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Sharing faith the Jesus way

Have you noticed how so many things have '360' tagged on to them? Your computer anti-virus could be Norton 360. You could have an Xbox 360 - after all 39 million people do.

'360' is, of course, the degrees in a full circle. These days it is often used (like with the Xbox) to mean 3D - in every direction, as a shorthand way of describing the virtual world. I have been thinking about it quite a lot, not because of the Xbox, but because of Jesus and the gospel. Let me explain with this short reading - which shapes my approach to mission and evangelism and speaks volumes to our ecumenical life together.

An essentially biblical emphasis - all too often ignored by the church - is that Christ is Lord and Saviour of the whole of a person, or he is no Saviour at all. Because Jesus insisted on seeing a person whole, one could never be sure which aspect of a person's need he would tackle first. Here comes the paralysed man, helpless and obviously sick in body. His friends have brought him hoping for a simple cure, and Jesus talks about the forgiveness of sins. Here, on the other hand, comes a clear case of spiritual need, an enquirer asking how to gain eternal life and Jesus gives him an economic answer, telling him to give away his goods to the poor. Because ultimately Jesus cannot rest content until all of a person's needs are fully met, it does not matter much to him where he starts on the work of salvation'. (John V Taylor).

Like the 360 degrees on a compass, Jesus addresses every individual with the facet of the good news they need to hear. There is no 'one size fits all' message of the gospel! 'So, what is the gospel of Jesus then?' I hear you ask. A Grove booklet, **'The 360 Gospel of Jesus'** addresses that, and **'Sharing faith the Jesus way'** launched by BRF this week, will help all Christians gain confidence in fulfilling the Great Commission. David Cornick, General Secretary at CTE says, 'this will be a source of courage for those of us who don't know where to begin - and for those who have begun the journey, it is a compendium of wisdom, humour and ideas'. Consistent with the '360' image, it would be a great resource for groups. See the new website: www.jesus360.org.uk and let [me](#) have your comments. [Back to top](#)

Christians reach broad consensus on appropriate missionary conduct

"Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct", a five-page document on the conduct of mission "according to gospel principles", was released during a public presentation on Tuesday 28 June at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland.

The recommendations regarding respectful behaviour on the part of missionaries, evangelists and other witnesses when sharing the Christian faith were issued following a five-year series of consultations among the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID) of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). The three bodies include Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and independent churches with a combined membership of some two billion people representing nearly 90 percent of the world's Christians.

"In the past five years we have been building a new bridge," said Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe, chief executive officer and secretary general of the WEA. "The document is a major achievement," he explained, in that it represents formal agreement on "the essence of Christian mission" while also demonstrating that diverse Christian bodies "are able to work together and to speak together." In this sense the release of the text "is a historic moment" in the quest for Christian unity.

"We send this document to each of our constituencies," said the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, "with the hope that they will see these recommendations as an inspiration to design their own codes of conduct, relevant to their own particular contexts." The document begins, "Mission belongs to the very being of the church." The recommendations that follow suggest practical ways of engaging in mission while showing sincere respect for neighbours of other faiths.

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the PCID, observed that leaders in the churches today "have a duty to proclaim the faith" and also "to propose a greater vision of dialogue." He cited a principle of Catholic teaching, "Reject nothing that is true and holy in each religion", cautioning that Christians must overcome religious conflicts if they are to "present the truth of God in a credible way."

The joint document on Christian witness calls for careful study of the issues of mission and inter-religious dialogue, the building of trust and cooperation among people of all religions and the promotion of religious freedom everywhere. Christians are encouraged to pray for the well-being of all, to strengthen their own religious identity and to avoid misrepresenting the beliefs of others. Where possible, it adds, the preparation of codes of conduct by churches and related organizations "should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions."

