



September 2011

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Re-action or Restoration?

Since the last CTE newsletter, the media have been revisiting 9/11 when 3,000 people, including many innocent Muslims, died as the Twin Towers fell. In the same period, England has been rocked by riots on hot summer nights.

The normal human response to violent events, whether near or far away, is to re-act. The cry goes up: identify the criminals, punish those who break the law, root out the evil ones and neutralise their wicked powers. 9/11 was immediately followed by just such a re-action. The '*war on terror*' began, Iraq was invaded, Saddam Hussein was removed, and the rift between a Shia majority and a Sunni minority has significantly deepened. In the UK crowds of ordinary citizens demonstrating against a war they thought to be folly, were shocked by a government's inability to listen to their voices. In Britain the processes of democracy, so reviled by extreme Muslim activists orchestrating the event in New York, also seemed under threat.

Re-action demonstrably failed to deliver peace, evidenced again following the more recent execution without trial of Osama Bin Laden. The question has to be asked whether re-action is the only rational response. For those drawn into a culture of re-action, the argument goes something like this: "I must hold on to what I've felt of your despair, and strike back in the only language you understand. So I must train myself to look past the particular deaths of innocent people to make sure that my anger has adequate expression. I must work to keep up this pitch of energy until you have been silenced, and then perhaps I can start trying to relearn the language I used to speak." This was an analysis offered by Archbishop Rowan Williams, soon after the 9/11 attack. [*Writing in the Dust*, 2002] He also said, very forcibly, that time was needed to reflect on such a tragedy, and asked whether "... anything can grow through this terrible moment?" Ten years on, many gaping wounds remain unhealed. Our hearts go out to all who grieve, East and West, South and North; but the question remains, is there still something we have not learned?

No-one should be asked to excuse the actions of those whose fanatical commitments lead them to engage in mass-murder. Re-action, however, might not be the only way forward. "We remain captives of a mindset which bases a pseudo-stability on the ability to create insecurity, danger and destruction." [Frank Jackson, "in a Time of Peace Which is No Peace", *Uniting for Peace*, 3, 2011]

This anniversary could itself become another *kairos*, a further opportunity to identify with those who are committed to the transformation of conflict rather than retaliation. The '4D Charter for Peace', for example, calls for a paradigm shift beyond which single issue campaigns could unite across national borders to forge a collective international voice for disarmament, demilitarisation, development and democracy. Today, however, the UK remains amongst the top five suppliers of weaponry onto the world stage.

Inevitably the road to peace will be long, and always unpopular with the powerful and their vested interests. After the English riots we continue to criminalise large numbers of children: not simply detaining them out of sight and mind, but reinforcing a cocktail of social values which continue to feed the fragmentation of family life, ever widening the gap between haves and have-nots, continuing to poison their fragile sense of self-worth. The August riots rose on a tide of opportunism. Truth to tell, young people were not typically the primary instigators of organised looting and related criminal activities; in fact, it was their parent's generation who were too often leading the way. Re-action immediately had its effect, and sentences meted out by the courts were on average 25% longer than normal.

Society will never free itself from criminal activity, and some crimes are truly vile. Society needs protection. Existing justice systems, however, are primarily designed to generate retributive not restorative justice and, following the riots, many young people have been harshly punished for actions dreamt up in the heat of a moment, and often very much out of character. It was only after the prisons and youth offender centres were full to overflowing that people began to recognise the absence of strategies to change 'hearts and minds'; but it was already too late. "We're going to end up in two year's time with a load of people coming out of jail with no qualifications, no jobs - *and what's that going to achieve?* The government needs to be careful; otherwise they're going to end up with another right little civil uprising." [Pauline Pearce, quoted in *The Guardian* 23.08.11]

Punishment almost always generates hostility. Rhetorical sound bytes accusing anyone in the firing line of belonging to a 'feral underclass' only aggravates the anger. The way through, as Anne Marie Carrie, Chief Executive of Barnardo's has written, can only be by 'whole family approaches.' Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), for example, bring children and adults together in non-judgmental mediation processes, actually getting to the roots of anti-social

behaviour. The results can be genuinely transformative, and the outcomes can be nurtured by professionals over extended periods of time. The call to evict whole families because one member has engaged in criminal activity is outrageous, and can only heighten resentment and lead to lasting bitterness. Certainly it will do little to resolve the complex issues which led to the August riots.

Christians around the world may well have found themselves shaken out of complacency on this tenth anniversary of 9/11. Not only did the anniversary fall on a Sunday, but the lectionary Gospel for the day included Jesus' profoundly challenging Parable of the Unforgiving Servant from Matthew 18:21-35. So there is a common theme emerging from these reflections. Whether it concerns terrorism in 2001 or riots in 2011, as Christians we always have an opportunity to speak peace into our time. By grace we can be party to a paradigm shift, tipping the balance from re-action to restoration. "You are called to freedom, brothers and sisters", [Galatians 5:13]

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Ecumenical voices at World Youth Day in Madrid

For seven days the streets and squares of Madrid, Spain, were overrun by more than a million young people from all over the world. They gathered for the 26th World Youth Day (WYD), a youth-oriented event of the Roman Catholic Church. The World Council of Churches (WCC) was officially represented by three members of its Echos Commission on Youth in the Ecumenical Movement, Diana Fernandes Dos Santos of Brazil, Mikael Giødesen of Denmark and Nikos Kosmidis of Greece.

