



# CT-eNews

July 2020

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## Reflection of the Month: Be the change you wish to see in the world

*Rev Phyllis Thompson, from the New Testament Church of God, shares our Reflection of the Month for July 2020...*



History and education are intricately connected. To my mind, education at its best has much to do with the quest for truth and wisdom as well as the development of skills to discern and apply the truth to experience along with the courage to 'be the change we wish to see in the world'. Our experience embodies our individual and corporate stories and a good education enables us to examine and thankfully learn from our past. If this were not the case we would be teaching and learning, advocating and celebrating Flat Earthism. History in the context of education has to do with learning from the past to make sense of the present, in the interest of bringing about a better future for the common good of humanity and all of creation.

Christians of all persuasions and traditions, according to my reading of Scripture, have a moral responsibility to ensure that we move from 'good to better and better to best' in every sphere of life - whether we call this evangelism, discipleship, integral-mission, social action and so on. In this process memory is recognised as a valued commodity as is the truth. The truth in our world is not static. The apostle Paul puts it this way: 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.' 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV). Our knowledge is partial and hence the need to learn from others - 'history' and 'herstory', the story from the perspective of the 'conqueror' and the 'conquered' the young and the old, the experience of those in the global south and those in the global north, to list a few, and in the course of the learning make the necessary adjustments to make wrongs right with the clarity of mind that 'two wrongs do not make a right'!

The path of righteousness demands the abolition of certain 'sins of thought' and 'sins of action' and the narrative constructs this creates and institutes to the detriment of the 'sinned' and the 'sinned against'. The practical application of this pattern of thought presents a conundrum of 'ifs' and 'buts' for those of us who are committed to the mission of God to bring kingdom values to our life on this side of eternity.

As stated in our recent publication, 'According to conventional wisdom, questions inspire conversation and conversations enable learning and growth. Learning to ask the 'right' questions, engage in insightful conversations and then identify opportunities to practise what we believe...is clearly a positive way forward...How we facilitate opportunities for meaningful conversations about social injustice...are critical matters and challenges for our time.'\*

For example, what does the Lord's prayer look like in our private and public world? In our local, national and global contexts?

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.  
Amen.

Matt 6:9-13(KJV)

Is our theology, dogmas and language perceived as antiquated stories or valid resources to a better future?

In the pursuit of truth for life - the gift of abundant life as Jesus puts it according to John 10:10b, continual examination of our theology, dogmas and language is fundamental to our mindset and worldview. The more our quest for truth becomes informed by the recognition of our interdependency as a heavenly resource for our earthly existence, the greater equipped we become to address the challenges of our time. We are charged as the people of one father to be agents of change and in the process develop the language of solidarity such as 'our' 'we' and 'us' to guide our thoughts and actions.

May we flourish in the hope of our faith.

\* P. Thompson (ed) Challenges of Pentecostal Theology in the 21st Century (London: SPCK 2020)

*Phyllis Thompson has a background in development education and Pastoral ministry in the UK. She is currently a member of the Church of God International General Board of Education, an Executive Council Member of the European Pentecostal Theological Association and a member of the leadership team of her local Church in Northampton, England. She has written on topics to do with Black Majority Churches, and women in Christian leadership. Recent publications include her contribution to Faith of our Fathers (Pathway Press 2009), Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the 21st Century (SPCK 2013) and Challenges of Pentecostal Theology in the 21st Century (SPCK 2020).*

## Education Sunday 2020

**The date: Sunday 13 September**

**The theme: A learning people in a time of change**



This year Education Sunday takes place at a time when many children, young people and staff have been away from schools, colleges and universities and have been working in different ways. Churches, too, have had to learn and adapt, whilst still maintaining a pattern of worship. This is a time to think about what we have learnt about ourselves, about our communities and about God. We'd love to hear from you about what you have learnt during this time. Why not send us your thoughts – just a sentence or two, plus a picture of yourself, if you're happy for them to be used on our website and in a resource for churches? You can send them to Sarah Lane Cawte at [sarah.lane.cawte@freechurches.org.uk](mailto:sarah.lane.cawte@freechurches.org.uk)

If you're a prayer-writer, we'd also like to include your prayers for Education Sunday, linking with this year's theme. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, if you would like

to write a prayer, we'll include a selection of them for others to use. Please send them to the email address above.

### **What is Education Sunday?**

Education Sunday is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education.

