



Reflection: Lend a Listening Ear

In our modern world where our senses are regularly not just stimulated but over-loaded by images, sounds and people, the ability and the opportunity to really listen can be limited.

Life is lively, colourful, loud and fast paced. In my view much of this is great, something to be enjoyed and utilized, but at times the fast pace can leave many feeling anxious, restless and burdened. In the words of the poet W.H. Davies " *What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stop and stare*".



It is in the stopping, and in the reflecting that we can listen - to ourselves, to our friends, colleagues and loved ones and to what God might be saying to us.

This is not a modern problem. In the Old Testament we see the story of the boy Samuel being restive and unable to sleep. It takes Samuel a while for him to recognise God's voice and he attributes it to Eli before finally responding 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening'. There are many examples in Christ's ministry of him listening to others' stories, of people wanting to listen to him and indeed of Jesus taking himself away from both noise and people to listen.

One example is of Christ as a twelve year old boy spending time in the temple listening and learning from the church elders and also speaking with them. Hoffman's painting "*The boy Jesus in the temple*" shows others listening to him, with church elders looking on quizzically, mystified by this young boy who is holding their attention. Much of what they heard would have challenged them, moved them in their faith. How often do we really listen and allow ourselves to be moved in our faith, our relationships and our behaviour?

One of the main events in the calendar of Interchurch Families is our annual weekend away. As well as listening to interesting speakers and sharing the experience of other families, couples get a chance to hear from each other, to really listen to each other. In the everyday work of married life these opportunities can be too rare. This experience can leave us moved and challenged and has the power to refresh relationships.

Early this month we have our annual London Meeting where we will meet with our new Anglican President, Bishop Tim Thornton of Truro. Bishop Tim comes to listen to the lived experience of interchurch families as well as to speak with us about his work as co-chair of the English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee. We are looking forward to starting out on this new relationship, one in which both of us will be actively listening to, and supporting, the other.

In this month of February, we find red roses, hearts and special offers telling us how to show our "*special someone*" that they are loved. St Valentine is a mysterious historical character and there are a number of theories about who he was, the most likely being that he was a Roman Bishop living in around 250 AD. He lived as a priest, pastor and healer before he was tortured and martyred, all of which bears little relation to the festival of St Valentine focusing on romance – but he too, as a pastor and teacher, would have focused on building relationships, speaking and listening, just as we seek to do with those whom we love.

As we consider our relationships this month let us all desire to listen more carefully, to reflect and respond with care and to in our hearts pray "*Speak Lord, for your servant is listening*".

Doral Hayes
Executive Development Officer
Association of Interchurch Families

General Election and the churches re hustings - CTBI website

This is information about the official website from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

On the site you can find information about how to hold a local Hustings event - a forum for members of the public to hear from candidates and political parties. You can register details of your own event and search for events happening near you. You can also download CTBI's election discussion document '2020 Vision of the Good Society' and other resources from member churches and agencies.

Link to CTBI site: <http://ctbielections.org.uk/>



Gather North - EA conference re unity movements for mission 3rd/4th March 2015

[The following text is from the website of the Evangelical Alliance](#)

[Video of EA/Gather director, Roger Sutton, speaking to Churches Together](#)



The two-day conference is the start of a prophetic, transformational conversation that impact northern villages, towns, cities and boroughs.

GATHERNORTH is about positioning and connecting leaders involved in church, Christian organisations and cultural spheres, to be ready for this prophetic opportunity. Taking place on Tuesday, 3 March, to Wednesday, 4 March 2015 at Salford Quays, Manchester – the heart of Media City in Salford.

GATHERNORTH will address the growing national issue concerning the renewal and transformation of the north of England. What is the future of this great region? As budget cuts and welfare changes begin to take effect, and politicians discuss regionalisation, what is the voice and role of the Church? What influence can Christian leaders in business, arts, media, local politics and other spheres really have?