The WYD offered the three Echos members a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics and developments of Roman Catholic youth through engaging the different movements and religious orders present there as well as discussions about issues of Christian unity. The team were guest speakers in two ecumenical events organized jointly by the International Young Catholic Students (IYCS), the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Pax Romana, the Juventud Estudiante Católica (JEC) and the WCC.

A "World Café" with the theme "Youth and the Search for Christian Unity" invited some 200 participants to discuss issues related to Christian unity, divisions in the history of Christianity, the initiatives within contemporary ecumenical dialogue, youth involvement in the life and work of the WCC. The World Café was developed out of the youth agenda and young members of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC. Kosmidis, an Eastern Orthodox, delivered a presentation at why Christian unity matters today, the history of the ecumenical movement and what young Christians may do together as part of their social responsibility.

In the discussion following the presentation the participants, most of whom were Roman Catholic youth representing all continents, shared their different understandings of what unity means. An even more challenging topic was raised by the group regarding the role and ministry of the pope of Rome in the worldwide church and the way his primacy was understood within the "Pentarchy" (the five major episcopal sees) of the early church. Questions were also raised regarding the current level of the Orthodox-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogue and how young people may serve their churches in this discussion.

"We believe our event gave a different experience of WYD where youth pilgrims had a chance to share, understand and reflect deeper on ecumenism experienced among young people," said Loucille D. Alcala, programme coordinator for the IYCS International Secretariat in Paris. "Further, it was also a space to encourage working together with different youth organizations and promote ecumenical actions at all levels." A second event focused on the spiritual foundations of ecumenical dialogue and how working for the unity of the church affects the faith of a young person. Dos Santos, a Methodist, and Giødesen, a Lutheran, both of whom have served as WCC stewards at international meetings, were able to share the experience of their ecumenical journey and how their lives have been changed as a result.

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Time for Creation 2011

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has joined in a call to observe Thursday 1 September to Tuesday 4 October 2011 as a time for prayer, reflection and re-dedication regarding care for and just use of God's gifts in nature.

For more than twenty years, increasing numbers of Christians throughout the world have reserved these dates in September and early October as a time to give thanks for God's creation and to join in common prayer and action for the environment. "A Time for Creation" is a modern addition to the liturgical calendars of many churches, emphasizing the work of God as Creator. It arose from a challenge issued by the late Dimitrios I, then the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, in proclaiming 1 September 1989 as a day of prayer for the earth and its ecosystems. The Orthodox church year traditionally begins in September, so it seems appropriate to turn worshippers' attention to the opening verse of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The new liturgical season of Creation has come to extend to 4 October, long celebrated by Roman Catholics and others as the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi.

The year 2011 has been designated as the International Year of Forests, and the WCC has appealed in particular for prayers and reflections to be offered on forests and related themes, in the spirit of such scriptural passages as this prophecy: "For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." - *Isaiah 55:12 (NRSV)*

In its public policy, the WCC has called for commitment to "[eco-justice](#)" and has stressed the need for action to overcome such problems as planetary pollution and other causes of climate change. In a [message](#) delivered to the UN Climate Change Conference at Copenhagen in December 2009 (COP 15), a high-level ecumenical delegation told the meeting, "The injustice is that those who are suffering the worst consequences of this crisis have contributed the least to causing this situation. This is a matter of justice and a call to moral responsibility. We would like to underline the importance of legally-binding commitments to addressing this crisis". A separate [statement](#) on behalf of the WCC and bodies representing other world religions recognized the scientific evidence for human causation of climate change, and asserted that "climate change is not merely an economic or technical problem, but rather at its core is a moral, spiritual and cultural one."

More information on the WCC and eco-justice: www.oikoumene.org/eco-justice

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Norwegian Church Leaders give thanks for mutual support

Fifteen leaders of dioceses and national church bodies in Norway, among them all 12 bishops of the Church of Norway, joined in common prayer on Wednesday morning 17 August at the Ecumenical Centre chapel in Geneva, Switzerland. They were joined in this act of worship by members of the Norwegian congregation in Geneva and staff of many church-related agencies including the ACT Alliance, Conference of European Churches, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Council of Churches (WCC). Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, a pastor in the Church of Norway who currently serves as general secretary of the WCC, welcomed those who had come to "join us in honouring the victims" of last month's violence in Norway. "We are still a people who are in sorrow, embracing one another, lighting candles in memory of those whom we have lost, praying for the survivors and their families," he said. He told the story of a young woman he knows who was shot five times at the Utøya Island youth camp on 22 July. "She knows that her friends saved her," Tveit reported, "and she is determined that this is not something that will destroy her life."

