



October 2012

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## Meanwhile, back at the ranch...

Occasionally at ecumenical gatherings, the wind of the Spirit breezes around. That was what happened at Swanwick in early September 1987. Those who were there remember Cardinal Hume presiding at a Catholic eucharist. He invited non-Catholics to come forward for a blessing, and found himself blessing Archbishop Runcie and a host of other church leaders. And then, after communion, there was a significant silence. The congregation realised that the Cardinal was so moved, he found it hard to finish Mass. The following day's service, when the Cardinal and the rest of the Catholic delegation came forward to receive blessings from Anglican and Presbyterian clergy, was equally moving. Two days later Hume addressed the conference, 'Christian unity is a gift from God and in the last few days I have felt He has given us this gift in abundance...'

And so, with a bit of politicking around the edges, was the Swanwick Declaration born, signifying a shift from ecumenism as an energy absorbing extra to 'a dimension of all that we do'. That's the kind of thing you sign up to when the Spirit is in the air. It's all a bit more difficult back at the ranch when you have to work out precisely how '... as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our churches must now move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other', let alone '...[develop] proposals for ecumenical instruments to help the churches of these islands to move ahead together'.

Twenty-five years on its surely time for an honest audit. On the plus side – ever broadening engagement including not only the Roman Catholic Church but black and white Pentecostals, a clutch of theological conversations from ARCIC to *Pushing at the boundaries of unity* (Anglican-Baptist), instinctive local co-operation in countless places, and deep co-operative friendships amongst many church leaders at diverse levels. On the negative side, Instruments that have never actually been allowed to do the work they were created to do, the rise of an unreflective theology that says 'Well, we're all one really aren't we, so why bother with all this formal stuff?', the dissociation of unity and mission, and the retreat behind the denominational corral to protect the pension fund and stave off the ravages of demography on membership statistics, however they are calculated.

The ecumenical ecology nationally, regionally and locally, is remarkably fragile – that it delivers what it does deliver is a daily miracle of grace. That it needs to deliver I am sure. Pope John Paul II noted in *Ut unum sint* that unity '...is not something added on but stands at the very heart of Christian mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather it belongs to the very essence of this community.' To be one with all who are 'in Christ', and to share that unity with all humanity is the aim of mission, not an optional extra. If that is so, it is time for some heart-searching because evidence suggests that the Swanwick vision died young. For the sake of God's world, and God's church, we need ways of co-operating and walking the pilgrim path together that work back at the ranch, not just in Spirit-filled days of God-given vision. [Back to top](#)

## WCC conference probes sustainability crises

What are the connections between widespread poverty and ecology? Seventy-five scientists, activists, philosophers and theologians met from 26 to 30 September at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, in Kolympari, Greece, to understand the intertwined dynamics of economic development and environmental sustainability.

The conference, entitled "Sustainable Alternatives for Poverty Reduction and Ecological Justice," was sponsored by the academy, the World Council of Churches (WCC) programmes on climate justice and poverty, wealth and ecology, along with other organizations. "Of course, poverty eradication and eco-justice are closely related, as poor communities in various parts of the world suffer the worst consequences of environmental degradation, climate changes and the current development model," says Dr Guillermo Kerber, WCC programme executive on Care for Creation and Climate Justice.

Although the WCC and the academy have focused on sustainable communities since the 1970s, today they face new and steeper challenges: accelerated climate change, environmental degradation and a global economic crisis. The conference, said Kerber, facilitates "sharing experiences from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Pacific islands – all looking for sustainable responses to these interrelated issues."

Meeting in Greece, a tumultuous flashpoint in the current economic turbulence, presenters offered case studies in specific sectors of agriculture, energy, economic development, healthcare and finance. Behind the economic and ecological challenges, and the search for an overarching conceptual and ethical framework, stands a spiritual crisis

inviting personal and societal conversion, according to Argentine presenter Elias Abramides from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. He added, "Humankind seems to forget that we share one world and the same resources. Yet humankind can even now take a decision to save creation."

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### Christians and Muslims engage in dialogue at a WCC meeting

After a four year interval the World Council of Council (WCC) and the Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue (CID) in Tehran, Iran, have recommenced their meetings for bi-lateral dialogue.

At the latest meeting, held at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, 16-18 September, the Christian and Muslim participants encouraged "inter-religious dialogue in all sectors of society with the aim of involving all in ensuring justice, equality, non-violence, welfare, friendship and compassion in society." The meeting in Bossey was the sixth in the series of meetings which began in 1995. It brought together for discussions five Muslim representatives of the CID and seven Christians representing different WCC member churches. In a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, participants stressed that "dialogue is the best means of overcoming misunderstandings and fostering mutual appreciation and peaceful coexistence between the adherents of different religions in today's multicultural world."

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### Paradise and the Economy: theological essay competition

An essay competition for theology students and young pastors is asking for response to the concept of "Paradise" as a source of inspiration for the renewal of global social and economic structures. The winner will be awarded the Lombard Prize by the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in association with Lombard, Odier & Cie, Bankers of Geneva, Switzerland.

"We believe this theme will provoke lively and creative response," says Douwe Visser, Executive Secretary for WCRC's theology office. "At this time of financial crisis and a questioning of the moral basis of the global financial system, the idea is provocative. We look forward to some very original, and yet deep, thinking in response."