In presenting "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World", Tveit alluded to Jesus Christ's prayer for unity in the 17th chapter of John's gospel. "We are called to be one so that the world may believe," said Tveit. "And so this day is a day for thankfulness, a day of celebration, but also a day of reflection." Meetings involving the WCC, PCID and WEA that led to the formulation of "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World" were held at Lariano, Italy in May 2006, Toulouse, France in August 2007 and Bangkok, Thailand in January 2011. See also [here](#). [Back to top](#)

Swedish Free Churches Merge

The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, The Methodist Church in Sweden and the Swedish Baptist Union have finalized their vote to become one denomination. Four hundred representatives from the three Swedish denominations voted on the agreement at a Formation Meeting earlier this month. The church will begin its operations later this year or in 2012. The central office will be housed in the Ecumenical Centre, currently under construction in Alvik, Stockholm. The working name of the new church is Gemensam Framtid (Common Future). A final decision on a permanent name will be made by 2014.

The vote was the culmination of years of cooperation. The three denominations voted in 2008 at their respective annual meetings to accept the Declaration of Intention concerning the creation of a new joint denomination. The Declaration explains the biblical reasons for the churches' decision. "Jesus' prayer for his disciples challenges the Christian Church to manifest the unity which is a gift of God. All Christians living in the same place are called to a full fellowship with each other and with the whole Church of Christ," the document read. "Worship service, proclamation, Holy Communion, and service witness to this unity."

Prior to the Declaration, the three denominations already had started planting joint congregations. The document noted that the differing histories will strengthen Common Future. "This church will be a provisional one on our way to the visible unity of the Church of Christ in openness to other churches and denominations in Sweden. Our historic roots from different traditions are gifts that we hand to each other. We constitute diversity in the joint assignment of serving God and our neighbour." [Back to top](#)

Points of Convergence on the Unity of the Church

"With the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the witness of Holy Scripture and as expressed in the ecumenical Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, we believe in the Triune God: Father Son and Holy Spirit. Because we here confess "one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church", our paramount ecumenical task is to show forth this unity which is always a gift of God". (Charta Oecumenica 1)

The Churches in Dialogue Commission of the Conference of European Churches held a Consultation on "Visions of Unity in our churches – Points of Convergence" at Ráday College, Budapest from 22-23 June 2011.

The task of the consultation was to try to discern points of convergence in the conception of the unity of the Church as the main goal of the ecumenical movement. Five papers were presented on the positions of different traditions regarding visions of unity and points of convergence: the perspectives presented were by: Dr Walter Klaiber (Methodist); Dr Martyn Davie (Anglican); Revd Prof. Dr Viorel Ionita (Orthodox); Prof. Dr Annemarie C. Mayer (Roman Catholic); and Prof. Dr Friederike Nüssel (Lutheran/Reformed). From these papers eight points of convergence were identified:

1. The Unity of the Church is from God, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit...
2. Unity demands expression in live and mission...
3. Between ecclesial and Eucharistic community there is an organic link...
4. Christian identities are rich gifts of God to be shared with each other...
5. The Search for unity always exists in a particular context...
6. "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic" is the starting point of the theological reflection on unity...
7. The unity of the Church also requires both conciliar fellowship and mutual reception of conciliar decisions by the churches...
8. Using the same terms does not always lead to or reflect common understanding...

The Report ends urging the churches to commit themselves:

"to follow the Apostolic exhortation of the letter to the Ephesians and persevere in seeking a common understanding of Christ's message of salvation in the Gospel; in the power of the Holy Spirit, to work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one Faith, expressed in the mutual recognition of baptism and in Eucharistic fellowship as well as in common witness and service". (Charta Oecumenica 1) [Back to top](#)

Christian faith in Palestine and the Middle East today

The volatile and precarious situation of Christians in the Middle East was of deep concern to the members of the February 2011 meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee, and it was highlighted in a conference on Christians in the Middle East held in Greece.

With the diminishing presence of Christians in the region, the central committee said in a public statement in February, the "conviviality among peoples from different faiths, cultures, civilizations, which is a sign of God's love for all humanity, will be endangered." The central committee also called for a major conference on this issue for 2012. One part of this effort was the conference in Volos, Greece, from 20 to 22 June to explore the situation from a theological, ecumenical, cultural and political perspective.

The reality for the Christian community in the Middle East is quite stark as more and more stories in the public media tell of Christians fleeing the region or feeling increasingly threatened, even in the context of the recent democracy movements. In Iraq alone the Christian population has declined by nearly half during the past decade. In Egypt, there has been heightened violence between Muslims and Christians since the downfall of former president Mubarak. And in Israel and Palestine, Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Gaza continue to live under the pressure and humiliation of the Gaza blockade and Israeli occupation.