In her sermon, Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien of the Church of Norway said that "we still see faith, hope and love standing up against evil, hate and destruction", weeks after "the long Friday" on which "this unbelievable thing happened in so peaceful a corner of the world." She offered thanks to the world's churches and other faith communities "for being together with us at this moment."

After the service, several church leaders offered further testimony to the sense of unity that has sprung up. Berit Hagen Agøy, general secretary of the Church of Norway council on ecumenical and international relations, spoke of her appreciation for the support and insights of Muslims she has encountered. "I am impressed by Muslim leaders in Norway," she told the congregation in Geneva. "Even though they experienced massive harassments and even threats immediately after the attacks – when many Norwegians assumed the terrorist or terrorists must be Muslim – they have clearly denied any connection between the terrorist, a self-proclaimed Christian, and Christianity." She continued, "It is thought-provoking that Muslim leaders were among those who stated most clearly that the act of the terrorist is contradictory to Christianity." "Together with the Islamic Council of Norway," she said, "the Church of Norway and the University of Oslo are planning two seminars this autumn about extremism and religion. Work together on this issue was actually planned before the terror attack on the 22nd of July. I must admit that when we first talked about these events, we were thinking of Islamic extremism. In July, we suddenly realized that we also have to confront nationalistic extremism in our own Christian culture."

Bishops Laila Riksaasen Dahl and Erling Pettersen reported on many of the ways that "the church was there" in the immediate aftermath of the horrible violence. They marvelled at "a new language" of reconciliation and unity that has grown up in their land, and they stressed the need for the church to dedicate itself to following up in support of victims, their families and the whole society. The bishops' two-day visit to Geneva includes meetings with leadership and staff of such ecumenical organizations as the WCC, the LWF, ACT Alliance and the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland.

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Fruits and Challenges of Ecumenical Dialogue

"From Dialogue to Communion: Fruits and Challenges of Ecumenical Dialogue," was the theme of the 45th International Ecumenical Seminar hosted by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. Some 60 participants attended the 2011 conference from 30 June to 6 July. They evaluated ecumenical milestones and sought to discern possible new directions. Facilitation came from those involved in the dialogues with Lutherans-Roman Catholics, Pentecostal churches and Mennonites.

The institute was established in 1965 under the Lutheran Foundation for Inter-confessional Research, after the 1963 LWF Fourth Assembly in Helsinki, Finland. It brings together scholarly theological research, receiving and communicating ecumenical dialogues.

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Fiji Government bans Methodist meetings

The Fijian government has banned all Methodist Church meetings except for Sunday worship in an unprecedented crackdown on religious freedom. This includes house groups, women's prayer fellowship, choir practice, mid-week communion and youth fellowship, as well as the Church's governance meetings.

Having withdrawn the permit for the Church's annual Conference the evening before the event was due to start, the interim government has now notified the Church in a letter from the Fiji Military Council that all other meetings of the Methodist Church are forbidden. All Methodist ministers are also forbidden from leaving the country for any meeting. The Church is responding with prayer and fasting. A planned press conference had to be cancelled last week because of the fear of further arrests. The Methodist Church is the largest faith group in Fiji and the only group to receive this treatment by the Government. "We are gravely concerned about how this situation is developing," said Michael King, World Church Relationships Team Leader for the Methodist Church in Britain. "Our brothers and sisters in Fiji are asking us to keep them in our prayers and to tell the world their story. We are worried for Fiji. We are not only worried about religious freedom, but also about what the loss of other freedoms might mean for all Fijians in this traditionally democratic island nation."

Fiji is the subject of sanctions by Australia, New Zealand, the US and the EU and is also suspended from the Commonwealth and the Pacific Islands Forum because of the Government's failure to meet a deadline for democratic elections. There are signs of unrest in the capital Suva, with attacks on police posts and related graffiti, which is fuelling anxiety about the nation's stability. Speaking out against the Government is deemed treason, and sending criticisms of the regime to or from abroad is now being treated as a criminal act.

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Mar Thoma church in India celebrates 175th anniversary

Celebration of the 175th anniversary of an 1836 reformation in the historic Malankara church in India featured a keynote address by the general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. The speech was given at the headquarters of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar in Kerala. Among those attending the event were Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Old Catholic church leaders. In his keynote address Tveit stated, "Reformation requires a unity in which we challenge one another. Mutual accountability is required for any reformation, so that we do not go our own way for our own benefit, but are mutually accountable to one another for the gifts and the decisions of our churches."

The Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar traces its roots back to the year 52 AD when Saint Thomas, one of the original apostles of Jesus Christ, is reported to have arrived at the ancient port city of Kodungalloor in Malankara, also known as Malabar, in the southern part of India. According to tradition, Saint Thomas preached the gospel and converted local people to Christianity in Malankara where Jewish settlements also existed at the time. Recalling the history of the ancient Christian community in Malankara and the unity in Christ that it shares with other churches, Tveit noted that today this church has become a global community scattered in parts of the world that include North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. "In all these places," he said, "your people are committed to nurturing ecumenism at the local and national levels. The rich traditions of the Malankara church based on the reformation's spirit have equipped your church to see the wider horizons of ecumenism, wherever your people have been based and placed."