Applicants for the award are being asked to reflect on the question of how the concept of paradise can be developed in a "relevant theological way and as an inspirational model for a just society". WCRC coordinates the competition on behalf of the Lombard Prize Committee. The award is named for the Genevan banker, Georges Lombard, who served as General Treasurer of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (one of WCRC's founding organizations) from 1948 to 1970. The aim is to encourage theological work in the classical traditions of Reformed thought by bringing together elements of faith and Reformed theology in relation to real-life concerns.

Theology students or pastors, 35 years of age or younger, are invited to submit essays in English, French, Spanish or German. Deadline for applications is 23 December 2012. Three prizes will be awarded by an international jury of scholars. First prize is USD 2,500; second prize, USD 600; third prize, USD 400. The winners will be announced in Geneva on Earth Day, 22 April 2013.

Further information about the competition is available on WCRC's website [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch)

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### Multinationals must come clean on Tax

New laws to force multinational corporations to reveal more about their financial affairs have come a step closer after a vote in the European Parliament. MEPs on the Parliament's Legal Affairs (JURI) Committee have backed plans for strong new rules requiring oil, gas and mining companies to report their payments to governments in countries where they work. If implemented, the plans will make both companies and governments more accountable for their actions.

Joseph Stead, Christian Aid's Senior Adviser on Economic Justice, said: 'MEPs' vote is a very welcome step towards a future in which multinationals have to reveal far more about their finances. 'That, in turn, will make it much harder for them to dodge tax – a menace which currently costs developing countries some \$160 billion a year, with devastating effects on public services and the people who use them. Now it's vital that the UK Government gets involved, to push the European Council of Ministers into agreeing to these important reforms, which could benefit millions of people around the world. David Cameron and George Osborne have both said they support greater corporate transparency – now they have a chance to prove it and deliver good rules as well as talk a good game.'

Christian Aid is campaigning for the introduction of country-by-country reporting for multinationals – an accounting standard which would force firms to reveal more than required by the plans voted on by MEPs. However, it regards the European Parliament plans as a major improvement on existing corporate secrecy. The plans include a welcome review clause that makes clear the need for Europe to consider requiring further disclosures in a few years' time. The rules which MEPs voted on go further than their US equivalents in some respects – notably by extending transparency requirements to banking, construction and telecoms companies and by requiring companies to declare the number of people they employ in every country where they operate.

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## Mission with humility, justice and inclusivity

In a world where understanding of Christian mission is changing rapidly, Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) explained what new visions the WCC mission statement will bring to the churches. Bishop Coorilos spoke about the mission statement in an interview in Crete, Greece, where the statement was adopted by the WCC Central Committee in September this year.

### **What is the new mission statement and what does it aim to achieve?**

The new WCC mission statement "Together towards life: Mission and evangelism in changing landscapes", prepared by the CWME, is about seeking vision, concepts and directions for a renewed understanding and practice of mission and evangelism amid changing global landscapes. Since the integration of the International Missionary Council with the WCC at the New Delhi Assembly in 1961, there has been only one officially approved WCC mission affirmation in 1982. As the global landscape has radically changed since then, a fresh look at the global situation and its implications for mission and evangelism became imperative. The statement aims at stimulating creative mission reflection and encouraging discernment of action by member churches and related mission agencies of the WCC. It is also expected that the new affirmation will promote a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Trinity (missio Trinitatis), especially the "mission of the Holy Spirit", the "life-giver". Differently put, it aims at articulating a fresh understanding of a prophetic missiology that affirms "life" in its fullness, in relation to justice, inclusivity and integrity of creation.

### **What impact will the mission statement have on the life of the churches?**

The new mission affirmation, we hope, will impact the life of the churches in a significant manner as it seeks to address the changed and the changing ecclesial landscape of global Christianity since 1982. Some of the changes that are addressed include a shift of the centre of gravity of world Christianity from the global North to the global South and East, the sweeping influence of neo-liberal economic ideologies, the impact of migration, new forms of oppression of people and the environment, new ways of being churches and the phenomenal rise of Pentecostal and charismatic churches. This statement will help member churches to make sense of their ecclesial and social milieu from contemporary missiological perspectives. The new mission statement, being creation (life) centric, will challenge churches to assume the role of a "servant" (instead of "master") of God's mission, and NOT to conceive of mission in colonial, expansionist and triumphalist terms. It will also have implications for the way evangelism is practiced by churches as the new mission statement advocates "authentic evangelism" which promotes values of humility, hospitality, justice, inclusivity and the dialogue of life.

The statement has been translated in many languages. The CWME will also prepare study guides that can be used for training missionaries and evangelists by member churches, affiliated bodies and mission agencies. In fact, we are encouraged by the enormous attention the new mission statement has already received from various quarters, including member churches. The CWME will also ask member churches and affiliated mission bodies to share in ways of reflecting and implementing the statement in their local contexts. The reflections and follow up actions on the statement will be shared in the International Review of Mission before the Busan Assembly.

