

Reflection of the Month: Putting Up With Each Other!



Another New Year arrives and I expect some of you reading this have already tried, like me, to start the New Year with good intentions of more exercise, a better diet and plans for personal improvement. By mid February at the latest I have usually settled back into my old comfortable ways, but I still feel better for giving it a go.

This year, 2016, I confess I found it harder than normal to bounce into January after the chaos and fun of Christmas. The autumn and early winter brought with it challenges both at home and abroad and I was left feeling muddled, exhausted and anxious about the state of the world and where this next year might take us.

When speaking to a friend about this feeling she replied "we all have days like that - it's just being human". Words that comforted me as I do know "this too shall pass" but also resonated with me as I live each day as an imperfect human in this imperfect world.

Back in September 2015 I was privileged to be part of a symposium in Rome held by [INTAMS](#) on Marriage and Family in the Church and Society. There was much discussion about the gap between the idealised family spoken of by our churches and the messy reality in which we all live.

Then, over the Christmas period I found this idealistic view promoted further by all the marketing images we see of Christmas. Most were of a perfect, happy family-focused Christmas with everyone together happy in well-furnished homes, all getting along and of course everybody looking healthy, well-fed and incredibly attractive. Very few adverts let us see the imperfect, the hurt, the lonely, the homeless, the poor or the destitute.

As Christians we recognise our own imperfections and we see difficulties around us, we ask where God is and regularly ask for forgiveness. We aim to do better, to resemble Christ more closely, to help others and make the world a better place. However, sometimes the right thing isn't so clear cut or easy, isn't pretty and doesn't fit with a view of the ideal.

In Colossians Chapter 3 Paul talks to the church about forgiveness and we are urged to "put up with one another and forgive each other". Today that need to tolerate and forgive continues, even within a community or communities of believers and, with this in mind, January brings around again the week of Prayer for Christian Unity. As we work together towards greater unity both locally and nationally, we are required to go further than "putting up" with each other. We are asked to make an active choice to be together in prayer, worship and action, to focus on what is shared and to show God's love to a world in pain.

So, as we start this New Year together, let's stop worrying about an unachievable ideal, forgive others and ourselves and, at all times, "add love, which is the bond of perfection" *Colossians 3 v 14*.

Doral Hayes, Executive Development Officer - [Association of Interchurch Families](#)

Church leaders call for prayer at New Year - and commend Talking Jesus research

The Archbishop of Canterbury (1), Cardinal Vincent Nichols (2), the Revd Dr Hugh Osgood (3), Bishop Eric Brown (4) and Billy Kennedy (5), all of whom are Presidents of Churches Together in England commend 'Talking Jesus' research:

'At Christmas Christians celebrate God's great gift of love in Jesus Christ. It is a gift that the Christian church wants to share with everyone. At the beginning of a New Year, we ask you to pray that the love of Jesus will transform the communities in which we live and witness, and that our churches will faithfully fulfil their commission to 'make disciples of all nations'. (Mt 25:19)

We commend to you the research undertaken about 'Talking Jesus' (<http://www.talkingjesus.org/>) as you begin a new year of love and service.'



This call and commendation has been in association with Hope:
<http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Group/Group.aspx?ID=256554>

Advance notice:

The February addition of CTe-News will have an article about the research 'Talking Jesus' written for local and county Churches Together Groups.

Volunteers invest 231,000 hours into Night Shelters

Volunteers invested 231,000 hours valued at a quarter of a million pounds into Christian and Community led Night Shelters in the past year.

As Night Shelters begin to open in earnest last month, a new report was launched by Housing Justice, the national Christian voice of housing and homelessness on Thursday 10th December. (Housing Justice is a Body in Association with Churches Together in England)



The Church and Community Night Shelters report was launched at the Shelter Forum in London, which brings together Shelter coordinators from across the UK to share best practice and encouragement across a growing network.

The aim of the yearly Church and Community Night Shelter report is to capture some of the significant impacts and contributions made by Christians working in the homelessness sector in England Wales, either as paid or volunteers.

In preparation for the 2016 Mayoral Elections in London, Housing Justice will be sending a copy of this Shelter Impact report, along with a covering letter to those standing for the role next May to share the work being done by the church to support those who are homeless and encourage them to make it a promise to see homelessness decreased within the capital.

Within the past year, an estimated 231,000 volunteer hours has been invested into Night Shelters including within that a separate 70,000 volunteering attendances. This reports saw Housing Justice collect data from 34 Night Shelters across the UK, including those from 23 London Boroughs as well as from across the UK. From the data collected, it shows that around 500 churches and Church Halls opened their premises for use as Night Shelters between October 2014 - May 2015.

