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Experience the magic

I used the word *magic* recently and it brought to mind the fact that the Harry Potter era seems to have closed with the last of the films, although with some revival at Halloween. I admired hugely the imaginative versatility of J K Rowling and her way of conveying the ever new message of the triumph of love and goodness.

Yet it seems to me that every day we can live the *magic* of love. We can let the spark of divine love in our hearts overcome the lethargy of our 'old self' and seek the good of the other with genuine interest and care. We can then discover the unexpected consequences in our own lives and the lives of others.

Recently I had a conversation with a woman of another religion who has a responsible job. When we first met I noticed she was very tired. The second time, she seemed frazzled and frustrated. On the third occasion it occurred to me to ask her what kind of support she had at work, and heard that changed circumstances meant support was absent. She was immensely grateful for this simple enquiry and our conversation led to a possible solution. This made me very happy – hence the *magic*. We do indeed pass from death (ordinariness) to life (happiness) because we love our brothers and sisters in the human family as ourselves (c.f. 1 John 3:14).

This is why Christian engagement in the interfaith scene is so important. God's love is at work here too and the big breakthroughs will come out of faithfulness to the small deeds and words. Furthermore, our capacity to relate (amongst ourselves as Christians and to others who are not) is the greatest witness to the Trinitarian God. So Christians must not allow themselves to be confined to inertia by an introspective attitude or indeed by fear. Love not only casts out fear, it takes the initiative, is imaginative and often brings a positive response in the people we try to love.

Inter Faith Week is coming up, from 20th – 26th November. It's the third Week in England and Wales, and already a tradition in Scotland. It's worth finding out what is going on in your area and going along. See the website www.interfaithweek.org.uk

From the front page of the Churches Together in England website you can access a web video about interfaith week. Other resources can be found under Working Together/interfaith. For Christians new or sceptical about inter faith relations I recommend my short Grove booklet www.grovebooks.co.uk "Friendship and Exchange with People of Other Faiths: a context for witness and dialogue" (EV91).

In the present moment we can look with love at the person of another faith who is in front of us, whether a colleague, a doctor or a shop keeper. This will help us to form sound relationships which will contribute to encounters and activities that build a healthy society. [Back to top](#)

A month of health and healing

A series of Biblical meditations on gender, reproductive and sexual health is being launched by the World Council of Churches (WCC), inviting congregations and individual Christians to make November a month of reflection on health and healing. "November is that time of year just before Advent when we prepare for our Saviour coming into the world," says Dr Manoj Kurian, WCC programme executive for Health and Healing. "It is a time for reflection and preparation as we invite God into our lives, a time for healing and transformation."

The WCC Health and Healing programme seeks to support these efforts to revitalize the church community by offering a reflection on one aspect of health and healing ahead of each of the four Sundays in November. Reflections will be looking at stories from the Bible and at the Christian calling to service in the world. The reflection for the first week, as well as an overview of the following weeks, is already available at www.oikoumene.org/health

For this first year, the focus of the Month of Health and Healing is on gender, reproductive and sexual health. "We chose to start this initiative with a focus on gender and sexuality because gender inequity has a grave impact on public health as well as on the church as a healing community of women and men," says Kurian. "Women and men are equally precious to God, yet religions have in many cases reinforced the marginalisation of women and girls.

[Download the first reflection](#): Gender inequity and its impact on health: Created in the image of God (pdf, 168 KB)

Click [here](#) for more information on the WCC work for health and healing. [Back to top](#)

Journey in Hope

"The ecumenical pilgrimage is one of discoveries. Some are painful discoveries of how we are viewed by others or how we have hurt and harmed others: this requires of all of us the healing of memories. Our joyful discoveries are what we have in common and what others can offer us." Thus writes Bishop Stephen Platten, the Chairman of the

Anglican Centre in Rome, in his introduction to a booklet of texts significant in Anglican – Roman Catholic Relations, ranging from King James I, via Lambeth Conferences and Vatican II, up to the present day. The booklet is part of the Anglican Centre's work of building friendly and informed relations, and helps to put the new ARCIC III conversations into context.

