



October 2011

Electronic, ecumenical news from Churches Together in England
[Click Bookmarks to go to page for each article.](#)

First a Reflection...

The Perils of Success

Dr Chris Sissons was Assistant Ecumenical Officer for the Methodist Church.

**Now here's
the news
from around
the world...**

Global Theology
Net launched
www.globethics.net/gtn

Pope meets with
Russian Orthodox
ecumenical officer
Metropolitan Hilarion

WCC sees
opportunity for
peace in Palestine's
UN application.

Conflicts,
Courage and
robot airplanes
named for Day of
Prayer for Peace

Hope in Christ is
answer to the
challenges of
churches says WCC
Moderator

And here's the news from around the land...

One World Week October 23-30
Living for One World

More than Gold opportunities to
share

100 Days of Peace for the
Olympics called for by Archbishop of
Westminster

Beyond the comfort zone
Christians and Muslims face the
challenge of suspicion

Living Our Christian Faith in a
Multi-faith Context in Birmingham

Power, Poverty and the Church
9 November, St John's Waterloo

Resources for people in ministry
Society of Mary and Martha, Sheldon,
Dunsford, Exeter

Faith groups welcome FTT
proposal by European
Commission on Robin Hood Tax
campaign

Focolare ecumenical meeting of
bishops at Welwyn Garden City

Friends of Israel Educational
Foundation offer to Churches
Together groups

**Week of Prayer
for Christian
Unity 2012**
[Download and](#)
[order your](#)
[materials now!](#)

Quakers mark historic peace
anniversary 350 years since
declaration marked in Quaker Week

Apostolic Pastoral Association
(APA) Ordinations 2011 in
Manchester and London

Queen's Award For Voluntary
Service Given To Christian
Evangelists Wintershall Players,
Surrey

Help your congregation make
sense of the Bible 14-15 November,
Coventry; Bible Society training

Intermediate Body Review
received by CTE Enabling Group

[Back to top](#)

For the current list of forthcoming
events on the website, click [here](#).

To add your e-mail address to the
list for an alert when CTe-news
appears, click [here](#).

For your address to be removed
from the alert list, click [here](#).

For news of the Churches Co-
ordinating Group for
Evangelisation of CTE, click [here](#).

The Perils of Success

Ecumenism has been immensely successful over the last few decades. Formal conversations in particular have achieved a great deal in enabling the churches to recognise one another and to work together, sharing resources and, increasingly, worship. Paradoxically, ecumenism's success is its main barrier to progress. Here are three examples:

As churches move closer together, theologically and structurally, they often find progress becomes slower. The reasons for this are not necessarily theological. It is property, finance and most often organisational structures that form additional barriers, not accessible to analytical theologians. At first sight, organisational problems may seem to be ecclesiological, indeed they are, but the barriers commonly experienced are entrenched deep in people's understanding of their own tradition. A theological rationale to change ecclesiologies might be convincing on paper but in real life something more is needed. The problem is, for many people ecumenism means loss of identity, being subsumed into some larger church. We are in desperate need of models of church that allow the traditions to maintain their identity.

Whilst there has been significant success in formal conversations, analytical theologians are not good at communicating their findings with the wider church. Papers are often written in academic language and hidden away in journals. They cover issues that are not relevant to most people's experiences and knowledge and understanding of arcane dimensions of ecclesiology is assumed. We need a careful analysis of how this material is communicated. The Methodist Church experienced this problem a few years ago when, despite previous decisions taken by Conference in principle to support bishops, the decision about what sort of bishops was rejected outright. The problem is, a decision in principle might lead logically to a decision in practice but reality doesn't follow the laws of logic.

As the mainstream churches have moved closer together, we have witnessed, over the last 20 years, a large number of new churches appear, which do not participate in mainstream ecumenism. To them the historic churches probably seem to be a monolithic block of outdated Christians, made more threatening by their mutual closeness. The Evangelical Alliance has for a long time been an alternative to the formal ecumenical instruments and now it is arguable there is a third ecumenism of Christians who belong to informal churches and see themselves as Christians Together rather than Churches Together.

