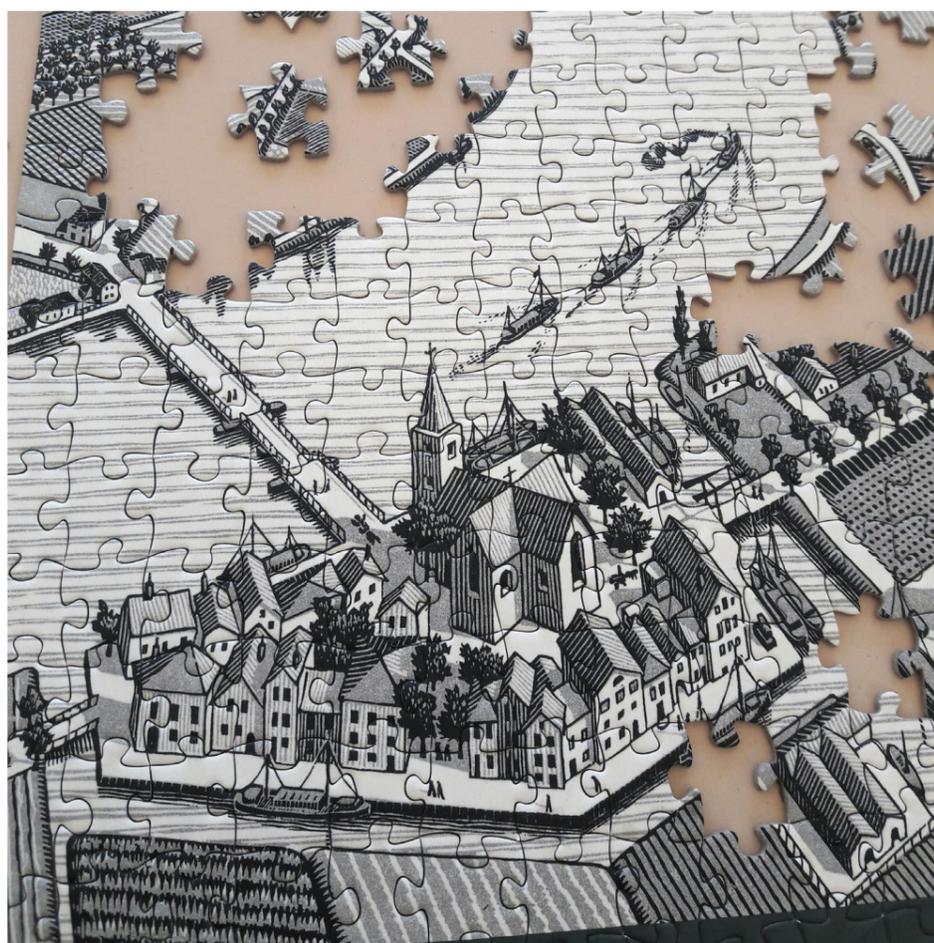


Photo by Wonderlane on Unsplash

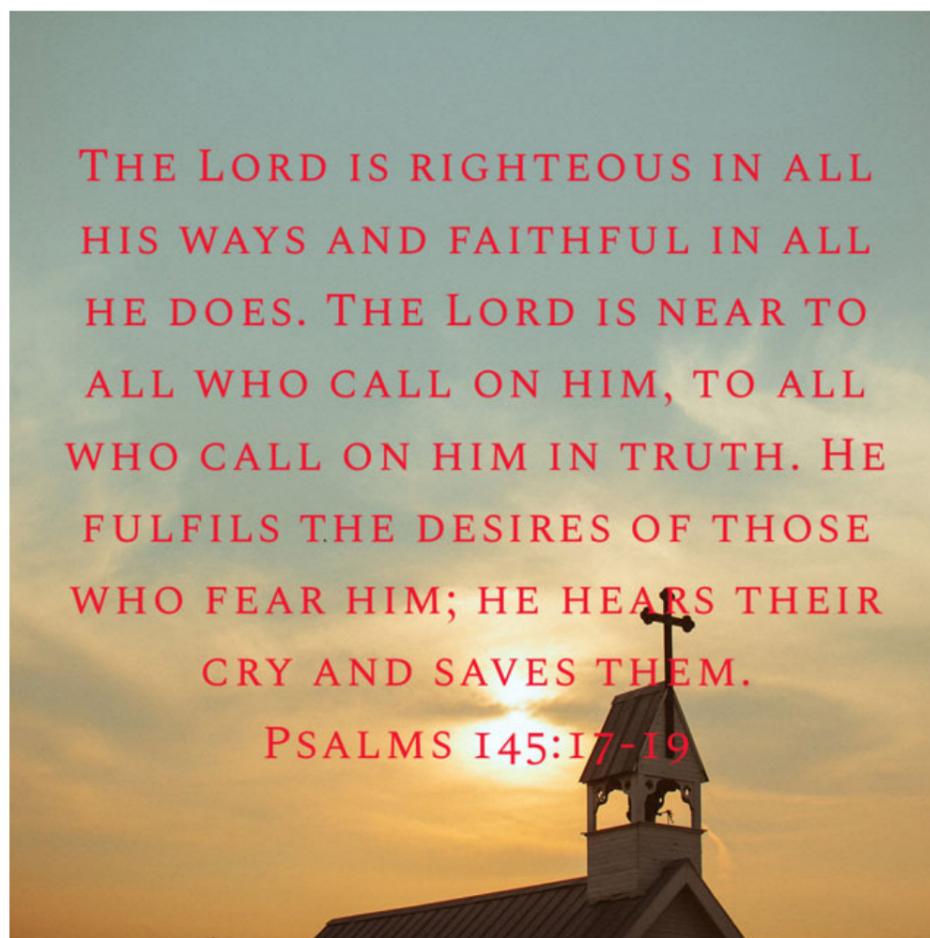
My thoughts, as the month of September is quickly passing by, are about new beginnings. Probably because of Education Sunday and the focus on those facing the beginning of the new academic year, with the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic and all that entail.

Recently, we've seen harrowing circumstances in Afghanistan. The Afghan people whether they left the country or stayed, face the challenge of a new start. The country, under new leadership, is beginning to set a new course, which looks to be uncertain, and it faces a challenging future because of looming economic and social problems. Many fear that the instability and challenges engulfing the country could lead to a humanitarian crisis, resulting in many thousands of refugees seeking a safe haven. The United Nations recently reported a significant rise in the number of unaccompanied children leaving the country. We hope that a concerted effort by governments and humanitarian organisations will prioritise the needs of these children and protect them from exploitation and neglect.

Many countries are in the process of resettling Afghan refugees. The UK Government has committed to welcome around 5,000 Afghan citizens in the next year and up to 20,000 over the coming years. The Afghans who are seeking to settle in the UK will require support and our prayers. There are not only Afghans beginning new lives in

the UK, but British people returning to the country who need to resettle.

I am aware that churches in the UK are looking at ways to help people arriving from Afghanistan, working with local community groups and local councils. Christians around the world are praying for the future of Afghanistan and the Afghan people and we need to continue to hold those affected by this situation in our prayers over the coming months.



Inevitably, we must learn to face new beginnings as part of the natural course of life. Sometimes enforced, and at other times choices we make to start over again. We naturally tend to feel more comfortable with routine rather than the upheaval that change can bring. Only God fully knows what the future holds, so the idea of a new beginning often feels terrifying, engendering feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. However, despite those anxieties, we can be confident in the love and strength that God brings to our lives.

