



Happy New Year / Epiphany

Happy New year! And happy Epiphany! – that season in which, with thanksgiving and commitment, we rejoice in God’s gifts to us and give thanks for those moments when we glimpse God’s tangible presence in our midst.



On the subject of gifts, I wonder what has happened to the gifts you received at Christmas this year. Some gifts, I’m sure, will have been given with considerable thought and at some cost. Other gifts will have been good for a moment or two’s entertainment and are now discarded. And we all know that some gifts will have been given with little thought at all, and will be unwanted. Perhaps they are, even now, in a bag awaiting a discreet trip to a charity shop, or hidden away at the back of a drawer out of sight.

Christmas can be a time of huge joy and a real boost to the spirits in the depths of winter. But for some people, the celebrations of Christmas, and the joyfulness of the season, mask a more complicated reality. Statistics suggest that more people file for divorce in the new year than at any other time. The celebrations, the giving, the time together, can bring conflicts to a head, and cause huge unhappiness. And in times of stress, all those TV programmes showing happy families having a great time can make everyone feel inadequate.

It might seem strange that the “season of goodwill” can herald such hurt. But this is something the church has always understood – in fact it’s something the Christmas story actually teaches us. As Christians we believe that God showed his love for us, by giving us the greatest gift possible – the gift of Jesus his son. That gift was received enthusiastically by many – by the shepherds and the wise men who travelled miles to see the new born baby, and by the angels who came down from the heavens to sing. But for other people, this gift was totally unwanted, and even threatening – people like King Herod, who saw the baby Jesus as a threat to his power, and tried to kill him.

So the Christmas story is one of both deepest joy and profound sadness. It’s a story of love offered and gladly received, and of love rejected, leading Mary, Joseph and Jesus to flee as refugees because their lives were in danger from King Herod.

As we embrace the gift of this new year, and as, in the season of epiphany, and as we recommit our love to the Christ-child, I pray that we will be all the more attuned to the needs of those who are experiencing rejection for their love or their faith. And I pray that we may be all the more courageous in sharing our love and our hospitality with the world.

Rt. Rev Christopher Foster
Bishop of Portsmouth (Church of England)
Chair of [CTE Trustees](#)

EDUCATION SUNDAY 1st February 2015

Education Sunday falls on 1 February 2015. The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas) falls on 2 February. Many parishes and churches will be celebrating this feast on the nearest Sunday. This



year's material therefore focuses on that moment in the Christian year.

Discovering who you are

What did you want to do when you grew up? Is that what you're doing now? Who or what influenced your decisions? How were you enabled to grow and broaden your horizons?

The readings for this Sunday, and the story of Jesus being presented in the temple, point to the heart of what education is about - discerning the potential in people and helping them to realize that potential.

In Luke, Simeon and Anna see what others don't see; this is not just a baby boy but one with universal potential, as every child has. They share a glimpse of what he might become.

In Hebrews, the writer recognises that Jesus became a human person in every respect, so that he might help us to fulfil our potential, as he himself has done.

The reading from Malachi suggests that perhaps what we do is less important than how we do it. We are told that the messenger is coming; he will refine and purify, so that we may all achieve our potential, which is to become the means of God's justice for the oppressed, widows and orphans – for the poor.

2015 marks the deadline to meet the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal to achieve universal primary education. Enrolment in primary education in developing regions reached 90 per cent in 2010, up from 82 per cent in 1999, which means more children than ever are attending primary school. However, one in ten children of primary school age was still out of school in 2012.

Whether we end up being bankers, shop workers, carers, politicians or teachers we can all help to build God's kingdom of love and justice, and ensure that everyone can live to their full potential, and become the person God intended them to be.

Resources

Suggested Hymns & Songs
Suggested Sermon / Homily notes
Vocation Workshop
Vocation Handout
All Age Worship suggestions

All available: <http://www.cte.org.uk/Group/Group.aspx?ID=252108>

Link: www.cte.org.uk/EducationSunday2015

The Student Christian Movement have also provided the following workshop material for students and young adults and can be used with permission of SCM as an extra resource.

Free Churches Group launch

Members of the Free Churches Group met at 27 Tavistock Square in Euston on 17th December 2014 for the launch of the group in to a new phase of public ministry under the heading 'Engaging in the Public Square'.

The Free Churches Group is a network of 24 National Churches in the Non-Conformist, Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, providing health care and prison chaplaincy services and education support from a Christian value base in England and Wales. It serves as the operational arm of the Free Churches Federal Council Incorporated and continues the work of bodies established to enable Free Churches to have a common voice and public presence, going back as far as the 1880s.



Previous Moderators and General Secretaries met with church leaders, including Archbishop Gregorios of Thyatira and Great Britain (a CTE President) for a service of worship and



rededication. The launch included a ceremonial opening of Free Churches House, seen here being performed by Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, the new Moderator of the Free Churches Group.