Earlier in his stay, the WCC general secretary, a first-time visitor to India, was received by members of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Mar Thoma Church and by bishops of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Malabar Independent Syrian Church. The general secretary was accompanied by Dr Mathews George Chunakara, director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

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Orthodox leaders smooth path to proposed summit meeting

The patriarchs of three ancient Orthodox Christian churches met from 1-2 September in Istanbul to discuss the situation of Christian minorities in the Middle East, and perhaps an even more prickly topic -- the move toward a historic pan-Orthodox council -- removing major stumbling blocks to what would be the first such gathering in centuries. The pan-Orthodox council is regarded with great interest by the world's Orthodox churches, many of which are in unstable regions following revolutions in the Middle East, or in countries facing a third decade of economic and social transition following the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. (ENI)

The meeting adopted a proposal for "an encounter of religious leaders in the region, where a form of Mediterranean Charter would be drafted and proclaimed". The purpose of the charter would be to address environmental concerns and "contribute to the peaceful coexistence and cooperation among religions in this region today". [Back to top](#)

Six point plan to redeem communities

In the wake of widespread urban rioting, Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, Churches Together in England called for:

1: The urgent restoration of law and order on our streets. Rioting, arson and looting are unacceptable behaviours in a civilised society.

2: Everyone to be held responsible for their actions. Brazen lawlessness that endangers life, limb and property threatens us all, and perpetrators must face the consequences of their actions. For their own sake and that of the next generation, parents and guardians must teach our youth sound morals and ethics, the difference between right and wrong, and encourage them to contribute to the good of society.

3: A review of the effects of cuts to youth and other essential services. Young people need support in the present and hope for the future. It is crucial that the infrastructural support in areas such as education, training, employment and policing be maintained.

4: The Police and IPCC to become more responsive over critical incidences. At critical moments urgency must be shown in provision of information responding to the concerns of families and the community. Unresolved police related deaths, disproportionate use of stop and search and DNA database can antagonise communities and undermine confidence.

5: The church to pray and work for the peace of our country. Churches play a key role in the spiritual life of the country and must establish, maintain and strengthen its links with communities in pursuit of every citizen experiencing justice and a sense of self-worth.

6: A return to faith-based national life. One based not on selfish consumerism but on faith in God and respect for humanity and God's creation. All people of faith need to reflect on how we can better engage with our young people, building partnerships for the common good.

Dr Joe Aldred of the Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, Churches Together in England, said: "We believe that the destructive civil unrest we have witnessed over past days is a reflection of the kind of society we have allowed to develop. In recent years we have buried too many who have died young, comforted too many bereaved families, supported too many with unanswered questions about the fate of their loved ones, and seen too many young people existing with little or no hope for a prosperous future. We must act decisively now to secure a good future for our children and grandchildren". [Back to top](#)

Hope for Croydon following the riots

Churches in Croydon have been engaged with practical support of those who have suffered as a result of the riots and have listened and talked with those on the streets shocked by these events. They have also given the opportunity to pray and come to God through services, open church doors, and personal contact. On the streets people commented on how good it was that the church is 'out there' with them at this time, and they wanted the church to be 'out there' more 'like on Good Friday', some commented.

A few days after Monday 8th August, it became clear that the possibility should be investigated of holding a service in Croydon town centre, in the open air, so that as many of Croydon's people as wanted could come together. This was held on September 4th. At a time when so many are looking for answers, love and hope following the riots, the aim of the service was to share our belief that true hope and unconditional love comes from God the Father who cares for us all, and has His hand on our shoulders, guiding our futures from this point forward. The service gave people space to stop and be still, to be carried by the worship and prayers of the church in their town and to find that they too can pray and hear God. [Back to top](#)

Church leaders call for political progress 10 years on from 9/11

A decade on from the 9/11 attacks British Church leaders are calling for the Government to examine its use of military force in response to violent extremism. They state:

"It is clear that our reaction to the attacks on 9/11 has caused more suffering and loss than the original attacks. The 'War on Terror' has done little to make anyone safer, but has harmed human rights, depleted our coffers and damaged our standing in the world, and at a cost of many lives."

The Churches will celebrate Peacemaking Sunday on 18 September. A service booklet and worship resources are available to download online [here](#).

The full statement follows:

The ten year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks will be a day of huge sadness for the whole world and our hearts and prayers are with all those who continue to mourn the loss of their loved ones in the terrible atrocities of 9/11. We remember those who died in the attacks, and those who died in the wars that followed. A decade on, it is also an appropriate moment to pause and consider what lessons we have learned as a nation in the intervening years. Our military action in Afghanistan and Iraq has taught us that defeating an enemy may take only days, but rebuilding a just and inclusive society will take many years.