### **Why is emphasis on "mission from the margins" important?**

The section "Spirit of liberation: Mission from the margins" figures at the very centre of the new mission statement. This is hugely important as "mission from the margins" is indeed one of the defining features of the statement. What makes the new mission statement distinct is the affirmation of the agency of the marginalized in mission. It is mission "from the margins", not mission "to the margins", not even mission "at the margins" where the poor and the marginalized are treated as objects of charity. This missiology further claims that the people at the margins have a special gift to distinguish life affirming forces from life negating ones. They are placed in a unique position "to see what is out of position from the view of people at the centre". The statement advocates justice, solidarity and inclusivity as the key expressions of mission from the margins. The prophetic dimension of the statement also lies in its outright rejection of the idolatry of Mammon in a world of free market economics. This is a missiological affirmation where the hitherto "receivers" of mission reclaim their status as agents and initiators of mission and in this sense the new affirmation is ground breaking.

### **What contribution does the mission statement make to the theme of the WCC's Busan Assembly?**

Well, there is so much in common between the emphasis of the new mission affirmation and "God of life lead us to justice and peace", the theme of the Busan Assembly of the WCC. The thread that binds the two is their life-centric focus. Life as promised by God in Christ, life in its fullness, presupposes justice, peace and integrity of creation. The Busan Assembly theme and the emphasis of the new mission statement seek to advance the concept of "life" understood in this holistic manner. We believe that the assembly theme in many ways is "missional" in its call and direction. Therefore, the mission statement with its profound theological reflections on a "mission of life affirmation" is also offered as a contribution from CWME to the WCC assembly.

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## Yorkshire Churches enter ground-breaking Partnership

A new and ground-breaking regional partnership in Yorkshire between the Church of England and Methodist Church has been inaugurated. The agreement between the Leeds Methodist District and the Ripon and Leeds Anglican Diocese was signed at a special celebration at Trinity Methodist Church in Harrogate on 6 October. It will lead to greater sharing of clergy, more joint services, working together to support mission and ministry and greater consultation over future deployment of staff and resources throughout the region. Under the Covenant Area Partnership - the first of its kind in Great Britain - there will be greater consultation and co-operation between 85 Anglican parishes and their 65 neighbouring Methodist churches.

"The lives of both Churches have already been greatly enriched by our determination to work, worship and grow together," said the Revd Julian Pursehouse, Acting Chair of the Leeds Methodist District. "The new Covenant Area Partnership is a fantastic opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to one another and to live out our calling to serve our communities in a more dynamic and coherent way." Methodist ministers in this area will be encouraged to apply for permission to minister in Church of England parishes and Anglican clergy will be encouraged to apply for 'Associate Presbyterian' status with the Methodist Church. For example, an Anglican priest would be able to preside at Methodist services of Holy Communion and baptism, and at funeral services. The two Churches will also seek to involve one another in their procedures of appointing new ministers, clergy and staff throughout the Covenant Area.

The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, the Rt Revd John Packer, said the partnership was an important opportunity for the two churches: "This marks an important step for the diocese and the Leeds Methodist District. It will encourage us to strive for closer connection with other churches, both together as well as separately. We hope that through our own working more closely together, we will also be able to encourage unity between other churches."

"Christ calls us to unity with one another, but that doesn't mean uniformity," added the Revd Dr Mark Wakelin, President of the Methodist Conference, who was present at the ceremony. "It will be a privilege to share in celebrating the gifts and heritage of both Churches, while looking to a more fruitful and exciting future together."

In 2003, a national Covenant between the Methodist Church in Britain and the Church of England was signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Secretary General of the General Synod, the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Methodist Conference in the presence of the Queen. [\*Back to top\*](#)

## 30,000 @ London Day of Prayer 2012

30,000 Christians from a wide variety of backgrounds and churches came together at Wembley Stadium for a London gathering of the Global Day of Prayer on 29th September 2012. Over lunch, church leaders were told from their booking forms that they had travelled a collective 100,000 miles to attend, and they represented 2million believers from all parts of the UK.

The Lord's Prayer was a key focus for the prayer meeting which lasted from 12.30-6.30. 'Our Father in heaven, heal our land' was the writing across the stage. As part of that, healing prayers of confession were led for the church, nation and individuals, while hope was offered in the Gospel message of God's love and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Central to sharing that message were 300 young people in bright red hoodies who came to the front of the stands to be commissioned as ambassadors for Christ in their communities. More people become followers of Jesus in teenage years than at any other time of life, so everyone present was challenged to invest and pray for young people's work.

'Transforming our communities' with the love of Jesus was the theme running throughout the programme, which included worship and song lead from a wide variety of artists, from Graham Kendrick, Sonnie Badu, Tim Hughes, Matt Redman to Guvna B and the Sound of Wales - all backed by the All Souls Orchestra and a gathered choir. 'Unity' was a frequent prayer for the churches to be working together in serving and transforming community. Jonathan Oloyede, convenor of the 'Global Day of Prayer' in London, and a member of the Churches Group for Evangelisation at CTE, in his introduction in the souvenir programme said, 'In essence the spirit of today is Unity in Prayer towards transformation'.