The booklet will be a helpful part of the toolkit of ecumenical officers and others wanting to deepen their understanding of the ecumenical journey, with its joys and sorrows. It can be downloaded [here](#) or obtained from Bill Snelson, Development Officer UK, 6 Abbey Craggs Way, Knaresborough, HG5 8EF. A modest donation to cover postage would be welcome; the major costs have been met by the Catholic League. [Back to top](#)

No peace without justice

Violence for God... violence against God: Assisi pilgrims for world peace

In his remarkable talk at the Day of Reflection in Assisi, Pope Benedict XVI said that directionless freedom becomes freedom for violence and that false religion and militant atheism both lead to untold violence in today's world. He summed up his own argument as follows:

...there is a way of understanding and using religion so that it becomes a source of violence, while the rightly lived relationship of man to God is a force for peace. In this context I referred to the need for dialogue and I spoke of the constant need for purification of lived religion. On the other hand I said that the denial of God corrupts man, robs him of his criteria and leads him to violence.

The Pope went on to assert that agnostics challenge both sides – the militant atheists in their false certainty about the non-existence of God and the religious people who consider God as their own property. For this reason a number of agnostics were invited to the Assisi gathering.

The uniting factor for all present was to be together on a journey towards truth, taking a decisive stand for human dignity and common engagement for peace in the world.

The full text can be found through [this link](#).

The general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said, "The cross is not for crusades but a sign of God's love embracing everybody". He praised the role of "young change makers" in pursuit of peace and called faith leaders to engage in dialogue by addressing conflicts and accepting "the other".

Following the example of Francis of Assisi, Dr Tveit highlighted the role of "young change makers". "Francis was a young man when he surrendered his life to God. His passion for the goodness of creation and example of radical daring for peace show the significance of faith and the courage of young people," he added. "Peace in the world requires the perspectives and the contributions of young people. A great obstacle to a just peace today is the high level of unemployment among young people all over the world. We need the vision and the courage of young people for the necessary changes, as we see how they lead processes of democratization and peace in many countries today."

Representing the 349 member churches of the WCC, Tveit stressed the need for a "safe space" for all religions to engage in a dialogue, while not shying away from addressing the conflict. "People are suffering due to clashes of interests as a consequence, since conflicts around Jerusalem are not solved. This city, holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims, is a visible symbol of our longing, our highest desires, our love of beauty and our desire to worship God. But it is also a powerful reminder of how this best can also go wrong. Let us as religious leaders pray for justice and peace for Jerusalem and for all who live there. In a mysterious way, Jerusalem does not simply unveil these realities about the human condition but also challenges us at the same time to address them."

Tveit was accompanied by Clare Amos, WCC programme executive for the Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation, who considers Assisi a significant event with a potential for dialogue contributing to peace and justice in the world. "It is very good that this gathering is seen as a pilgrimage. We come together here sharing a pilgrim spirit of humility, and like all pilgrims we travel in the hope that we will be transformed through our journey, and that we will eventually return to our everyday situations with renewed vision and determination to work for both truth and peace," said Amos. [Back to top](#)

Ecumenical Water Network breaks new ground

From Durban in South Africa to Busan in South Korea, water must be high on the agenda of international summits, conferences and church assemblies, according to participants in the Ecumenical Water Network Forum. More than 20 activists gathered in Nairobi, Kenya from 25-27 October for the forum, which meets once every three and a half years. They collaborated in shaping a three-year action plan that sets directions for this church-related global network on water. Clean, safe and sustainable water remains a rare commodity for billions of people in our world, noted the

forum's participants. They pressed for movement beyond mere recognition of a human right to water, calling for the actual implementation of this right as well as the establishment of adequate means of sanitation for all.

The network formally came into being at the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006 and was given a mandate to report back to the 10th Assembly of the WCC at Busan, Korea from 30 October to 8 November in 2013. Among the remaining landmarks on the way to Busan are the Conference of Parties (COP17) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting at Durban in late November and early December 2011 and the "Rio + 20" United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, marking the 20th anniversary of the Earth Summit (Rio, 1992).

