



Reflection of the Month:

The Journey of the Magi to Bethlehem was not easy



Cardinal Vincent Nichols,
Archbishop of Westminster and [CTE President](#) writes:

As TS Eliot wrote: 'A cold coming we had of it, just the worst time of the year for a journey, and such a long journey: the way's deep and the weather sharp, the very dead of winter.'

The shepherds, too, in their journey to the crib had a mountain to climb, the mountain of social exclusion, for they were the lowest of the low, not welcomed anywhere. Yet both shepherds and scholars found their way to the manger and to the person of Jesus whose coming remains the hinge of human history.

Many aspects of our society today are distanced from this saving truth of Jesus of Nazareth. We live in a culture that wants to push religious belief out of sight, into the margins. Now we have a long journey to make, finding our way through these barriers, through this thickening forest, to the true source of our joy and stability, Jesus, the One alone who is the truth of God fully expressed in our flesh.

It is His coming, which we celebrate in the holy season. We can do so with a profound and lasting confidence that He who conquered death itself can also penetrate our darkness. His coming tells us that such is his deepest desire: to be Emmanuel, God-with-us, no matter how far we may have wandered. He summoned the shepherds, in their place of work, with music and brightness; He called the wise men through their scholarship and desire to know. He calls each one of us, if we have the sensitivity to recognise that summons!

We read that the wise men returned to their 'old dispensation', no longer feeling at home there. In the presence of this Christ-child they discovered something that remained in their hearts, an enduring peace and joy which they could no longer push to one side. We believe that they went home as men more wise, as men more peaceful in themselves, as men more poised in their lives.

The shepherds, too, we know, went home full of song and gladness for what their eyes had seen.

This is the invitation offered to us this Christmas. And its fruits can be the same for us too!

Christmas Alone 2017

Christmas should be one of the happiest times of the year for everyone; yet for millions of people across the UK it can be the gloomiest.

While most people are occupied amidst the festivities of the day with their families and friends, some people experience Christmas as one of the most loneliest times as businesses around the country shut their shops, leaving them with no place to go.

Premier believes that no one should have to spend Christmas Alone if they don't want to, and for the 5th year running, we're aiming to help people across the UK to go to places so that they can spend their Christmas with others. Once again, we have created [Christmas Alone map](#) of all the Christmas Day events happening across the UK this year.

We'd like to invite you to share our vision by hosting a Christmas day event for your community. In previous years, people have held events which have varied from having a Christmas meal, a sing along, and even a gathering of people to watch the Christmas specials on TV. Whatever you have in mind, we'd love to hear about it.

We have also produced a special Christmas Pack that includes all the key information and answer questions to help you plan your event effortlessly. [Click here and download your free pack!](#)

If you're aware of any Christmas Day event then please make sure you [register it and add it to our map](#). (We do not make your personal details publicly available.)

Premier Christian Radio is a [Body in Association](#) of Churches Together in England

2018 CTE Leaflet

The 2018 CTE tri-fold leaflet is a very useful resource which includes staff details, a list of our member churches, an overview of 2017 and planned projects for 2018.

It is now available as a pdf and can be [downloaded here](#).

Printed copies will be available in the new year and can be requested by email to Lorraine.shannon@cte.org.uk and confirming the number you would like and the postal address to which you would like them sent.

Previous leaflets and annual reports can be [viewed here](#).



Churches call for support on treaty banning nuclear weapons



From the Joint Public Issues Team
Press Release of 5th December 2017.

- Churches release a video calling for people to act in support of the ground-breaking UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- People invited to sign a "picture petition" asking the government to prepare to sign and ratify the Treaty at the first opportunity.

A two-minute video calling on Christians to safeguard God's good world through working towards a future free of nuclear weapons has been released this week. The video, which is being distributed digitally to thousands across the world is a joint call to action from five Christian denominations: the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church, the Quakers, the Church of Scotland, and the United Reformed Church. The video can be found at <https://youtu.be/oYiCtLJ4WYk>.