With God's help, we can learn to adjust to new stages in life, whether they be palatable or not. We can learn to focus on new opportunities and live with optimism and hope. Starting afresh, despite the uneasiness, can be rewarding, although that may not be seen or understood at the time. We can take great comfort that God remains the constant in our lives and that He gives us the strength and courage to adjust to changes when we need to. Thankfully, He does this by His nearness to us; he walks with us, allays our fears and comforts our hearts. Psalms 145:17-19 provides a wonderful reflection on the nearness of God and His faithfulness to act on behalf of those who call on Him: "The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them."

Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are called to walk alongside those in need, with a willingness to help. There are opportunities to do so every day, as people start new jobs, move to new homes or must come to terms with health challenges that are life changing.

They need people who are patient, loving and considerate at these times. Innately, we have a sense of the help they need, because we know how we would wish to be treated with sensitivity and love.

Let's think about someone facing a new start and ask what we can do to support them as the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

Revd Paul Rochester

Secretary of the Free Churches Group



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THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL COHESION

An opportunity to hear about the Free Churches report on the Church and Social Cohesion in the North of England context

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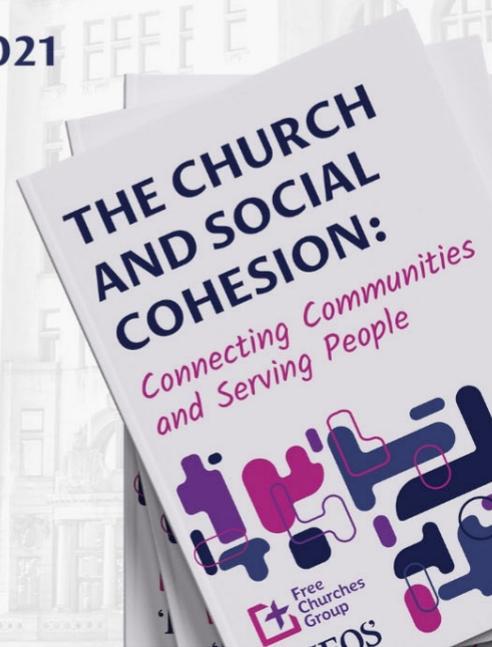
THURSDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

LIVERPOOL TOWN HALL

1:30 - 3:30PM



Liverpool & District Free Church Federal Council



“Churches are an asset for social cohesion, not a threat to it.”

SPEAKERS



Cat Smith, MP

Catherine Jane Smith is a British Labour Party politician who has been the Member of Parliament for Lancaster and Fleetwood since 2015. She has served as Shadow Secretary of State for Young People and Democracy since 2016.



Zia Chaudhry MBE, Barrister, Author, Speaker

Zia is a barrister and the author of Just Your Average Muslim. He is a former chair of the Merseyside Council of Faiths and was awarded an MBE for services to interfaith relations in 2015. After 26 years at the Criminal Bar he took up his current position at Liverpool John Moores University continuing his community engagement work in a more formal role.



Madeleine Pennington, Theos.

Madeleine joined Theos in 2018 as a researcher. Madeleine led on the Free Churches Commission, investigating the impact of churches on social cohesion across England. She holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Oxford, and previously worked as a research scholar in Philadelphia.

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CONNECTING COMMUNITIES, SERVING PEOPLE, THE CHURCH & SOCIAL COHESION

Register now for an exciting and thought provoking event coming up in Liverpool on 30th September 2021! Connecting Communities, Serving People, The Church & Social Cohesion will take place on the afternoon of the 30th September 2021 and be hosted at Liverpool Town Hall. The Church and Social Cohesion: Connecting Communities and Serving People report is available to download [HERE](#).

Find out more about the event [HERE](#) and register here:

[Register Here for the Event](#)



Revd Dr Mark Newitt

News from Mark Newitt

Sheffield, which is where I am based, is estimated to contain over two million trees. This means that it has more trees per person than any other city in Europe with trees outnumbering people 4 to 1. Although the temperature here, recently, has been over 20°C, the leaves on various trees that I can see from my window are already showing yellowish hues which is a reminder that, meteorologically at least, we are now in the season of Autumn.