The Ecumenical Water Network joins other international groups at such events in advocating for fair and eco-friendly practices and policies, especially in the context of the controversial "green economy" approach. The network also provides annual devotional resources for the Christian season of Lent, "7 Weeks for Water", used in many churches during the period from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week. The materials for 2012 have as their theme the "blue economy" envisioned in support of clean and plentiful water for everyone.

Maike Gorsboth, coordinator of the network, expressed concern that so much of the international discussion of a "green economy" focuses on matters of water efficiency and market-based incentives for promoting this efficiency," she said. "Economic mechanisms should not restrict control over, and access to, water on the part of small-scale farmers or marginalized communities. Principles underlying the availability of water must be both sustainable and just."

Revd André Karamaga, general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, told the forum in an opening address that access to water "is a fundamental right that human beings should willingly and graciously allow one another to enjoy." Dinesh Suna, co-chair of the network's international reference group, noted that the forum in Nairobi "has put us in a firm place" to make mid-course adjustments in the journey from the 9th to the 10th assemblies of the WCC. According to Suna, the network's members feel energized because the United Nations has now recognized access to clean water and sanitation as a human right, which has been a central goal in the network's advocacy work. "From recognition" of the human right to water, said Suna, "we now move to implementation of the rights to water and sanitation. As a network, we also shall try to branch out to other links, like water and food, water and energy, water policy and climate change."

New resources for congregations, means of interpreting water ethics, economic implications of eco-justice and the right to water, were envisioned by participants. A publication called "Water briefs for the pew" is being developed under the leadership of US law professor Susan Lea Smith of Willamette University and Dr Rommel F. Linatoc of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. The network will also send delegates, facilitators and resource materials to several upcoming global, environmental and church-sponsored conferences dealing with climate change and other key ecological issues.

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Echos for Peace

Given the significant role played by the young people in pursuit of peace in communities, the World Council of Churches (WCC) features reflections from eight young people from around the world in its new book *Echos for Peace*, addressing the issues of global peace, justice and nonviolence, launched recently at the meeting of Echos Commission on Youth in the Ecumenical Movement in Lebanon. *Echos of Peace* is a collective work of essays by young Christians, who inspired by the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) at the occasion of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) focusing on the theme, "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" share their journeys of peace, each in their own unique context.

As described by Nikos Kosmidis, editor of *Echos of Peace*, the book contains "stories that reflect the realities of millions of people around the world, many of which apply to youth: stories of violence in communities, segregation based on racial, religious or gender differences, stories about Earth's desecration, ...stories of economic crisis, imperialism, and stories of conflict among people, who are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26)". By documenting the journeys of young people for justice, *Echos of Peace* affirms the crucial role of youth in peace-building as well as their potential as change makers. For Kosmidis, who is also a member of Echos - Commission on youth in the ecumenical movement, this book is a contribution by young people to the "pilgrimage of churches towards a world where God's peace will prevail". "We offer this gift to all of you as we move towards the 10th Assembly of the WCC, which will place in Busan, Korea in 2013. It is our hope that this work serves as a bridge between the IEPC and the WCC assembly focusing on the theme 'God of life, lead us to justice and peace'," says Kosmidis.

Echos of Peace is the result of Echos involvement in the planning process of the IEPC. It was in their joint meeting with the planning committee of the IEPC in January 2010, in Ethiopia, where Echos initiated an essay contest inviting young people to reflect on the work of DOV and themes of the IEPC. The contest was officially launched in September

2010. According to Jec Dan Borlado, also an Echos member involved in the selection process, *Echos of Peace* provides "a concrete response to the call for better youth engagement in ecumenical advocacy for peace. The process, which included an invitation to participate, the selection of outstanding contributions, and its production, was arduous yet worthwhile. Reading the thoughts from young authors helped us to learn a lot about peace and peace-making". According to Meenuka Amaratunga, the ecumenical formation sub group moderator of Echos, the book serves as a response to the need for more ecumenical formation resources for youth in the WCC. "This publication can be used for peace programmes and discussion sessions. We look forward to developing a second edition of this work based on feedback, which will serve as a much more interactive model". [Back to top](#)

Churches ask Chancellor to 'Close the Gap'

Representatives from a range of Christian denominations and charities handed over this letter to the Chancellor asking the Government to tackle tax avoidance in order to Close The Gap between rich and poor in the UK.

