

Reflection of the Month: Finding the Sheep

Jo Clare-Young reflects on St Luke 15: 1-10:

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So, he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance. 'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'



Reflection

I worried about some strange things as a child; many of them to do with God.

Watching the first space shuttle take off, I worried about it hitting an angel or, even worse, hitting God. On Palm Sunday, I worried about whether any of the disciples remembered to return the donkey to its owner. I worried about the sheep in this parable too, not the lost one, because it gets found, but the other ones. The sheep left all alone whilst the shepherd hunts for that one, privileged, lost sheep.

I have rather different worries today. I worry about the ever-evolving family at church. We rejoice, of course, when a new sheep finds our flock, we welcome them in with joy, rejoicing in their presence. We should also, though, be rejoicing in the wonderful people already in our church family, even if there are not quite 99 of them. Affirming and appreciating all they do for our community just as joyfully as we affirm and appreciate the new sheep.

What I worry about more are the people who fade out of our fellowship, our church family. How often do we fail to notice the lone sheep that has wandered off? They, too, are a lost sheep and we must go looking for them. We must not be so focused on the front door that we miss those drifting out of the back one.

We are all shepherds with sheep. Not all of our sheep are in church. There are sheep that we forget until a Christmas Card or postcard arrives; sheep we mean to phone, or email or pray for, but we just forget. There's always tomorrow...right? I wonder if you can think of a sheep you have lost track of. A sheep that needs to be found. Maybe you can track them down and rejoice.

Prayer

God of wandering sheep,
We rejoice that you found us,
that you never stop
bringing us back to the fold.
Keep us from drifting and wandering,
make each one of us a sheep dog,
attentive to your whistle.
Amen

The Rev'd Jo Clare-Young is minister of the North Yorkshire Coast Pastorate of the United Reformed Church.

This reflection is used with permission from Jo Clare-Young©and the [Daily Devotions of the United Reformed Church, April 1st 2019](#).

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Churches working together in times of uncertainty

In the current political climate many churches and church leaders have been working together for the common good. Below are three ongoing initiatives that try to bring hope and reconciliation in times of uncertainty. These are all ongoing:



The Presidents of Churches Together in England continue to call all Christians and churches to pray together about Brexit:

<https://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=542972>

The national Rural Officers have written a letter with information about pastoral agencies supporting those in the rural economy who might be facing particular difficulties: <https://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=540206>

The National Church Leaders Forum have produced a statement about knife crime, together with a list of actions to be taken. Full details follow on page 3 as not covered in CTe-News before, but the link is:

https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/543764/Home/News/Latest_news/NCLF_statement_re.aspx

NCLF statement re knife crime

7th March 2019 PRESS RELEASE

CHURCH GROUP PUBLISHES 10 POINT ACTION PLAN TO REDUCE KNIFE CRIME AND SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE



The church has long been and continues to be committed to tackling knife and gun crime on our streets that blights communities and destroys families.

Over ten years ago, a CTE report 'Who is my neighbour - a church response to social disorder linked to gangs, drugs, guns and knives' by Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Dr Sophie Hebden, Dr Keith Hebden[1] made a number of practical recommendations to tackle knife crime and provide opportunities for young people.

In 2015, a NCLF - A Black Christian Voice Manifesto recommended that churches should seek to find effective ways to work with local and national agencies and organisations to provide outreach programmes targeting vulnerable youths.[2] However, the seriousness with which we take the current situation with our young people, means none of us can carry on business as usual.

'Young people and their futures are so important that we must resist temptations to treat knife and gun crimes as a political football. Government, police, churches and communities should work together to help bring about a society in which young people feel and are safe', says Dr Joe Aldred (Executive Secretary for Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations at Churches Together in England).

As a Christian agency, we are therefore calling upon churches to dedicate all or a portion of every service during Lent (6 March - 18 April) to raise awareness, engage with young people, practitioners, families, communities and others to address these issues prayerfully, theologically and practically.

According to BBC Home Affairs correspondent, Danny Shaw, 'There is nothing new about knife crime: sharp objects, blades and knives have been used as weapons for thousands of years. But after falling for several years, knife crime in England and Wales is rising again.