Celebrating in prayer the achievements of the churches working together during the Queen's Jubilee weekend and the 2012 Games, those gathered were given information about a major mission in London during 2013 which may well travel to other parts of the UK. [www.crossinglondon2013.co.uk](http://www.crossinglondon2013.co.uk) is a new website with this information, while Samaritans Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association were presented as partners. See also [www.ndopwembley.com](http://www.ndopwembley.com) [\*Back to top\*](#)

## Orthodox Vespers at Spanish Place

There will be a joint celebration of Vespers of our Lady in St James' Church Spanish Place, 22 George Street London W1U 3QY, on Thursday 6th December at 7pm. It is a joint event between the Roman Catholic Church in England and the Oriental Orthodox Church communities, following on from the publication of the joint report on the dialogue between the two church families in this country and in Europe. All are most welcome. It is being organised by the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary. [Back to top](#)

## Black Church Political Manifesto gets underway

The National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF) Steering Group members began a fact finding tour across the country in a bid to help write a Black Church manifesto in the run-up to the General Election scheduled for 2015. Their first meeting, held at Operation Black Vote's offices in Bethnal Green, London, sought to have a conversation with Black activists, NGOs and campaigners. Amongst those who attended were Superintendent Leroy Logon, anti-gang campaigner Sheldon Thomas, head of BARAC Lee Jasper, NCLF Steering Group members Celia Apeagyei-Collins, Ade Omooba, and David Muir. Chairing the meeting, Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, also of Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, Churches Together in England, stated: "This all came about during a church leaders meeting in which participants wanted the Black-led churches to engage in a nationwide voter registration campaign, and to formulate a Black church manifesto. We know that there are many spiritual, socio-economic and political issues facing our communities, and we want to show leadership both with knowledge and a great sense of purpose."

### A Kairos Moment

Echoing the sense of purpose theme, Celia Apeagyei-Collins stated: "This is our 'Kairos' moment!" She was referring to the South African Black church document published in 1985. A theological document that galvanized the Black churches into political action by using scripture as a tool to mobilize resistance to the apartheid regime. She concluded: 'A generation of Black church goers, and wider community, will not forgive us if we do not seize this moment.' Sheldon Thomas urged the Church leadership to 'listen' to those youths who were deeply cynical of both politicians and the church leadership. After four hours of discussion and debate, the gathering left the OBV offices much better informed, united towards a common cause, with spirits raised that this indeed could be our 'Kairos' moment. [Back to top](#)

## Unity with a Purpose

Christians from across Buckinghamshire gathered at Wendover for the annual Vision Day of Churches Together in Buckinghamshire.

There was a presentation by Mark Ackford of 'CONTACT', the initiative of the Aylesbury churches in response to planned new communities in the town. The team has visited new arrivals in Buckingham Park and offered them a welcome pack with local information. They are developing a Fresh Expression initiative and a community newsletter.

Gill Barrett introduced 'Embrace the Middle East', the new name for the Bible Lands Society. She described how she visited a school in the Palestine territory for children with special educational needs and, as a teacher, was greatly impressed with their achievements. The library, though, was very short of books. In a very poor part of Hebron she visited a Christian school where most of the children come from Muslim families. In Jerusalem she visited the Spafford Centre and the Helen Keller Centre for people with visual impairments. All this work is supported by Embrace the Middle East. The well-known Bethlehem Carol Sheet is now available free and users are invited to make a donation to Embrace the Middle East.

Hazel Richardson described 'Churches on the Hill, Amersham' (COTHA) which was approached by a local businessman who is a Christian with the offer of the use of a shop for several months. They were able to borrow from the Bible Society an exhibition of forty-two panels of embroidery on the theme of creation. Seventy volunteers provided refreshments and welcomed 2,600 visitors, many of whom left comments to express their appreciation.

Steve Johnson of Christian Aid said that despite the economic downturn, the donations received during Christian Aid Week 2012 were up on those of 2011. Nevertheless there are still one billion hungry people in the world while another huge population is obese. Partnership for Change is a forthcoming campaign of development agencies to address this, including a march for justice for the Dalit people of India.

In her keynote address, Mary Cotes, the County Ecumenical Development Officer for Bucks, traced the ecumenical journey from the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 through to the challenges facing the world today. She set the quest for Christian unity in the wider context of God's plan for the unity of the universe in Christ described in the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians. She challenged the gathering to reflect on our lives as churches together and ask ourselves what the bigger picture is for us. Are we doing so much that we run out of energy? What one or few thing(s) could we do; what is our particular charism? Then it would make sense to talk of unity with a purpose. [Back to top](#)

## UK churches contribution to Olympic and Paralympic Games

Figures released by More than Gold, the agency set up so churches could make the most of the Games, reveal the contribution made by UK churches to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to be 'the largest ever'.

The scale of church involvement included over 13,000 hours of voluntary service to travellers. This came from a team of 300 Games Pastors at ten major rail stations, two airports, a coach station and key tourist sites. They offered help and comfort for everything from a lost contact lens to someone considering taking their own life. Meanwhile, family members of athletes enjoyed more than 2,000 nights of free hospitality. This involved 160 hosts welcoming 280 guests from more than 20 countries. The athletes supported won a total of 45 medals, including 8 golds.

The largest statistic released is the estimated 500,000 people attending community events run by churches. These included big screen festivals for the opening and closing ceremonies, family fun days and sport-based children's clubs. This number was far greater than anticipated. South Buckinghamshire churches had expected 2,500 for their Run the Race festival but around 6,500 turned up. Isle of Dogs churches planned a festival for 500, with 4,000 turning up. Churches in Purley, Surrey, catered for 400 and had to rush out for more supplies when almost double the number came.