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing as senior representatives of a range of Christian denominations and charities who have come together out of a shared concern about the urgent need to Close the Gap between rich and poor in the UK.

As the Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown, not only is the gap between rich and poor in the UK higher than at any point for at least the last fifty years, the numbers of people in both absolute and relative poverty are projected to increase substantially in the coming years. It is our experience that this level of inequality is tearing at the fabric of society. The consequence is that increasing numbers of individuals and communities feel that they have no stake in wider society and have no realistic hope of their children bettering themselves.

We welcome the Coalition Government's commitment to protect the poorest and most vulnerable from the impact of the spending cuts, but we are concerned that the cuts are nevertheless having a severe impact on many of the people we work with on a daily basis.

In this climate, as Churches, Christian organisations and individual Christians, we are increasingly concerned about the impact that tax avoidance and tax evasion are having on the public purse. In an age of austerity and spending cuts, we believe that tax avoidance is morally unacceptable and tax evasion has to be seriously addressed. Tackling these issues will reduce the need for further damaging cuts in public spending.

Tax evasion and avoidance is estimated by the Treasury to cost the UK purse at least £35 billion annually. Others estimate the number to be substantially higher. This is nearly 9% of UK tax revenue and the efficient collection of this revenue would lessen the demand to cut social and welfare expenditure which is hurting the poorest in our communities so much. Treasury estimates also suggest that those who are avoiding paying their contribution are mainly wealthy individuals and corporations, so the recouping of this money would not harm the poorest and most vulnerable.

We welcome existing initiatives on the part of Government to reduce levels of tax avoidance, but would urge that you take stronger and more decisive action to crack down on unjustifiable tax avoidance measures.

In particular, we would urge you to consider three specific measures.

A first, simple step would be to end the anomaly that when goods are bought by internet or mail order from a company based in the UK they attract VAT, but if they are bought from some off shore territories they are entirely tax free. A tax avoiding industry has sprung up, routing purchases through these territories purely to avoid tax. The £130 million that this costs the UK exchequer is small in comparison to the total loss, but for instance would be enough to largely protect the Sure Start programme and children's services from the 11% cut in the Early Years Intervention Grant.

Secondly, we would urge you not to proceed with the draft proposals on Controlled Foreign Companies announced on 30 June. Whilst advocates of the policy claim that it will increase the UK's 'business competitiveness,' what it actually offers is big incentives for companies to shift their financial operations to 'off-shore' tax havens as a means of avoiding paying UK taxes. Even on the Treasury's own estimates, this will cost £840 million in lost taxes a year.

Lastly, we would also urge you to seriously consider the introduction of a General Anti-Avoidance Rule into UK domestic law. Whilst we all await the outcome of the Aaronson inquiry, due to report today, we are convinced that such legislation could be framed to meet the objectives of deterring and countering tax avoidance in a fair way, whilst at the same time providing certainty for business.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Revd David Walker, Bishop of Dudley

Gwen Shaffer, Co-clerk of Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee
Revd Leo Osborn, President of the Methodist Conference
Revd Richard Mortimer, Deputy General Secretary, United Reformed Church
Niall Cooper, National Coordinator, Church Action on Poverty
Sr Maureen Tinkler, Director, Vincentians in Partnership
Anne Peacey, Chair of National Justice and Peace Network
Alison Gelder, Chief Executive, Housing Justice
Revd Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary, The Baptist Union of Great Britain

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Housing Justice opposes plans to criminalise squatting

Housing Justice opposes the Governments' rushed amendment to the Legal Aid and Sentencing Bill which could criminalise those who are squatting in residential property. "Housing Justice is firmly opposed to banning squatting as it will only exacerbate the housing crisis. Research carried out by Crisis has shown that as many as 40% of homeless people have squatted at some point. As homelessness figures are on the increase, to criminalise those with no homes makes no sense" said Alison Gelder, Director of Housing Justice.