There were 40,147 offences in the 12 months ending in March 2018, a 16% increase on the previous year and the highest number since 2011, the earliest point for which comparable data is available.[3]

In light of the current spate of murders, and the increase in the incidents of knife crime, we call upon our churches and other key partners to redouble their efforts and resources to tackle knife crime and youth violence as a matter of urgency.

Dr R. David Muir, Co-Chair of NCLF, says: "Knife crime is a national emergency. Like all national emergencies, we must treat it with the urgency and resources it deserves to protect young people, families and communities."

Call to Action: A 10 Point Plan

In the 'Who is My Neighbour' Report', there were 29 Recommendations to Churches, Government and the Police Service. These recommendations are still relevant today. We have extracted 10 of these to inform and guide our Call to Action on knife crime.

Recommendations for The Church

1. Educate members to raise awareness of young people's needs and the pervasiveness of child abuse, as well as providing training for youth leaders and young people on the issues around guns, drugs, knives and gangs.
2. Focus youth work on developing young people's skills and confidence through serving the community, providing an environment where they can find a sense of worth that families and schools may not be able to provide, as well as an opportunity to befriend adults who may become role model figures.
3. Hold listening events where you hear from young people and/or members of the community directly, but these should initiate further interaction rather than being an alternative means of engagement.
4. Host events to promote peace and integration, such as community barbeques, peace concerts, visits and exchanges with other communities, etc.
5. Have a prayer strategy attached to voluntary groups and businesses in the community, asking them regularly what they would like you to pray for.
6. Ensure there are safeguarding policies in place so that both church and gang members are protected in case of difficult disclosures.
7. Give young people responsibility and leadership roles within church.

Recommendations for The Government

8. Many church members feel that the government carries responsibility for 'doing something' about the problem of negative gang activity and violent crime in inner-city areas. The government should counter this view by encouraging and empowering local community members to tackle the problems themselves, in partnership with professional organisations and the police.
9. Support training for church and volunteer organisations working with young people who use drugs, guns and knives.

Recommendations for The Police

10. The police should recognise the role that churches can play in bringing together communities to fight crime and holding community forums. Strive to work with churches in a training, informing and capacity-building role.

Over the period of Lent, we will initiate a national conversation about the causes and consequences of youth violence and knife crime, as well as the strategies and solutions for combatting the crisis facing our communities. When NCLF conducted the consultation to inform its 2015 Manifesto we travelled around the country to hear from church leaders, young people, activists and academics. We want to hear from all our communities, including these key groups. We especially want to hear the voice of young people and parents. In our Manifesto, we highlighted the importance of strengthening families and providing greater opportunities for young people. During our consultation, there was a strong message about the role of fathers and other role models for young men. 'The phenomena of absentee fathers', says Co-Chair of NCLF Pastor Ade Omooba MBE, 'must be given considerable attention in our conversation.' Link for more information: <https://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=543764>

Lambeth Awards presented to previous Gen Sec and current PMR staff at CTE

04/04/2019



From peacemakers to nuns, academics to gardeners, the 2019 Lambeth Awards recipients celebrate the wide range of ways that people devote themselves to serving others. Twenty-seven people who have made an extraordinary contribution to the Church and wider society were given Lambeth Awards by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace today, including the previous General Secretary and a current member of staff at Churches Together in England.

The Reverend Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of CTE until September 2018, received the Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism for his outstanding sustained contribution to the development of ecumenical life and witness in England.

Bishop Dr Joseph Aldred, Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations at CTE was awarded the Langton Award for Community Service 2019 for his outstanding mission to the UK's African-Caribbean community and to the wider church.

The Lambeth Awards, launched by Archbishop Justin Welby in 2016, recognise outstanding service in different fields, including those of the Archbishop's ministry priorities of prayer and the Religious life; reconciliation and peace building; and evangelism and witness.

Photographs of David Cornick, Joe Aldred and the Archbishop from Lambeth Palace. [Link to the full text, pictures and links from the website of the Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

2 new appointments at CTE

Churches Together in England is delighted to announce two new appointments to its staff team, taking up posts at the beginning of June before Captain Jim Currin CA retires in July 2019.