2,171 guests were accommodated through these 500 venues. Asking where guests came from, 21% of respondents said they were on the street long term. Of this, 86% of shelter guest said they were long term street homeless with 14% of those expressing a disability. Of the guests, 43% were UK in nationality, with 49% being non EU. This compares to 51% and 47% respectively from last year. Only 14% of those using Shelters were female, which was broadly the same as last year.

In terms of how long Shelters were open, Together in Barnet were the first shelter to open it's doors last winter on October 20th and the Growth project in Tower Hamlets and the Westminster project both ran through as late as the end of May 2015. The majority of shelter projects closed their doors at the end of March.

[Full report at Housing Justice Website](#)



Living with Difference

Report of the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life

The Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public life was convened in 2013 by the Woolf Institute, which promotes the multidisciplinary study of relationships between Christians, Jews and Muslims. The commission's purpose is to consider the place and role of religion and belief in contemporary Britain, to consider the significance of emerging trends and identities, and to make recommendations for public life and policy. Its premise is that in a rapidly changing diverse society everyone is affected, whatever their private views, on religion and belief, by how public policy and public institutions respond to social change.



Under the leadership of Baroness Butler-Sloss to 20 commissioners - incorporating adherents of the main religious and belief traditions within the UK, including humanism - have met

frequently. They have taken evidence from a wide range of people, and have journeyed around the UK and through its social and economic, religious and cultural, legal and political, academic and educational landscapes. Their report sets out their main conclusions and recommendations.

[A copy of the full report is available here](#)

Archbishop Blanch Memorial Lecture 2015

The heartbeats of ecumenism: blood, sweat and tears

The 2015 Archbishop Blanch Lecture, *The heartbeats of ecumenism: blood, sweat and tears*, was delivered by the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, the Bishop of Liverpool. Bishop Paul comes from Bradford, West Yorkshire. A churchwarden's son, his spiritual and social life in the late 1950s and 1960s was formed by Sunday school, church choir and youth group. Like many teenagers he decided in 1968 that all this was a waste of time, and in his University years he left the Christian faith behind and investigated a whole range of other spiritual and political options before re-encountering Jesus Christ as a living person, and committing himself to serve God within the ministry of the Church. Ordained in 1979, Paul served as a curate in Whitley Bay, Tyneside, before moving to London as a University chaplain. After five years in London Paul and his wife Kate moved to High Wycombe, a multicultural town north of London, where Paul ministered as Team Vicar and then Team Rector.

In 1995 the family moved to Totton, on the edge of Southampton, where Paul served as Team Rector. After almost ten years in Totton, and twenty-five years in pastoral ministry, Paul moved to work for the Archbishop's Council in London as the Church of England's National Mission and Evangelism advisor. Alongside this work on the emerging church, Paul was involved in resourcing traditional church life through the national Weddings Project and through evangelistic initiatives such as Back to Church Sunday. In 2010 Paul was invited to move to St Albans Diocese as Bishop of Hertford. In 2014, it was announced that Paul would become the 8th Bishop of Liverpool and he was installed as Bishop in Liverpool Cathedral on 15th November.

- [A transcript of the lecture is available for download here](#)
- [A video of the lecture is also available here](#)

Posted with permission from the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, the Bishop of Liverpool
(<http://www.blanchlecture.org.uk/lecture2015.html>)

A banner for Education Sunday. It features a central text area with a white background and a blue border. On either side of the central text are decorative elements consisting of colorful, abstract, watercolor-like splashes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and red. The word "News" is written in white on these splashes. The central text area contains the words "Education Sunday" in a large, bold, red font, followed by "In 2016 moving to the start of the new school year - click" in a smaller, black font.

Education Sunday

In 2016 moving to the start of the new school year - click

www.educationsunday.co.uk

Roof Repair Fund to listed Places of Worship



New £25m fund for urgent roof repairs to listed places of worship

Congregations across the UK responsible for looking after listed places of worship can now apply for a share of £25million to address urgent roof repairs to ensure these historic buildings are weathertight, safe and open for use. Organisations, trusts and congregations of all faiths and denominations can apply for a grant from £10,000 to £100,000 to meet the costs of urgent repairs to roofs and rainwater disposal systems. Limited funding can also be provided for structural investigations, specialist reports and bat surveys.