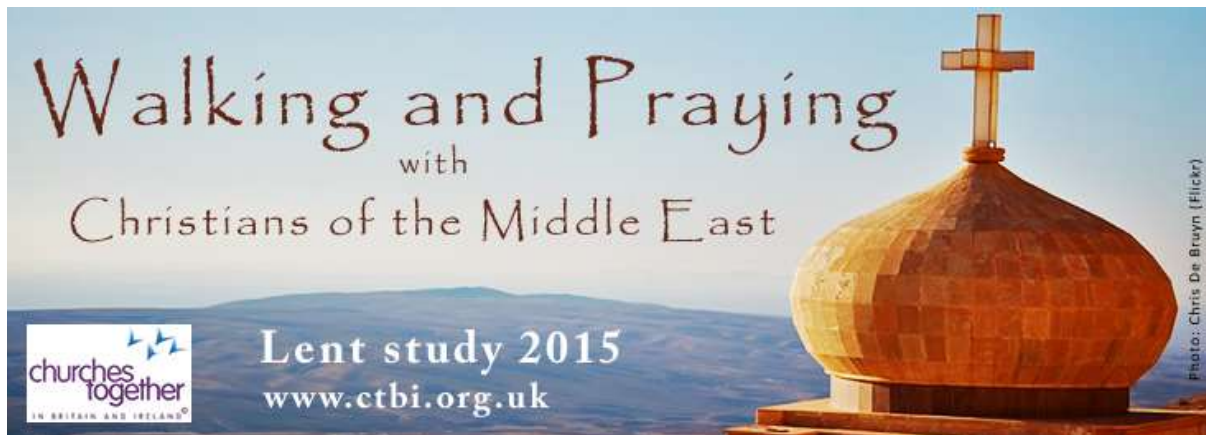
Christian leaders from churches, unity movements and secular spheres will come together at GATHERNORTH to pray together, discuss and begin to discern God's vision for the north of England.

The GATHER team is growing fast – Roger Sutton and Dave King have recently been joined by Ian Mayer, the new GATHER programme manager. Along with a team of church ministers from a range of denominations, Ian leads One Heart One Voice, a unity movement of more than 60 churches based in and around Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

You can find out more about the network through [GATHERTV, by watching a video here](#).

GATHER is working to see churches from all denominations across our country joining together for the good of their town or city. The team said: "It's exciting to see the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane being answered across the world: 'That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.'"

[Book tickets for GATHERNORTH on the EA website](#)



Resources direct from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: www.ctbi.org.uk

Universal Day of Prayer for Students Resources for Churches



On 15 February, we are celebrating the Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS). Coordinated every year by the World Student Christian Federation, (a Body in Association with CTE) and celebrated since 1898, the UDPS is an opportunity to remember the lives and contribution of Christian who are studying around the world.

SCM Britain has produced a set of resources, including a toolkit of prayers and reflections, for churches to use to mark the UDPS. Although the day is set on the third Sunday of February (which falls on the 15th this year), churches may wish to use another more convenient date.

Please visit our webpage for more details about the UDPS and to download the resource. There are template posters available for download as well.

Residential Training Course

For new Ecumenical officers and facilitators: 24/25th Feb

Click for more details



Please note that this is the last chance to book. Information/enquiries to jenny.bond@cte.org.uk

Middle East Christianity Conference: Present challenges and future possibilities



THE
BRITISH TRUST
FOR TANTUR

The British Trust for Tantor and the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College, have jointly convened a conference which will take place on Saturday 28th February 2015 at the [University of Notre Dame, London SW1Y 4HG](#)

The day will begin with coffee and registration at 10.30am and conclude at 4.15pm.

Keynote speakers include:

- Bishop Antoine Audo
- SJ Chaldean
- Bishop of Aleppo, Syria
- Dr Suha Rassam
- Dr Mariz Tadros, University of Sussex
- Revd Dr Vrej Nersessian (Former Curator of Eastern Christian Collection The British Library)
- Dr Anthony O'Mahony (Heythrop College, University of London)

[The full itinerary for the day can be viewed here.](#)

All are welcome but for practical planning you will need to fill in an [application form](#).

Archbishop Romero 35th Anniversary

The Archbishop Romero Trust remember the work with the poor, search for justice and speaking about the Gospel in the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero who was murdered 35 years ago.