The annual theme is devised by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations and organisations.

### **Resources for 2020**

An [introduction to the 2020 theme](#) has been written by Barbara Easton, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2021-22 and Head of Service, Methodist Academies and Schools Trust.

The Bible passages for this year are:

Exodus 14.19-31  
Psalm 114  
Romans 14.1-12  
Matthew 18.21-35

A growing list of resources for this year (logos, documents, guides) can be found on the [Education Sunday 2020 page on our website](#).

## **CTE Presidents' statement on the Hagia Sophia**

Issued 14 July 2020

"Presidents of Churches Together in England are saddened at the decision of the Turkish Government to change the status of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.

For a long period of time Hagia Sophia has been a unique centre symbolising a co-existence of people of faith. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and, as a place where the rich history of Istanbul is told visually, can be a living example of religious tolerance and respect. The decision to alter the status quo in this way is a powerful, symbolic change that is lamentable and painful for many people of faith the world over."



Presidents of Churches Together in England:

Archbishop Justin Welby, The Archbishop of Canterbury  
Cardinal Vincent Nichols, The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster  
Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, The Free Churches Moderator  
Archbishop Angaelos of London, Archbishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London  
and CTE President for the Orthodox Churches  
Pastor Agu Irukwu, head of Redeemed Christian Church of God UK and CTE Pentecostal  
President

## Sowing in concrete: New Lubbesthorpe

*CTE's Principal Officer for Mission and Evangelism, Rev Dr Ben Aldous, reflects on the development of a community and church in New Lubbesthorpe in Leicestershire:*

Part of my role at CTE is to act as secretary to the [Churches Group for New Housing Areas](#). It's a group that has been in existence for around 15 years and is charged with bringing churches together to consider how best to reach those moving onto the growing communities of new housing across the country.

The truth is, when churches come together to do this kind of thing it's not straightforward. At times there can be miscommunication, unmet expectations and a sense that what was embarked upon ended in failure. But there are also really wonderful, missional, flexible, creative and incarnational approaches to being and developing church on new housing estates.

Before lockdown and the 'new normal' of Zooming and immobility, I visited one such project and met its coordinator, Sue Steer. The construction of New Lubbesthorpe, to the West of Leicester and not far from the M1, began in April 2014 but the story begins long before that...



### Foundations of prayer

Back in March 2008 a planning application was submitted to the local (Blaby) district council to build 4,250 homes. Six years later, as plans were being approved, [Churches Together in Leicestershire \(CTL\)](#) approached the council expressing an interest, if the development went ahead, to assist them in 'building community.' And in early 2015 CTL and Blaby District council met to consult and think about what healthy community might look like.

At the same time a regular ecumenical prayer group was established which met in and around Lubbesthorpe. It's a reminder that this work was first established in prayer and that's a vital part of the Fresh Expressions journey. Before the ground was broken, other seeds were being sown.

## **Make expectations clear**

By September 2016, Sue Steer had joined the project. Sue is a Baptist minister with a pioneer\* gift, experience and training. Funding for her CTL part-time post came and still comes from the Church of England, Baptists (via the Home mission fund), the URC and Methodists.

Because of Sue's previous experience, she realised it was necessary to set out some expectations about what would be achieved. When she started, she was clear that her first job was to build community; the second priority was to help build church.

Initially her stakeholders were aligned with this vision. However, about three years later, when new members joined the management group, some questions were raised as to why Sue hadn't started 'a church' yet. The new members were more familiar with traditional church planting models (rather than, for example, following the fresh expressions journey). Working together these tensions were quickly resolved and the open mindedness endured.

## **Listening, being a guest and building team**

As I read through Sue's newsletters and blog, I was struck that in the early days she really listened to a whole variety of people. From shop owners in Kirby Muxloe, who worried that the changes in road networks would diminish their business, to local farmers who were staying in the area but were set to see the landscape they had known well utterly changed.

She reflects in an early newsletter that she was initially, 'Getting to know the builders, the sales teams, the council, some of the local farming community and the people living and serving the surrounding communities.' But she was also aware of the notion of being a 'guest' rather than a host in the emerging space of the new community.



Sue, being unafraid to inhabit the role of guest, was key in those early days. She reflects that this is in line with the kind of posture Jesus expected his disciples to take when they are sent out in Luke 10.