The launch event also included a presentation by [Endis](http://www.endis.org) who provide the platform for the new look web site www.freechurches.org.uk which went live on the day in its new format.

Notes:

The staff of Churches Together in England continue to use 27 Tavistock Square as the office address, in a new arrangement with the Free Churches Group. The Moderator of the Free Churches Group is one of the [6 Presidents of Churches Together in England](#).

Affirming Peace making 100 years of nonviolence



To celebrate those who've committed themselves to the pursuit of nonviolence, everyone is warmly welcomed to a service in Oxford.

Our guest will be David Walker, Bishop of Manchester. The service is ecumenical and will include contributions from Fellowship of Reconciliation members and supporters, as well as stories from around the world and here in the UK. This is part of our centenary celebrations, so do join us to kick-start the next 100 years of nonviolent action.

It will take place at St Mary the Virgin University Church on Saturday 17th January 2015 at 2pm

The event is free and all are welcome to join us afterwards for refreshments.

A retiring collection will be taken for Fellowship of Reconciliation.

For more information, [email](mailto:) or call 01865 250781

RSVP is not necessary but helps us with planning.

Death of a WYEC founder

Clive Barrett writes:

The death has been announced of Dr Lewis Burton, the first County Ecumenical Officer for West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC), from its foundation in 1987. Early tributes have included appreciation of Lewis, a Methodist minister, as "a great scholar", whose theological approach was much valued, as well as for "his concern that arrangements and action should be tailored to each local situation". The photograph shows Dr Lewis Burton, far left, at the inauguration of West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council, 1987.



His team of ecumenical officers included Bill Snelson, Keith Jones ("He was a great colleague – we spent many hours together setting up WYEC ... and making sure we involved as many Christian traditions as possible") and David Newman, who writes that "Lewis generated a wonderful collegial spirit amongst us during a period when ecumenism was fresh and exciting".

Lewis later wrote up his experiences in the wider context of local ecumenism in his doctoral thesis *Ecumenical Relationships Across the Denominations in Leeds, 1960-1993* (University of Leeds, 1995)

Personally, I appreciated his work with those of us who were chaplains at Leeds University and Polytechnic in the late 1980s, and early 1990s, as we built the broadest ecumenical team in the region. I was delighted to see him at Leeds Cathedral in 2012 for WYEC's 25th anniversary celebrations.

Christian Aid Backs MPs' Demand For New Global Goal On Climate Change



MPs are right to demand that a strong 'green thread' runs through all the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Christian Aid says today in response to a report by the Environmental Audit select committee.

They are also right to insist on the importance of a goal focused on climate change - and to warn Ministers against oversimplifying the SDGs, which governments are currently negotiating and which will be agreed by world leaders later in 2015.

"The timing of this new report is very welcome, because the UN climate negotiations in Lima have just finished and international negotiations on the SDGs are about to resume", said Helen Dennis, Christian Aid's Senior Adviser on Poverty and Inequality.

"It's also good to see the Committee's recognition that we cannot eradicate poverty without addressing climate change and that tackling inequality is vital for social cohesion and sustainable development."

Christian Aid believes the credibility of the SDGs will depend on their treatment of climate change - will they promote low-carbon, climate-resilient development and send out a clear message about climate as a global development priority?

Ms Dennis added: "The UK Government needs to stop dithering and come out strongly in favour of a standalone climate goal. If last week's climate summit in Lima has taught us one thing, it's that leadership is needed now, not later.

"While we agree that the new agenda should be compelling, we remain unconvinced by the Government's fixation on the overall number of goals. We would like to see the debate move from quantity to quality - ensuring that the content is ambitious and responsive to the social, economic and environmental challenges facing people and planet."

Christian Aid is also pleased to see the MPs' insistence that the new goals apply to all countries, poor and rich alike, and that achieving them will demand joined-up work across all Government departments in the UK.

Ms Dennis said: "The new goals are not just something for other countries. The UK will need to play its part and to ensure that its policies, for instance on tax, do not undermine the development of poorer countries."

The MPs' new report comes just before publication of the EU Common Position on the Post-2015 Agenda and ahead of intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs, which will resume in January.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Many groups of churches will be praying in January with materials from CTBI:-

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2015

Resources adapted by the Britain and Ireland writers group include:

- Pamphlet with order of service and reflections
- Powerpoint of service
- A3/A4 Poster

Order or download from:
WWW.CTBI.ORG.UK/WEEKOFPRAYER



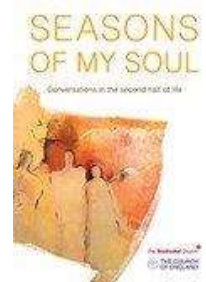
Seasons of My Soul Church of England / Methodist publication

Seasons of My Soul is the result of an Anglican – Methodist project, and is a resource which all churches can use. It explores questions of spirituality and discipleship for the older active person.