Rev'd. Dr. Ben Aldous will be a full-time member of the team, with responsibility for Evangelism and Mission. Ben has been in Anglican ministry in Durban (2010–2013) and, most recently, Cape Town in South Africa (2013–2018) and has recently completed a doctorate at The University of Stellenbosch exploring an ethnographical study of Fresh Expressions in The Anglican Church of Southern Africa. Ben loves running, especially half marathons. He is a musician and plays electric bass and keyboards and is a fan of neo soul, jazz and funk. He is particularly interested in the wines of South Africa and has



considerable experience in wine tasting! Ben will be based in the West Country, where he grew up and worked as a youth minister (2001–2003), before missional work in Cambodia from 2004–2009 and is married to Sharon with four children.

Lucy Olofinjana has been appointed to a half-time post as Communications and Media Officer for Churches Together in England. She comes with experience in this area working for the Evangelical Alliance (2012–2019) leading a range of mission, unity and research projects to resource churches across the UK, including the evangelism website www.greatcommission.co.uk. She also previously worked for the Salvation Army in London and attended SOAS University. Most recently, Lucy has been on maternity leave and loves being a mum to ten-month old Iyanu. She is passionate about building multicultural communities and sharing stories from across the rich diversity of the Church. She also loves singing, baking and trips to the cinema. Lucy will be based in South East London where she lives with her husband Israel, minister of Woolwich Central Baptist.



From NEO to diocesan bishop

Robert Byrne, who served as National Ecumenical Officer for the Catholic Bishops' Conference, was installed on 25 March as the new diocesan bishop of Hexham and Newcastle.

When he moved on from the NEO post to serve as Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, he remained a Trustee of CTE until retiring due to pressure of work. He was also Chair of Trustees and Convenor of CTE's Enabling Group.

The Papal Mandate appointing Robert to Hexham and Newcastle reminded him that 'Bishops especially are responsible for bringing about unity in diversity' and while this was done in the context of his role as diocesan bishop, it nevertheless also relates to his commitment to Christian unity.



The service was attended by several ecumenical guests from North East Churches Acting Together. The photo (© diocese of Hexham & Newcastle) shows Robert greeting the Suffragan Bishop of Berwick, Mark Tanner.

NW Churches at CRE

Andrew Taylor writes about the North West Churches supporting Christian Resources Exhibition:

The Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) came to Manchester on 13th and 14th March, taking over Event City at the Trafford Centre. Amongst the considerable range of exhibitors, addressing almost every conceivable church resource need, was a stand under the title of 'Faithspace'. This was the stand of Churches Together in the North West, a collective of the Churches Together bodies of Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside.



The stand had been organised by Revd. Phil Jump, Regional Minister of the North Western Baptist Association and currently Chair of both Churches Together in Cheshire and the Merseyside Region. Phil reports:

"This was a great opportunity not only to tangibly demonstrate the depth of relationship that exists between our churches in the North West, meet and engage with Christians from a variety of traditions, but also to celebrate the Church as a key resource in God's mission".

Ecumenical Officers from the five counties maintained a presence at the stand, which featured not only information about the North West, but also highlighted resources of the forthcoming period of 'Thy Kingdom Come'. There was a constant stream of enquirers and passing conversations, many delighted to see the united involvement and engagement of the range of church traditions that were represented.

Free Churches Group and Pray for Schools

Sara Iles writes:

The Free Churches Group has been an active partner with Pray for Schools for many years. The Steering Group of Pray for Schools met earlier in March to pray for and plan for how to engage even more churches in praying for our schools.

Does your church pray for the local schools?

Would you like to find out more?

Check out the latest events, resources and news [HERE](#).



Pray for Schools Fortnight is coming up soon - 12th - 26th May. Find out more and how to get involved [HERE](#).

The steering group is made up of many Christian groups who are involved in education, some of whom are featured in the photo from our latest meeting, which includes partners/guests from:

Open The Book
Prayer Spaces in Schools
Youth for Christ
CARE
Church of England
Scripture Union
ACT

See this news item and links for the partners on the FCG website: [HERE](#)
You can read more about the work that FCG are doing in the field of education [HERE](#).

Free Churches Group Blood/Organ campaign for BME Churches



Debbie Hodge from the Free Churches Group writes about a 'Call to Action':

The Free Churches Group working with the Blood Transfusion and Organ donation services facilitated a one day conference with 'BME' Churches. The aim of the day was to encourage more blood donors from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to come forward to meet the needs of patients from these backgrounds, as certain conditions, such as sickle cell and thalassaemia, are more prevalent within these communities. Indeed, some rare types are also only found within these communities and patients who require regular blood transfusions benefit from receiving blood from donors with a similar ethnic background.