The paradox is that the closer churches find themselves, the harder they find it to maintain movement towards unity. How might we address these perils of success? The answer may be in paying more attention to conversations between national and local churches. Twenty years ago, local churches spoke very clearly across the four nations, through the Not Strangers but Pilgrims inter-church process. It seems the national churches dragged their feet and so many local Christians responded by ignoring the formal conversations. The message then was the churches wanted an end to barriers to closer relationships between churches. Over twenty years on, we're still waiting.

[Back to top](#)

Global Theology Net launched

A unique and ambitious web-based theological resource was launched in Geneva on 23 September by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Globethics.net. It aims to redress a global imbalance of access to research materials in theology and related disciplines. The Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib) contains several hundred thousand of articles, documents and other academic resources that can accessed online free-of-charge by registered participants from anywhere in the world via Internet (www.globethics.net/gtl).

"The time has come to launch a new model of ecumenical sharing of theological resources in order to prepare world Christianity for the 21st century," said the WCC general secretary, the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. GlobeTheoLib is intended to use new digital models of information exchange to make the theological voices and resources of the global South more visible and accessible, across national, cultural and denominational barriers. It uses the electronic platform of Globethics.net, the Geneva-headquartered organization that already holds more than 650'000 full-text documents in its Global Digital Library on Ethics.

Prof. Dr Christoph Stückelberger, the founder and executive director of Globethics.net, said GlobeTheoLib represents a determined attempt to redress the balance in global knowledge transfer. "GlobeTheoLib harnesses the potential of the internet to offer theological research and education new possibilities for international networking, exchange and digital sharing," said Stückelberger. GlobeTheoLib provides access to journals, books, training materials, and theses and dissertations on theology and ecumenism. It also gives registered participants the opportunity to submit their own documents and publications to share with others from around the world.

The project is supported by a consortium that includes associations of theological libraries and seminaries, as well as mission organizations, foundations, Regional Ecumenical Organizations, and Christian World Communions. The project has been co-initiated and planned by the WCC programme on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE).

"GlobeTheoLib offers a new and creative opportunity to promote the sharing of theological perspectives between fast-growing churches in the global South as well as with churches and theological institutions in the North," said the Revd Dr Dietrich Werner, the international project coordinator for ETE. Content for GlobeTheoLib comes from four major sources: commercial publishers with whom GlobeTheoLib has subscriptions to make content available to registered participants; rapidly growing Open Access repositories; partner institutions that make their own resources available via GlobeTheoLib; and registered participants who are able to submit their own documents to the library. The technical implementation of the Globethics.net libraries has been undertaken by Pointsoftware in Zürich, specialists in online libraries and data management.

[Back to top](#)

Pope meets with Russian Orthodox ecumenical officer

Pope Benedict XVI met with Metropolitan Hilarion, the Russian Orthodox Church's chief ecumenical affairs officer, in what Hilarion said afterwards could be a precursor to the first-ever meeting between Benedict and the Russian church's Patriarch Kirill. The meeting, held at the pope's summer home, Castel Gandolfo, was the conclusion of a two-day visit to meet with top-level Vatican officials, most notably Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. (ENI News)

[Back to top](#)

WCC sees opportunity for peace in Palestine's UN application

The World Council of Churches (WCC) urged strong positive action by the United Nations on behalf of Palestine. While the WCC has advocated justice for Palestinians and Israelis for decades, the United Nations Security Council's consideration of full membership for Palestine was hailed by the WCC and regional churches as an opportunity for peace.

In his statement, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, the general secretary of the WCC, said, "It is now a unique opportunity for the UN to take important decisions, to fulfil its role according to the UN charter, to make peace with justice prevail between Israelis and Palestinians, and with their neighbours. Across the Arab world, people are standing up for their freedom and dignity to establish democratic states. Now it is appropriate that the UN actively supports the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state."

He further signified the role of UN in positive efforts in the region, saying, "Yesterday's announcement in Israel of plans to build 1,100 more housing units on occupied territory is a stark reminder, why sober deliberation, genuine courage and responsible actions by the UN are necessary". Along with the heads of churches in Jerusalem, Tveit stresses the "need to intensify the prayers and diplomatic efforts for peace between Palestinians and Israelis, considering this most appropriate time for such an opportunity".