Christian churches in the Middle East have shown signs of decline despite their continuous historical presence in different countries in the region where many of them embody a heritage of ancient patriarchal jurisdictions. This has become a growing concern as the churches there struggle to maintain their presence and at the same time contribute to a culture of peace.

The Volos conference was co-sponsored by the WCC and Volos Academy for Theological Studies, which is a programme of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias. Titled "Living Christian Faith in Palestine and the Middle East Today: Theological and Political Challenges in Orthodox and Ecumenical Perspectives", its participants explored the theological, ecumenical and political perspectives of living as a Christian in the Middle East. A subsequent visit by the WCC youth body, Echos Commission, to Lebanon to explore how Christian youth are dealing with the realities of the church in the Middle East will take place in October. The WCC central committee has recommended "convening an ecumenical international conference in 2012 to address the new challenges Christians are facing in the Middle East, in collaboration with the churches in the region."

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Water conflicts pose threat to global peace

Conflicts over water threaten peace in the world, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, told a gathering in Germany on the banks of the River Danube to mark the end of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). "It may well be that in the coming years water will be at the centre of conflicts," Tveit told the Danube Peace Wave event in Ulm on 2 July.

The Peace Wave project was launched in Ulm in September 2010 and was followed by events along the River Danube in Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. It was intended as a contribution to and celebration of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence. The anti-violence decade started in Berlin in 2001 and culminated at an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in Jamaica in May 2011. Water was one of the issues that emerged at the convocation as a source of potential conflict in the world.

"The WCC is supporting the Ecumenical Water Network as one of many steps that demonstrate a link between peace with nature, and peace between peoples who find themselves in conflict over vital resources," said Tveit. In a sermon at the cathedral of Ulm, Tveit highlighted the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians as an issue underlying almost all the conflicts in the Middle East and into Asia. In the Middle East as well, he said, "the unjust occupation and use of water is one of the issues in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians". Tveit said Christians everywhere have a role to play in the search for a just peace in Israel and Palestine. "What we believe, what we say, can be a contribution to peace and justice – or to something else entirely," he said.

The WCC he said has launched an Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel through which volunteer accompaniers observe and understand the consequences of injustice and violence. The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, brought together a thousand individuals working for peace and justice from over a hundred countries. As well as celebrating the achievements of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence, the IEPC also encouraged churches and individuals to renew their commitment to nonviolence, peace and justice.

"The issue of peace is an issue for all of us. It starts with us, and our daily interaction with other human beings. It is about the effects of our lifestyle on others," said Tveit. "And to return to the issue of water: our high water usage has an impact on the water economy that in many places is getting out of balance. And we can observe the same thing about food, energy, and the monetary economy."

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Europe Day at CTE

Europe as a continent contains an enormous range of diversity, from the far northern forests of Finland to sunny Mediterranean shores, from the windy Atlantic Isles to the mountains of Transylvania. This richness of habitat and culture is matched by an equal diversity of faith communities – the Lutheran Nordic region, Catholic Spain and Italy, the Orthodox east to mention but a few. During these troubled times for the European political project, with changes threatened to the Schengen agreement and the Eurozone under pressure, the role of cross-border organizations and relationships is also undergoing scrutiny. What is the role of churches here? Can the post-WWII dream of uniting people around the Christian faith, thus preventing old enmities and divisions from fracturing Europe again, be relevant to our largely post-Christian societies? How are churches maintaining contacts and building bridges today?

On Tuesday 15 November all those with experience of church contacts in Europe, an interest in developing fellowship across borders, or curiosity about what the current state of European Church relations is, are welcome to join us at CTE for the first Europe Day. We will hear presentations from those actively involved in this sphere of church work – notably Dame Mary Tanner, European President of the World Council of Churches, Revd Canon Harvey Richardson (Community of Protestant Churches in Europe) and Very Revd John Arnold, formerly Dean of Durham and an architect of both the Porvoo and Meissen Agreements. There will also be opportunities to share experiences and to network; it will also give all of us an opportunity to explore what role CTE might have in supporting, encouraging and enabling European contacts. Lunch will be provided.