Whatever the meteorological season might be, for many working in health and social care it is still the season of Covid. Numbers of hospital admissions are increasing once more and a care-home chaplain told me this week one of their homes was in lockdown because of an outbreak. While restrictions brought in due to the pandemic have been lifted in most places, mask wearing and social distancing is still the norm in many health and social care settings. A senior chaplain I spoke with recently said that, in terms of both the volume and complexity of the work their team is dealing with, they have never known it so busy for such a sustained period of time. Unsurprisingly, a constant refrain that I hear is about how spiritually and physically tired chaplains are feeling.

This context is the background for the annual Study Day that we will be putting on for health and social care chaplains on November 4th. The day will look at the themes of grief, trauma and resilience. This will be from two directions; 1) looking at some of the theory behind those words to help chaplains in their support of others and then 2) enabling chaplains to reflect on their own feelings and experience brought about by the pandemic and how they can build or maintain our spiritual resilience. Recognizing the level of exhaustion that many chaplains have, the day will include elements of self-care with the aim of bringing a lighter touch and a smile to the day. As part of this, I'm delighted that the performance poet [Harry Baker](#) will provide a recorded set that will include a poem written specially for the day. [Booking details will be sent out to chaplains shortly.]



I started off mentioning Autumn. It is a season of transition and contrasts, having both elements of harvest and abundance (John Keats' famous *Ode to Autumn* describes it as the 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness') but also aspects of decline and death (Robert Frost writes, 'Then leaf subsides to leaf, / So Eden sank to grief, / So dawn goes down to day / Nothing gold can stay.'). Wherever we are in the season of Covid, I suspect that, in reflecting on our experiences, alongside the grief and trauma there would be the contrasting moments of joy and fruitfulness. Some of that paradoxical nature is captured in a poem/prayer written by Michael Leunig. It is a piece that I've often used with patients when reflecting on mixed emotions, and I offer it to you now.

Autumn

We give thanks for the harvest of the heart's work:

Seeds of faith planted with faith;

Love nurtured by love; Courage strengthened by courage.

We give thanks for the fruits of the struggling soul;

The bitter and the sweet; For that which has grown in adversity.

And for that which has flourished in warmth and grace;

For the radiance of the spirit in autumn and for that which must now fade and die.

We are blessed and give thanks.

Amen.

Revd Dr Mark Newitt

Secretary for Healthcare Chaplaincy

FCG - Prisons



Revd Bob Wilson

News from Prisons Chaplaincy

I'm grateful to Bob for giving me an opportunity to write something for FCG News. I first walked into a Prison in 2003, I was then employed by Youth for Christ as a Christian Youth worker with young offenders in HMYOI Castington which held up to 400 young people (aged 16-21). 4 years later I attained Chaplaincy accreditation through Assemblies of God and was employed as a "Christian Chaplain". In 2011 two prisons merged to become HMP Northumberland where I still am today in the role of Managing Chaplain. HMP Northumberland is a Category C prison which holds 1348 prisoners (aged 21+). We have prisoners who are serving short sentences up to those serving a life sentence and anyone in-between. As Chaplains, we support men in their faith as you'd expect but another vital part of our role is pastoral support for all prisoners and all staff! As part of my staff support I do a weekly "Phil good Friday" slot, sometimes singing or writing poetry to, hopefully, boost the morale and put a smile on faces after a busy week.

My reflection, therefore, below is a poem I wrote for staff based on John 11:35. I love my job and it's varied forms of duty. I am so thankful to God for the opportunity to have the conversations that I do and to work with amazing people staff and 'residents'.