This is the second round of the Listed Places of Worship: Roof Repair Fund. In March 2015, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that more than 500 places of worship had been successful in securing £30million of grants for urgent roof repairs including synagogues in Cheltenham and London and a Buddhist Centre in London.

The Listed Places of Worship: Roof Repair Fund is administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) on behalf of the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).

Applications are now open until 26th February 2016 with decisions to be announced in early summer.

[Click here for more information about the Fund and the kinds of places of worship that are eligible to apply](#)

Christmas Flashmob in Northampton

Local churches in Northampton East surprised Sunday shoppers by giving out Christmas baubles with invitations to Carol Services, Midnight Mass & Christmas Eve Communion, and singing as the donkey went past the coffee shop, with Joseph, Mary and a real baby.

It can be seen on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgfzIF0-Ygk>



You will see it starts with singing carols from different parts of the shopping centre and the nativity characters gradually appear and come together. The Salvation Army band play and people are seen to dance, join in and watch as Christians celebrate together in the shopping centre.

The Nikæan Club after dinner speech on ecumenism



The Nikæan Club began in 1925 out of celebrations to mark the sixteenth centenary of the First Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church held in Nicæa in 325. It aims to 'further relations with non-Anglican Christian churches, to assist students from such churches and to offer hospitality on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury to representatives of such churches'.

At its July 2015 pre-synod dinner at Bishophorpe Palace in York, Joe Aldred delivered the after-dinner ecumenical speech in which he offered a Pentecostal perspective on 'Full visible unity'. The full text of his speech is as follows;

Chair, special guests, sisters and brothers in Christ, greetings. I always knew I'd have to pay for the free meals I've been enjoying at this annual ecumenical Nikæan Club dinner for the past five years. But since I love to talk, this is not a bad currency for payback.

Nineteen years ago I left the safety of the familiar world of my denominational jobs as pastor and regional bishop to enter a strange profession, akin to herding cats some might say, known as ecumenism. On the way I have been introduced to grandiose terms like oikoumene, organic unity, unity in diversity, unity in reconciled diversity, unity in unstructured diversity, conciliar fellowship, and capping them all, full visible unity. This family of terminologies represents the church's differing responses to the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 10, 'that they may be one as we are one, that the world may believe'.

Speaking as a pentecostal, with a small p, from a relatively small international denomination, most of these ecumenical philosophical approaches sit quite comfortably with my understanding of the church catholic. However, 'full visible unity' continues to be challenging. Two secular vignettes point to why this may be so. First, the pig and the chicken discussing breakfast for their owner in which the pig says it's alright for you dear chicken all you have to do is lay an egg, but to give my master bacon for breakfast will cost me my life. Second, is the saying that turkeys don't vote for Christmas. Laying aside Pentecostal paranoia about being gobbled up, I believe there remains the question of the veracity and reasonableness of 'full visible unity' as a viable ecumenical objective.

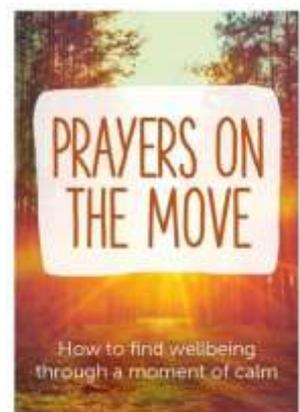
Link to the whole address:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/456259/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/The_Nik%C3%A6an_Club.aspx

How Churches are Working Together to Get Prayer Moving

Thanks to the co-operation of local churches, Prayers on the Move, an initiative from [SPCK](#), is launching in London and Newcastle in February, and in Birmingham later in 2016.

SPCK is placing 700 ads on the Newcastle Metro and 3,000 on the London Underground encouraging people to give prayer a go. The prayers are aimed at stressed young commuters and are designed to appeal to people who think of themselves as spiritual but not religious. Alongside the prayer posters are a website, app, booklet and merchandise.



The booklet, app and website contain 31 prayers, mostly written specially for the project by leading Christian writers. The app also contains 31 one-minute audio files so individuals who are unused to praying can challenge themselves to pray for a minute a day for a month. There is also advice on how to pray and where to go to find out more, written from a Christian perspective. These materials may also help Christians who are feeling jaded in their prayer life and want to try something new.

Churches in Newcastle have been collaborating in organising local events – prayer vigils, prayer walks and getting volunteers together to hand out travel card wallets with prayers printed on them. It is through the CTE network, led by Revd Colin Marsh of Birmingham Churches Together, that SPCK have been able to initiate the fundraising effort in Birmingham, raising support from the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican and Salvation Army Churches.