That posture of listening and asking what the community needed has continued. In June 2019, Sue organised 'a listening week' with drop-in sessions allowing residents the opportunity to comment on how the community was developing. That exercise will be repeated in the coming weeks post-Covid-19.

Sue, as a pioneer, knew it was important to build a good support system especially in the early days. She visited local churches looking for people with a pioneering heart to join her in a Lubbethorpe Action Group. Her Development Team were people who could help out practically with events and activities and were happy to learn from each other and their experiences. They hosted 'meet your neighbour' events as Sue and the team personally welcomed everyone who moved into the estate. In July 2017 there were residents in 18 houses; today about 400 houses are occupied.

## The word became flesh...

By December 2017 a smart new cabin had arrived (funded by the developers). This allowed Sue to be much more noticeably physically present in the community and to be able to create a space for people to gather.

The Hub developed as a place for coffee mornings, drop-ins, a book club and toddler groups. It also hosted [Radio Leicester's Sing Christmas](#), which felt like a significant step towards developing the community.

The Hub now moved to a new position next to the Primary School and their space has expanded into one of the classrooms.

That extra room and adjacent play space outside are very welcome as physical-distancing measures become the norm.

"Adapting to the new context, that's what this whole pioneering thing is about," reflects Sue as she starts to talk to the community about what #BuildBackBetter might look like in New Lubbethorpe. 'Luckily, I do enjoy change. I'm a firestarter!'

Another key relationship for Sue has been with the land agent, [the Drummond Estate](#). From the start they have been committed to seeing a healthy community form and thrive; not to just making a quick buck. In 2019 the project received the LGC Best Housing Initiative Award, which is a national award for local government. [Visit YouTube for a video of their entry.](#)



Through a regular financial contribution, the Drummond Estate offers ongoing support to the social enterprise (a Community Interest Company or CIC) which Sue is developing. A CIC is less rigid than a charity, allowing flexibility to adapt to the needs of the new residents. Up to 15 new households move in every month. As the CIC grows Sue can possibly be freed up to focus on the formation of church.

## Church taking shape

Along the way Sue has built a small community who are committed to being disciples. Some are still involved in their local churches and, whilst fully signed up to something emerging in the estate, aren't quite ready to leave inherited church yet. Sue reflected that the transition from inherited church to a new expression of church takes time. Grace to make that move is key.

The ecumenical dimension is a key part of the New Lubbethorpe story. Sue remarked, "if we can't learn to work across our denominations, how the heck are we going to work in our ethnic diversity?" About a quarter of the residents of the area are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background.

Sue is committed to ecumenical working. Her own spiritual director is a Roman Catholic, who has given her great personal support and the opportunity to talk through challenges along the way.

Church is taking shape based around themes of wellbeing, food and enjoying the outdoors, with a fantastic looking Mossy Church.

### **Areas of ecumenical experimentation**

As I listened to the story of New Lubbesthorpe and spoke with colleagues from CTE, I became aware that this idea of creating ecumenical experiments on new housing areas has historical precedence.

In a fascinating and well-worked paper [Telling the Story](#), David Hawtin and Roger Paul trace the history of Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). Before LEPs were a thing, the British Council of Churches Faith and Order consultation in Nottingham in 1964 came up with the idea of an "Area of Ecumenical Experiment" (an AEE).

As Hawtin and Paul write, 'the first major direction was to give approval to setting up locally 'areas of ecumenical experiment'. In giving its stamp of approval, the Nottingham Conference indicated how the unity of the church could be expressed at the local level. 'One of the challenges for the churches in post-war Britain at this time was to do with mission to the new areas of housing development which were being planned and built around almost every major city. The proposed new towns were a particular challenge in this respect. Sometimes these plans only allowed space for one church site. There was a growing sense that in responding to this challenge the churches would be more effective if they were to work together.'

I wonder if we need a return to the language of experiment in our ecumenical endeavours in New Housing. The future in many ways at this juncture of the Covid-19 crisis looks uncertain. Ecumenical funding could be cut as churches reboot and make do with less. Some churches may choose to hunker down or retreat to lick their wounds. But a commitment to creativity and experimentation is absolutely necessary if we are going to see new contextual churches forming through the concrete of our new housing areas. We need people like Sue and her commitment to listen, love and serve.

*This piece is adapted from the original blog ["Sowing in concrete: Tales of Church taking shape in new housing areas – New Lubbesthorpe"](#).*

\* [See the Church Mission Society for more information and definitions of pioneering ministry](#)

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

## **Free guide helps local groups build on community spirit**

[Together for the Common Good](#), one of CTE's Bodies in Association, has published a free guide to help local groups build on the great community spirit that emerged during lockdown.

