



# CT-eNews

June 2020

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## **Introduction**

This month's edition of CTe-News is largely focused around two main themes – racial justice and the coronavirus crisis.

Several of the pieces in this newsletter are summaries, and we hope you will follow the links in this document to the full content.

Look out for a special CTe-News edition later this month, bringing you reflections on life during the coronavirus crisis from more than 20 of our Member Churches.

## **Reflection of the Month: Beyond lamenting Covid-19**

*CTE's Principal Officer for Pentecostal and Charismatic Relations, Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, shares his Reflection of the Month for June 2020...*

The past three months, March to June 2020, has been the most intense and sustained trauma I have ever experienced. An unprecedented number of my friends have fallen ill or have died during this time; a situation made worse by social distancing measures introduced by the UK government in an attempt to bring the spread of the coronavirus Covid-19 under control. These measures meant I, like everyone else, could not visit my sick or dying friends, or the bereaved. All but essential services have been closed down, including churches leading to a mass movement to online activities.

Early on I was invited by the Woolf Institute to take part in its [Covid-19 Chronicles](#) series and found myself reflecting upon what it means to 'lament'. I was reminded that a major theme in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, including over a third of the Psalms, is lament; i.e. to cry out to God in times of deepest distress and despair for intervention. My own lament has been less a crying out to God and much more a deep sense of loss and sorrow, and an inner searching in the spirit of Jesus when he prayed, 'My Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done' (Luke 22 & Matt 26).



As this Covid-19 pandemic has tightened its grip upon every aspect of our lives it has become clear that my own grief is better served as motor for reaching beyond myself and deep into the concerns of those around me. My Pentecostal tradition offers a mainly activist and interventionist approach to challenges punctuated by crisis moments leading to radical change – sometimes tending towards theory than practice. But how do I do activism and interventionism in lockdown? Professor Robert Beckford helpfully initiated an audio documentary: [Better Must Come! Black Pentecostals, the Pandemic and the Future of Christianity](#), to which I was pleased to contribute and which has much to say to the wider church beyond Black Pentecostalism.

Lockdown has presented challenges and opportunities for us all irrespective ethnicity, faith or denomination. I am reminded of a visit I made to China in the early 1990s, when the country was emerging from its Cultural Revolution during which all faiths saw their places of worship closed. As they began to re-emerge from enforced lockdown collaboration across faiths and Christian denominations became essential. Covid-19 has in some ways levelled the faith and denominational playing field, with everybody locked out of their places of worship and all having to discover new ways of being. An interesting form of unity has emerged, with unprecedented sharing of information across faiths and denominations via multiple online platforms.

From this place of mutual inconvenience, grief, and a searching for new ways to be together, we have additionally to face up to some of the lessons of Covid-19. For example according to a recent [report into factors impacting health outcomes from Covid-19](#) by Prof Kevin Fenton, the over 80's are seventy times more likely to die from Covid-19 than the under 40's; those living in deprived areas, those most recently come into the country, and BAME people are all over-represented in infections and deaths linked to Covid-19.

And so, as together we search for meaning and how to be good neighbours to fellow sufferers in the wake of coronavirus, just maybe this cup of suffering can teach us something about our oneness as a humanity and as the church of Jesus Christ.

*Dr Joe Aldred is a Bishop in the [Church of God of Prophecy](#), from the Pentecostal tradition. He is an ecumenist, writer and broadcaster, providing Pause for Thought for BBC and having regular slots on UCB radio.*

## **Racial Justice**

### **Presidents of CTE to listen carefully to black voices**

Presidents of Churches Together in England are listening carefully to black voices, including young people, black leaders in the churches and those who have worked to combat racism over many years.

In a statement they say:

Churches Together in England Presidents are deeply concerned about the lack of racial justice in our society and, in the wake of George Floyd's death, have convened a series of meetings so they can listen to a range of black voices and hear the views of key black leaders. They believe that such engagement will



enable them, as CTE Presidents, to increase their understanding of this deep-rooted lack of equality and so come to a position where they can make an active contribution towards a constructive and just way forward that enacts real and urgent change.