If Prayers on the Move is a success in Newcastle and London there is every reason for Churches Together in other cities to look to raise funds to run the campaign in their local area.

[Further information is available here](#)

Echoes of Love: A charity single recorded by Lloyd Gordon on behalf of Greater Manchester Churches Together



The song entitled 'ECHOES OF LOVE' was produced in response to the refugee crises which has caused thousands of refugees to flee their homes in fear of their lives. This emergency has gripped the nation and stirred the heart of Lloyd Gordon and the team at Greater Manchester Churches Together (GMCT) to stand together and make a difference.

Archbishop Doyè Agama wrote the song and Pastor Lloyd Gordon was the producer. Due to Lloyd's former career as a professional session musician, he has managed to pull together some of the Norths A-list musicians and singers alongside a 40 piece choir of everyday people who simply had a desire to help those in need.

'ECHOES OF LOVE' is a single which will make a difference' says Lloyd Gordon (Producer and instigator of the project) *'It started with a desire and I believe that this song has the potential to be the song of the church for this season'*

[Please click here to watch the video](#)

[Click here to download via iTunes](#) or [Email Lloyd Gordon if you would like a copy of the CD](#)

CCU (CofE) study resource: The Church: Towards a Common Vision

As part of the follow up to the General Synod debate in July on the World Council of Churches convergence text, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England discussed producing a study resource suitable for running a 'stand-alone' session, complementing other material that has been published such as the Study Guide from CTBI.

The text for this was approved by the Council for Christian Unity in the autumn and Margaret

Swinson has been most helpful in putting that into an attractive format. The final version is attached and will be published shortly on the Church of England's website.

Do please circulate to all who might be interested, publicise as you are able and above all encourage churches and other groups to use it.

[Download the PDF CCU Study Resource](#)

John Bradley, remembered.

On Monday 14 December 2015, Marian Bradley, wife of John who was a member of staff at Churches Together in England and a County Ecumenical Officer before that, sent a text to say that John had 'passed from time to eternity' in the early hours of the morning.



Friends and colleagues of John will have known about his Multiple Sclerosis and how he managed work as Field Officer South for many years from a motorised wheelchair. Latterly, after retirement, John was also diagnosed with cancer. Typical of John's outlook he recently said, 'For all these years I have been waking up to the sound of the alarm clock. One day soon it will be the sound of trumpets.'

Our prayers are with Marian and daughter Mairyn who have cared for John at home. The funeral was held at the church of Christ the Cornerstone in Milton Keynes on Wednesday 6 January at which past and present colleagues were present.

John had planned the funeral service and asked for his ['Last Word' to be read - which is now available on the website of Christ the Cornerstone.](#)

CTE 2016 Leaflet

Churches Together in England has produced a leaflet about its life on behalf of the wider church for 2016. It is available as a PDF here and from the website. Paper copies (including bundles for meetings or conferences) are available on request to Lorraine Shannon in the CTE office.

[Download CTE 2016 PDF](#)

[Email Lorraine Shannon for paper copies](#)



Summary of the Annual Report

As well as this general leaflet, a lot more information about CTE is available in the summary version of the Annual Report. The report provides a picture of the work undertaken the year just gone and offers a record of what CTE does in a year.

[Link to the Annual Report summary](#)

A reminder:
Theological Anthropology
.. drawing churches closer together

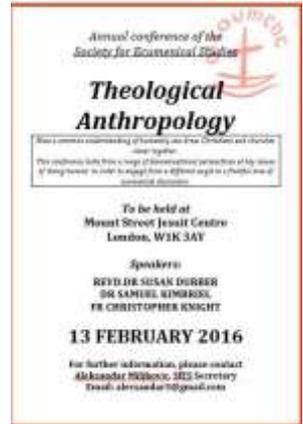
Annual conference of the Society for Ecumenical Studies

Theological Anthropology: How a common understanding of humanity can draw Christians and churches closer together. This conference looks from a range of denominational perspectives at key issues of 'being human' in order to engage from a different angle in a fruitful area of ecumenical discussion.

To be held at Mount Street Jesuit Centre, London, W1K 3AY
Speakers: Revd.Dr Susan Durber, Dr Samuel Kimbriel, Fr Christopher Knight

13 FEBRUARY 2016

For further information, please contact Aleksandar Miljkovic, SfES Secretary
Email: alecsandar3@gmail.com



And finally ..

History was made on Wednesday, 25 November, when a Catholic Confirmation Mass was celebrated at Worcester Anglican Cathedral.

[Read the account in the Independent Catholic News item.](#)

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