It is clear that our reaction to the attacks on 9/11 has caused more suffering and loss than the original attacks. The 'War on Terror' has done little to make anyone safer, but has harmed human rights, depleted our coffers and damaged our standing in the world, and at a cost of many lives. It is sad and ironic that regimes that seek to maintain their rule through military force have often purchased their weapons from Britain, such as Libya, which has purchased 120 million Euros worth of British arms since 2005. Our government aspires to support democratic reform in the Middle East, but at the same time tax-payers' money is being used to support the London Arms Fair, hosting 1,300 weapons companies from around the world.

There can be no future security if we place our trust in more sophisticated weapons. We cannot rely on military intervention but must concentrate on supporting the principles of political progress, human security and economic justice if we are to achieve a better and more secure world for all. As Christians we follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We pray for world leaders, for peacemakers and for those suffering violence everywhere, and we look to the future with hope.

Revd Jonathan Edwards
General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Revd Lionel E Osborn
President of the Methodist Conference

Revd Roberta Rominger
General Secretary of the United Reformed Church

S Yorkshire Church Leaders renew Covenant

On Sunday October 2nd Christians of Churches Together in South Yorkshire will gather at Victoria Hall, Sheffield, for an afternoon of music and mission with songs and reflections led by John Bell of the Iona Community. The gathering at 3 pm will include an address and a BIG SING to help us reflect on ecumenism for mission in the 21st century, welcoming the Redeemed Christian Church of God into membership of CTSY and the formal re-signing of the Church Leaders' Covenant. It will be followed by a Sandwich Tea. Admission is free and donations may be made for the Iona Community's work across the UK.

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Christian Engagement with Islam: Context and Developments in England

This day is specially intended for those less comfortable with or new to Christian-Muslim Relations. It is on Tuesday, 11 October 2011, 10.30 – 16.00 at Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds, LS6 2BX. Coffee/tea will be served from 10.00 am.

The Morning Speakers will be:

- Rt Rev Tom Butler "Reflections on the Inter-faith Landscape Today"
- Dr Philip Lewis, Islam in England: "Who's who and where?"
- Dr Helen Reid, "Christian perspectives on Islam in the last 50 years"

The Afternoon Speakers will be:

- Anjum Anwar, Julian Bond "Working together for a healthy society"
- Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Julian Bond "Mission vs. dialogue?"

There will be Workshops on:

- Dialogue and Witness – are they in conflict?
- What are you doing on the ground? - shared social action
- Less visible leaders? Women's role in developing dialogue
- Getting to know you better – opportunity for questions
- The bigger picture - politics and international impact

The Cost is £40 waged, £25 unwaged, inclusive of lunch and refreshments and booking is essential. See the CTE [website](#) for the booking form.

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'Ground Zero Mosque' leader gives 9/11 talk in Britain

The US Muslim leader at the centre of the recent storm over plans to build an Islamic community centre near Ground Zero in New York gave a series of talks and interviews in Scotland. Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf offered his perspective on 9/11 during a visit organised by the Festival of Spirituality and Peace in partnership with Edinburgh University's Prince Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World.

Imam Feisal came to international prominence last year when his plans to build Plan51, a Muslim community centre, two blocks from where the Twin Towers stood sparked a heated debate within America and abroad about the relationship between the Islamic faith and the West since 9/11. Author and activist Feisal has won several awards for his work bridging the divide and improving relations between the Muslim world and the West.

On Saturday 27 August he was in conversation with Professor Hugh Goddard, head of the Alwaleed Centre. In the event, 'The Day The World Changed', he discussed religious pluralism and Islam in the United States ten years after 9/11. It was a keynote event within the Festival of Spirituality and Peace. The conversation was repeated in Glasgow on Wednesday 31 August.

As part of the festival's closing event on Sunday 28 August, Imam Feisal received a peace award from the festival, the City of Edinburgh, Edinburgh InterFaith Association, and the Conference of Edinburgh's Religious Leaders. He has founded two non-profit organisations, the Cordoba Initiative and the American Society for Muslim Advancement, dedicated to building bridges of understanding between the general public and the Muslim community through interfaith dialogue and the arts.

Professor Hugh Goddard, director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, said: "Given the furore in the United States last year following the threat by Pastor Terry Jones to burn a copy of the Qur'an in public, it will be excellent for audiences in Scotland and the wider UK to hear the American Muslim leader against whom this threat was directed speak about being a Muslim in the USA today and the wider relationship between the world of Islam and the West."

Director of the Festival of Peace and Spirituality, the Rev Donald Reid, added: "Imam Feisal is an eloquent exponent of how the highest aspirations of Islam and US democracy concur - I can think of no better speaker therefore, for a festival dedicated to peace in a post 9/11 world as we approach this tenth anniversary."