Anecdotal evidence from Housing Justice's members (churches and other faith groups who work with the homeless) shows that many squatters are or have been street homeless. Their fear is that with this measure the numbers of people living on our streets will rise sharply. These concerns were presented in Housing Justice's response to the consultation put forward by the Government on this issue. The consultation responses were published on the 27th of October and despite over 90% of these responses opposing the criminalisation of squatting, the amendment to do just that was announced the same day.

The existing law already allows for the fast track eviction of squatters if the displaced occupier needs the home to live in. If courts and police fail to act on existing legislation, this does not seem to constitute sufficient ground to further amend the law. The proposed amendment is particularly worrying as it will mean that all of the people currently living in squats will be committing a crime should it come into law. This will create a situation in which tens of thousands of people nationwide stand to lose their home. Homelessness services and local authorities are already pressured in the current climate. It is uncertain whether they will cope with the additional influx of need. [Back to top](#)

Methodist, United Reformed and Anglican Churches of Cumbria to sign Declaration of Intent

A service to celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Intent between the Methodist, United Reformed and Anglican churches of Cumbria will be held on Sunday 27th November 2011, at 3pm, at St. Mary's Church, Ambleside. The Declaration reads:

With the whole Christian Church, we believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We share a life of faith which is the Spirit's gift, continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

We believe that we are being called by God to realise more deeply our common life and mission, to share and respect the distinctive contributions of our traditions, and to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service.

We commit ourselves and our churches:

- a. to seek out every possible opportunity for joint initiatives at Local and County Level in mission to all the people of Cumbria.
- b. to work together to equip both lay and ordained ministry whenever possible, and to share that ministry wherever appropriate.
- c. to continue the work of developing strategies whereby we optimise the use of our church buildings for the benefit of communities throughout the county.

We believe that God has given our three churches a particular opportunity to work together more closely.

We also affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people may be led to love and serve God more and more. [Back to top](#)

Church of Scotland announces Moderator-Designate for 2012

Revd Albert Bogle, minister at St Andrew's Parish Church in Bo'ness, has been nominated Moderator Designate of the Church of Scotland. As well as preaching his ministry in Bo'ness, Mr Bogle has served the General Assembly of the

Church of Scotland in various roles from 1983 sitting on the Panel of Worship to being convener of the Kirk's "Church without Walls" Planning Group from 2004 to 2009. He is currently a member of the World Mission Future Strategy Group.

The importance of the correlation between local, national and international has had a profound effect on him personally and on his ministry and congregation and it was this that led to Mr Bogle establishing the Vine Trust. Set up in 1985 the Vine Trust helps some of the poorest children and communities around the world. Currently, the charity's Amazon Hope Project provides a health service for around 100,000 patients every year. [Back to top](#)

Dorking Christian Centre

Thanks to grants from Mole Valley District Council and the South-East District of the Methodist Church, Dorking Christian Centre in Surrey is now offering vastly improved facilities to the local community. The centre opposite St Martin's Shared Church (Methodist and Anglican) now houses a refurbished café, a hairdressing salon and chiropody treatment room. Locals have praised the new services, saying they offer a warm welcome and a "top to toe" experience to the town, particularly to users of the former Mayflower Centre, which has now closed.

Sue Jamieson representing the Methodist Trustees said: "For nearly forty years Dorking Christian Centre has been a place offering food, friendship, loving care and stimulation for mind and soul, through the many groups and activities that meet on its premises. Now we are delighted to offer those things in even brighter and better surroundings."

Euan Workman, one of the centre's younger users who was baptised at St Martin's Church, cut the ribbon and opened the doors (with a little help from Mum, Ailsa). Guests packed St Martin's Church for a thanksgiving service followed by an official opening. Clair Fisher, Christian Centre Director, said: "We are thrilled to be able to open wide the doors of our beautiful new café and treatment rooms to the Dorking community after this refurbishment and look forward to seeing friends old and new." [Back to top](#)

The Unity for which we pray

At a recent meeting of the Council of Churches Together in South London, most of the evening was devoted to the question 'What do we pray for when we pray for Christian unity?' The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, the Anglican Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Paul Hendricks, Auxiliary Bishop in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark, and the Revd Nicola Furley Smith, Moderator of the United Reformed Church Southern Synod, all spoke on the theme and there was an opportunity for discussion and comments after their presentations.