The video explains, in simple cartoons, the basis for the Churches' support for the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and calls on people to join in this multinational movement towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The Treaty once ratified will make the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons illegal under international law.

The Churches are inviting people to submit their names and images online to a picture petition that will be delivered to the UK government in February. The letter asks the government "to urgently develop and publish a transition plan so that the UK is ready to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the first opportunity." It states that "the continued threat of use of nuclear weapons by a few governments is contrary to the genuine peace that Christians and others seek to build."

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opened for signature at the UN on 20th September 2017. It places nuclear weapons in the same legal category as biological and chemical weapons. It is hoped that this will be a significant step towards a nuclear weapons free world.

Read more:

https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/511944/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/Churches_call_for.aspx

Alzheimer's Society award finalist from Churches Together in Cumbria

Helen Boothroyd writes:

Churches Together in Cumbria's volunteer Dementia Coordinator David Richardson was one of just three finalists for the Alzheimer's Society's prestigious Outstanding Contribution Award 2017.



This award recognises significant work to improve the lives of those affected by dementia. David was nominated by Churches Together in Cumbria for setting up and driving forward its project 'making every church in Cumbria dementia-friendly by 2020.' He was shortlisted by the judging panel, which was made up of people affected by dementia and representatives of the headline sponsor British Gas.

In just two years David has worked with an ecumenical Dementia Reference Group to recruit 108 Dementia Enablers at 90 churches or groups of churches across Cumbria, spread across nine denominations. He has provided high quality training for the Dementia Enablers and run annual Cumbria Churches Dementia Conferences for the wider public, each attended by around 80 people. He is currently fundraising for a Churches Together in Cumbria Dementia Project Officer to ensure the continuing growth of this vital work into the future.

David attended the award ceremony in London and commented: "It was a great honour to be nominated and a privilege to attend the ceremony. It was encouraging to be reminded of the thousands of people who in so many different ways are seeking to make their communities dementia-friendly and to address the interests and needs of people affected by dementia. I was glad to be able to fly the flag for Cumbria and spread the word about our unique and pioneering project."

UK Orthodox and Pentecostal Leaders in solidarity with The Persecuted Church



Leaders of Britain's Eastern and Oriental Orthodox and Pentecostal churches meeting at Christ the Redeemer College, Harrow, Middlesex on Monday 27 November 2017 reaffirmed their commitment to stand in solidarity with Christians suffering persecution, including martyrdom, in our world.

Stories of atrocities and suffering met by love and non-retaliation, of tragedies met by deep spiritual resolve were shared concerning the Middle East, Asia, Africa and elsewhere. In response the leaders encouraged Christians everywhere to:

Prayer
Generosity
Advocacy
Keeping the matter of The Persecuted Church alive

Speaking after the meeting the three conveyors, Bishop Angaelos, Pastor Agu Iruwku and The Rt Revd Maxim Nikolsky responded: 'The second meeting of our Orthodox-Pentecostal Forum was a good opportunity to discuss our relationships here in Britain and how they can impact our surrounding communities. It was also a time to share news and experiences of persecuted Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world and see how we can best collaborate to support them' (Bishop Angaelos, CTE

President for Orthodox churches).

Pastor Agu Irukwu, CTE President for Pentecostal churches said, 'This was certainly a historic meeting as representatives of the leaders of the Orthodox and Pentecostal churches in the UK came together. Amongst other things, we deliberated on The Persecuted Church and the role we should play in praying and speaking up for them. We also discussed ways of supporting churches and organisations that are actively working with our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted for their faith around the world. We committed to ensuring that this message of solidarity is communicated throughout the churches that we represent and that we can all work together to be there for our brothers and sisters who are suffering simply for loving the Jesus we love.'

Read more:

https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/511461/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/UK_Orthodox_and.aspx

Churches call on UK Government to support stateless people

15th November 2017

A new initiative calling for improved rights and better support for 'stateless' people has been backed by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams and Rabbi Hershel Gluck OBE, chairman of the Arab-Jewish Forum. The pair have joined 110 religious and faith leaders in signing a statement urging the UK Government to do more to welcome those who no longer have a country to call their home.