More information will follow closer to the time.

When? Tuesday 15 November from 11am-4pm **Where?** CTE, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH

RSVP by 8 November to Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, Secretary for European Church Relations, Churches Together in England, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH [Back to top](#)

Shared Visions of Fresh Expressions at Christ Church, Warminster

Over 40 people came together to hear inspirational speakers from the National Fresh Expressions Team and local stories from practitioners on June 11th. Christ Church in Warminster provided a great venue for those taking part which included Ian Adams – National FE Team Facilitator, Philip Bromiley – FE Vision Day Facilitator and Rector of Oldbury, and John Wraw, Archdeacon of Wilts.

The morning sessions were designed to look at the huge breadth of Fresh Expressions of Church and to see how they integrated with traditional forms of worship. The steps towards exploring a Fresh Expression were also clearly explained together with the story of how a Fresh Expression grew, developed and produced fruits of many kinds in new projects attracting new people in West Wiltshire. Seminars in the afternoon included a session on “Messy Church” from Allie Kerr, “Not Just Sundaes” – exploring the importance of and opportunities presented by food with Andy Bowerman and “Monasticism and Fresh Expressions” from Ian Adams.

The challenge Salisbury Diocese is now to develop a strategy for taking Fresh Expressions forward and a small group are forming to do just this in conjunction with the Mission Council. A Facebook [link](#) has been developed in order to share stories and seek resources and help. The Fresh Expressions Group (FEG) will meet in September and plan to be able to facilitate Mission Shaped Introductory courses in various parts of Wiltshire to enable interested churches and groups to move forward with their ideas, plans and dreams for Fresh Expressions of Church. If you would like to put your name down for one of these groups or would like to know more about FEG, please contact Danela Adams at the [Ramsbury](#) Office. [Back to top](#)

People, Experiences and Achievements of Women’s Coordinating Group

The Women’s Co-ordinating Group of Churches Together in England (WCG) was born out of the Women’s Inter Church Council some 13 years ago. WCG consisted of representatives of the member churches of Church Together in England and over the years many issues were considered such as Domestic Violence, Women’s Ministry, Women in the Media and Women in the structures of the Church.

At the final meeting of this group Revd Celia Midgley, a former Co-moderator of the Group, reflected on the people, experiences and achievements of WCG over the years. You can read her full reflection [here](#). [Back to top](#)

The Church in the Levertons

On the beautiful summer's evening of Monday 20 June 2011, the ancient parish church of All Saints', South Leverton, in north-east Nottinghamshire was comfortably filled for a special service to inaugurate a new Local Ecumenical Partnership known as The Church in the Levertons.

This LEP brings together the Anglican churches of All Saints', South Leverton and St. Martin's, North Leverton with North Leverton Methodists. It is the culmination of many years of working and worshipping together, including a number of Fresh Expressions initiatives. However, as several of those taking part in the service reminded everyone, just as a marriage can be seen as the end of a process it is also, importantly, a beginning.

Among those taking part in the service were Rt. Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham and Revd Timothy Bradshaw, Deputy Chair of Sheffield Methodist District. The bishop preached and Mr Bradshaw led the intercessions. The service was led jointly by Revd George Brigham, Circuit Superintendent and Revd Felicity Ferriter, Team Vicar. The bishop reminded everyone of the many ecumenical initiatives, both formal and informal, in that part of his diocese and spoke warmly of further steps in the Anglican-Methodist Covenant being recommended to this year's General Synod and Methodist Conference.

One highlight of the service was the signing of the Ecumenical Vision Statement by the bishop and deputy chair, representatives of deanery and circuit leadership, the local ministers and, most especially, all the members of the new LEP who were present in the service. [Back to top](#)

Methodist President urges South Korean government to resume food aid

The Methodist Church in Britain has expressed solidarity with the people of Korea after Churches distributing food aid were threatened with legal action by the South Korean government. Revd Alison Tomlin, President of the Methodist Conference, sent a letter to the President of South Korea last month urging the government to resume food aid. The Methodist World Mission Fund has issued a £10,000 grant to the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) in response to the crisis.