[Cofe Comms: Anyone can get old, all you have to do is live long enough](#)

To quote:

Groucho Marks once quipped "Age is not a particularly interesting subject. Anyone can get old. All you have to do is live long enough."



It sometimes seems as if much of the Church has agreed with Groucho – and has not been very interested or focussed on the situation of most of those who are getting older. In some places there has been excellent work concerned with providing pastoral and spiritual care to those in nursing homes, or struggling with dementia. But what about the older people who do not fall into those groups? There are resources galore to stimulate work with children and young people in the church. But though there are some helpful religious writings drawing attention to the spiritual possibilities of the second half of life, there are far fewer materials for groups of older people and individuals to explore issues they face at this stage of life in the light of the Christian faith. It is for this reason that the Church of England and the Methodist Church have worked together to think about these challenges, and have commissioned and shaped the resource 'Seasons of My Soul'.

Combating Loneliness The healing power of community



The Diocese of Hereford have organised a national conference aimed at community and voluntary groups, PCCs, church groups, health professionals and faith groups.

This is a day of sharing and learning and is aimed at any organisation or community group looking to address issues of loneliness and its effects on health and wellbeing. We are privileged to have a variety of speakers with a great depth of knowledge and experience on how loneliness can effect an individual's quality of life and how that might be addressed by using a community approach.

It will take place on Saturday 31st January 2015 at [Shire Hall, Hereford](#) from 9.15am – 4.00pm and the cost will be £35 per delegate or £30 if 2 or more book from the same organisation. A hot

lunch will be included.

[Click here for the booking form](#)

[Full information can be found here](#) or contact [Joanne Gibbon](#) or tel. 01584 871089

CTE 2015 Leaflet

Churches Together in England has produced a leaflet about its life on behalf of the wider church for 2015. It is available as a PDF and as a paper copy on request with an to Lorraine Shannon in the CTE office.

[Download CTE 2015 PDF](#) (our apologies that it has a repeat page)

[Email Lorraine Shannon for paper copies](#) (free and available in bundles on request)