Photo by Tim Marshall on Unsplash

Everyone Needs Compassion

*You don't have to be "Religious" to have heard this expression – "Jesus wept" is today's confession
Some use this in prayer others to describe the worst, but there is a lot of compassion contained in this two-word
verse.*

*Compassion, you guessed it is the word for the day, it's powerful, empathetic and will keep us from dismay.
Asking someone more than once how are they are doing, is showing compassion and is always worth pursuing.*

*Cards on the table we'll all know someone who has struggled with their ACE's they've had excessive trauma
since the age of learning to tie their laces.*

*Everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about, be kind always, help someone process their thoughts guide
them out of the maze.*

*Take some time today to praise someone or thank them kindly for something they've done. It may just be the
thing that strengthens them to thinking that one battle is won.*

*Walking with another on their journey of life, can help them cope with many things which would otherwise cause
them strife.*

*Looking out for the non-verbal signs and changes of mood. They may be in a sticky mess and you can help them
get unglued.*

*What can I possibly offer others you may ask yourself? By being kind, considerate, a listening ear can help
someone's mental health.*

*So, in closing, if things are on your mind and you're struggling with some issues, you can ask to see a Chaplain,
they're the ones who carry tissues.*

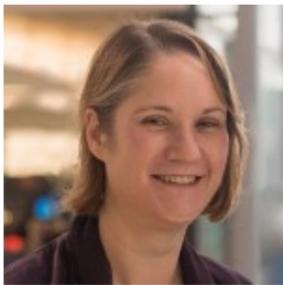
I pray that the God of all compassion will fill you with his Holy Spirit afresh and his compassion will flow through you to others.

God bless and thank you



Phil Longhurst
Managing Chaplain
HMP Northumberland

FCG - Education



Sarah Lane Cawte



Revd Sara Iles

News from Sarah & Sara

How your church can support students

The A-level results are out, and many young people are looking forward to starting their university careers. For some of them, this will be the first time they've been away from home without family or friends, and it's a big step. Whether you have young people in your church family who are starting university for the first time, or others who are returning, you might be wondering how you can support them.

If your church is in a place where there is a university nearby, there will be many new students in the area in the next few weeks. We have produced a series of 4 leaflets to help you think about what you can do as a church to support students in universities.

[Branching Out](#) offers suggestions about how to support those who are part of your church and who are going away.

[Keeping in Touch](#) explores ways in which you can maintain contact with young people who are starting student life.

[Making a Difference](#) is a collection of ideas about how to support university students in your community.

[Home from Home](#) will help you think about supporting students who come to your church.

These leaflets are free to download from the Free Churches Group website [HERE](#).

We do have a limited number of printed copies available if you would like to circulate them around a group of churches, for example. Please contact me if you would like us to send some to you

(sarah.lane.cawte@freechurches.org.uk). We are only able to send these in quantities of 10 or above for each leaflet and would be pleased to receive a donation towards the cost of postage.

Sarah Lane Cawte

Free Churches Education Officer

You can follow Sarah on Twitter - [@SarahFCG](https://twitter.com/SarahFCG)

News from Gethin



Gethin Rhys



Cytûn

Eglwysi ynghyd yng Nghymru
Churches together in Wales

News from Wales

Cytûn's new Policy Bulletin

Cytun has published a new Policy Bulletin which is available [HERE](#). Articles cover the build-up to the COP26 climate conference in November and the nations' Climate Sunday service on Sept 5th at 3.30 for 4pm; re-establishing the Senedd's Cross-Party Group on Faith; new funding for church-related community facilities from both Welsh and UK governments; the new Welsh Government's legislative programme; and the proposed 'Protect Duty' for places of worship.

The Nations' Climate Sunday service is now available to view [HERE](#).

Parch./Revd Gethin Rhys

Swyddog Polisi / Policy Officer

Cytûn: Eglwysi ynghyd yng Nghymru | Cytûn: Churches together in Wales



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Our two fully-equipped meeting rooms, situated in the heart of London at the Free Churches Group offices (3-minute walk from Euston Station, London), are available to hire for those needing professional and private space to meet.

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