[Poster for the Service \(PDF of above\)](#)

[Flyer for the Service](#)

[Archbishop Rowan Williams lecture remembering Archbishop Romero](#)

Archbishop Romero Trust

Romero's Martyrdom:
A faith that does justice

An ecumenical service to mark the 35th anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero

Preacher: **Cardinal Vincent Nichols**
Archbishop of Westminster

Officiant: **Revd Dr Sam Wells**
Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields

Saturday March 21st at 11.00am
St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 4JJ

contact: romerotrusted@btinternet.com website: www.romerotrusted.org.uk

Archbishop Romero Trust registered charity no. 1150088

Church statements re attacks in Paris



Statements from national church leaders and churches in England regarding the recent attacks in Paris were collated and posted on the CTE website:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/426500/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/Statements_re_attacks.aspx

Christmas Day Together in Lichfield



This is an ecumenical community project sponsored by Churches Together in Lichfield working in partnership with community groups that for the past 6 years has provided a Festive meal and afternoon entertainment on Christmas Day for people who would otherwise be on their own and have no friends or family to provide hospitality.

Beginnings

It all started with Edna (not her real name). As a volunteer with the Library Home Reader service I was visiting her just before Christmas 2008. When she said that Christmas Day would be just like any other day and that she would be alone, I reflected that there could be many other people in Lichfield in the same position. So with the support of the local Baptist minister who offered his church premises and experience of providing community lunches every week we approached Churches Together. With their blessing and a grant we began to contact churches and also make links with the local community groups.

From the start Christmas Day Together has been a partnership between the churches and community. I had meetings with the local Housing, Social Services, Neighbourhood and Voluntary groups and their referrals has been key to trying to ensure we meet those in greatest need. Over the years we have also developed links with the mental health services and Women's refuge.

We decided that initially we would use volunteers from the churches and this still accounts for the majority of people helping. However as word has got around we have more volunteers from the community and it is an interesting area to pursue as to what the balance should be. We have had grants from City Council and local supermarkets as well as local charities. Churches Together guarantee to meet any shortfall.

Our guests

We felt it important from the beginning that we have no age restriction. The only limitation is that guests need to be able to access car transport and be reasonably independent in personal care. Each guest receives an invitation and as well as approaching agencies/churches for referrals we also put posters up in supermarkets/churches etc so that people can refer themselves.

In 2009 we had 27 guests. We decided to extend the area to Lichfield District in 2010 - this meant that it could include all the Churches together region. By 2011 we had 45 guests and that number has remained the same. While there are many guests who come every year it is important I feel that we have new people as well to ensure it is a dynamic project that is continuing to meet people's needs.



What we have learned is that there we are all potential guests and that there should be no "us and them" Guests often become hosts. So while we make no charge for the event, we do provide an opportunity for guests to make a financial contribution anonymously. Each year this raises between £100 and £200.

Our volunteers

One of the greatest achievements over the past 6 years has been the number of volunteers involved in the project in a wide variety of ways. Every church has been represented in some way. We have a transport coordinator who organises a team of drivers. On Christmas Eve we have group who prepare vegetables and decorate the Hall. The local neighbourhood Community centre wraps the presents. On the day we have hosts who look after the guests and serve the food.

The story of the catering team is one of ecumenical progress! For the first 4 years we were

grateful to use the experience of the church who provided the weekly community lunches. When they took a break the Cathedral took it on and this year we had a catering team from 3 churches who at the beginning had not met and by the end worked together to produce a wonderful meal!

Mary Harris, Co-ordinator
[Link to Churches Together in Lichfield](#)

New report is wake up call for rural mission



The Arthur Rank Centre strongly supports the research report Released for Mission published by the Church of England today. "It is absolutely essential that the Church of England implements the recommendations in Released for Mission," said Arthur Rank Centre CEO Jerry Marshall. "The next decade is a make or break time for continuing rural ministry. Thankfully some rural dioceses are already moving in the right direction."

