

Reflection: Getting Out Of The Boat

5.30am, Galilee. Across the calm sea from our promenade view, we watched the grey-blue mist ignite in to a kaleidoscope of red, orange and yellow shades fused together by the rising sun until all the sky and sea were ablaze with its hue.



Scenes like this conjure up vividly the Bible telling of Jesus and the disciples teaching, sailing and living together. Of all the account of Peter walking on the water in response to Christ's invitation to join him came to mind that morning and long afterwards. (Matt 14: 25-31).

During our time in Israel & Palestine with the British Tantur Trust in April, we met Jews, Christians and Muslims who were seeking a peaceful resolution to the tensions that existed between nations and religious communities there. They had 'got out of their boat', i.e. their own communities, to engage with the other in order to seek this goal. To do so means to be open to being vulnerable, open to personal sacrifice and open to working as equal partners for the shared vision.

Like Galilee on a clear day there are many, many boats sailing in the Christian sea. Unlike the Galilean one, here in UK, Christianity is shrinking. [1] Recent research, from the Centre for Church Growth, Crammer Hall St John's College, Durham, show that in the north east, where I live, 126 new churches have emerged since 1980. Out of these only 18 churches were founded by main the historic denominations with the majority coming from smaller denominations or denominations which have arisen in the UK since 1980 or independent churches. Most significant, 47 congregations come from mainly black and minority ethnic communities.[2]

These findings suggest that the shape and feel of the Kingdom we are called to build is changing too. The challenge is not so much concerned with sustaining the different boats we occupy but rather more about building the boat – the kingdom here on earth.

The CTE consultation A new Framework For Local Ecumenism, is then well timed, It seeks to discern how systems and structures can be simplified for churches involved in existing LEPs and looking forward to creating a new framework that will enable churches of different ecclesiologies to be partners. In doing so, we may find ourselves imitating those in Isereal/Palistine by accepting the need for an approach which requires us to also to 'get out of our boats' in order sustain an engaging and relational christian presence amongst the communities we live in.



[1] <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/5-june/news/uk/uk-anglicans-are-in-serious-decline-say-researchers> & <http://faithsurvey.co.uk/uk-christianity.html>

[2] <http://community.dur.ac.uk/churchgrowth.research/research/new-churches-in-the-north-east>

Sheelagh Aston (Revd), Priest in Charge, Oxclose LEP Church & Ecumenical Adviser Durham Diocese

Links

[Oxclose LEP Church Facebook Page](#)

[Tantur Trust](#)

[Jenny Bond's Reflection about Tantur pilgrimage](#)

[A New Framework for Local Ecumenism](#)

I want to come to the Forum!

While the Forum is a delegate conference, we are now able to release some places for anyone who would like to attend.

Book your place now!

[Follow this link](#) to book a full or part-time place at the Forum.

Please note that Eventbrite bookings will close at 9.30 am on Friday 11 September.

In particular, the [programme](#) is designed to facilitate people coming for the day or part of the day on Tuesday 29 September. If you are 35 or under, we would love to welcome you as a guest on that day. Choose your ticket carefully – the costs are indicated clearly on the booking form. If you have any queries, please contact [Lorraine Shannon](#).



	Now open booking
	2015 Forum
	28-30 Sept 2015
	cte.org.uk/forum2015 <i>Click banner</i>

If you would like to be part of the delegation of your [Member Church](#) or [County/Intermediate Body](#), please be in touch with them by following those links. In some cases the issue might be one of funding, so you may be able to negotiate a place by offering to pay for your attendance.

If you have come here as a delegate looking for the link to the registration form, please contact [Lorraine Shannon](#), indicating in what capacity you will be attending the Forum. Direct link to book:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/churches-together-in-englands-forum-2015-registration-16296201377>

Forum poet appointed

Sarah Larkin (née Fordham) has been appointed poet-in-residence for [CTE's Forum](#) at the end of this month. She is 'thrilled by this unique opportunity to share and encourage poetry at the Forum' and is very encouraging:

'It is my experience that even people whose relationship to poetry is non-existent or slight, are amazed at what emerges given a little time and encouragement. My deep conviction is that we are all creative because we are made in God's image, and that as we give space to explore our God-given creativity, our connection with our Maker, as well as with each other, is strengthened.'

Sarah will reflect on the Forum in verse and also encourage Forum delegates to write their own poems.

- Throughout the Forum delegates will post short poems on Twitter and display them in the Derbyshire Suite.
- Sarah will run a drop-in mini poetry workshop in the [Marketplace](#).
- Poetry will be part of the final session and closing worship.

[Visit Sarah's poetry blog](#) and [read more about her](#).