[Back to top](#)

Conflicts, Courage and robot airplanes named for Day of Prayer for Peace

From Fiji to Rwanda, prayers and signs of commitment were offered for the annual International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September. This year's observances took place in parishes and on Facebook, led by people who attended a World Council of Churches peace convocation in Jamaica this May.

"Use me, Lord, to build bridges of hope," is the Revd Edelberto Valdés Fleites's prayer in Cuba.

"Make us artisans of peace in the example of Christ, women and men of courage and discernment. Rather than fleeing from conflict, make us willing to identify, to denounce and to dare to become mediators for peace and justice," asks Father Bernard Ugeux, a missionary in Rwanda.

Katrin Rux of Germany remembers a mural in Jamaica with the words "Peace Wi Seh" [photo]. "Peace we say," she writes, "so that the faces burned by violence will change into laughter and happiness."

Noting the military drones appearing in local skies, a prayer from Wales begins: "Mewn byd lle mae mwy a mwy o sylw'n cael ei roi i ryfe" which translates, "In a world where increased attention is being given to war, in a country where there is an increase in military activity...it's essential that the people of Wales continue to work for peace and reconciliation".

The Fellowship of Reconciliation there will open a large, handcrafted book for signatures on the International Day of Peace to testify that many wish to see a world of peace rather than war. 21 September is also the United Nations International Day of Peace.

Elsewhere in the UK, Stefan Gillies' peace day prayer is for a man in prison, naval medic Michael Lyons. Lyons is a conscientious objector in detention for refusing to deploy to Afghanistan. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland are publicizing his case.

"Father God, we ask your peace to prevail amongst countries where there is no peace," Shina Chileshe writes from Zambia.

"The [Jamaica] convocation has helped me to see how I can contribute to peace in the community," Wessley Manasa of Fiji says. He has organized two new youth groups since returning home.

"The Palestinian Coalition of Christian Organizations, with Palestinian Moslem brothers and internationals, is celebrating this day at the YMCA Shepherds' Field in Beit Sahour with much commitment and dedication to work for peace and human dignity," writes Nidal Abuzuluf, in Palestine.

Ten theological schools in Boston that sent students to the Jamaica meeting are promoting the peace prayer day in the USA. The National Council of Churches in India is staging a public event with local peace activists and movements, using the statement from the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in May.

"Often the victims of violence are ... the poor and the disenfranchised, the marginalized of society, women and children, even the unborn. ... We pray for empowerment for a peace that is just and right, that we may thus exalt and honour our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace," says a prayer by the Revd Dr Tony Richie, bishop in the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA).

Dr Reena George, in India, offers a song titled "Make Us Channels of Your Peace". It begins, "May peace flow gently through our hands, strengthened by what Your love commands."

"You, God, bring peace; we know that security does not bring peace," the Revd Esther Suter writes from Switzerland. "We ask that humans will encourage each other for making a peaceful world and help those who suffered from war and violence," is a prayer from Marlin Junita Paranggai in Indonesia. "May there be just peace in the world."

[Back to top](#)

Hope in Christ is answer to the challenges of churches

Responding to the changing ecclesial landscape and challenges facing churches today "our hope grounded in Christ is the means through which to address them," Revd Dr Walter Altmann, moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee, told a group of 300 delegates at the Global Christian Forum meeting in Indonesia. "This hope must manifest itself in the relationships we nurture and the community that we build across traditions," he said while in a greeting to the group, which is meeting in Manado, 4-7 October.

This is the second gathering of the Global Christian Forum (GCF) which first met in Kenya in 2008. The GCF brings together representatives from different organizations representing various traditions within Christianity, including the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The GCF is encouraging relational encounters between churches and organizations that have not been traditionally in dialogue, independent of existing structures. The meetings are organized by the churches in Indonesia and in particular the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The participants were hosted in a reception by the governor of North Sulawesi province, Dr S.H. Sarundayang, and gathered for a plenary to learn more about the issues facing the churches and society in Indonesia.