Sickle cell disease is the name for a group of inherited conditions that affect the red blood cells. The most serious type is called sickle cell anaemia. Sickle cell disease mainly affects people of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Eastern Mediterranean and Asian origin. In the UK, it's particularly common in people with an African or Caribbean family background. People with sickle cell disease produce unusually shaped red blood cells that can cause problems because they don't live as long as healthy blood cells and they can become stuck in blood vessels.

Sickle cell disease is a serious and lifelong condition, although long-term treatment can help manage many of the problems associated with it. Black, Asian and minority ethnic donors are specifically needed right now because:

- some patients who receive frequent blood transfusions need blood to be closely matched to their own

- a number of blood conditions, like sickle cell disease which is treated through blood transfusions, most commonly affect black, Asian and minority ethnic people
- the best match typically comes from blood donors from the same ethnic background.

While people from all communities and backgrounds give blood, but fewer than 5% of our blood donors who gave blood in the last year were from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. This is despite black, Asian and minority ethnic communities representing around 14% of the population. We want to try and readdress this balance, and just for information, if you have the sickle cell trait you can still become a blood donor.

Major David Evans, the Salvation Army Territorial Ecumenical Officer, also writes about new blood and organ legislation and the change from 'opt in' to 'opt out' re donating from 2020:

The Salvation Army as an international intercultural church welcomes the new legislation regarding "Blood and Organ Transfer". Our maxim of "Heart to God and hand to man" encourages us to serve effectively, where possible, the needs of the various communities in which we serve. In the United Kingdom growing numbers of our denomination come from Afro-Caribbean origins and alongside the Black majority churches we encourage the Black Community to consider this new legislation and the benefits it has already made in Wales since the legislation was adopted there in 2013".

For further information about this Free Churches campaign, 'A Call to Action' and the new legislation: [please visit here](#).

St Chad ecumenical pilgrimage

Robert Mountford writes:

On Saturday 8 June 2019, midlands Church Leaders, priests, pastors and people will walk together in prayer and fellowship over the 19 miles between Repton and Lichfield. The St Chad Pilgrimage will take around nine hours to complete, including pauses for prayer and refreshment en route.

Prayer

All five fixed prayer points on the pilgrimage have significant, historic Christian roots:

St Wystan's, Repton, our starting point, was established in the 7th Century and was the base of the first four Bishops of the Mercians

St Modwen's, Burton upon Trent, is the location of the place of prayer established by the Irish nun St Modwen in the 7th Century



All Saints, Alrewas, has over 1,000 years of history as a place of prayer

St Chad's, Lichfield, is the site of the house of prayer established by St Chad in 669AD. Lichfield Cathedral, for many centuries the resting place of St Chad's remains, was founded on Christmas Day 700AD

Since Saturday 8 June is Pentecost Saturday (except for Orthodox believers), it falls within the 'Thy Kingdom Come' novena. This introduces a contemporary ecumenical prayer aspect to the pilgrimage, powerfully complementing its Christian heritage context.



Church Leaders

The following midlands Church Leaders will participate in some or all of the St Chad Pilgrimage on 8 June:

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave, 99th successor of St Chad as Bishop of Lichfield
The Rt Revd Jan MacFarlane, Bishop of Repton in the Anglican Diocese of Derby
The Rt Revd Pat McKinney, Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham
Mgr Tim Menezes, Vicar General in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham
Revd Rachel Parkinson, Chair of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District of the Methodist Church
Revd Mike Fegredo, Regional Minister for the East Midlands Baptist Association
Revd Adrian Argile, Regional Minister Team Leader for the Heart of England Baptist Association
Revd Steve Faber, Moderator of the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church

More information: <http://www.staffordshirechurches.org/>

Minister Cambourne Church - A Partnership of the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist & URC



Are you called to join us in our mission congregation and community on the West of Cambridge, building on our Ecumenical tradition alongside our partner churches?

We are seeking a new Minister, ordained in one of our partner Denominations, who will embrace the Ecumenical nature of our Fellowship and build on a secure foundation within Church to enable our Fellowship to enact God's purpose for us in Cambourne.