The NCKK sent 172 tons of flour to the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) on 18 May through the Amity Foundation, an organisation that receives funding from the Methodist Church's World Mission Fund. The flour was sent in response to food shortages in North Korea reported by the World Food Program and the NCKK. The emergency supply was distributed by the KCF in North Korea to kindergartens in three towns, reaching around 31,400 children. Revd Kang Young Sup, Chairman of the KCF, expressed his thanks and indicated that another eight towns were in need. But the South Korean Government has threatened to take the NCKK to court for distributing the emergency supplies via China without its consent.

Steve Pearce, partnership coordinator for Asia and the Pacific for the Methodist Church, asked people to pray for Korea. "This is a terrible situation," he said. "People are starving in North Korea. We urge people to help support the food relief effort through The World Mission Fund and to pray for peace and justice in Korea. The Methodist Church will continue its membership of the NCKK partners group and stand in solidarity with its actions."

Revd Heawon Chae, executive coordinator for Peace, Reunification and Development Cooperation on the Korean peninsula, said: "It took almost two months for the Amity Foundation to purchase the flour and transport it in trucks to Shineuijoo, a city at the border. The Korean government is now very angry at the NCKK's activity and it's going to take this to court as an illegal activity." South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's government ended donations of food and medicine to the North when he took up office three years ago. In a statement, the NCKK affirmed that "Christians in South Korea firmly believe that supporting food aid to our brothers and sisters in the North who are faced with starving is to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ." [Back to top](#)

Explore Adventure

Rock UK Trailblazers offers fantastic low cost outdoor adventures in the UK and overseas providing the perfect way to support your ministry, whether it is for men, outreach, or family. In April we completed another successful trip to Snowdon where 40 people reached the summit and enjoyed a great time of adventure and friendship. Christians and non-Christians most of whom had never met before, mixed it up and made the most of relaxed opportunities to discuss the Christian faith in an amazing setting. Encourage your contacts to make the most of these genuine opportunities helping deepen people's Christian faith in a fresh and exciting way.

Click [here](#) for website. ☎ 0844 8000 222 ✉ trailblazers@rockuk.org

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Housing Benefit caps in London - equipping London churches for action

With the launch of a short guide to enable clergy (vicars, pastors and priests) and other church pastoral workers to offer practical help to people who find that their benefit payments no longer cover their rent, Rt Revd James Langstaff, Chair of Housing Justice, urged the government to think again on its plans for benefit caps.

Bishop James said: "The reports and estimates of impact emerging from government sources only confirm what churches and projects working with Housing Justice are hearing on the ground: families are living in fear because they know they will not be able to make ends meet when their Housing Benefit is cut, let alone when the benefit cap is introduced. Landlords are already refusing to take new tenants under the age of 35 because of the impending changes to the Shared Room Rate. This cannot be about fairness to tax payers because many of these people are themselves tax payers. The situation is made worse by the misguided localism of removing ring fences from funds sent to local authorities to provide services for poor and homeless people and the apparent reluctance expressed by some housing providers to proceed with new 'affordable' schemes because they are uncertain that, with the Housing Benefit caps, they will find tenants able to pay at the new 80% of market rent level. There is still time for the government to respond to this outcry and draw back from a step which will surely increase family homelessness. This is the outcome for which we, alongside many households across the country, are praying."

The guide – ***Blueprint for action*** – is sponsored by the London Churches Group for Social Action and Housing Justice, and was launched on Monday 11th July. Revd Ruth Lampard, Associate Vicar of St Mary The Boltons, in the Earl's Court/Chelsea area of London, one of the most affected areas, said: "People turn to churches in times of trouble and as soon as I discovered the scale of the problem I realised that equipping church workers to help would make a huge difference. The Blueprint is full of practical advice about the help Local Authorities can offer, how to lobby landlords to reduce rents and steps like providing food parcels to make up for smaller reductions in benefit payments."