Simon Barrow, co-director of the beliefs and values think-tank Ekklesia, which has been involved in several aspects of this year's Festival of Spirituality and Peace, commented: "It is important for Europe to hear a senior US Muslim voice as part of the debate about religion, ideology, violence and peacemaking as we remember the horror of 9/11 and the continuing conflict and terror that followed it. Finding a path to just-peace in place of further justifications for war remains a global priority for human flourishing." (Ekklesia)

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Social Media as a force for good

15th October 2011, 9am to 5:20pm, City University, London Tickets Just £27.50

The recent riots across London have demonstrated the negative effect that social media can have when used by people with malicious intent. But what should we do? We cannot un-invent technology so our response must be for the Church to jump into the digital space with both feet, to be the Salt and Light Jesus called us to be in our world. To find out how you, your church or organisation can have more Kingdom impact through New Media book now for the [Christian New Media Conference 2011](#).

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Local, National and Global – our responsibility in the created order

On Sunday September 25 the Christian Socialist Movement will organise the Labour Party Conference Service at 11.30 am at Liverpool Parish Church, Chapel Street, L2 8TZ. The service will feature Gavin Shuker MP and the Director of CSM, Andy Flanagan. At 12.30, following the service, the CSM Conference Reception will be held.

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The Word – a reflection on the King James Bible at Sarum

Fourteen Artists are to showcase "The Word" at an Exhibition to celebrate the King James Bible which opened on 2 September 2011. Sarum College, Salisbury, launched its new visual arts programme on 2 September 2011 with the exhibition, The Word – A Reflection on the King James Bible.

Works in sculpture and lettering on stone, glass and fabric offer a unique reflection on the cultural importance of the King James Bible and its contribution to society through Christianity. The Presence of Christ, a carving by Henry Gray in Portland stone, is decorated in the colourful style prevalent when the KJV was first printed 400 years ago.

"These days it is unfashionable to paint stone," comments Gray. "Tastes and attitudes change, so the continuity provided by the written word is essential. It can help to carry the message that resides in our hearts that it is possible to move beyond the words towards a direct relationship with the love of God. This is to be treasured."

The unique qualities of alabaster are key to sculptures by Frederic Chevarin ARBS and Roger Stephens. "As Christ is light, the pale fragile alabaster echoes the subject thanks to natural light shining through the material," says Chevarin about his sculpture, Nativity. "All the curves in alabaster turn as the movement represents life."

The other exhibition artists are Peter Eugene Ball, Tim Chadsey, Zoe Cull and Alex Evans, Christopher Elsey, Robyn Golden-Hann, Elizabeth Herkstroter, Giles Macdonald, Mary Noble, Jemimah Patterson, Suzanne Redstone ARBS and Tracey Sheppard FGE. The Word is free and open to the public. Opening hours are 9am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday (closed Sundays). The exhibition ends on 19 December 2011.

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New Insights into Whole Person Care

Burrswood Christian Hospital is hosting a conference "New Insights into Whole Person Care" at St Marylebone Parish Church, 17 Marylebone Road, London NW1 on Friday 25th November 2011 from 9.30am - 4pm chaired by Revd Dame Sarah Mullally. The day will provide a unique opportunity to hear and discuss how an inter-disciplinary approach to healing operates in practice. This conference is aimed at all church leaders, healthcare professionals and all those involved in pastoral care. Tickets are £25 - please email sophie.minoprio@burrswood.org.uk to book your place or call 01892 865984.

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Pilgrims in an alien land

Christian Ecology Link retreat weekend, 14-16 October at Ringsfield Hall in the peace of the Suffolk countryside near Beccles is on the theme 'Pilgrims in an alien land – walking to freedom when the world's in chains'.

More information and booking forms at www.christian-ecology.org.uk/ringsfield-2011.htm or from [Barbara Echlin](#)

This year's retreat is to discover some fruitful ways to pray with scripture. We are starting with the understanding that as Christian disciples we are at odds with the dominant culture of rampant consumerism – we live as if in an alien land. Inevitably our journey of discipleship is not easy. In fact it is often a struggle.

So the retreat will not only ask the question where in the Bible do we find help for this difficult journey, but also what methods can we use to interpret, absorb and process the scripture for our own journeys. There will be some short inputs from some of us about a number of these methods; there will be times for companionship and discussion; there will be times of common prayer and times of solitude. If this all seems rather "heavy" remember we will be making community together for the weekend. This means we will eat together, enjoy one another; we will laugh together and play together. We have the advantage of the large grounds at Ringsfield so we will use time for being outside in God's creation; we will enjoy a campfire and viewing party (come and find out what this is), the labyrinth and the opportunity simply to be. We will come away having shared each other's aspirations and burdens, strengthened for our journey through this alien land of the present age.