The report points to the importance of the rural church (two-thirds of parishes) and to many areas of success, particularly around fresh expressions and Messy Church. A statistical analysis indicates that there is no clear link between growth and the number of parishes in a multi-church group; but lay leadership and an intentional focus on mission are crucial.

Priorities identified by the report include:

- Building a culture of discipleship
- Envisioning, enabling and equipping the ministry of lay people
- Effective training for lay and clergy for the complexity of leading multiple churches
- Simplification of governance and legal structures
- Facilitating creative ecumenical partnerships.

The report outlines findings from a major research project led by Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson, the National Rural Officer for the Church of England.

"Rural churches of all denominations are not always aware that they can and do engage in mission," said Revd Elizabeth Clark, National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church." This report highlights what is happening whilst at the same time pointing out the challenges that exist, particularly for Anglican Churches. Many Methodist and URC Churches face similar constraints. My hope is that we will look for ways of tackling these obstacles together since ecumenism is a mission imperative."

The National Rural Officers are based at the Arthur Rank Centre, the churches' resource for rural mission and ministry. "We provide training and resources in leadership and mission, for both lay and ordained, across denominations," said Jerry Marshall. "But much more needs to be done. We especially urge national leadership structures to find ways to reduce the burden of local governance and to support the creation of staff posts that address administration, finance, and facilities management, to release time and energy for mission. "

[Click here to view the full report.](#)

New community project memorial for World War I

Frank McGegor writes:
The Hanley Team Ministry in Stoke-on-Trent is made up of 5 churches in different communities around the city centre of Hanley. With the national focus on WW1, and



four of our churches having war memorial plaques, it was obvious that we should see the Commemorations as something our churches should be involved in both helping with acts of remembrance and in pointing them again to Jesus. One of our churches, St Matthew's in the Birches Head district is the only 20th century building, and unlike the others contains no memorial and no stained glass at all.



The first Sunday morning I led a service there, the sun was blazing through the 48 huge plain glass windows which are all down the long south facing wall. It struck me then that a stained glass window would flood the whole church with colour, and so the seed of the idea for our WW1 Window was planted.

As "Creative Missioner" I do a lot of arts & crafts in my ministry but up until now I had only ever done A4 sized stained glass effect work using tissue paper with school and church groups. As our churches began discussing ideas for the Centenary I experimented with an A3 size piece of black craft foam board thinking this might create the lead effect, and I used coloured lighting film for my glass, and drew a simple poppy for my window image. It looked good and I then presented the idea to the St Matthew's Church Council. At this point I had no design in mind except for lots of poppies and lots of red film flooding the church with dramatic red light reflections.



The idea was accepted, as well as suggestions for local community involvement. It was to be a memorial to the fallen heroes of Birches Head, whose names could be found on memorials here and there around the city, with some buried locally and others abroad. But their names had never been brought together on one memorial in the place where they all lived, Birches Head. I bought the "Greater Love" DVD from CVM and this reinforced my choice of the bible verse John 15:13 to go up on the window. I started looking at WW1 pictures and was drawn to the simplicity of the iconic images of silhouetted figures on the ridges of Ypres, Belgium, which became the centre of the design.

I then decided that a silhouetted image of Jesus carrying his cross should follow behind the men, with a large crown of thorns on his head which would echo circles of barbed wire which I added to the picture. Where is God in war? There with you, suffering with you, carrying our sin which includes all the wars of the world. Jesus is also the way to true peace for individuals, communities and the world.

Frank McGregor, Church Army/CreativeMissioner/Hanley Team Ministry

Read the whole story:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/428259/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/New_community_project.aspx

Rowan Williams challenges a response to Climate Change

This is a press release from Christian Aid, an agency of CTE: Christian Aid Chair Dr Rowan Williams marked Bristol becoming the 2015 European Green Capital with a stark warning about the spiritual imperative to show responsibility to others and the planet.



Photo: Chris Dobson

On Saturday Dr Williams delivered the keynote speech to 200 people inside Bristol's packed Elim Church. Reflecting on the day's conference titled Climate Change: A Matter Of Faith, Dr Williams said: "The world's poorest people – those communities who have done the least to cause climate change – bear the brunt of its impact. By being part of Bristol 2015 and taking steps towards a safer and cleaner future, we can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with people around the world. I was

delighted to see the strong level of support for the day and the palpable sense of urgency amongst Christians from across the region.