Alison Gelder, Director of Housing Justice said: "Housing benefit caps were first announced in the emergency budget soon after the Coalition Government came to power last year and they began to be introduced in April 2011. No one, including officials at the Department for Work and Pensions, knows exactly what the impact will be, but predictions are dire with Mayor Boris Johnson talking of the potential for huge numbers of poor Londoners being forced to move, the Evening Standard reporting that thousands of school children will be displaced and now this letter from Eric Pickles' aide. Worst of all this will bring about a huge change to the diverse social character of London life, part of what makes it a great city." [Back to top](#)

Higher Education

It was known well before last year's General Election that a new Government would be faced with big decisions about the English University system. In December 2010, decisions began to be made. Parliament agreed Universities could charge a maximum fee of £9,000 a year, with students being given loans to pay the fee (repayable once they started work and earned £21,000), and direct government funding for, broadly, the arts, humanities and social sciences being withdrawn. On June 28th a White Paper was published; 'Students at the Heart of the System'.

The White Paper includes proposals to improve student experience, encourages collaboration between industry and universities, suggests 'unrestrained recruitment' of high achieving students, seeks to reward with extra places universities and colleges charging lower fees, and affirms the importance of getting students from lower socio-economic groups into university.

There are things to be welcomed in this; no undergraduate needs to pay 'up front' for their education, part-time students will in future receive help towards fees, the stated commitment to students from lower socio-economic groups, the valuing of teaching alongside research. There are areas which need further investigation; what will be the overall effect on widening participation of unrestrained recruitment of high achieving students and extra places for institutions charging lower fees? There are also areas of concern, including a very narrow view of universities as being there to serve the economy. They are for that, but they are also there for the holistic development of students into active, serving, moral citizens, and to help society reflect on itself; to be part of the conscience of a democratic society as Lord Dearing once put it. Anything of that nature is lamentably lacking from the present proposals.

Further details can be obtained from Revd Dr Stephen Heap, the Church of England's National Higher Education Adviser on Stephen.heap@churchofengland.org [Back to top](#)

Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage

Representatives from more than 40 organisations, ranging from The National Trust, The Church of England, Crime Stoppers and the Ministry of Defence to National Parks, The Woodland Trust and The Historic Houses Association have come together to set up the Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage (ARCH).

ARCH is a new voluntary national network that will be used to take forward a range of initiatives and galvanise local action against heritage crime. The initiative is being spearheaded by English Heritage, the Police (through the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Each of the three organisations has signed a memorandum of understanding on tackling heritage crime (MoU) which delineates responsibilities between the three strategic partners English Heritage, ACPO and CPS. Local authorities will also be encouraged to join this coordinated effort and sign the MoU, with Canterbury City, Ipswich Borough Councils and Cheshire West and Chester leading the way. Churches are encouraged to create partnerships with their local authorities and others.

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Churches key role in regenerating rural communities

Churches of all denominations in East Anglia can, and should play a key role in regenerating rural communities by using their land and buildings to provide new affordable homes and community resources, the Lord Bishop of Norwich said at the Faith in Affordable Housing (FIAH) event at Norwich Cathedral. Giving the opening speech at the FIAH East Anglia conference, Lord Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James, said: "Strengthening and breathing fresh life into our rural communities is vital if we are to retain them as real places to live and work. Churches are exactly in the right place at the heart of our village life to take the lead role in creating sustainable communities. Working in collaboration with other churches we can renovate and regenerate our land and buildings to provide affordable homes and community resources for local people."

Housing Justice Deputy Director Alastair Murray explained that high property prices caused in part by the growth of second-home ownership in rural areas is causing a breakdown in the very communities where people want to spend their weekends and retirement: "This is creating a housing crisis, where local people can no longer afford to live and work in the communities where they have roots – priced out by second home owners. That's why Housing Justice is holding a series of FIAH conferences to explore how central and local government, together with local communities and churches of all denominations can provide much needed affordable homes." Helen Kelly, Team Leader, Rural and Community Affordable Housing at the Department of Communities and Local Government, will speak about the role that emerging policy can play in helping local communities, and what incentives there are for local landowners. The plenary session at the end of the event will allow delegates a chance to question speakers about what they've heard during the day.