Booking forms available [here](#) or from Ringsfield ☎ info@ringsfield-hall.co.uk or ☎ 01502 713020

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Afghanistan and 'talking to the enemy'

Senior parliamentarian Sir Menzies Campbell and commentator James Fergusson, whose book 'Taliban' strips away misconceptions and lays bare the contradictions of western policy, took part in a public conversation on Friday 19 August, co-sponsored by the beliefs and values think-tank Ekklesia. The discussion, at St John's Church, Princes Street, Edinburgh, was part of the 2011 Festival of Spirituality and Peace, which is hosting 200 events throughout the month in Scotland's capital. After almost 10 years of British involvement in Afghanistan, it is now official policy to talk to the Taliban. What, then, are the prospects for a settlement? What will it mean for the Afghans, for Britain and for the world? These are among the key issues to be examined.

Sir Menzies Campbell is long-standing Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife. He has been Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs since 1997. He has been critical of "disproportionate military action" employed by the Israeli Defence Force in Gaza and Lebanon, suggesting that Israel's tactics exacerbate existing tensions and lead to human rights abuses. Sir Ming has also been seen as one of Parliament's most measured and authoritative voices in relation to engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. During his time as Liberal

Democrat leader (2006-7), Campbell suggested that the Bush-Blair relationship was too one-sided, and that the UK government needed to be more mindful of its positive role in international institutions.

James Fergusson started out in journalism in 1989. He has written for many publications since, including the Independent, the European, the Daily Mail and Prospect magazine, covering current affairs in Europe, North Africa, Central Asia, the Far East and the Caribbean. His specialisation in Afghanistan began in 1996. From 1999 to 2001 he worked in Sarajevo as a press spokesperson for the Office of the High Representative, the body charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Accord that ended Bosnia's civil war in 1995. Among his books are 'Taliban' and 'A Million Bullets: The Real Story of the British Army in Afghanistan'.

Ekklesia is an independent think-tank that examines the role of religion, belief and values in public life - emphasising the importance of conflict transformation, non-violent civil interventions, negotiation and restorative justice in situations of confrontation and injustice throughout the world.

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'We don't call it the Holy Land anymore. We call it the Crazy Land.'

Churches Together in Shropshire's AGM included an input from Madeleine McGivern from Hereford. It was particularly timely, given the 18-19 July 2011 Anglican-Roman Catholic meeting on Christians in the Holy Land. Madeleine McGivern's writes:

'In June this year, I arrived back in the UK, having spent just over three months in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). Working as a Human Rights Monitor and Advocate for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, I was based in East Jerusalem.

East Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian Territories which have been occupied, illegally in the eyes of the international community, by Israel since 1967. My job, along with around thirty others from over a dozen countries, was monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, including the arrest and torture of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem, monitoring military checkpoints ensuring that children got to school and workers to their jobs, supporting families with demolition and eviction orders on their homes, assisting farmers as they tried to access their land but were prevented by Israeli forces or illegal settlers, supporting Israeli NGOs, providing a protective presence for Palestinian communities at risk of violence from Israeli soldiers, police and settlers, and working to support communities as they tried to access water, healthcare, education and employment. All of this is done using the framework of International and Human Rights Law, and UN resolutions, listening to and providing a voice for, ordinary Palestinian and Israeli people, living in the most extraordinary of circumstances, who are predominantly ignored by the mainstream media, for whom the extreme minorities on 'both sides' are far more interesting.

As a World Council of Churches programme EAPPI also works to support Palestinian Christians, long overlooked in this conflict which the world's press decided long ago is one between Judaism and Islam, as opposed to a battle for land and resources. One such Palestinian Christian is Bishara Khoury. He's a mechanic and is married to tour organiser Samya. They have two young children; Joanne, 10, wants to be a doctor, and his son Anis, 8, a scientist. They live in the Old City of Jerusalem, which has a Muslim, Jewish, Armenian and Christian Quarter. In 2007 Bishara connected two internal rooms inside his house, and put up an internal wall. No external changes were made to the property, which he owns. Weeks later the Israeli government issued Bishara with a self-demolition order for his whole house, and a huge fine, ordering him to demolish his house, or they would do it for him. Four years later, Bishara has paid between \$25,000-28,000 in fees to lawyers and fines, and his family's right to housing, a basic humanitarian right, remains under threat. No reason has been given for this demolition order, and it is illegal under international law for an occupying power such as Israel to destroy any property in the territory it occupies unless 'absolutely necessary for military operations' (Art. 53 of IV Geneva Convention). This means only when the destruction would target a military target or legitimate threat, which Bishara and his family are not. 'Destruction not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully, and wantonly is a war crime.' (Art.147 of IV Geneva Convention).

Bishara's family live in fear that the next knock at the door will be followed by the bulldozer. He told EAPPI that 'They [The Israeli authorities} come and do checks by walking every two weeks in old City, and a six monthly flight, without pilot, flies for 12 hours, they can see every street, every house, making maps and photographs to see changes, and then they issue new demolition orders. We only built inside our house, for the children. They need the space, there was no space to play, it was too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter, even studying, even sleeping, was very difficult. My wife asked a policeman when they came to the house why they were doing this, and the man replied "Because you live in the Old City" They want to force Palestinian Christians out.' Samya said, 'I'm so tired, I don't care anymore, when they come, they come. They [Israeli authorities] treat people like animals. Everyone. People here don't want to live like animals, to wait at checkpoints for two or three hours to go to your home, to be searched, to have to take off all our clothes to travel or go to work. The people just want to live quietly, in peace.'