David Willson, CEO of More Than Gold said, 'This is by far the largest contribution from churches to any Olympics. Thousands of Christians stepped up to the mark, working together to engage with their communities and welcome visitors to a level never seen at any previous Games'. The role of the churches included giving out 500 000 bottles of water to visitors and distributing 9,100 cups of water given during the three marathons. Also on offer were 440 hours of free live performance, 233 hours of street art and 434 days of exhibitions. This came from 30 teams of musicians and creative artists, involving over 350 people from 30 nations in 40 venues.

The UK churches didn't do all this unaided. Working alongside them were over 2,100 mission and service volunteers who came from 40 countries. 'This has been more than great news for the Olympics, travellers, athlete family members,' says David Willson. 'It has also been a very positive experience for the churches themselves. Many have been seen in a new light by their communities, now have a new sense of confidence, and are experiencing more people taking an interest in what they offer'.

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## Churches unite to attack affordable housing crisis in London

More than 80 clergy and church representatives joined together to attack the deepening crisis of affordable housing in London. Churches are mobilising because families are increasingly being priced out their homes in London, and with welfare reforms on the way the situation can only get worse.

The platform for action was an emergency meeting "**The Housing Crisis in London: mobilising the church**" on Wednesday 10th October, World Homeless Day. The event was organised by Housing Justice, the London Churches Group for Social Action and the Joint Public Issues Team, and brought together church leaders of all denominations, poverty and justice experts and activists, and Christians working in housing and homelessness.

Terry Drummond, of the London Churches Group for Social Action and chair of the event said: "We are joining together because the shortage of affordable housing in London is now at crisis point, and because it impacts most heavily on the poorest in society. The underlying causes must be addressed, and responses found in both practical and policy terms." Policy responses were identified through plenary speakers and workshops. Contributors included Kate Barker CBE, author of The Barker Review, who spoke on Financial Policy, and Professor Steve Wilcox of York University Centre for Housing Policy, on Housing Supply. There was a strong emphasis on the deepening poverty faced by struggling families, led by Paul Morrison of the Methodist/Joint Public Issues Team. Alison Gelder of Housing Justice set out the arguments for Fair Rents as an alternative to Benefits Caps.

As well as identifying the problems the meeting put forward practical solutions to which the churches nationally will be encouraged to sign up.

Some of the key issues addressed at the conference were

- Families losing their homes and being forced out of London
- Young people unable to afford to leave home
- Caps to Local Housing Allowance severely reduce the amount of private rented accommodation available, especially for families and young people
- Wealth accumulated from price inflation on first homes is not subject to capital gains tax, increasing income inequality
- Luxury houses and flats being developed by property speculators, to be bought and left empty by wealthy investors for minimal running costs and no Council Tax
- Housing is now commonly identified as a "private" or "financial" matter.

Alison Gelder recalled the words of Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, the first president of Housing Justice: "A united Christian response will highlight the importance of the home as a basic necessity for all human beings. To have somewhere we call home is a fundamental part of our human dignity. To be deprived of such a basic necessity is to feel less than human". James North of the Joint Public Issues Team said: "The theological imperative is for churches and individual Christians to be good news for the poor. We have rallied to this call before and now is the time to do it again".

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## Churches challenge Foreign Secretary on U.S. drone strikes

The Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain have called on the Foreign Secretary to distance the UK Government from the United States Government's practice of using missiles to target individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism.

Church leaders have expressed their anxiety over the humanitarian and legal implications of the CIA-operated drone campaign, arguing that it contravenes protections established in international law and is inciting radicalism and violence. Today the three Churches wrote to the Foreign Secretary, asking him to confirm that the UK would not permit the rules of war to be used to support targeted killings of individuals suspected of committing terrorist crimes.

Steve Hucklesby, Public Issues Policy Adviser for the Methodist Church in Britain, said: "The United States drone strikes have killed around 3,000 people in Pakistan. Whole communities are living in fear of the drones flying overhead. The U.S administration is, in effect, attempting to rewrite international law in order to justify their action. This imperils us all. It potentially sets a precedent for any government to declare war on groups of individuals on the basis of a perceived threat that such individuals might present. All governments have an obligation to persuade others to uphold international law. Our own government cannot wash its hands of this responsibility while it is in a military alliance with the United States in the region."

Frank Kantor, the Secretary for Church and Society of the United Reformed Church, said: "There is a legal requirement under international law to identify all casualties that result from drone strikes, under any and all circumstances. We therefore call on the UK Government to comply fully with this legal requirement, releasing information on the number of fatalities and publishing a summary of all investigations into civilian casualties."

A group of people will walk from the Elbit Factory in Shenstone, Shropshire, where drone engines are manufactured, to the RAF base in Waddington where the RAF plans to base UK drone operators next year. The seven-day walk (October 6 to 13) passed by the Thales Watchkeeper Drone Plant in Leicestershire where the aircrafts' bodies are manufactured. The Revd Bill Anderson, Methodist District Chair for Birmingham, was one of the people walking to raise awareness about the UK's use of drones. "As Christians we are committed to pursue the path of peace," said Bill. "This is a difficult path and made all the more difficult if our forces are perceived as invisible, disengaged and remote. I hope that in each of the places we stop along the walk, we will gather people together who might want to talk to us about why we are walking. That way we can raise awareness about the illegitimate use of drones."

