



## CTe-News from Churches Together in England March 2014

### **Colin Marsh reflects on his new book: 'Mission Shaped Ecumenism: new ways of Being Churches Together'**

The word ecumenism has become shorthand for all aspects of Christian unity. When I told a friend I was writing about mission and ecumenism, "What!" he exclaimed, "mission and ecumenism in the same sentence, they are contradictions!" For him and many others in the Christian community, ecumenism has become a by-word for all that is to be avoided in church life – dry, dull and irrelevant meetings, full of compromise and disconnected from the outward witness of the church into the community. It is my hope that this booklet has helped to explain how 'ecumenism' has become disconnected from its missionary roots in the early twentieth century and that *Missio Dei* provides a way to reconnect them in the everyday life of Christian witness through word, action and prayer. The reliance on church-centred mission during the twentieth century meant that church unity was a prerequisite for shared mission, however by re-centring mission on the loving actions of a Trinitarian God new opportunities are created to bring mission and unity together, this time from the perspective of mission.



It was the discovery of the unity dimension of *Missio Dei* that led me to apply for my present role of working with Birmingham Churches Together and helping churches across the city connect mission with unity. As one of the most ethnically diverse cities in England and as Europe's largest unitary authority with a population of 1.1 million, the challenges of working together in Birmingham are very different from rural areas or towns such as Rugby. A constant issue we face in developing mission is the challenge of how we might strengthen connections and relationships across the many distinct neighbourhoods of the city region. For example, in the past week I have spoken with a group seeking to develop prayer for the city, an individual wishing to share his experience of Street Pastors with other neighbourhoods and a Christian social enterprise wanting to increase the support from churches for its work with young offenders.

In the past a hindrance to tackling this challenge has been the perception that all members of a Churches Together group should be involved in an activity for it to be truly 'ecumenical'. *Missio Dei* provides a framework that encourages bilateral and trilateral partnerships just as much as larger group initiatives. An example in Birmingham is St. Chad's Sanctuary, a voluntary project supported by Saint Chad's Catholic Cathedral and the Salvation Army to provide a place of welcome and hospitality in the city centre for asylum seekers, refugees

and immigrants. Another approach is for a lead church to offer an open invitation for others to participate, for example a Faithful Neighbourhoods Centre serving the city was opened through a partnership between the Church of England and Birmingham Churches Together to resource Christians living in a multi-faith society and support people in their calling to serve local neighbourhoods. A winter night shelter for the city's homeless during the coldest months of the year involved over twelve churches of different backgrounds. These are expressions of a new way of being church together: participating with Christians from different traditions and cultures as co-partners in God's mission. Unity and mission brought together in a myriad of expressions. Unity expressed in mission: God's mission – *Missio Dei*.

Rev Colin Marsh is the Ecumenical Development Officer for Birmingham Churches Together  
Mission Shaped Unity: New Ways of Being Churches Together is Ev103 [www.grovebooks.co.uk](http://www.grovebooks.co.uk)

## Pastoral Care Project - Week of Prayer and Awareness of Dementia



Welcome to the Pastoral Care Project

We would like to invite you to join in the Annual National Week of Prayer and Awareness of Dementia 12th - 19th March 2014.

Please take a look in the Prayer section where you will find a wide range of resources which may be helpful, or please contact us if there is something specific you require.

We would really like to hear from you about how you will be joining in the Week of Prayer where you are, so that we can promote it on our website.

**Week of Prayer & Awareness of Dementia  
12th - 19th March 2014**

## Quakers offer another view of World War I



Quakers in Britain release a free resource kit 'Witnessing for Peace on the centenary of WWI', telling the stories of the early stages of the war from a Quaker perspective. The kit contains a newspaper featuring articles by present-day Quakers and original 1914 contributions to *The Friend*, (the Quaker magazine), peace education materials, an audio play about members of the Rowntree chocolate family, a timeline about the creation of Friends' Ambulance Unit and images from the Quaker archives.

Being a Quaker in wartime was not a simple story of 'cranks' or 'shirkers', as portrayed by many newspapers both then and now. Some, opposed to fighting, joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU), working close to the frontline – and unarmed – in ambulance convoys and medical stations, treating wounded soldiers and civilians. Nearly a quarter of a million sick and wounded soldiers were carried by FAU ambulance convoys, and 21 FAU members died whilst on service. Other Quakers wanted nothing to do with the war. Known as 'absolutists', they risked imprisonment, hard labour, or the death sentence. In 1916 through the work of Quakers and others the 'conscience clause' was enshrined in British law, the first time the legal right to refuse to fight was recognised.

"This is the beginning of a four-year project for Quakers in Britain during which we will tell the untold stories of those who refused to fight in WWI," says Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain. "We found powerful and moving stories in our archives, of those who were, for their

conscience, imprisoned, tortured, ridiculed, sentenced to death or forced to be child soldiers. Today many countries, including Finland and Greece, still do not recognise people's right to refuse to serve in the armed forces. Around the world prisoners of conscience are tortured. Today in Britain the armed forces recruit child soldiers younger than they did during WWI. This project will bring alive for a new generation how ordinary people can endure extraordinary circumstances for their beliefs."