"Let's Continue to Build Community" helps local groups consolidate neighbourly relationships. The guide includes four short sessions that lead to a simple action plan agreed by those involved. The session guide is [free to download from the Together for the Common Good website](#).



The four sessions can be run online or in person and are designed to bring together people who despite different backgrounds, life experiences and opinions are prepared to collaborate for the good of the neighbourhood. Everyone participating has an equal voice and leadership of the group can be shared, so there's no need for one person to do it all.

Alison Gelder from Together for the Common Good said: "During the crisis, you have probably been connecting with many people and organisations across your community. Why not gather a group to take that energy forward?"

Participants could be neighbours, key workers, faith leaders, community leaders and volunteers, local business owners, representatives of the Local Authority, police, NHS, schools, people who have used the foodbank or other community services. The sessions are suitable for everyone of all faiths and non-religious backgrounds.

Jenny Sinclair, director of Together for the Common Good said: "We saw great community spirit emerging during lockdown and we don't want to lose it. As the fallout of the pandemic unfolds, we'll need to continue to work together to strengthen our neighbourhoods. This is a new resource we are offering to help people at this time - please try it."

Framed around Common Good principles, the sessions provide an opportunity to encourage open conversation and mutual responsibility, building on goodwill already existing in the community.

For each session, the guide has a short piece to read in advance, and questions to prompt discussion and action. The sessions are not a series of lectures nor a set of neat and tidy answers, but a framework for constructive conversation and practical action. There are full instructions and tips on preparing for and running the sessions.

Geoff Knott, founder of Word on the Streets said: "As lockdown eases, many people will want a return to the status quo. But the COVID-19 crisis exposed many underlying weaknesses in our society, and as the economic impact hits, life will get tougher for many. That is why pursuing the Common Good is so necessary."

### **About the free resource**

The "Let's Continue to Build Community" guide:

- consists of four sessions in the form of [a free pdf download](#);
- includes instructions and tips on preparing for and running the sessions;
- includes an outline for each session, readings and questions;
- is written in non-religious language to be inclusive for people of all faiths and none;
- enables leadership to be shared in the group: one person doesn't need to do it all.
- is designed so the four short sessions can be run online or in person.
- stimulates discussion to enable participants to look at what is going on where they live and work through the lens of Common Good principles



## What is 'the Common Good'?

'The Common Good' is the shared life of a society in which everyone can flourish - as we act together in different ways that all contribute towards that goal, enabled by social conditions that mean every single person can participate. We create these conditions and pursue that goal by working together across our differences, each of us taking responsibility, according to our calling and ability. The Common Good is something we build together - it fosters community spirit and strengthens the bonds of social trust. It transcends party political positions. [Find out more.](#)

## About Together for the Common Good

Together for the Common Good (T4CG) is a small charity working to strengthen the bonds of social trust. Our vision is of a world transformed, where more and more people take responsibility for the Common Good.

Our mission is to help people play their part and fulfil their vocational responsibility by putting Common Good principles into practice. We call people to work with others across different opinions and backgrounds in shared purpose, to strengthen our civic immune systems and uphold the sanctity of human beings and creation.

We do this through training resources, public conversations, online and printed materials, talks and sessions. We partner with people and organisations across the churches and with allies from fellow faith and non-religious traditions. T4CG works across the UK and beyond.

Contact: [info@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk](mailto:info@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk)

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

## Celebrating diversity and unity in the Black Country Church

Christians from churches across the Black Country have come together during lockdown to unite as one and produce a powerful creative declaration over their region.

Almost one hundred singers, musicians, dancers, and visual artists from all four boroughs of the Black Country offered their contributions in response to the song 'We Are One', which was written by Chris Eaton for the Black Country Church and performed at Love Black Country's Together 2020 event on Saturday 4 January 2020.

The [result is a video](#) showcasing diversity, creativity and togetherness.

The project was spearheaded by [Love Black Country](#), an interdenominational network of Churches and Christian Organisations in The Black Country. Love Black Country encourage unity by facilitating a network that spans denominations, backgrounds, age-groups, ethnicity and gender.