“Bristol 2015 offers churches and faith communities in the city an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to caring for people and planet.

The conference, organised by Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund and South West Fairtrade, combined theological context with challenges, ideas, inspiration and resources including voices and reflections from Uganda and Bangladesh on the impacts of climate change.

The day began with Dr Williams addressing around 15 of the region’s church leaders at a cross-denominational breakfast where representatives including those from Anglican, Baptist, Salvation Army, United Reformed Church, Quaker churches all signed a pledge to live more sustainably, pray for action on climate change and raise these issues at meetings of their governing bodies.

With tips and suggestions including reducing dependence on fossil fuels, installing solar panels, growing food, switching to green electricity suppliers and lobbying MPs the conference included practical ideas for both individuals and church communities. Christian Aid’s regional coordinator for Bristol Lydia Nash said: “We have been delighted by the response to the conference which indicates the level of commitment across church communities in Bristol to tackle issues of climate change and to care for the planet. Bristol 2015 is a real opportunity to extend that commitment and to make this a year when lasting change takes root. “Our work with partners in 45 countries across the world shows us the vital importance of making changes here in Bristol to help improve not only our immediate environment but those of communities where global warming presents an immediate and growing threat.”

For more information contact Lydia Nash on 07814 131167 or lnash@christian-aid.org

Christians around the world pray for unity



WCC Photo

A service at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva celebrated the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on 21 January. Rev. Emmanuel Fuchs, president of the Protestant Church of Geneva, preached.

Challenged by Christians from Brazil to strive for greater respect for religious and cultural diversity, churches in many countries are reflecting together on the gospel of John (4:7), “Jesus said to her: ‘Give me to drink’” as they celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme proposed by the Brazilian ecumenical team called together by the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC), takes inspiration from the biblical gesture of sharing water with whomever arrives, as a welcome, something repeated in all regions of Brazil. The week of prayer is traditionally celebrated from 18 to 25 January (in the northern hemisphere) or at Pentecost (in the southern hemisphere). Since 1968, the production of the liturgical and biblical resources for the week of prayer has been jointly coordinated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order and the Roman Catholic Church through its Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Through this year’s theme of the week of prayer, Brazilian Christians are drawing attention to an important aspect of the ecclesial and religious situation in their country that transcends the Brazilian context. They note in the introduction to the prayer resources that “Brazil is living through a time of growing intolerance made manifest in high levels of violence, especially against minorities and the vulnerable: black people, the young, homosexual people, people practicing Afro-Brazilian religion, women and indigenous people”. They further add that “overcoming intolerance in its various forms should be dealt with in a positive way: respecting legitimate diversity and promoting dialogue as a permanent path of reconciliation and peace in fidelity to the gospel”.

Reflecting on the week of prayer on social media, the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said, "The unity of the Church we seek on our way is unity in the water of baptism, renewed at every well where we share life and the grace of God". "The unity in life means sharing our needs and the resources given by God," he added.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity @ Lambeth Palace

The following report and picture is from the website of His Grace Bishop Angaelos, and printed here with permission and thanks. In the link at the bottom of the page you can listen to the sermon.



On Monday 19 January 2015 Church leaders and representatives gathered in the Crypt at Lambeth Palace at the invitation of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury to share in a prayer service under the auspices of [Churches Together in Britain and Ireland \(CTBI\)](#) marking the beginning of the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity \(WPCU\)](#).

In his warm welcome, the Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, read from a Middle East Council of Churches letter which called for unified prayer efforts and advocacy: "Prayerfully together, we call upon all our fellow Christians around the world, both clergy and laity, who are celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to share with us our fervent and passionate prayer for peace in our beloved and suffering Orient, especially in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, who are currently facing the harshest waves of persecution...We appeal for your prayers and ask you to spare no efforts of advocacy wherever and whenever possible, to alleviate and end this painful and tragic reality, and to bring a safe and immediate release to all who have been kidnapped and to preserve a sustainable and peaceful Christian presence in the Middle East."