At the 2012 Methodist Church Conference in July, Methodists agreed that the government should urge the U.S. to discontinue the practice of targeting suspected members of terrorist organisations with drones. The United Reformed Church also supported this position at their General Assembly over the summer. Although the Baptist Union of Great Britain has not had an opportunity to debate the use of drones yet, Stephen Keyworth, the BUGB's Head of Faith and Unity, is very supportive of raising the issue with the UK Government. "This is an ethical issue of our time that we must respond to," he said. "The use of armed drones seems to be seductive to governments as the innocent are not supposed to get hurt. From numerous examples this is clearly not the case and their regular use must be reassessed."

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## Workplace Witness

The London Institute of Contemporary Christianity's **Life on the Frontline** is designed to help Christians live out their faith in their own everyday context, such as the workplace – and support each other while doing so.

It features documentary-style DVD film containing real-life stories that help people discover the potential in their own contexts, and follows up with Bible passages and interactive exercises to explore Christ's call and commission. Revd Ian Bunce, BUGB's head of mission, says: "This is an ideal resource for churches seeking to support the daily crossing places of their members - whether they're 18 or 80. It's brilliantly put together, accessible and understandable, but not patronising." "**Life on the Frontline**" is a 6 session DVD-based course. Disk contains videos, leaders' and participants' guides. £8 for one pack; £5 for multipack purchases. Available online from [www.licc.org.uk/shop](http://www.licc.org.uk/shop) or ☎ 020 7399 9555.

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## New General Secretary of the Free Churches Group: Frank Kantor

Frank has served as Secretary for Church & Society for the United Reformed Church (URC) based in London for the past five years where he was responsible for coordinating the public issues agenda of the church in collaboration with Baptist and Methodist colleagues in a Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT). He was also a member of the URC's Mission Team where he was responsible for the justice and peace witness of the church in the UK and abroad.

Prior to working for the URC, Frank was engaged in working ecumenically on church-based justice and peace projects in Southern Africa where he has lived for most of his life. He is married to Valerie and lives in Northampton.

Frank said, 'I am looking forward to assuming my new position with the Free Churches Group as we together seek to discern what faithful, hopeful and loving witness requires of us as disciples of Christ in the Free Churches tradition in the midst of the multiple challenges facing church and society in England and Wales. We are facing times of unprecedented challenge and unparalleled opportunity as churches and can draw on the dynamism of the Holy Spirit and our non-conformist tradition to craft our responses in the sure knowledge that "God has yet more light and truth to break forth from God's holy Word" (to quote Pastor John Robinson, 1620)'. [Back to top](#)

## Jubilee for Justice

Inspired by the ancient idea of jubilee, a time when debts were cancelled, slaves were freed and land was redistributed, the Jubilee Debt Campaign is calling for a new debt jubilee in response to today's global economic crisis: a Jubilee for Justice. The first great wave of jubilee campaigning in the run up to the year 2000 has seen \$120 billion of debts cancelled for some of the world's most impoverished countries. But governments never fixed the system that created these debts, and the European banking crisis has shown the problem of debt is greater than ever in the world today. A Jubilee for Justice means not just cancelling unjust debts, though this is vital, but taking additional steps to secure a global economy where people will never again be enslaved by debts.

For more information go to [this website](#); Ministers and other faith leaders are encouraged to sign a [letter](#). [Back to top](#)

## ECCR appoints John Arnold as new Executive Director

The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) announced the appointment of John Arnold as Executive Director to help take the organisation forward in the next phase of its mission.

John Arnold brings to ECCR extensive knowledge of the corporate sector and a wealth of experience in the practical application of Corporate Social Responsibility. He moves to ECCR from his current post with the Fairtrade Foundation where he has been in charge of Partnerships and Programmes. In this role he worked closely with the corporate sector in developing constructive and sustainable partnerships for change. Prior to this he worked for a US based reinsurance group and also with management consultants, ULG Consultants, supporting a variety of private sector clients, non-governmental organisations and bilateral donors. Lee Coates, Chair of the Board of Trustees of ECCR, said "We are delighted to have John Arnold lead our team. Our research and engagement with companies continues to have an impact on boardrooms and helps to bring about change in the way that companies operate. John's experience and gifts will enable ECCR to expand this work and develop our links with national and international partners."