[Read this story and watch the video on our website...](#)

## Bristol churches standing together against racial injustice

The Keyboard Trust, part of [Churches Together in Greater Bristol](#), is encouraging black and white led churches to 'have the conversation' about racial injustice and to make practical steps towards eradicating it.

"Part of the body of Christ is hurting," says the Keyboard Trust's Carmen Carroll. "How do we bring healing to that?"

The Chair of Churches Together in Greater Bristol, Pastor Eric Aidoo agrees, "we seek proactive ways to make the required structural adjustments and changes to the systemic racial and socio-economic injustices existing within our context, to create a better future for posterity...may we all strengthen our resolve to engage in conduct and activities that will be for the common good and the strengthening of community relations."

Bristol Cathedral and other churches in the diocese have carried out work to remove several prominent references to slave trader Edward Colston from their buildings. In a statement they said, "we want to work with others to address the true cost of our history, heal our divisions and build a unified city of hope that values and cares for everyone."

See more from [Keyboard Trust Bristol on Facebook](#)

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



## Coronavirus Update

### Re-opening of buildings for public worship

Churches across England were permitted to open for services from 4 July.

A [summary of the guidance](#) is available on the CTE website. The [government's guidelines](#) are also available online.

We have also published [additional advice for Single Congregation LEPs and shared buildings](#)

### Member Church reflections on Covid-19

We have gathered together [perspectives from many of our Member Churches](#) on how the coronavirus pandemic has affected them and their congregations.

## CTE Coronavirus Hub

If you are looking for guidance, resources or inspiration for your church during this difficult time, then visit our Coronavirus Hub at [cte.org.uk/coronavirus](http://cte.org.uk/coronavirus).

## Job Opportunity: Ecumenical Development Officer, Churches Together in Cheshire

Prompted by the impending retirement of the existing post-holder, Churches Together in Cheshire (*Registered Charity No: 1115015*), seeks to make an interim appointment to this role.

This position for 15 hours a week, is to facilitate and support the churches of Cheshire in their relationships with one another and their wider mission in the world, by encouraging and developing the principles and practicalities of Christian unity throughout the county.

It is hoped for an early appointment. The salary is £8,025 p.a. The post is for a period of up to two years, whilst a process of review and re-visioning is conducted.

CHURCHES TOGETHER  
IN CHESHIRE



Completed applications are required for 31st July. It is hoped to interview by the end of August.

For full details of this post and an application form, either printed or electronic, please contact Andrew Taylor on 01270 780529 or by e-mail at: [ceo.ctic@gmail.com](mailto:ceo.ctic@gmail.com)

*[View this job advert on our website...](#)*

## And finally...

### Covid-19 and the World Church webinar

Wednesday 19 August noon to 1.30 pm hosted by the Society for Ecumenical Studies.

Join an ecumenical conversation between diverse contexts and traditions in our World Church. What can we learn from each other and share together across ecclesial and geographical boundaries during these unprecedented times?

*[More information and how to book on our website...](#)*

### New mission resource -Walk, Pray, Talk

Walk, Pray, Talk is a short five-part resource from the [Evangelical Alliance](#), which can be used in small groups or amongst Christian friends. It unpacks how we can be praying for the community in which we live and creating mission opportunities for those on our doorstep. It focuses on exploring prayers through the themes of:

- **Plugging in** – being intentional in both prayer and mission opportunities where we live
- **People of God** – sensing God’s call to use each of us powerfully amongst our friends and in our neighbourhoods
- Being **Present** in your community – seeking out prayer needs and interceding for others
- **Participating** in God’s plan for those around you – catching the wave of where God’s spirit is already at work around us
- Caring for **Place** and people – seeing these opportunities for prayer and mission as part of our worship to God

*[More details on Walk-Pray-Talk are available online.](#)*

*View the promo video here on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/Lf7zI6N611M>*

## **Young Christian Climate Network launch**

Launching on Saturday 1 August, Young Christian Climate Network (YCCN) is an action-focused community of Christians in the UK aged 18-30, choosing to follow Jesus in the pursuit of climate justice.

They have three aims:

- to connect young Christians into an inclusive community engaged with climate justice
- to take and facilitate collective action towards climate justice, motivated by faith
- to see ourselves and our communities grow in passion and understanding, learning with humility and reflection

The network is ecumenical - the set-up team has members from the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Quaker traditions.

Follow YCCN on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook (all @YCCNetwork). Contact them at [hello@yccn.uk](mailto:hello@yccn.uk).

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