"The great gift of this forum is the space it provides for building relationships across the breadth of our faith tradition, and exploring together the common challenges before us," Altmann said in his remarks. After opening the sessions in common prayer, the group spent the first day in a plenary session reviewing the history of the GCF, its strengths, scope and perspectives on the transformative potential of encounter and dialogue. In small groups, participants shared their faith journeys with one another, an important and valued part of the GCF gatherings.

During a meeting in Manado, participants will examine major trends in world Christianity, engage in meetings by region and tradition, and explore together the theme of the meeting, "Life Together in Jesus Christ, Empowered by the Holy Spirit." Also representing the WCC are Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia, moderator of the Faith and Order Commission, Revd Dr Soritua Nababan, WCC president for Asia, and Natasha Klukach, programme executive for Church and Ecumenical Relations.

[Back to top](#)

One World Week October 23-30

Living for the Planet - Living for its people - Living and acting for change, One World Week offers exciting new resources to help you put on your OWW event in 2011.

A **PowerPoint presentation** is now available to use with your Organising Committee to help you plan your event; also available is a slightly different version you can show as a presentation and discussion starter at an event. Download from the [Discussion page](#)

A Christian Worship Anthology is available from [Faith Resources](#) to download (It's easy to cut and paste the sections you want to use).

An Inter Faith Resource, 'Environment across Faiths', is available to download from [Faith Resources](#)

The Wordsearch is now available in "[Activities](#)" to download and print (an ideal activity for entertainment at OWW meals and all sorts of other events and activities)

Pledges are now available in [Activities](#). A great way to round off your event with everyone committing to take action.

A Quiz, designed for the theme, is available from the [Quizzes page](#)

Resources from other organisations for use with 'Living for One World'. There is plenty of information and ideas for action on this specially researched selection of websites in: [Explore Living for One World](#) [on the Links page](#)

A Drama for schools and young people - This drama-presentation focuses on the theme of 'stewardship' and the duty of humans to protect the world in which we live. Download from the [Faith Resources page](#) or the [Schools Resources Page](#)

[Back to top](#)

More than Gold

The many and amazing opportunities to share in local community events in partnership with other churches and community groups are approaching fast - if we take a moment now and plan creatively. Many of you know that More than Gold is collating the churches response re outreach / hospitality / service, but did you know -

- every church can appoint a 'gold champion' to receive and pass on information to the congregation?
- every Churches Together Group and county / regional network can appoint a 'Super Gold Champion' to pass on information - and get the Super Champion T shirt!?
- there are 6 main types of activity which More than Gold is collating: can you name them?
- Do you know who are the denominational reps in the national More than Gold team - to advise each denomination in getting involved?
- Local Councils, schools, arts and voluntary groups are all getting involved - have you had conversations with them yet about working together?
- the torch relay is an amazing opportunity for community activity - have you plans?

Through CTe-news, Jim Currin will be sending regular reminders and pointers about these fantastic 'given' opportunities. He will also produce some resource papers about 'partnership' and planning'. Even at this imminent stage it is not too late to get things going - and everything you need to know is at www.morethangold.org.uk.

Be a champion and visit www.morethangold.org.uk/goldchampions.

[Back to top](#)

100 Days of Peace for the Olympics

The Archbishop of Westminster, Rt Revd Bernard Nichols, asked Catholic schools to plan for '100 Days of Peace' during the forthcoming London Olympic Games. The call was made at Westminster Cathedral on Friday 7 October 2011 at a Mass attended by around 1,400 children from the 485 schools in the Catholic dioceses of Westminster, Southwark and Brentwood.

100 Days of Peace is based on the Sacred Truce of the ancient Greek Olympics, which enabled competitors to reach Olympia without being attacked as they passed through warring city states. It will run from Friday 8 June 2012 (50 days before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games) to Sunday 28 October 2012 (50 days after the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games).