We are seeking someone who is:

- an articulate, robust, biblical preacher

- an experienced leader, able to inspire and develop willing
- volunteers in all aspects of ministry
- mission-focused in approach with a heart for young people

We:

- are diverse culturally, socially, theologically and in age-range
- value our fellowship and mutually supportive ethos
- seek to be welcoming and are exploring new ways of outreach into our expanding community

Cambourne has excellent transport links to London and further afield with access to a diverse range of amenities, good leisure facilities and excellent schools.

For more information visit www.cambournechurch.org.uk/ministerialvacancy

Contact/Applications: Sue Drane, Eastern Synod Office, United Reformed Church, Duxford Rd, Whittlesford, CB22 4ND.

Tel. 01223 830770 or email: admin@urceastern.org.uk

Deadline for applications: Monday 15 April 2019

Interviews: Friday 10 May 2019

Followed by a preach with a view on a date to be agreed with the selected candidate. (Informal enquiries may be made to Revd. Paul Whittle – email moderator@urceastern.org.uk to arrange a phone conversation.)

Sector Minister MK Christian Foundation



Salary Package: £36,500 plus pension (if ordained a stipend at denominational rates, housing and pension)

MK Christian Foundation
Growing people and community through social enterprise

An exciting opportunity, for someone lay or ordained, to be part of the leadership of an innovative, mission focused ecumenical charity that uses social enterprise to grow people and community.

As Sector Minister you will:

- Hold, develop and communicate, with others, the mission, vision and values of the MK Christian Foundation, with our particular expression of the Christian Faith and way, with its emphasis on the practical working out of the gospel;
- Ensure the growth and development of the community of our staff, trainees, volunteers and other service users enabling them to participate in delivering our mission and values;

- Oversee the on-going sustainability of the organisation, working with others to develop projects, new enterprises and expanded contracts that deliver our mission and Strategic Plan.

You will be:

- An effective leader who enjoys working collaboratively and empowering others
- Creative and entrepreneurial, taking ideas through to practical fruition
- Committed to working ecumenically and with other faith communities
- Able to reflect theologically, translating Christian traditions in ways relevant to community experience
- A good communicator, comfortable with public speaking
- Strong financial literacy and experience of contract management

This post will require an Enhanced DBS check. This post has an Occupational Requirement under the Equality Act 2010, Schedule 9 Part 1 that the post holder be a practising Christian as set out in the person specification.

We value diversity and welcome applicants from all sections of the community

Applications will only be accepted on the forms provided (No CV's)

For an application pack please email Stephen.norrish@mkchristianfoundation.co.uk

Deadline for applications: Midnight on Friday 31 May.

Interviews: We are using a two stage interview process with first interviews on Friday 14 June and second interviews on Friday 28 June 2019

And Finally ...

Gather podcast interview of unity leaders

The Gather network have produced a podcast 'for unity leaders out there looking for fresh inspiration and encouragement'. Roger Sutton from Gather (www.gather.global) writes: 'We've interviewed leaders who have been involved in building unity for many years. They share candidly what they have experienced and learnt and how God has spoken to them time and time again'. [Podcast hyperlink.](#)

Evangelical Alliance IDEA magazine 'Unity' theme

The magazine of the Evangelical Alliance for March/April is on the theme of Unity, under the front page headline 'God is Relational: Learning to Live with "The Other"'. There are a variety of articles from 'Me and "The Other"', to 'Disagreeing Well', and 'Restoration through Relationships'. <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/idea>

A charity for women over 40 in hardship

The Deakin & Withers Fund is for women (over the age of 40) facing hardship or distress. They must be Church members and single, widowed or divorced. It is a UK wide fund. CTE member churches will definitely know eligible people in hardship - please ask them to spread the word on your website, in a direct email to member churches, in CTE newsletters, via social media etc

<https://www.sycf.org.uk/apply/individuals/deakin-withers-fund/>

Rural Mission Sunday: 14th July 2019

Louise Davis writes: Sometimes we can feel overshadowed in the rural church by larger urban churches. Sometimes we don't always think that small churches 'do mission'. At Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre we feel passionately about the importance of small churches: we know they do mission and we want to celebrate that fact.

Rural Mission Sunday is an annual event celebrating the work of small rural churches. Get involved by holding a special service at your church or in your community.

<https://germinate.net/mission/rural-mission-sunday/>

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