John Arnold commented "Today, people in the UK have increasing awareness of the influence that consumer choice has through initiatives such as Fairtrade. We are only just beginning to appreciate the influence that we can have as investors, for example through our pension funds. Ethical investment has now come of age and it is an exciting time to be joining ECCR. The organisation plays a vital role in helping the church community and their members use their influence as investors to bring positive change in business practice." John Arnold will take up the role of Executive Director from November 1st. He will lead the ECCR team in developing research on company performance, training and supporting individual ECCR members and liaising with Church and other institutional investors to co-ordinate effective shareholder action. [Back to top](#)

## Overcoming fossil fuel addiction - the next moral revolution?

Andy Atkins, the Chief Executive Officer for Friends of the Earth, will be speaking on 21st November 2012 at 7pm in the Small Lecture Theatre at Friends House, Euston, London. His topic will be 'Overcoming fossil fuel addiction - the next moral revolution?' Andy has considerable experience in advocacy work. For many years he was the Policy and Campaign's Director at Tearfund, where his role included support to enable Tearfund partners to voice their concerns over climate change and its regional impacts to a global audience. He was one of a small group who set up the 'Make Poverty History' campaign in 2005. He is an excellent and challenging speaker. The lecture will be followed by small group discussion and an opportunity to present some questions for Andy. There will be refreshments available at the end. Entry is free but there will be an opportunity to make a contribution towards expenses and Operation Noah. [Back to top](#)

## 'Resonate', a new research tool from Christian Research

Resonate is a 5,500-strong panel of Christians that enables businesses, churches and organisations of all kinds to gain a clearer understanding of the attitudes, motivations and perceptions of the Christian community.

Think of BBC staples such as Vicar of Dibley, Rev or Songs of Praise! Are such stereotypes valid? Do they say anything meaningful about church? What's church about? Why do people bother with it? What does church look like from the fringes? Is 'digital' church plausible? What's the alternative to 'institutional' church? Which models are evolving? How is the landscape changing? Through resonate we can find out. Several years in strategic planning and development, resonate has been created by [Christian Research](#), an organisation with a long-standing reputation for rigorous and thought-provoking research. And the service is now available for use by your organisation.

'The 5,500-strong resonate panel of Christians includes around 1,500 church leaders and clergy closely matching core denominational proportions, according to the 2005 English Church Census. 'Being sufficiently representative is crucial,' explains Rob Powys-Smith of Christian Research. 'It permits us to generalise about our research findings and reflect the national church picture. Alternatively, in order to research a market segment, say, resonate data enables us to draw samples that fit target audiences comprising specific geographical postcodes, household or socio-demographic parameters. To the best of our knowledge, it is the most comprehensive online Christian research panel of its kind in the country.'

Panellists accommodate the spectrum of inner city and rural churches, cathedrals and church plants, contemplatives and campaigners, traditionalists and innovators. With typical completion rates at a healthy 35 per cent, resonate panellists have fed back on issues such as church engagement with asylum seekers, female ordination and poverty alleviation - and seem inspired to contribute more. The panel is set up to facilitate face-to-face and/or telephone interviewing, while lending itself to qualitative research methodologies. Christian Research runs a quarterly 'omnibus' and quarterly and bi-annual 'tracking study' amongst church-goers and/or church leaders/clergy. Resonate has been launched to help garner insight that informs strategic development for your organisation. We recruit to the panel on an ad hoc basis. Flavour of the month, but not exclusively so, are students. If you need answers about a campaign, concept or core issue, make it resonate.

For more information [✉ res@christian-research.org.uk](mailto:res@christian-research.org.uk)

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## Sharing Destiny - Moving Towards One World: One World Week 21-28 October

One World Week is a Development Education Charity. Each year, 'The Week' is an opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about global justice, to spread that learning and to use it to take action for justice locally and globally. In the aftermath of the Sustainable Development Summit in Rio, the Olympics and Paralympics, the One World Week 2012 theme of **Sharing Destiny – Moving Towards One World** can capture the imagination and importance of contributing to an equitable future for all.

New resources include the 2012 worship anthology, quotations, pledges and a word search.

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## Homeless Bound? Finding routes out of homelessness

This one day free conference will bring together practitioners to explore the current picture of homelessness in London, the East of England and the South East.

Speakers will identify the key trends in homelessness across the three regions, where some of these pressures are most acute, and explore the impact on households, housing and services. Interactive workshops will showcase good practice and identify solutions to equip attendees to return to their work places with the tools to tackle this destructive problem. Places are limited, so if you'd like to attend, please make sure you return the [RSVP flyer](#) to Chia Jobson at [chia.jobson@housing.org.uk](mailto:chia.jobson@housing.org.uk)

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## How the BCP Changed Public Prayer

The influence of the Book of Common Prayer on public worship beyond the Church of England, and the story of its detractors and admirers, will be among the topics of a symposium to be held at Sarum College, 15-16 November 2012.

"Denominational pastors and scholars across denominations will gather to discuss the impact of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer," says Dr James Steven, symposium convener and director of liturgy and worship. "The story to be told is rarely heard yet has surprising implications for understanding the evolution of public worship both globally and

amongst English denominations." Scholars and leaders from Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Reformed traditions as well as the wider Anglican Communion will mark the 1662 Prayer Book's 350th anniversary.

Contributors include Chris Ellis, vice-president of the Baptist Union; Susan Durber, principal of Westminster College, Cambridge; Norman Wallwork, Methodist Minister and member of the Joint Liturgical Group; Alan Griffiths, lecturer in liturgy at St John's Catholic Seminary; Colin Buchanan, assistant to the Bishop of Bradford; David Frost, principal of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge.

At 12pm before the symposium, the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM), based at Sarum College, will lead a [special choral service](#) with hymns, anthems, readings and prayers from the RSCM's festival service book 'At All Times & in All Places', published specially for this anniversary year.