During the service, His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom and Moderator of CTBI, delivered the sermon in which he said: "Some may have asked today whether this service should have been in an Orthodox Cathedral, a Church of England Abbey, or in this Crypt, but at the end of the day it does not matter; the fact is that we are here, and how wonderful and blessed it is for us to be here to pray together."

Speaking of the potential hindrances to realised unity he said: "Of course we have traditions, history, and practices, but they should never become an obstacle to us worshipping the Father. We now come together in the identity that is most core to us; before we are called Orthodox, Catholics, Anglicans, Evangelicals, or Free Church, we are called Christians and that is what we gather as today."

Commenting on the suffering of many across the world Bishop Angaelos went on to say: "There is no greater time for us to worship and gather because there has never been a greater need for us to stand and pray together. The world needs us; those suffering the effects of Ebola, HIV, and other diseases need us; the persecuted Church in the Middle East, Nigeria and around the world needs us, those suffering the results of global, ruthless, heartless terrorism that rocks our own communities need us, and contentiously, even those who are manipulated into horrible acts of violence need us; they all need us to stand to pray today." Concluding his sermon he said: "Today we must work towards that one presence of one Body before one Lord. The ecumenical journey is a challenging one, but not impossible, and at the end of the day it is Christ's journey for us. Small sparks, like today, can turn into blazing infernos of the work of the Spirit; we are here as one such spark, albeit an important one."

[Link to the article on the blog site for His Grace Bishop Angaelos](http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/427860/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/WPCU_Lambeth_Palace.aspx) - on which you can listen to the sermon.
http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/427860/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/WPCU_Lambeth_Palace.aspx

Chemin Neuf community launched video prayer project for Christian Unity Week

This text is adapted from a press release from the website of the Archbishop of Canterbury:

Members of the Chemin Neuf community in the UK are encouraging Christians from different churches to pray for Christian unity. Each day during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity they posted a short video from a young Christian offering a prayer for another denomination. The videos will feature Christians from eight different churches including Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Baptist.

Four members of Chemin Neuf [live at Lambeth Palace as a praying community](#) after being invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury last year. The Chemin Neuf community is a Roman Catholic community with an ecumenical foundation, which grew out of a prayer group in Lyon, France, in 1973. It consists of couples, families and celibates, men and women, who chosen to follow Christ by living a life of simplicity, serving the Church and the world.

Links:

Find out more about the Christian Unity prayer project and how you can get involved [here](#)
Videos will be posted each day [here](#)

The new Prior of the Community of St Anselm, the Revd Anders Litzell, has a blog about Christian unity on [the Community of St Anselm website](#)

There is a short video about the Chemin Neuf community at Lambeth Palace on the article link: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5477/father-make-us-one-join-young-christians-praying-for-christian-unity>

WEA and WCC explore possibilities of working together



WCC photo

22 January 2015 [Joint press release of the World Council of Churches with the World Evangelical Alliance]

In the light of current global realities, representatives of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met from 20 to 21 January at the Chateau of Bossey, Switzerland to explore and discuss possible areas of future cooperation.

The meeting featured introductions to the work of the WEA and the WCC, and participants reflected together on current developments in society and churches, and in evangelical and ecumenical movements. They shared current plans and discussed possibilities for closer collaboration.

Stressing the significance of being Christian witnesses, the meeting participants also identified various ways of responding together to the needs of communities around the world. Together the participants read the Scriptures and reflected on similar and different understandings of mission and evangelism. They prayed together and shared stories of faith. Recognizing the importance of a joint response to a suffering world, the participants agreed to continue to meet in order to identify further areas of possible cooperation.

The WEA representatives at the meeting were Dr Wilf Gasser, associate secretary general, Gordon Showell-Rogers, associate general secretary, Thomas Schirrmacher, executive chairperson of the Theological Commission and ambassador for human rights, Rosalee Velloso Ewell, executive director of the Theological Commission, Bertil Ekström, executive director of the Mission Commission; and John Baxter-Brown, senior advisor on Evangelism and Ecumenical Affairs.