Noel Robinson to lead Forum Worship

Noel Robinson, a well-known worship leader, music pastor, song-writer and producer, will be leading the Forum music with his band. He was part of the Forum worship group in 2012.

Noel has worked extensively with Pentecostal churches and with charismatic groups of many different denominations. He feels called to cross cultures and aims to bring a spectrum of different music to the Forum. His heart is to see unity across the body of Christ and he believes that this unity of the church is a key component to revival.

Noel has recently signed an Artist Deal with Integrity music, the first British born person of African-Caribbean heritage to have done so.

[Visit Noel's website.](#)



5000 churches launch Alpha with prayer

Emily Thomas, from Alpha UK, writes about prayer at the start of Alpha courses this Autumn:

Churches across the UK are gathering to pray for revival. History tells us that whenever we pray, God moves.

What if churches in the UK prayed together, for one night, in a moment of unified prayer for the re-evangelisation of the nation and the transformation of society?

This autumn, over 5,000 UK churches will launch Alpha and inspire the nation to explore the meaning of life. Before we launch we need to pray, and as we each play our part, God will do immeasurably more than we could possibly imagine.

Tune in alpha.org/TV on Tuesday 15 September from 19.30 for 45 minutes of live prayer and join churches across the UK to pray at the same time for the same purpose.

For more information: uk.alpha.org/prayer



SCM invitation for new students

The Student Christian Movement is a Body in Association of Churches Together in England and Lisa Murphy from SCM writes about new students going to university:

As another academic year approaches, we'd really appreciate your help in getting the word out about the Student Christian Movement (SCM) to the thousands of students who will be going to university this autumn. SCM is an amazing student-led community inspiring students to engage with faith, justice and theology, and get the most out of their time at university. SCM is made up of a network of groups, individual members and link churches across Britain. Please encourage students and young people you know to get involved with SCM by sharing the information below in your newsletters (email or otherwise) and on social media.

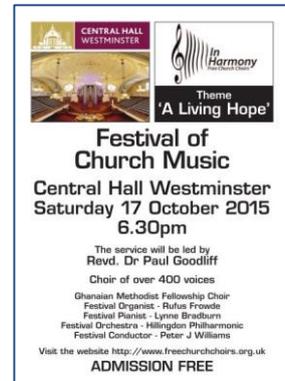


SCM is also building a network of link churches to make it easier for students to find the right local church whilst at university. It is completely free to sign up, and each church will get a profile on our website, which will be promoted to students, as well as access to resources and training from SCM. To sign up, please complete [this online form](#).

Free Church Choirs Festival 17th Oct 2015

The Free Church Choirs come from several different denominations in the Free Church tradition. On Saturday 17th October at 6.30pm the combined choir of 400 voices will sing in Central Hall Westminster, with the theme 'A Living Hope'.

[Click to download the poster](#)
www.freechurchchoirs.org.uk



Notice re Freedom Sunday

Freedom Sunday highlights the plight of the millions of children and adults around the world, including in this country, who are victims of modern forms of slavery and human trafficking.



CTE and several member churches ..
working together re
human trafficking and modern slavery

#FREEDOM SUNDAY

Save the date: Sunday 18th October 2015

It will be celebrated on Sunday 18 October 2015 and [resources for worship and action](#) are now available.

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/446176/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/Freedom_Sunday_2015.aspx

Engage 2015

Churches are working together and with their local communities, schools and sports clubs, to celebrate the game of Rugby, which (as you know) started in Rugby. In Rugby itself the churches are fully involved in the FanZone during the World Cup:



http://www.reviverugby.net/Articles/446132/Revive/News_and_Events/Rugby_World_Cup.aspx

On behalf of the churches in England, and with CTE represented at the Advisory Group, Engage 2015 has been collating stories, resources, testimonies, ideas and advice available for outreach this autumn. Every day there is new information #engage2015 and #dontdroptheball

All information and a key resource, 'Game of Life' as well as a prayer diary and updates are available through the website www.engage2015.co.uk.



And please tell us what you did ...

Jim Currin, CTE Evangelisation, Mission and Media, adds a comment and request:

In the Engage 2015 Advisory group we are very keen to know how many churches, groups of churches, sports groups, Christian youth movements and other agencies too part in any way with the activities related to Engage 2015. We would like to know, whatever it is, and whether or not it related to the resources of Engage 2015. The information for our interest, our funding partners, and for the legacy of the Engage 2015 group for other networks who may pick up other national major community outreach sport events in the future. Please use the website www.engage2015.co.uk for your feedback. Thank you.

Pioneer Church Planter and Leader

A relational Evangelist is sought for the full time ecumenical post of Pioneer Church Planter and Leader in the new Wellesley housing development in Aldershot.