<p>Staff</p> <p>Revd Dr David Cornick General Secretary of CTE David is a minister of the United Reformed Church and his particular interests are spirituality and theology. He wrote <i>Letting God be God</i>.</p> <p>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations Joe is a bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy, a broadcaster with the BBC, author and editor of <i>The Black Church in the 21st Century</i>.</p> <p>Jenny Bond Training, Resourcing and Events Jenny brings Ignation spirituality to the team. Jenny fields enquiries about local ecumenism and is co-ordinator of the 2015 CTE Forum.</p> <p>Celia Blackden Inter Faith Relations (part time) Celia is a member of the Focolare Movement, and author of <i>Friendship and Exchange with people of Other Faiths</i>.</p> <p>Captain Jim Currin, CA Evangelisation, Mission and Media Jim is a Church Army Evangelist in the Church of England and wrote <i>Sharing Faith the Jesus Way</i>. Jim is web manager at CTE.</p> <p>Sarah Lane Cawte Education /Free Churches Group Sarah is seconded to CTE as co-ordinator of Education Sunday.</p> <p>Lorraine Shannon CTE Administrator Lorraine is responsible for hosting meetings, organising conferences, answering telephone queries and all other general office duties.</p>	<p>Looking back on 2014</p> <p>New priorities and Staff changes The priorities of 'Relationships, Action/Mission and Theology' were agreed. We said farewell to John Bradley and Carole Golden from the CTE team.</p> <p>CTE Presidents 2 of the 6 CTE Presidents changed: Hugh Osgood and Billy Kennedy signed the Presidents' Covenant after we said farewell to Michael Heaney and Bishop Jana.</p>  <p>More information www.cte.org.uk/presidents</p> <p>Website re-launched With a new design and navigation system, including live news from the churches and a wealth of news and resources, we re-launched www.cte.org.uk.</p> <p>Annual Report summary of the year Available at: www.cte.org.uk/2014</p> <p>Office Churches Together in England 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH 020 7529 8131 office@cte.org.uk www.cte.org.uk/contact Staff email = first name.surname@cte.org.uk</p> <p>Reg Charity 1110782 Reg Company 5354231</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Making connections: Relationships ... Action/Mission ... Theology</p>  <p>CHURCHES TOGETHER in ENGLAND 2015</p> 
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<p>What is Churches Together in England?</p> <p>Churches Together in England (CTE) was established in 1990, along with Cytyn (Wales) and ACTS (Scotland) to offer 'resourced space' for sharing between the churches on a wide range of common interests and concerns. Across the four nations is Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.</p> <p>CTE works at a national level with 43 member churches in England. There are 6 Presidents: www.cte.org.uk/presidents. In counties and cities across England, County / Intermediate ecumenical bodies support, resource and encourage over 2500 local Churches Together Groups, over 900 Local Ecumenical Partnerships and innumerable ways in which local congregations work together informally.</p> <p>Key to local ecumenism is the network of County Ecumenical Officers. CTE offers them training, resources and support, particularly at times of change.</p> <p>The Enabling Group of CTE draws together representatives of all member churches to reflect on the ecumenical journey, and to provide direction to the work of CTE and their life together. The current agreed priorities of CTE are Relationships, Action / Mission and Theology.</p> <p>CTE Trustees</p> <p>Chair: Rt Revd Christopher Foster Bishop of Portsmouth (Church of England)</p> <p>Deputy: Revd Ruth Bottoms Baptist Union of Great Britain</p> <p>Hon Treasurer: Peter Hammond Twelve other trustees are appointed by the Enabling Group.</p> <p>Up to date information</p> <p>Website: Information, News + Resources: www.cte.org.uk Twitter: News from member churches: @churchesengland CTE-News Free every month: www.cte.org.uk/news</p>	<p>Member Churches</p> <p>Antiochian Orthodox Church Apostolic Pastoral Association Armenian Orthodox Church Assemblies of God Baptist Union of Great Britain Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Church of England Church of God of Prophecy Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England) Churches in Communities International Congregational Federation Coptic Orthodox Church Council of African and Caribbean Churches UK Council of Lutheran Churches Council of Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches Elim Pentecostal Church Evangelical Lutheran Church of England Evangelische Synode Deutscher Sprache in Großbritannien Exarchate of Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition (Oecumenical Patriarchate) Free Church of England Ground Level Ichthus Christian Fellowship Independent Methodist Church International Ministerial Council of Great Britain Joint Council for Anglo-Caribbean Churches Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church) Mar Thoma Church Methodist Church Moravian Church New Testament Assembly New Testament Church of God Pioneer Redeemed Christian Church of God Religious Society of Friends Ruach Network of Churches Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) Salvation Army Seventh Day Adventist (observer) Transatlantic Pacific Alliance of Churches Unification Council of Cherubim + Seraphim Churches (Europe Chapter) United Reformed Church Wesleyan Holiness Church</p> <p>For an up to date list of member churches, with web links for contacts, visit: www.cte.org.uk/memberchurches.</p>	<p>Planned for 2015</p> <p>CTE's agreed priorities for 2015 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building relationships between the member churches - Engaging in action/mission together - Reflecting on theology of the ecumenical journey <p>Events include:</p> <p>Education Sunday 1st February</p> <p>County Ecumenical Officers' consultation</p> <p>2nd National Ecumenical Meeting of Inter Faith Advisers</p> <p>The CTE Forum (delegate conference)</p> <p>Delegates will look at the Orthodox Churches, Pentecostalism and Young People, 28th - 30th Sept.</p>  <p>More information: www.cte.org.uk/forum2015</p> <p>Ongoing work includes:</p> <p>Hosting 'Co-ordinating Groups' / 'Bodies in Association'</p> <p>Engaging with Government on various issues</p> <p>Supporting intermediate and local Churches Together</p> <p>Engaging with new networks for mission</p> <p>Seminars, workshops and conferences on specific topics</p> <p>Free news service: www.cte.org.uk/news</p>
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Reflecting on 'new movements for mission' - from USA to UK

Member of CTE staff for Evangelisation, Mission and Media, Jim Currin writes:-



This is a report following attendance at City Advance[1] and Movement Day[2] in New York, Oct 2014. It is a personal reflection and represents no other views than my own.

These are initial headlines to report back and thank colleagues at CTE (and leaders of City Advance) for the privilege to attend. It is a reflect on how the new unity movements for mission in North America contrast and compare with those I see them in England.

This is a discussion document and comments are welcome, especially from colleagues and friends met through the networks described who will be better informed about some of the topics I have presumed to comment on. [Email Jim Currin](mailto:Jim.Currin@cte.org.uk) by January 31st 2015 with comments which will be collected for this page in February 2015.

[Download the report PDF *Reflecting on 'new movements for mission' - from USA to UK*](#)

This web page link: www.cte.org.uk/newmovementspaper

[1] <http://www.cityadvance.net/>

[2] <http://www.movementday.com/movement-day/interactive-tracks/gospel-movements>

CTE Christmas card picture competition - final call

All details: www.cte.org.uk/christmaspicture

And finally ... daily news updates

If you are on Twitter follow daily news from the churches so the right hand know what the left is doing @churchesengland or from the home page of our website www.cte.org.uk where the twitter feed is automatically displayed.

The news via twitter is updated more than once a day and provides a lot of detailed information from the member churches, partners, agencies and groups linked together through Churches Together in England.

To join twitter visit: www.twitter.com and search for @churchesengland to follow on your phone or computer.

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