Further details on the symposium and the choral service can be found on the Sarum College [website](#). The price to attend is £50 non-residential and £95 residential with an en-suite room. [Back to top](#)

## Faith and Identity – Embracing Difference

The Friends of Corrymeela are meeting on November 24 at The Reading Quaker Meeting House, 2 Church Street, Reading, RG1 2SB for a day conference. At a time when for many people faith or lack of it is the principal source of their identity and often influences the way they respond to cultural and political circumstances, how is difference to be accommodated, let alone embraced? And is faith the only determinant of our identity or what other factors are in play? How do we discover who we are and how we may or should respond, if reconciliation is ever to be achieved?

The Chairman for this conference is Mick Oliver, Leader of the London Corrymeela Group who in the afternoon will be joined by Ian Gilchrist, a founder member of the Community.

The speakers are Revd Dr Sam McBratney, Queen's Foundation, Selly Oak College, Birmingham and a provisional member of the Corrymeela Community. He has wide experience of our conference theme and will refer to the Olive Tree Project, which focuses on relationships between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

Susan McEwen is the recently appointed Development Director of Corrymeela who brings to this post significant experience of work in Northern Ireland with Community Groups, Residents' Associations, special interest groups and particularly with Women's Groups along the Peace Walls in Northern Ireland. Central to these conversations have been issues of identity. She will talk about how Corrymeela understands social identity theory and faith as an element in this.

There will be opportunities for discussion both in groups and in general forum. There will also be an opportunity for Friends of Corrymeela to hear of developments in the Community's thinking and programme, probably at the end of the formal proceedings.

The conference fee is £25.00 per person to cover Conference fee, tea and coffee throughout the day and a soup, salad and baked potato lunch at midday. To book a place, please either send an e-mail to [Mick Oliver](#) or write to Corrymeela Conference, c/o Mick Oliver, 19 Woodcroft Avenue, Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 3PT [Back to top](#)

## How is my neighbour? Making livable communities

Thursday 29th November 2012 at 9:45am-4pm (we will start promptly at 10am) at the Sutton Salvation Army, Benhill Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4DD £25 per person (early bird discount), including lunch (£30 after the 25th November)

Across our communities trust is eroding, stress is increasing and inequality is on the up. Across the UK more people are reporting a reduction in their economic, health, social and spiritual wellbeing. These changes are made even worse as global corporations tell us that happiness means consuming more and sharing less. None of this is good for us. In fact, our children are the unhappiest in Europe.

Livability, formerly the Shaftesbury Society and John Grooms, has spent over 160 years working to improve life for disabled individuals and disadvantaged communities. More than ever we recognise that there is a need to act creatively to increase the 'livability' of our neighbourhoods. We believe that all kinds of people and organisations contribute to the livability of any community but also that Christian organisations and churches have a unique motivation and credibility to contribute towards building whole, safe, inclusive and flourishing communities.

As a nation we are richer and better connected than ever. We can contact 1000s of global 'friends' at the swipe of a smartphone and yet in our neighbourhoods trust is eroding, stress is increasing and inequality is on the increase. It's very difficult to truly love our neighbours when we don't know who they are or how they are. More people have less friends and 5 million people aged over 60 say they now consider the television to be their only source of company.

## Can we as Christians do anything to change this story?

We are planning a day that will look at what Christians are doing to make a difference. Our hope is to equip people to meaningfully ask how their neighbours are and to develop simple strategies to make a difference.

Click [this link](#) for more info and to book.

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## 5th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality

An exciting programme of speakers and activities has been developed for this conference, with a focus on creativity both in thought and practice, which will address three themes:

***ageing gifts   ageing changes   ageing hopes***

During the course of the conference participants will be invited to contribute to making a **quilt**. There will be music, poetry and art. With dancing at the Ceilidh

**Our confirmed international keynote speakers include:**

**Professor Elizabeth Mackinlay, Australia** (2013 Faith in Older People Malcolm Goldsmith Lecturer) Director of the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies at St Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra. Professor in the School of Theology, Charles Sturt University.

**Professor Susan McFadden, USA** Emeritus Professor of Psychology, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Now working with programmes aimed at creating a "dementia-friendly community" in northeast Wisconsin

**Professor John Swinton, UK** Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care in the School of Divinity, Religious Studies and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. He has a background in nursing and mental health chaplaincy

**Baroness Julia Neuberger, UK** Previously the rabbi serving the South London Liberal Synagogue, Chairman of an NHS Trust and Chief Executive of the King's Fund.

**John Killick, UK** A freelance writer, lecturer and broadcaster. His special interest is dementia and the problems and opportunities presented by communication.

**Claire Craig, UK** A qualified occupational therapist, focussing on the relationship between creativity and well-being, particularly in relation to people with dementia.

**Professor Phil Hanlon, UK** Professor in Public Health at the University of Glasgow. On secondment (2001-2003), he established the Public Health Institute of Scotland.

There will be a mixture of Master Classes, invited workshops, academic papers and presentations on projects.

The call for papers and presentations is now open and information can be obtained from the [website](#).

The closing date for receipt of proposals and papers is 31st January 2013 and a decision will be made by the end of February. For information about the conference programme, registration, call for papers, venue and accommodation please visit the [website](#). Early booking is recommended

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