The context in which this theme has been chosen is a continuing conversation in the CTSL Council, first with Bishop Christopher and then with Bishop Paul as Chair, on the nature of ecumenism today. John Richardson, the Ecumenical Officer, said "I think we are clear that it is relational rather than organisational and we can also see many good examples of understanding and co-operation. At the same time, maybe we have avoided some of the fundamental questions about where our journey is taking us, what sort of ecumenical vision is inspiring us and what really is our goal." [Back to top](#)

Congregational Lecture 2011

The Congregational Lecture 2011 will be given by Revd Dr Janet Wootton with the title **Hymnody: A Sung Theology that changed the world** on Thursday 17 November at 5.30 pm at Dr Williams' Library, 14 Gordon Square, London WC1. Dr Wootton edits the magazine *Worship Live* which publishes newly-written hymns. [Back to top](#)

Churches Group for Evangelisation reports Better Connections

Members of the Churches Group for Evangelisation met at High Leigh conference centre for 24 hours for the annual group residential. They discussed a wide range of topics including the following:

Welcome

How do we get the principle of 'welcome' more in to the everyday life of the church? They discussed resources and training but chiefly compared notes about how denominations approach 'welcome'. One denomination has a national initiative planned while others have resources and training to offer. [Back to Church Sunday](#) is being adapted by some denominations e.g. Baptists who produced the [Big Welcome](#), while other churches are asking how an annual event like Back to Church can be built in to a regular pattern.

Mission Spirituality

How do we connect with the spiritual interest of people who don't go to church? How do we make our own spirituality missional? Have we created the church in our own image? They addressed some of these questions and revisited the

CGfE book [Equipping your Church in a Spiritual Age](#). They compared notes from their various perspectives and considered the question, what will revival look like today?

Confidence and Discipleship

They looked at three aspects under this heading:

1. Methodist [resources](#) and plans for developing this key denominational theme
2. Catholic 'confidence' in the light of the Pope's visit - and how to build on that [legacy](#)
3. Evangelical Alliance, and a recent gathering '[Confidence in the Gospel](#)' to help people speak of their faith

Global Day of Prayer

They heard from Jonathan Oloyede about the history, thinking and planning for GDOP which aims to equip and encourage Christians across all denominational streams to pray and transform community. The Lord's Prayer is a unifying prayer as well as missional, and forms the basis of GDOP practice, whether in large gatherings like 1000 church leaders at Wembley, or daily with individuals praying at 12 noon. See a [report](#) and [video](#) link.

National initiative overload?

They considered the national initiatives such as [More than Gold](#) and [Hope](#), in the light of the current experience of [Biblefresh](#) and various other national initiatives aimed at helping local churches in mission. They considered the 'crowded space' and whether churches would engage and think strategically and together to make best use of the opportunities. Since the CGfE residential, a statement has been issued about this and the legacy such national initiatives can leave. See the link to the statement [here](#).

Missional communities and New Mission Orders

They noted the significant rise in 'new monastic communities' being a tool for mission and church planting, especially in the Anglican tradition. In their discussion they also found Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal examples of very live discussion and mission experiment. They also noted how agencies like Church Mission Society and Church Army were becoming new 'recognised communities' and how the Order of Mission in Sheffield has grown. They scoped the thinking / practice and considered both the possibilities and problems, while wanting to emphasise the 'back story' of how the denominations gave space and encouragement for new mission practice. They discussed the ecumenical dimension and noted that many new mission communities were ecumenical by nature e.g. [The Order of Mission](#).

Research MA and PhD papers in Evangelism online

In the last CGfE meeting it was asked where dissertations in evangelism could be viewed online. Since then they have had a very positive discussion with the [Sheffield Centre](#) who already have an online library for such. They will report on this creative partnership as it develops. For any question contact the secretary, [Jim Currin](#). [Back to top](#)

Three Approaches of Churches Working Together in Mission

These stories illustrate how different groups of churches are working together with the theme 'More than Gold'. Jim Currin offers a short comment on each.