Some 200,000 children attending Catholic schools in London, Essex, Hertfordshire and Kent were encouraged to prepare for the 100 Days in the same way that athletes will prepare for the games - by training in the classical virtues which will help everyone to receive and promote peace. The virtues, which have their roots both in Aristotle and in Christian tradition, are:

- Prudence, which allows people to judge correctly what is right and wrong in any given situation,
- Fortitude, which enables people to overcome fear and to remain steady in will in the face of obstacles; it is commonly called 'courage'.
- Temperance, which attempts to keep people from excess in their bodily desires. It requires the balancing of these legitimate goods against an inordinate desire for them.
- Justice, which is the permanent determination to give everyone her or his rightful dues.

100 Days of Peace is on Facebook [here](#). (Ekklesia)

[Back to top](#)

Beyond the comfort zone

'I was very happy with the choice of speakers, my first venture into Christian-Muslim encounter'
'A broad focus packaged nicely into one day. It felt focused and well organised'
'Very positive day, will make a difference to me'
'It was a good, informative, optimistic event'
'The day has raised my awareness of my own ignorance of the issues'

This was some of the feedback from the opportunity offered to Christians who feel less than comfortable with Islam to ask questions and see what is being done together for the common good by Christians and Muslims in this country.

Arranged by Churches Together in England and the Christian Muslim Forum the meeting took place at Hinsley Hall Leeds on 11th October bringing together Christians of various traditions who were joined by Muslims in the afternoon. The title of the day was: *Christian Engagement with Islam: context and developments in England*.

Bishop Tom Butler, former Co-chair of the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, gave a keynote address highlighting the development in the churches commitment to inter religious dialogue over four decades. Dr Helen Reid, Programme Director at Bradford Churches for Dialogue and Diversity, offered a very helpful overview of Islam in England: a living religion expressed in many cultures and a global context. Dr Richard McCallum of the Department for Sociology at Exeter University unpacked Christian attitudes to Islam as they have developed over the last 50 years.

In the afternoon Dr Philip Lewis (author of *Young, British and Muslim*) and Anjum Anwar, Dialogue Development Officer at Blackburn Cathedral, spoke on Christians and Muslims working together for a healthy society. Julian Bond, Director of the Christian Muslim Forum and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra of the Muslim Council of Britain addressed the task of Reconciling opposites: Mission and Dialogue in Christianity and Islam. Explaining in particular the development of the Ethical Guidelines for Christian and Muslim Witness in Britain.

Afternoon workshops on *social action*, on women as *less visible leaders*, on *asking the questions you always wanted to ask* and on *politics and the international impact* were led by Christians and Muslims together. Participants came from all over the country and also Scotland.

Full details will follow on the CTE and CMF websites including web videos of some interviews and conversations during the day.

[Back to top](#)

Living Our Christian Faith in a Multi-faith Context

The Presidents of Birmingham Churches Together opened a new Faithful Neighbourhoods Centre in Court Road, Sparkhill on 11 October. The Centre will be a resource for Christians in Birmingham who want to understand how to live out their faith in a multi-faith context. It is also the base for the Near Neighbours programme (see below) and Thrive West Midlands. Further details about the centre will be available in due course.

The Director of the Centre is Dr Andrew Smith is also Bishop's Advisor for Interfaith Relations in the Diocese of Birmingham. Andrew was appointed on 1 September 2011.

The Near Neighbours Programme, a new fund of Government cash aimed at strengthening communities by bringing people from different faiths together, is now looking for applicants from 13 wards in Birmingham. Applications are especially welcome from places of worship and faith communities in the eligible wards of Ladywood, Soho, Nechells, Lozells and East Handsworth, Aston, Washwood Heath, Bordesley Green, Edgbaston, Moseley and Kings Heath, Sparkbrook, Springfield, South Yardley and Hodge Hill.

Groups can apply for up to £5,000 for activities which bring people of different faiths or ethnicities together for either social interaction or social action – that is either to get to know each other or to work together to improve their local area. The overall aim of the fund is to connect people who are geographically near neighbours in communities that are diverse; so they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that make their local community a better place to live in.