The WCC representatives at the meeting were Georges Lemopoulos, WCC acting general secretary,

Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC associate general secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia, Rev. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC associate general secretary and director of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, Rev. Dr Hielke Wolters, WCC associate general secretary for Mission and Unity, Canon John Gibaut, director of the Commission on Faith and Order, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, secretary for the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and Peter Prove, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

[Ecumenical perspectives on mission and unity](#)
[Website of the World Evangelical Alliance](#)
[Article on World Council of Churches website](#)

Celebration of Ecumenism in Northampton

The 50th anniversary of the Vatican II decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* – the Restoration of Unity – was celebrated in an inspiring service at Northampton Cathedral during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Bishop Peter Doyle had invited church leaders from across the four counties of the diocese and from Churches Together in England to take part in this unique event. The congregation that filled the cathedral were delighted to see the diversity of clergy gathered from a variety of traditions, seated in a semicircle around the altar. Greek Ecumenical Patriarch Archbishop Gregorius read the Gospel and the Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley was the preacher.



In his homily, Archbishop Longley recalled that the promulgation of *Unitatis Redintegratio* 50 years ago was the first time that the Catholic Church had reflected theologically on the life and witness of other Churches and ecclesial communities and begun to appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit in all who are called to form the Body of Christ in the world. "From then onwards our prayer and work for Christian unity was to be understood as integral to the life and mission of Catholics everywhere." However, this decree was only the beginning of our ecumenical pilgrimage towards the goal of full visible unity of the Church. Despite discouragements and challenges it remains the goal of our dialogue and work together. "Through our baptism the Lord challenges each successive generation to contribute to the fulfilment of his prayer that they may all be one." His final words were "Only by allowing ourselves to be transformed together can we hope to give a more credible witness to the Christ who sends us into the world and longs to walk beside us there."

Seated beside Bishop Peter was the Methodist District Chair Rev Anne Brown, who led the Bidding Prayers, Bishop Donald Allister of Peterborough Diocese, who read from the New Testament, and three more Anglican bishops, as well as Baptist, URC and Pentecostal leaders. Representatives of Churches Together in England were present and the recently appointed Catholic National Ecumenical Officer Canon John O'Toole read a prayer. Moments of silent reflection during the service were powerful, and a symbolic action involved everyone being invited to dip their hand into a bowl of water as a sign of our shared baptism, while the Choir led the singing of a Taizé chant, There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The Choir itself was ecumenical, as Cathedral Director of Music Teresa Brown had gathered 50 singers from 23 different churches, representing five denominations. As the service drew to a close, they sang the Hallelujah Chorus – an uplifting and joyful response to all that had taken place.

Bishop Peter thanked his ecumenical guests and the congregation for joining him in this special service of prayer for Christian unity. After the resounding refrain of One Church, one Faith, one Lord, the joyful spirit of the evening continued in the cathedral as people chatted to fellow pilgrims on the journey. Hallelujah indeed!

Thanks to Teresa Brown for this text and Tony Allen for the photograph.

[Link to the text from the preacher, the Archbishop of Birmingham, Most Rev. Bernard Longley](#)
[Link to an article on the website of the Diocese of Northampton](#)

Christian Aid urges political parties to remember people living in poverty worldwide



Monday 12th January 2015

Christian Aid (an agency of CTE) today launches its bid to influence all UK political parties' general election manifestos. Tax dodging, climate change and reform of the world's emergency aid systems are among the topics covered by the document, [Contract With the World's Poor](#).

Laura Taylor, Christian Aid Head of Advocacy, said: "As parties prepare their manifestos, we believe they must remember people living in poverty around the world. Decisions by UK politicians can have a huge impact on vulnerable families in other countries, so today we set out the principles and promises we hope all parties will adopt, whoever leads the next government.

"From our 70 years' experience of tackling the root causes of poverty, Christian Aid knows that poverty doesn't happen by accident. That is why we are trying to influence parties' policies. However, the organisation is not party political and would never seek to influence how people vote." In relation to fairer tax systems, Ms Taylor added: "Tax avoidance and evasion rob countries of vital revenues to provide public services. The next government should continue to champion reform of the global tax system and, crucially, ensure that developing countries benefit."