Across Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire, about 25 churches are working together. Gold Champion Angela Such tells us, 'To share Jesus with the whole town, we are planning a week long mission the week before the Games start. There will be a sports feel to some of the events and we'll show the opening ceremony on a big screen'.

This reads like a network of churches hosting events at the same time with a shared profile and program. I wonder if the model is 'church' as 'host'?

In Frome, Somerset, 40 churches from 7 different denominations are linking with sports clubs, voluntary organizations and are in negotiations with their Town Council. At the heart of it is David Brinn who tells us of plans for a Big Screen Café with the menu themed on past host cities such as Beijing - Chinese, Rome - Italian and Sydney - BBQ.

This illustrates partnerships with leisure and community networks and I wonder if they will be hosting the event. Jesus was often a guest rather than host.

The churches in Dagenham, Essex, have four teams each responsible for a different part of the time-line. It means they can cover the lead up to the Games and right through the Paralympics. A key organiser is Jacky Payne who is excited about the Opening Night Festival for which they have a great venue.

Here, four teams make things manageable, each taking a lead in turn. In another post I'll suggest some examples of good practice for the 'lead-church' principle.

With such small vignettes I fear I have over simplified the host / guest and team comments - but they are offered as pointers to different ways in which churches are working together in their planning. [Back to top](#)

Railways and Religion

'Railways & Religion in the Western Dales' is an innovative new faith trail focussing on the places of worship associated with the railways of Cumbria, including the famous Settle-Carlisle line. In particular, the Methodist chapels on this trail chart the story of the missions to the navvies in the 19th century.

Often in appalling weather, with poor living conditions and exposed to constant and life-threatening dangers, these men toiled on the tracks, with their wives and children often sharing their shanties. This harsh life and the efforts of the Methodist missions to bring sobriety and so a little financial stability, education and spiritual support to the navvies were brought vividly to life by nearly 50 local school children who participated at two launch events for the 'Railways & Religion' Faith Trail on 13 October 2011.

First, at Tebay Methodist Church, the children of Ravenstonedale School performed a choral ballad they had written with the help of local vicar, the Revd Beverley Lock, 'The Ballad of the Ravenstonedale Navy', and the children of Tebay School acted out the navy life. At the second launch event at Dentdale Methodist Chapel, the children from Dent School had written letters home from the perspective of the navvies and sang about life on the railway. Their letters made a moving presentation; the children had clearly managed to begin to understand the fears and motivations of the navvies building the (now famous) Ribbleshead Viaduct, imagined and tenderly expressed to wives many miles away in Ireland.

This ecumenical project includes Brigflatts Quaker meeting house, St James' Tebay and also St Gregory's Vale of Lune, which is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. The Archdeacon for Carlisle, the Venerable Kevin Roberts was master of ceremonies at the Tebay launch, and the Revd Richard Teal, Chair of the Cumbria Methodist District, and Joanna Booth, English Heritage's Historic Churches Officer in the North-West, who helped to kick start work on devising this trail, gave presentations on the day

Following the launch day, Revd Richard Teal said

"It was a great privilege to be involved in the launch of the 'Railways and Religion' Faith Trail in the Western Dales. I am delighted how partnership working has produced this new and exciting Faith Trail. Churches and chapels that have been open only for worship on Sundays are now going to be open each day of the week, to welcome people in and share the fascinating railway and Christian story of the area. They will also be open to offer peace and space and allow the atmosphere of years of prayer and worship to help people on their Christian journeys."