EAPPI is a programme which arose from a request from the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem in 2002 and, almost twelve years on, Christians here still need help as they try to go about normal lives where access to housing, work,

education and worship is severely restricted through a complex collection of policies, permits and policing. If you are involved in a church, why not think about linking your congregation with one here in East Jerusalem to show your support, and show that Christians here have not been forgotten? With all this in mind, I will be continuing my EAPPI work through advocacy, telling the stories of the people I met, and suggesting ways people here can assist them.'

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Prisons and the Journey to Freedom

How can Churches become Basic Caring Communities? A talk and discussion with Mgr Malachy Keegan will be at the United Reformed Church, Pond Square Chapel, Highgate, London N6 6BA on Monday 26th September 2011, at 7.30 pm.

Today, there are over 85,000 children, women and men held in around 140 prisons in England and Wales. Why do we imprison more people than almost every other Western European country? Are there alternative responses to offending behaviour? Who are the people in our prisons? Why do people commit crime? Who are the victims? Is there a 'prison' in everybody's life?

Mgr Malachy Keegan is the Catholic Bishops' Prison Adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. He has worked for many years in the Prison Service and is particularly interested in Restorative Justice, Prison Chaplaincy, and in the Re-settlement of Former Offenders. He is a psychotherapist with a great enthusiasm for bringing together Spirituality and Human Development. He feels passionately about 'Prison' being a metaphor for something we all experience and that the Good News of the Gospel is that the Lord comes to set us all free!

All are welcome, there is no charge and refreshments will be served.

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New Housing Areas

New Housing and CIC /CIO

Has anyone experience of a Community Interest Company (CIC) for a new initiative they have set up?

Members of the Churches group for New Housing Areas are collating stories to see if CIC's help in new housing areas. Alternatively you may be planning to set up a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for a new initiative when they are set up. Either way, we would like to hear from you so we compare notes and put people in touch who may benefit from shared experience of these new arrangements from the Charity Commission.

For more information see the report [here](#) or contact [Jim Currin](#).

New Housing and Planning

On [this](#) web link you will see links to documents about changes regarding planning procedures and how church leaders can get involved in the process. These relate to the Community Infrastructure Levy and the advice Government have given to Local Authorities. Members of the Churches group for New Housing Areas are interested to hear local examples of how changes are affecting the churches engagement in new housing areas in the regions.

Contact [Jim Currin](#).

Getting into the Spirit of things -

The 'Acts of the Apostles' come to Surrey

Following their stunning performances of 'The Passion' on Good Friday to thousands in Trafalgar Square, the Wintershall Players return to Surrey's favourite barn theatre on the Wintershall Estate this Autumn for the dramatic '**Acts of the Apostles**': the incredible story of how the Holy Spirit used a few brave men to change the world! Just like the books, written in amazing detail by Luke, which cover about 30 years and reaches across lands from Jerusalem to Rome, with a variety of people and cultures, the play is vivid and fast-moving throughout!

What was it that prompted a bunch of inarticulate artisans, fishermen and civil servants to leave the safety of their homes and families and risk everything to tell the world of their experience of Jesus? The **Acts of the Apostles** began a new epoch in the encounter of the Holy Spirit with man. The Apostles were baptised by the Holy Spirit, as a gift from God, and were transformed from a group of uncertain nervous men to powerful missionaries who spread the word of Jesus across the known world! One can only begin to imagine what they and the others gathered must have felt, with the accompanying supernatural manifestations at Pentecost such as the sound "from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind", the appearance of "tongues of fire", understanding by strangers of speaking "in other tongues", – and the outpouring of gifts of the Holy Spirit for everyone irrespective of age, rank and race!

The play's script writer and producer, Mr Peter Hutley says, "Our endeavour to illustrate the descent of the Holy Spirit on stage is the most frighteningly difficult task we have ever attempted as it carries so much responsibility but we want to try, in order to bring St Luke's important message to our audience"

The breath-taking story will not disappoint and includes Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, the ship-wreck on the coast of Malta, an earthquake, healings, exorcisms, executions and hair-raising close escapes! In order not to miss out we recommend booking tickets NOW for remaining tickets to the performances on Thursday 6th, Friday 7th and Saturday 8th October at 7.30 pm. There is also a 2.30 pm matinee on Saturday 8th October. The box office telephone number is 01483 892167 or you can book on-line by visiting the website: www.wintershall-estate.com.

Studies on Baptism

In 2005 the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Church of England published the report of their conversations under the title ***Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity***. The conversations focused on baptism and mutual recognition and posed a series of questions to each partner.

A set of studies, suitable for use in mixed small groups has now been produced and is based on the report. The studies are available to download free from either the Baptist Union [website](#) or the Church of England [website](#).