The Churches of Aldershot, funded by the Methodist and Anglican Churches, are seeking to appoint a full time Pioneer Minister (either lay or ordained), to develop a Christian community in a large area of new housing that will eventually grow to almost 4,000 households.

One of the first houses to be built has been bought on site for the Minister, with a large enough room for small meetings.

For more information and an application pack contact The Archdeacon of Surrey's PA, [Mrs Frances-Anne Cross](mailto:Mrs.Frances-Anne.Cross@dioceseofsurrey.org), on 01483 790352 or Diocesan House, Quarry Street, Guildford, GU1 3XG

Closing date for applications: 24th September 2015

Interview dates: 14th/15th October

This post is subject to an enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/447162/Home/News/Jobs/Pioneer_Church_Planter.aspx



Go for growth conference

<http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=443895>

A major ecumenical conference
Saturday 3rd October 2015
Focolare Centre
Welwyn Garden City



Growth in many dimensions ...

Churches Together in Hertfordshire and surrounding ecumenical bodies

Baptist/CofE latest conversation: Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity

In July, the Church of England and the Baptist Union released a report on their latest round of Conversations, *Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity*, together with accompanying study material.

Both are available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/england/conversations-with-baptist-union-of-great-britain.aspx> (follow hyper-links in the text, not links to older report in 'resources' pane to the side).

The Revd Canon Jeremy Worthen, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology in the Council for Christian Unity for the Church of England writes, 'The report has plenty of 'meat' and is a substantial contribution to ecumenical dialogue, while the study material is designed to be widely accessible by a range of local church groups'.

In the preface to the book Anglican co-chair Rt Revd Donald Allister, Bishop of Peterborough says:

"This book is quite unlike other reports of ecumenical conversations. In its conversational form it aims to give the reader a flavour of the cut and thrust of friendly debate, on the key theme of sharing the Christian faith today. How do we know what the faith is? How do we receive and grow in the faith? How do we celebrate the faith in worship? How do we share the faith beyond the walls of the church? The conversations reported in this book, seeking to answer these questions, follow up the first report published ten years ago under the title *Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity*, which was widely recognized to have broken fresh ground in ecumenical dialogue.

Once again conversation-partners commissioned by the Church of England and the Baptist Union of Great Britain produce a report which enables readers to stand on the borders of unity between Christian churches, as well as on the borders between the church and society around. Its purpose is to draw in readers themselves to share the conversation.

CENTRE FOR BAPTIST HISTORY AND HERITAGE STUDIES VOLUME 12

Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity



Further Conversations between Anglicans and Baptists
Paul S. Fiddes (Editor)



Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity: Study Guide

Three study sessions for small groups of Anglicans and Baptists (and others as well) using the *Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity* report to:

- understand each other better and learn from each other
- understand our own tradition better and offer it as a gift
- Enable us to be better able to work and pray together.

The report is published in book form by Regent's Park, College Oxford with the addition of two further reflections. Priced at £10.00 it is available from Regent's Park College Oxford website or Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3BN

To read or download Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity [click here](#)
Material to enable groups from local churches to engage for themselves with the main themes of the report has been prepared. To read or download this study material [click here](#).

[Link to more information on the website of Baptists Together](#)

[Link to more information on Church of England website](#)

'God for All' in Cumbria

Over the last few years churches across Cumbria have been talking, praying and planning together, seeking ways to revitalise the church and its work, and to help connect the people of Cumbria with the reality of God. The three denominations, Methodist, Anglican and United Reformed Church, have developed significant strategies to support this shared commitment – strategies for buildings, for outreach and for ministry.



This has now come together under the heading 'God for All', underlining that in different ways what we are doing is designed to put mission and evangelism at the heart of what we do – sharing in God's work in this world and building for his Kingdom, helping more people connect with God and helping Christians go on and grow on in their faith, loving service, worship and witness.

God for All calls for change

Traditional models of church are still important but together we are exploring new styles and expressions of church. We are committed to strengthening the ways those people not involved with church can connect with the reality of God.

God for All promotes unity

Along with other denominations the Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed Church in Cumbria are working closely to bring about this shared vision and sense of purpose. Churches of different denominations will come together in new 'mission communities', creating a network of support, encouragement and growth. The particular emphasis (and challenge) of those mission communities will be to ensure that they are truly about a renewed and creative involvement in mission, and are not simply a convenient reorganisation of churches that maintains the (often struggling) status quo. Instead of talking about unity and mission we intend to be doing it, all-be-it that we recognise that 'doing it' instead of talking about it will not be easy.