Tax reforms suggested by *Contract With The World's Poor* include a requirement for greater financial transparency from UK companies and moves to ensure the UK's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories can no longer operate as tax havens. In relation to climate change, Laura Taylor said: "Global warming is already costing lives and destroying the livelihoods of those who did least to cause it. Here in Britain, its impacts are also now being felt. In 2015, governments of the world will meet to endeavour to agree a historic deal on climate change, and we believe the next UK Government belongs at the forefront of those negotiations."

Climate policies suggested in the contract include working within the EU for the adoption of tougher carbon emissions cuts, and greater incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency. Another policy recommendation is that the UK should increase its support for developing countries to adapt to climate change and adopt clean energy.

The Jerusalem Awards 2015

The Jerusalem Awards are happy to announce that after yet another successful Awards in October this year, they are now open for entries for the Jerusalem Awards 2015.



If you have any entries for the Festivals category (we are thinking especially of Advent and Christmas at this time of year!) they would be happy to see them. Please note, the closing date for entries is Friday 8th May.

For guidelines on how to enter and more on the various categories, please visit www.jerusalemawards.org.uk

If you have any queries regarding the Awards, please write to info@jerusalemawards.org.uk

Historic ordination of first woman bishop in CofE - an article re Unity in The Tablet

The Roman Catholic journal *The Tablet* on 30 January 2015 had an article by Joanna Moorhead, about some of the implications of the Church of England ordaining a woman bishop re the ecumenical journey towards visible unity: [Visit the website of The Tablet to read the article](#)

Rugby World Cup - a golden opportunity

Download > [Briefing Notes Jan/Feb 2015](#)

The third largest international event of its kind will be here in the UK in the autumn of 2015, writes Dave Chawner, the co-ordinator of an organisation created to help churches engage with the tournament

Following the 2012 Olympic Games and the 2014 Commonwealth Games, comes the 2015 Rugby World Cup.

12 months before the Rugby World Cup Final in 2015, the churches co-ordinating group for engaging with the Rugby World Cup, called Engage2015, will be encouraging all churches to begin a wave of prayer for the festival of Rugby.



Background

In 2003 England snatched the glory – remember Jonny Wilkinson’s match winning kick? In 2007 against all odds England reached the final. In 2011 Wales just lost out in a nail biting semi-final. All this drama and passion will be on our doorstep as England host Rugby World Cup 2015. 48 games in 13 venues from Newcastle to Exeter and Cardiff to Brighton spread over just six weeks. 20 international squads using 50 training venues. Local festivals of rugby in every major town & city. Half a million fans from 100 different countries. Wall to wall media coverage.

Here is another golden opportunity for the church to engage with a national event and with its local community as it did around the Olympics. And Engage 2015 is here to help, providing a menu of ideas and resources many of which can be built into existing activities. Backed by the denominations and many of the organisations involved with More Than Gold, we are working closely with the tournament delivery body, England Rugby 2015, to provide hosting for participants’ families, chaplaincy to the squads, games pastors and volunteers.

At the local level there will be opportunity to develop partnerships to screen matches, host community festivals, experiment with touch rugby, stage quizzes and speaker events, minister to locally based squads & their supporters, and much more. Irrespective of limitations on resources there will be ways in which your church can link into your community during RWC 2015. Don’t risk missing out on these God given possibilities to serve and to share. Start thinking and planning now. Register your interest by contacting david.chawner@engage2015.co.uk, and visit www.engage2015.co.uk.

http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/242856/Home/Resources/Mission/Rugby_World_Cup/Rugby_World_Cup.aspx

And finally ..

One of the areas of the website which has been updated recently is **Receptive Ecumenism and the Local** which includes various resources including an introductory video from Callan Slipper:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/252478/Home/Resources/Theology/Receptive_Ecumenism/Receptive_Ecumenism_and/Receptive_Ecumenism_and.aspx

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