Tim Widdess, superintendent for the Sedbergh Methodist Circuit said

"We are delighted that four of our tiny chapels at Cautley, Garsdale Street, Garsdale Low Smithy and Hawes Junction will now be joining the others in this trail and will open to the public for the first time ever – every day during day light hours. We are developing local information about the history of our buildings to encourage more interest and visitors in these special local historic buildings. "

Bernard Thornborrow, church steward at Tebay Methodist Church said

"It was the coming of the railways to Tebay and the surrounding areas which caused the churches and chapels to expand in this area. The increasing number of employees building the railways really shaped the life of the church. This trail tells this interesting aspect of our local history"

Gina Dowding, of the Churches Trust for Cumbria said

"This is an exciting new addition to attract visitors to new places in the area. In all, the trail highlights a dozen small, simple and serene chapels, churches and meeting houses together with a map of their locations and a short piece on the history of the 'break- away' churches from the mid seventeenth century."

For hard copies of the trail contact the [Churches Trust for Cumbria](#) or see their [website](#). For further information, contact Gina Dowding: Churches Trust for Cumbria 07501 469374 [Back to top](#)

New Insights into Whole Person Care

[Burrswood Christian Hospital](#) is hosting a conference "New Insights into Whole Person Care" at [St Marylebone Parish Church, London NW1 5LT](#) on Friday November 25th. Burrswood Hospital, near Tunbridge Wells, offers its patients Whole Person Care via its medical team, counsellors, physiotherapists and chaplains.

Revd Dame Sarah Mullally is charring the day which will provide a unique opportunity to hear and discuss how an inter-disciplinary approach to healing operates in practice. Everyone with an interest in this topic is very welcome,

particularly all church leaders, healthcare professionals and all those involved in pastoral care. The day will include insights into Burrswood's model of Whole Person Care, understanding interdisciplinary care from a healthcare professional perspective, as well as group discussion. You are invited to stay on for Evening Prayer at 5pm.

Tickets are £25. For further information please call: 01892 865984, Email: sophie.minoprio@burrswood.org.uk or visit the website: www.burrswood.org.uk [Back to top](#)

The Olympics is coming to a place near you

"Are you ready?" asks Chief Inspector Colin Green of the Olympic Community Relations Project.

205 nations taking part
14,700 athletes competing
10.8 million tickets on sale
4 billion people watching globally

The numbers involved in London 2012 are truly staggering. This is the biggest sporting event ever hosted by the UK and as a result the security operation that protects it will be the largest in peacetime. However London 2012 is a celebration of sport not of security. We will put in place an appropriate safety and security operation to keep the Games safe, but we will wherever possible remain discrete and un-oppressive in our stance.

I truly believe that British policing is amongst the best in the world and we already know that the police service already has substantial experience in policing major events in this country. However, the strength of the British policing model is policing with the consent of its communities, working with local people from every culture and background to support our society.

A year out from the arrival of the Olympic torch on UK soil and our planning is progressing well. We are in a good position to deliver a safe and secure Games. Of course meeting all the demands placed on the police service during 2012 will be challenging, but we are determined that day-to-day policing across the country will not suffer and that any disruption will be minimised wherever possible. I am particularly grateful to the publishers for giving me space in this month's newsletter in order to inform readers as to how they may consider preparing for the arrival of the Games in their area. While the Games are branded London 2012 there are very few parts of the country that will not be affected to some extent by the arrival of the Olympic and Paralympic Games between the 27 July and the 9 September 2011.

I have put together some questions that readers may wish to consider within their respective faith organisations in the coming months, together with some links that will help you answer them. If you have specific questions that do not appear below or have observations on the safety and security operation around the games, then please write to the faith forum or contact myself on communityrelationsteam@olympics.pnn.police.uk [Back to top](#)

Wintershall Nativity Play

For the past 21 years families from miles around have trekked up the hillside to Holly Barn Theatre to experience the magic and mystery of the Bethlehem tale, along with being terrified by Herod on horseback and lulled by the beautiful angelic choir. The play has come to mark the start of Christmas for many.

From Saturday 17th to Wednesday 21st December, beginning at 4.45 and 7.30 pm, the performance is an hour and half long. Tickets are £15 for adults and £7.50 for children and can be booked online via the [secure website](#). All surplus funds are distributed to local charities and fund Wintershall's free performances in Trafalgar Square and in the Prisons.

For further details, contact Wintershall Estate Office, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LR ☎ 01483 892167 Monday – Friday, 9 am to 5 pm only or see the website www.wintershall-estate.com [Back to top](#)