**Unity in mission –**

**blog article for Church Army, Oct 2015**

Asked, ‘Is unity important for mission?’ **Justin Welby**, the current Archbishop of Canterbury, replied "No, it is not important." This reply took the 300 representatives of the 43 member denominations and networks of the Forum of Churches Together in England by surprise... as intended. The next point Archbishop Justin made was to cement the point he was really wanting to make strongly: "It is not important", he said, "It is indispensable!"

The Archbishop went on to say that if Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples for the sake of the world that others might believe, then that was sufficient for all Christians to pray too for unity and mission too. In saying that he was in agreement with the five other Presidents of Churches Together in England, as they too had answered the same question with words like ‘essential’, ‘crucial’, and ‘without doubt’, from their various traditions, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and ‘New Churches’.

The common agreement among our church leaders at a national level is replicated by thousands of small groups of churches and Christians at a local level who are daily demonstrating unity in mission. Whether praying together for a local school, supporting youth outreach, running a foodbank or being a member of a street pastor scheme, Jesus' prayer in John 17 is being fulfilled: "that they may all be one... so that the world might believe." Add to this Christians sharing their faith from different traditions in the same work context to small groups praying for neighbours in the street, unity in mission is being demonstrated daily.

The six Presidents of Churches Together in England spoke about mission and unity during a session at Forum 2015. At the same time groups of churches were running events, quizzes and festivals around the theme of rugby during the World Cup under the banner Engage 2015. Recently Hope launched their next phase of mission initiatives they want to encourage, to mobilise the whole church in mission and **J John** launched a project to preach the gospel at the Emirates Stadium for a major mission in the south east. As a Church Army Evangelist it is a privilege to have some link with all of these initiatives behind the scenes as part of the DARE strategy of Church Army to resource the church in mission.

Whether at a national, intermediate, or local level, the church is on the move in a way that is unprecedented. Writers and commentators on evangelism used to describe it as the ‘dreaded ‘e’ word' (eg James Lawrence in Lost for Words, 1999) but that is no longer the case. Many leaders, evangelists and local ministers are talking about the ‘re-evangelisation of England’ with bishop's mission initiatives, resources and prayer gatherings. I am not sure about the phrase but I am sure we have a part to play in this as members of Church Army Mission Community.

To help us in the task of mission together, especially in sharing the words as well as works of the gospel, we do well to note resent findings presented in research conducted by Hope, The Evangelical Alliance and the Church of England about attitudes to Jesus, Christians sharing faith and the task of evangelism. They found that Christians actually do share their faith more often than many of us thought, and one in five of the people we share with, might actually want us to follow up it up and know more.

To help us, here are some links and resources:

Information on CTE Presidents and Forum 2015: [www.cte.org.uk](http://www.cte.org.uk/)
Hope and launch to 2018: [www.hopetogether.org.uk](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/)
Research on perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism: [www.talkingjesus.org](http://www.talkingjesus.org/)
J John mission proposal: [www.canonjjohn.com](http://www.canonjjohn.com/)
My book on sharing faith: [Sharing Faith the Jesus Way](http://www.brfonline.org.uk/9781841018621/)

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