God for All looks long term – it is not a 'quick fix' project

God for All brings with it new forms and styles of ministry and an exploration of how best to use buildings for worship, mission and community life. There is a new approach to church leadership, with each church having its own local leaders who could be ordained or lay. And there is a very significant emphasis on the evangelisation of both residents and visitors, and of all ages.

God for All has purpose

God for All wants everyone in Cumbria to have the opportunity to discover more of God and God's purpose for their lives, with equipped and motivated Christians who are active in witness, service and mission and churches invigorated as communities of worship, care and outreach.

A dedicated website – www.godforall.org.uk – sets out something of the background of what is being done, and gives insights into progress and news of what is happening.

Our 'God for All' prayer, is a reminder that all this is dependent of the grace and guidance of God:

God for all, you reached out to the world in your Son Jesus Christ.
Help us to reach out in faith and love and witness to all.
God for all, you send your Holy Spirit to empower and gift your Church.
By your Spirit help us,
grow in unity,
grow as followers of Jesus Christ,
and grow your kingdom in Cumbria and in this world. Amen.

Robert Freeman, Bishop of Penrith
August 2015

News from the Churches Rural Group:

The Churches Rural Group is one of the many Co-ordinating Groups of CTE. Here the secretary, Ann Wright, provides a summary of a recent CRG meeting:

Representatives of Christian denominations with a significant rural presence meet together with other groups and organisations concerned with rural life and ministry to discuss issues of common interest on behalf of Churches Together in England. Main points from the last meeting, held in August 2105, include:

- 'Released for Mission: growing the rural Church'. Jill Hopkinson gave a presentation on this report, which went to the Church of England's General Synod in February 2015 and demonstrated that mission and growth are possible in rural multi-church groups (irrespective of the structure of the group) where time and space were created for it to take place, and where the ministry of lay people was enabled and equipped. Although the research focused on a particular aspect of the Church of England's rural churches, many of the issues are similar for other denominations with a rural presence. The full report is well worth reading and can be downloaded from [*Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church*](#)
- 'Listening Event'. Members of the CRG and invited guests with knowledge of rural mission and ministry will meet in early October to listen to what God is doing in our village communities and identify any gaps that could be met by working together. If you know any good projects that could be replicated elsewhere, or are aware of gaps in provision of training or resources, please send a paragraph to Jerry at the Arthur Rank Centre as soon as possible.
- 'Germinate.' Germinate Enterprise rural business start-up materials are now available for free download from the Arthur Rank Centre website. This six week course has been well received and ARC is looking for 1,000 facilitators to deliver it around the country within five years. The next 'Germinate Leadership' programme starts on 30 September. Applications from Free Church members would be especially welcome, and some bursaries are available. More details can be found at www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk
- Farming issues continue to hit the news, with the price of milk of particular concern. The spread of mycoplasma bovis amongst cattle is adding to the problems faced by dairy



farmers. Jill Hopkinson's blog 'Buy British: support the dairy industry' is on the Church of England website www.churchofengland.org and includes a link to prayers for farmers. 'Honey and thistles: Biblical wisdom for renewal of farming' by Christopher Jones and John Martin, is a very useful guide to help individuals and groups think through some of the underlying issues around food and farming. Order from. http://honeyandthistles.uk/?page_id=222

- Rural Mission Sunday was held for the first time in July 2015. The theme for 2016 will be 'Sow and Grow' and material will be provided for use on 17 July 2016 (or other date that is appropriate locally).
- Links between urban and rural. Terry Drummond joined the CRG for an interesting discussion about overlaps and connections between urban and rural issues, particularly around marginalisation, poverty, disengagement and the value of place. This conversation will be continued!

And finally: If you haven't yet seen the Rural Theology Association's first e-news, do follow this link <http://campaigns.ablosmedia.com/t/ViewEmail/r/94FABC1BE73DDC9D2540EF23F30FEDED/4138DA2C881BA8EF46778398EADC2510>

Present: Barry Osborne (Chair; Smaller Free Churches Group / REN), Robert Barlow (RTA), Elizabeth Clark (ARC / Methodist / URC) Jim Currin (CTE), Roger Greene (Agricultural Chaplains), Harry Doyle (RC North), Jill Hopkinson (ARC / C of E), Jerry Marshall (ARC), Robert Miller (RC National Rural Officer), Ann Wright (C of E/ IRCA Europe).

And finally

A reminder that there is a consultation paper about Local Ecumenical Partnerships and the whole scope of mission and Local Ecumenism to which you are invited to comment:

<p>A New Framework for local Ecumenism</p> <p>Consultation Paper Responses by Oct 31st</p>	
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Consultation paper: <http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=441164>

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