The move comes during Inter Faith Week (12-19 November) which seeks to build on the good relationships and partnerships between people of very diverse faiths and beliefs. All have a shared commitment to protecting human rights and promoting human dignity. The statement is calling for action on the part of the UK Government to review its policies towards stateless people as many end up in prolonged and pointless detention while the Home Office tries to remove them from the UK.

'Stateless' people without legal status cannot leave the UK because no country will accept them. But without status, they don't have permission to work in the UK and remain vulnerable to destitution, exploitation and detention. Worldwide there are around 10 million 'stateless' people. Signatories are calling for alternatives to detention and better support for access to rights and advice and help with integration.

The move is part of the #LockedInLimbo campaign which is led by the European Network on Statelessness and seeks to end the detention of people who end up locked in limbo simply because they have no country that they can return to.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said: "This is a significant statement, showing inter faith support for global efforts to contribute to ending statelessness and the arbitrary detention associated with it. Faith groups have an important role in calling for policy-makers to prioritise the welfare of people who face

marginalisation and exclusion. It is good to see so many faith and religious leaders addressing this deeply concerning issue that affects millions of people worldwide.”

Rabbi Hershel Gluck OBE, chairman of the Arab-Jewish Forum and chairman and founder of the Muslim-Jewish Forum added: “There is no question that statelessness leaves people vulnerable and at risk of being forgotten and abandoned. All people deserve to have their human rights recognised and respected, which is why this multi-faith communities collaboration is so important.”

Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim representatives have supported the statement. Signatories include Rt Rev Dr Derek Browning, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Bharti Taylor, Vice-President of Religions for Peace UK, the Rev Lorraine Mellor, President of the Methodist Conference and Rabbi Aaron Goldstein, Chair of the Liberal Judaism Rabbinic Conference. The statement will be open for other faith or religious leaders who wish to add their support via the website <http://lockedinlimbo.eu>

A full list of signatories can be found at: <http://lockedinlimbo.eu/uk-faith-leaders-statement-against-detention-of-stateless-people>

Brave New World? Faithful living in a time of change

In a time of political turbulence, social upheaval and climate change, the 2018 Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) conference will be looking at how Christians can live prophetically and faithfully.



Brave New World? Faithful living in a time of change takes place in Manchester on Saturday, 17 March 2018.

The one-day conference is a unique opportunity to explore in detail a faith-based perspective on some of the most pressing political issues of our times. There will be workshops covering topics as varied as the changing face of poverty, tackling hate crime and counteracting climate change.

In the spirit of learning how to work for justice and peace across political divides the highlight of the conference will be a debate between Stella Creasy, MP for Labour and Co-operative, and Peter Osborne, columnist at the Daily Mail.

They will discuss and debate the challenges, fears and hopes facing communities, nations and the world. This is an exciting opportunity to hear two individuals with very different perspectives attempting to build a vision for the future.

The day will conclude with Revd Sally Foster-Fulton, Head of Team at Christian Aid Scotland, sending attendees out with a vision for a new heaven and new earth.

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), which is running the conference, was established in 2007 as a venture of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the

United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland to help the four denominations work together on issues of justice and inequality.

Team Leader for the Joint Public Issues Team, Rachel Lampard, commented: "We are living in a rapidly changing, complex and sometimes frightening world, but as Christians we are given a vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

"What does a brave new world look like for our communities, society and world? And how can we as Christians participate in shaping in the coming new world?"

"The Joint Public Issues Team conference is an opportunity to inform, resource, inspire and challenge Christians on the issues of peace and justice which we face. It is also a wonderful opportunity to meet face to face with others and share visions for a new heaven and new earth."

Full details are available on the JPIT website www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/about/2018conf/

'On the Way to Be One' - Signs and Surprises

Ann Gavin from the [Focolare Movement](http://www.focolare.org), a Body in Association with Churches Together in England writes:

The elegant simplicity of the Swiss Church in Central London was a fitting venue for exploring a spirituality of communion; in the context of today's world, the afternoon of 11th November expressed a common search to be credible witnesses to Christianity together. Brilliantly chaired by Conleth Burns, a young law student from Northern Ireland, the time was well used and exceptionally fruitful.