Full details of the grant criteria and the application process can be found from the [Church Urban Fund website](#) or email jess@nearneighbours.com

[Back to top](#)

Power, Poverty and the Church

On Wednesday 9th November 2011, 10.30 am to 3.30pm, at St John's, Waterloo, London SE1 8TY, the first in a series of forums will look at power and poverty and the role of churches of all denominations in post-riot, economically-challenged England. How can we increase awareness and understanding within churches on issues of

poverty and powerlessness in England? How can we help churches to find ways to engage more effectively with those in power? How can we build a movement of Christians and churches committed to doing something tangible to tackle poverty? Come and discuss... and ask more questions.

The speakers will be Dr Luke Bretherton (Faith and Public Policy Forum), Canon Paul Hackwood (Chair of Church Urban Fund and Baroness Maeve Sherlock (tbc).

[Back to top](#)

Resources for people in ministry

Telling Tales

Story is the shortest route between truth and the human heart. Come and learn some of the tools of the trade and experience its transforming power. Led by Simon Airey. 8th – 10th November. £200 residential. 20% ministry discount. [More](#).

12,000-mile Service weeks

Our flagship resources for people in ministry and/or spouses. Service yourself as well as you do your car. Led by Sheldon team. 16th – 21st October, 20th – 25th November, 12th – 17th February. £400 fully inclusive. [More](#).

R5 – read, retreat, rest, relax, recuperate

Come for all or part. Use however you wish. From £32/night. 13th – 18th November, 27th November – 2nd December, 29th December to 4th January, 3rd – 5th February. Open to everyone. £32 - £50/night depending on length of stay and ministry discount. [More](#).

Lodges, Pig Pens and now Hen Runs

Lots of spaces for private retreats, open to everyone. Self-catering or stocked larder. Own front door. Grounds, chapels, library. 1:1 time for people in ministry. Emergency bolt-hole or restorative space. [More](#).

New accommodation

We're very proud of the excellent facilities in the new Long Barn. Beautiful new meeting rooms and en-suite bedrooms for our own events and to bring your own group. [More](#).

Society of Mary and Martha, Sheldon, Dunsford, Exeter EX6 7LE ☎ 01647-252752 smm@sheldon.uk.com
www.sheldon.uk.com

[Back to top](#)

Faith Group welcomes FTT proposal by European Commission

Members of the Faith Group of the Robin Hood Tax campaign welcomed the announcement by European Commission President Barroso that the Commission has adopted a proposal to set-up a financial transaction tax (FTT) in the 27 member states of the European Union. However, the group is seriously concerned that the British government does not appear to be willing to sign up to these plans. We believe that for them to fail to do so undermines the whole project and urge our government to reconsider their stance.

Speaking on behalf of the Faith Group, the Revd Roberta Rominger, general secretary of the United Reformed Church, said: "This is positive news amidst all the economic gloom and turmoil in the EU region at the moment. As faith communities we urge the British Government and other partners in the G20 to follow the courageous and innovative step taken by the European Commission in seeking to implement a Financial Transaction Tax. This will be good for Britain, good for Europe, good for the world."

"The financial sector bears a huge responsibility for the current economic crisis and must make a fair contribution to help finance the massive deficits in EU member states. There is a moral imperative to use the Robin Hood Tax to fill the gap in urgently needed funding to tackle climate change and poverty at home and abroad. It's in everyone's interests to find new sources of finance to tackle these global challenges" she added.

[Back to top](#)

Focolare ecumenical meeting of bishops

More than 30 bishops including representatives from the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox churches met at the Focolare Movement's Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City from September 6-11 as part of the ongoing efforts to strive for Christian unity. Inspired by the Focolare's 'spirituality of unity', the event was the 30th annual meeting of the inter-denominational group which this year was convened by Cardinal Vlk, Archbishop Emeritus of Prague. The theme of 'The Word of God and its transforming power' was addressed through talks, reflection and dialogue.

The Bishop of Nottingham, Malcolm McMahon, gave one of the keynote addresses as did the Archbishop Rowan Williams who also welcomed the bishops to Lambeth Palace on September 8. Later that day, the ecumenical group joined Archbishop Vincent Nichols for vespers and were present at the 5.30pm Mass in Westminster Cathedral.

Bishop Robin Smith, the Bishop Emeritus of Hertford, described the moment when he received a blessing from Archbishop Nichols as a 'moment of paradise'.