To order a free resource kit email [quakercentre@quaker.org.uk](mailto:quakercentre@quaker.org.uk) or download from [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)

## Christian Enquiries about War and Peace

The Christian Enquiry Agency have produced some pages of text under the following headings for enquirers who visit [www.christianity.org.uk/ww1](http://www.christianity.org.uk/ww1)



- A timeline of the First World War
- Justice and peace
- Can war ever be justified?
- Christians who renounce violence
- Why is the Bible so violent?
- War poetry
- More pages to be added

CTe-News will carry more initiatives relevant to 'Churches Together', and further resources, papers, and links are on the CTE web page [www.cte.org.uk/WW1](http://www.cte.org.uk/WW1)

## CofE resources re WW1



Church of England releases prayers and other resources to commemorate the Centenary of World War One.

Prayers, music, literature and art are part of a pack of resources released by the Church of England's Liturgical Commission today for parishes and groups to use to commemorate the centenary of World War One.

Specifically, it includes:

A selection of suitable readings from the Bible

Appropriate hymns, songs, music, literature and art

A selection of different kinds of prayer (including a Litany of remembrance)

An outline for a service around a War Memorial

An outline for a Vigil Service on 3 or 4 August 2014 (marking the centenary of the Declaration of War)

Material for use in a Requiem Eucharist. Further material will be made available throughout the years of commemoration up to 2018.

You can download the resources by going to the Church of England's website

[www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org) and clicking on the 'World War One' box, or here:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/latest-updates/world-war-one-liturgy.aspx>

## **ACTS new Gen Sec: Rev Matthew Ross**

The Scottish ecumenical body Action of Churches Together in Scotland has appointed Church of Scotland minister Rev Matthew Ross as its next General Secretary. He will take up the post on 1 April 2014.

Mr Ross is currently a parish minister at Cockpen and Carrington in Midlothian and is a member of the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council and Ecumenical Relations Committee.



His wide ecumenical experience includes six years in Brussels as Executive Secretary of the Church and Society Commission of the CEC (Conference of European Churches).

He succeeds Br Stephen Smyth, a former ecumenical officer of Glasgow Churches Together.

**Read the full report**

**Photo from Glasgow Churches Together** with thanks

## **43 Christian Leaders sign letter re food banks**

The BBC website has the following article:

Forty-three Christian leaders, including 27 Anglican bishops, have signed a letter urging David Cameron to ensure people get enough to eat.

They argue that "cutbacks and failures" in the benefits system are forcing thousands of people to use food banks.

The End Hunger Fast campaign called the situation "truly shocking". It wants a national day of fasting on 4 April.

But the government said it wanted to help people "stand on their own two feet" by cutting welfare dependency.

The letter comes after Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, warned last weekend that welfare reform was leaving people in "destitution" and labelled it a "disgrace".

But on Wednesday the prime minister defended the changes as a "moral mission" to return people to work from a life of dependency on the state.

**Read the whole BBC article**

The Bishops' open letter marked the launch of 'End Hunger Fast', a new grassroots movement, which is encouraging everyone to fast in solidarity with people in poverty in the UK on 4th April, and to call for more action against hunger.

**End Hunger Fast** are partnering The Trussell Trust and encouraging people to support foodbanks as part of their fast. If you'd like to fast for foodbanks, please get in touch, and don't forget to sign up to **End Hunger Fast**. **Channel 4 video of church leaders and the letter to the Prime Minister**



## Entry to the Jerusalem Awards 2014



As you may know, the Jerusalem Awards honours programmes that increase the understanding of Christianity, via radio or the internet, to as wide an audience as possible. To enter the Awards, please visit their website by clicking [here](#).

If you were involved in any programmes over Christmas 2013, please do consider entering them. There are also many other categories which encompass all areas of Christian radio and internet broadcasting.

The closing date for the 2014 Awards is 5.00pm on Friday 9 May 2014. For more information on the different Awards and to enter, please visit their website – [www.jerusalemawards.org.uk](http://www.jerusalemawards.org.uk) or follow them on Twitter: @JerusalemAwards

## Pentecostals confirm commitment to national ecumenical movement

Following the election of Churches Together in England's first Pentecostal President in October 2014, a meeting of Pentecostal leaders was convened on Monday 17 February 2014 at the headquarters of the New Testament Church in Northampton.

The meeting was chaired by Bishop Eric Brown, the CTE Pentecostal President who is also Presiding Bishop of the New Testament Church of God. The twelve leaders noted the historic and growing presence and influence of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement in England; and committed themselves to taking a leading role in the Churches Together movement, particularly in the evangelisation of this country. Further notes from the meeting will be posted shortly.



## 'Pass It On' Campaign

This week Bible Society launched its 'Pass It On' campaign and received substantial coverage across the media. The campaign encourages parents to read, watch or listen to a Bible story with their child.



Bible Society aspires to offer one million children a 'Bible Bedtime' throughout the year, because we believe that every child should have the opportunity to experience the Bible. Our campaign is about the people that count in children's lives helping to keep the Bible alive for many generations to come. We want to remind all those that value this classic text, regardless of their reason, that we must 'use it or lose it'. The report is now available for you to download [here](#).