FIAH East Anglia is the third in a series of regional events that are being held across the country organised by national Christian housing charity Housing Justice and sponsored by Quaker Housing Trust (QHT). They bring together a range of key organisations from Government to local housing groups to look at imaginative ways of providing affordable homes for local people by using church land and buildings. QHT is currently looking at an application from Solo Housing (East Anglia) for a finance package to help them provide accommodation for single homeless people in rural Norfolk: "This illustrates the extent of local need that FIAH can help to tackle," conference speaker QHT Secretary Paula Harvey said.

Many churches have more space in their buildings than they can make full use of, or are simply no longer using land or space. The conference held in Cumbria last year highlighted examples where housing need is being met successfully in areas such as Coniston through church involvement. Mitre Housing Association acquired land from the Parochial Church Council to build 11 houses, and bought Coniston Church Rooms from the Diocese of Carlisle to convert into three more homes. The end result is that this should meet the need for affordable homes in the area for some time to come. "This is exactly the kind of excellent example that Faith in Affordable Housing would like to see replicated across the country. We want to encourage communities to look imaginatively at how church buildings and land can be used for the future."

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Housing Justice National Conference

Over 80 people from churches, local and national organisations, and housing and homelessness projects from around the country came to the Housing Justice Annual Conference on 15th June responding to the question: **Church Action on Housing and Homelessness: Tea and Sympathy or Radical Action?**

The workshop topics and speakers were not pre-arranged but were instead chosen on the day itself by those who took part using [open space](#) format. Topics discussed included

- How can we build homes and not just housing?

- The needs of young people leaving care.
- How can the Church respond to the destitution faced by refused asylum seekers?
- Homes for works: are we back to the deserving poor?

In the conference report you will find notes from the workshops and action plans from the day, which broadly fell under one or other of these headings -

- **Challenging the government** on the injustice of the changes to housing, the benefits system, and as one group put it, the "dismantling of the welfare state"
and
- **Challenging ourselves** to use our own / our church resources for those who are excluded, homeless or in housing need.

One nice piece of feedback from the conference was: "Of all the events I've been to so far this summer, yours was easily the most productive. It was quite brave to go for the open space, but good facilitation pulled it off."

Hopefully this will encourage you to download the conference report, so you can get at least a flavour of the day - now available from the newly re-launched [Housing Justice](#) website. Comments, as always, are welcome. [Back to top](#)

CWM to relocate to Singapore

Council for World Mission trustees meeting in Durban, South Africa, have chosen Singapore to be the new location of the CWM secretariat. CWM general secretary Revd Dr Collin Cowan said the 22 June decision had far-reaching implications for the future of the CWM family: "The decision to relocate to Singapore was arrived at through a commitment to discernment and a consensual decision-making process."

The historic decision came following a lengthy and emotional debate, which resulted in the production of a special statement withdrawing Johannesburg from the process. "This decision is not to be interpreted as rejection of any other location that we considered, including the UK. Rather, it is to be seen as part of the dynamic involvement of God's spirit for the time." He added: "I am pleased with the outcome and I am looking forward to being part of a team that will serve CWM from a context that is geographically central to the CWM family."

The statement acknowledged the very clear concerns and feelings of the trustees, expressed during a lively debate on the secretariat location issue, and included the following resolution:

- * to rescind the decision that the CWM secretariat shall remain in London
- * to withdraw the city of Johannesburg as a possible location for the CWM secretariat
- * propose that at this time in the life and work of CWM, the CWM secretariat shall be relocated to Singapore.

After some further debate, the resolution was approved unanimously. Today, CWM is seeking to implement a strategy that challenges injustice, inequality and gives a voice to the voiceless. It is against this background that the choice of Singapore is challenging, exciting and strategically important for the future of CWM.

Dr Cowan said: "The decision to relocate the CWM secretariat to Singapore has far-reaching implications for the future of the family and especially for the staff. It is our prayer that the way forward will be full of hope and possibility for all of us. "Our colleagues in Singapore are ready to receive us. Singapore is where CWM's model of partnership in mission was born in 1975 and there is a feeling that we are returning home."