On September 9 an open day was held which welcomed an additional 25 Church Leaders from England and Scotland and included a key input from Maria Voce, who took over as Focolare's president from the founder Chiara Lubich after her death in 2008. Maria Voce is well versed in ecumenical matters having opened the Focolare community in Istanbul in the late 1970s where she lived for several years, establishing strong ecumenical bonds with the Orthodox Church as well as developing Focolare's interfaith relations with Muslim communities.

Referring in her talk to the experience of the first Focolare group during the Second World War when it read the Gospels in a dark air-raid shelter by candlelight, she spoke of the 'darkness' of today's world which was in urgent need to see the Gospel lived out. Quoting Chiara Lubich, she said: "If by some absurd hypothesis all the Gospels on earth were destroyed, we would like to live in such a way that people could to some extent rewrite the Gospel by seeing our behaviour."

Church leaders present were affirming of Focolare's contribution to ecumenism in Britain. The Archbishop of Glasgow Mario Conti paid tribute to the way in which it influenced and enriched the life of the Church, noting the contribution of its members within parishes and the fact that it did not set up its own structures but works within the structures of the Church. Referring to what some people call a 'winter of ecumenism', Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor spoke of "green shoots everywhere", among these, he said, was the Focolare Movement which with its spirit of communion indicates a way forward.

Report: Noreen Lockhart (Universe)

[Back to top](#)

Friends of Israel Educational Foundation

The Middle East is a focal point of global significance – and instability – and the Arab-Israel question one of the key sources of anxiety in Region. There is considerable comment on the issues though much of it is terribly partial and ill-informed.

As an Educational Foundation the Friends of Israel Educational Foundation does not engage in lobbying. Its mission is to analyse developments in the area reflectively, engaging sympathetically with all the many actors in the drama.

It offers speakers to schools, colleges and to individual Church groups all over the country. If your Churches Together group would be interested in devoting a session to a discussion on Israel and the Arab World and its impact on us here in the UK, please contact them at PO Box 42763, London N2 0YJ ☎ 020 8444 0777 ☎ 020 8444 0681 info@foi-asg.org www.foi-asg.org

[Back to top](#)

Quakers mark historic peace anniversary

Quakers around Britain were speaking up during the fifth national Quaker Week, 1-9 October, about making peace a way of life. It is three hundred and fifty years since Quakers declared to the King that "we are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity" and that sets the theme for Quaker Week: Make peace a way of life.

Enquirers were welcomed to Quaker meetings for worship to experience the communal gathered stillness which stirs Quakers to work for peace, equality, simplicity, sustainability and truth. Local meetings are listed on www.quaker.org.uk

Dozens of events were planned around England, Scotland and Wales including vigils against the arms trade, book fairs, coffee mornings and car washes, all to welcome people to Quaker meeting houses. Discussions ranged from economic justice, sustainability and nonviolent alternatives to terrorism. In line with Quakers' recent decision to become a low-carbon sustainable community, one local meeting is planning a recycling event, saying "Bring things you no longer want and take things others have brought. No money involved." Elsewhere, fairly-traded bananas will be handed out to students.

Quaker Week was marked in Friends House, the London home of Quakers in Britain, with a series of talks in the Quaker Centre: author, magician and Quaker Geoffrey Durham, spoke about a new guide for newcomers called ***Being a Quaker***, campaigner and facilitator David Gee launched ***Holding faith: Creating peace in a violent world***; and activist Tim Gee looked at how campaigns work in his book, ***Counterpower: Making Change Happen***.

[Back to top](#)

Apostolic Pastoral Association (APA) Ordinations 2011

The Apostolic Pastoral Association (APA), an applicant for membership of Churches Together in England, is holding its 2011 Ordinations in the week beginning 16 October. There will be an Ecumenical Service led by the Black and Minority Ethnic Churches on 22nd October from 1000 to 1300 at Manchester Cathedral, Exchange Station Approach, Victoria Street, Manchester M3 1SX, (Contact ☎ 0161 833 2220). There will also be Awards from the Order of St Hadrian of Canterbury. The nearest Train Station is Manchester Victoria - linked by Tram to Manchester Piccadilly. There will be a Reception afterwards at 1400 at Jubilee Church (RCCG) Conference Centre, 384 Hyde Road, Manchester M12 4SA. (Contact ☎ 07951 550 992).