In his introduction, Dr Callan Slipper spoke of the "infinite yearning" that lies at the root of every human heart, "to love and to be loved"; unity – modelled on the Trinity - being a "living out of our deepest desires". His talk explained how ecumenism is so much more far reaching than healing the divisions among Christians, since living in Communion is how we bring God to the world, as Jesus prayed.

To illustrate how this unity is being lived out in practice, there were examples of Christians of various churches reaching out to others. David Burke shared his experience of working as a street pastor along with members of thirteen different churches. His testimony showed that communion was practised as much between the members of the different churches as it was with those they were seeking to help on the night-time streets. A comment made to David about the work of the Street Pastors was "it's as if the world has been waiting for this sort of witness".

Via video Peter Grimheden of the Swedish Lutheran Church spoke of the witness given by the Focolare in Stockholm where he lives with others who are Catholic. He also provided a striking reminder of the momentous signing of the accord between the



Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches in October 2016. It was clearly a very moving moment for those like Peter, who had been in Lund to witness this demonstration of the deep unity that exists between members of different churches, even if full communion is not yet a reality.

Kirsty Thorpe and Martin Smith are ministers in the URC and are part of a small, ecumenical group which meets regularly to share the 'Word of Life', with its commentary on a specific verse from the Bible and suggestions as to how to put it into practice. They told the story of an asylum seeker from Pakistan who had come to their group and of their ongoing journey to prevent her from being deported back to a dangerous situation.

The afternoon continued with short presentations by four panellists who shared their insights as to how to arrive at the witness for which the world is waiting. Martin Lind, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Britain, said what it was for him to have welcomed Pope Francis to the cathedral of Lund last year and suggested that we need to look for the signs of apostolicity in one another's churches, but "first we must accept each other".

Read more:

https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/511937/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/On_the_Way.aspx

CTMR Presidents reflect on 'Luther 500'

This is text from a leaflet circulated by Churches Together in the Merseyside Region (CTMR):

Our 6 CTMR Presidents have fully endorsed the Statement of the CTE Presidents regarding the celebration of 'Luther 500' in England. The CTMR Presidents are offering a common witness to Churches in Merseyside by each reflecting on one of the 5 Rs: Rejoicing, Remembering, Reforming, Repenting, Reconciling. These 500 word-reflections have been circulated in Merseyside are collated in this booklet.

Churches Together in the Merseyside Region Presidents reflect on 'Reformation 1517'



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Endorsement of National Statement of CTE Presidents on behalf of CTMR - The Rt Rev'd Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool

Rejoicing - The Rev'd Phil Jump, Regional Minister, North West Baptist Association

Remembering - The Most Rev'd Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool

Reforming - The Rev'd Jacky Embrey, Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church

Repening - The Rev'd Dr Sheryl Anderson, Chair of the Liverpool Methodist District

Reconciling - Major Drew McCombe, North-Western Divisional Commander, Salvation Army.

[Download the leaflet PDF](#)

And Finally ...

Photo Alert EXTRA: Just an extra, extra point about the Photo Alert in November CTe-News. Just as legitimate stock suppliers of photographs can send demand notices if an image has been used without a copyright licence and possible payment, so there are also scammers also writing to claim compensation illegally. We apologise for not adding this information.

To know the difference always check that full details of the image has been supplied. If in doubt do not click any web links in an email but first use the information in a new and separate web search, to verify who is writing to you. Check online for any discussion about the company and see if there is any discussion about it being fraud. Legitimate claims usually come with a full description and verifiable details of the company are quite easy to check from an internet search.

Christmas video: Bible Society, a Body in Association of CTE has produced a video for sharing in social media: <https://www.facebook.com/BibleSociety/videos/10155628500877110/>

CTE office closed for Christmas: from Friday 22nd December 2017 to Tuesday 2nd January 2017.



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