The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a worldwide community of Christian churches. The 31 members share their resources of money, people, skills and insights to carry out their missionary work. CWM was established in 1977 in its present form. It grew out of the London Missionary Society (LMS, founded 1795), the Commonwealth (Colonial) Missionary Society (1836) and the (English) Presbyterian Board of Missions (1847). Most member churches have backgrounds in the Reformed tradition. Many are united churches such as the United Reformed Church. [Back to top](#)

Racial Justice Sunday September 11

This year's Racial Justice Sunday resources are planned to be based around the theme "Created by God, Treated like Slaves: Tackling Human Trafficking" and "Love your neighbour as yourself, do this and you will live" from Luke 10:27-28. There has been an unforeseen delay in producing materials for this year so it has been suggested that those for 2008, available on the CTBI website [here](#), may be re-used. [Back to top](#)

Ancient Faith, Future Mission

Ancient Faith – Future Mission is a one day conference for 18-35 year olds organised by The Community of Aidan & Hilda (www.aidanandhilda.org). It will be on Saturday August 20th 2011 from 9 am to 8 pm at Kestin House (Urban Saints Centre), Luton, Beds, LU2 0AH. The purpose of the day is to open out and expand on the topic and ethos of Celtic Christianity and the concept of New Monasticism as a fresh expression of authentic Christianity for the future.

We will be focusing on four themes through the day which we believe are relevant to this age range (if not everybody), and are also key foundations to everybody's Christian walk. The themes are: Prayer; Mission; Whole Life Discipleship; and Authentic Expressions of our Faith. We have four speakers who will each tackle one of these topics, which they have a passion for, making it relevant to the age group and inspiring those who attend to go out and 'be' these things for Christ where they live:

'The Ancient Art of Breathing' - Prayer

Andy Freeman is from Reading, Pioneer ordained with the Church of England. He works with 24-7 Prayer in areas of social justice and community and the 24-7 'Boiler Rooms'. Andy is the author of 'Punk Monk'.

'Contemplative Activists' – Mission

David Cole works part time for the Community of Aidan & Hilda as 'Explorer Guide', where he gives guidance and teaching to members of the Community and also runs retreats for them. He also works freelance as a retreat leader and is on the leadership of an Evangelical church in the New Forest. David is the author of a one day training seminar on Christian Meditation.

'Being and Becoming' - Following Jesus in the Whole of Life

Jo Whitehead is Assistant Director of Midlands Centre for Youth Ministry where she teaches Youth and Community Work, Practical Theology and Pioneer Ministry. She has written on youth work, culture, collaborative ministry, self-management and self-care.

'Ancient Faith Future Mission' – An authentic Expression of Christianity

Ray Simpson is one of the founders of The Community of Aidan & Hilda. He was, until recently, also the Guardian of the Community. Ray is an Anglican priest who worked in an ecumenical venture in Bowthorpe in Norfolk. He now lives on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne and spends most of his time writing the many books he has published, including 'Exploring Celtic Spirituality', 'Church of the Isles – a prophetic strategy for renewal' and 'High Street Monasteries – fresh expressions of committed Christianity'. He also travels the globe lecturing on Celtic Christianity and New Monasticism as fresh expression of church.

The day will be flanked with worship led by NGM (New Generation Music), Bristol, whose mission is to seek to reflect the creativity and excellence of Jesus within the mainstream arts world. Our vision is to go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society, to provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God and to carry the light-giving message into the night.

The day will be held from 9am to 8pm at the Urban Saints centre in Luton (buffet lunch and a hot evening meal included in the price) and is only £60 per person! To book a place, please contact The Community of Aidan & Hilda office at admin@aidanandhilda.org.uk or on 01289 389249

Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy

The Free Churches Group have appointed Revd Bob Wilson to serve as Secretary for Prison Chaplaincy, with responsibility for the authorisation and pastoral support of Prison Chaplains around the country. Bob is a Baptist minister serving at Wayland Prison in Norfolk, where he will continue to 'keep his hand in' for one day per week.

This post has hitherto been funded and supported by the Methodist Church but now moves to the Free Churches Group in recognition of the fact that a wider range of churches are now engaged in this specialist ministry. Bob will also be seeking to assist the churches engage in community 'outside the gate' chaplaincy work in co-ordination with others. Bob succeeds the Revd Alan Ogier who is retiring and to whom a huge debt of gratitude is owed.