On Wednesday 19th October at 1900 to 2100 there will be a Pentecostal Church Service, at House Of Faith, #7 Norbury Trading Estate, Craignish, London SW16 4RW. The nearest Tube station is Brixton, and the nearest overland Rail station is Norbury (From Victoria). [Back to top](#)

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service given to Christian Evangelists

On 24th September at Wintershall in the Surrey Hills the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Sarah Goad, presented to the Wintershall volunteer cast the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service from Her Majesty the Queen. For over 20 years the Wintershall players have each year performed to tens of thousands of people the famous passion plays. Their highlight each summer is the Life of Christ, a 5 hour open play next to be performed from 19th – 25th June, 2012. On 6th October for four performances their most difficult production is to be the Acts of the Apostles in the Barn Theatre at Wintershall. As usual, their now famous Wintershall Nativity takes place with 10 performances from 17th December, 2011. Their most famous of all production is now their regular performances of the Passion of Jesus in Trafalgar Square on Good Friday.

The owner of Wintershall, producer and script writer the evangelist Peter Hutley said that the two performances of Jesus' Passion in the centre of London, in such an historical venue, free to thousands of the general public has become a marvellous achievement for my like minded volunteer cast and all their back up supporters. It brings Jesus to the hearts of the enormous crowds on a very special day. They discover the real reason for Good Friday and that it is not just another Bank Holiday.

Further information from Peter Hutley, Wintershall, Bramley, Surrey, GU5 OLR. ☎ 01483 892167

[Back to top](#)

Help your congregation make sense of the Bible

The Bible Society is offering you a brand new training course, to equip you to help others with their biblical virtues and skills, as they read and study the Scriptures. During a two-day training event, you will explore a range of hermeneutical issues, that is, thinking about how we read the Bible. We'll also show you how you can use the course to train others.

What the *H+ Making Good Sense of the Bible* course offers you is the opportunity to:

- enhance your own Bible experience
- grow in hermeneutical virtue and skill
- transform your church's engagement with the Bible

The course has been designed and piloted with groups in local churches and has received a very positive response. This is your opportunity to become a trainer for this course so you can use it in your church, other churches in the diocese or with churches of other denominations locally. The training days are 14 and 15 November at Queens Road Baptist Church, Coventry, CV1 3EG.

The course is free* and includes lunch on both days as well as your *h+ Making Good Sense of the Bible* multi-media course pack.
*(Travel expenses and overnight accommodation not included)

The closing date for bookings is 7 November, so please reserve your space to avoid disappointment; and please would you kindly forward this email to your church contacts. To book, please call 01793 418222 or [email](#) [Back to top](#)

Intermediate Body Review

A major review of the intermediate ecumenical instruments, between the local and the national, was received by the Enabling Group of Churches Together in England at its recent meeting. The review group was led by Revd Bill Snelson, the former General Secretary of CTE. It arose from a previous strategic review which identified as CTE's first priority the support of local and intermediate structures.

The review group interviewed County Ecumenical Development Officers and others and analysed material from two on-line surveys. The report describes the various origins of the intermediate bodies and their subsequent developments and the ways in which they network between their partner Churches. It makes 43 recommendations to various bodies and an implementation committee will be appointed by the Enabling Group of CTE to coordinate the responses to them. 25 appendices gather together the information on which the report is based, including the surveys.

In presenting the report, Bill emphasised that Intermediate Bodies are firstly 'visible signs' of the churches' commitment to Christ and each other and, secondly, instruments for the churches to proclaim the gospel together by common witness and service in their localities. The report notes that the present state of Intermediate Bodies is 'the result of a changing scene – the desire for lighter structures, reduced human and personal resources, the tension between mission and unity, the increased profile of other faith communities, the more varied and diverse nature of Christian communities, and an accountability culture.'

The report is available as a [PDF download](#) from the CTE website and printed copies may be obtained from the London office at cost (£4).