Representatives of CTE's 50 Member Churches met for their biannual Enabling Group meeting in early March 2020 and welcomed a presentation from the Movement for Justice and Reconciliation (MJR). [MJR's exhibition](#) and presentation, reflecting on the history and legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, was a profoundly moving and disturbing experience. Churches are invited to both reflect upon the challenge of racial justice within their own communities, and to contribute to the larger struggle to bring about a just and inclusive society.

### **Presidents of Churches Together in England:**

Archbishop Justin Welby, The Archbishop of Canterbury

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, The Free Churches Moderator

Archbishop Angaelos of London, Archbishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London  
and CTE President for the Orthodox Churches

Pastor Agu Irukwu, head of RCCG UK and CTE Pentecostal President

## **CTE Presidents and Member Churches take a stand against racial injustice**

A growing number of churches from the Churches Together in England (CTE) family have spoken out, following the death of George Floyd in the United States and protests around the world against racial injustice.

A range of [statements from CTE Member Churches](#) are available on [our website](#). Here are the statements from CTE Presidents and CTE's General Secretary.



### **The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby released a joint statement with former Archbishop of York John Sentamu:**

Recent events in the United States of America have once again drawn public attention to the ongoing evil of white supremacy. Systemic racism continues to cause incalculable harm across the world. Our hearts weep for the suffering caused – for those who have lost their lives, those who have experienced persecution, those who live in fear. God's justice and love for all creation demands that this evil is properly confronted and tackled. Let us be clear: racism is an affront to God. It is born out of ignorance and must be eradicated. We all bear the responsibility and must play our part to eliminate this scourge on humanity.

As Dr Martin Luther King Jr said, "In a real sense, we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Therefore, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

We pray that God's abounding wisdom, compassion and love will guide leaders across the world to forge a better society.

**Pastor Agu Irukwu, chair of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) UK and Pentecostal President of Churches Together in England, released [a video statement](#).**

Here Pastor Agu encourages Christians in the UK to pray for others, to share a message of love and forgiveness, to speak out against injustice, to speak into our society here in the United Kingdom - challenging institutional racism - and to encourage more representation of black people and ethnic minorities in the many institutions which influence our everyday lives.

**Archbishop Angaelos, CTE's President for the Orthodox Churches, has also [written a reflection](#) including these words:**

"When we walk alongside those who hurt it must be about them; their pain, their experience, their perception and their reality, and not what we deem it to be. It is about understanding and responding to that pain."

**Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, The Free Churches Moderator and President of Churches Together in England, [released a statement on Twitter](#).**



**Hugh Osgood**  
@HughOsgood



A few of my thoughts on George Floyd and the sin of racism.

I am feeling a lot of pain. And I acknowledge there are many that are suffering more than I am. My heart goes out to the family of George Floyd and to everyone else who for

Hugh has also released two videos on the issue: [Thought for Thursdays](#) and [an interview with Noel McLean \(Churches in Communities Vice President\)](#).

**CTE's General Secretary, Rev Paul Goodliff, made the following statement:**

"The killing of George Floyd has revealed afresh the depths of racism that remain in our world, and the evils that flourish when it is allowed to go unnoticed. Every black life matters, and every black life is of infinite worth in God's eyes — and ours too.

The Member Churches of Churches Together in England are committed to fighting racism, to see every human life as of equal value, and to point to the ways in which our society remains unjust and our world unequal.

Whether it is police brutality, or the disproportionate affect of Covid-19 in BAME communities, or the thousands of children who die every day from preventable diseases, we pray that God's kingdom of justice and peace might come afresh upon the world that God loves so much that He redeemed it through His Son, Jesus Christ, crucified, buried and risen."

*[More statements from our member churches are available on the website...](#)*

### **A local story: Nottingham churches unite in prayer and action against racial injustice**

"We wanted to pray, but also to pledge to be the change that we are praying for... It's sad to think that we as churches have often ignored or overlooked racial injustices, and not spoken up when we should have..."

At 9.25pm on Monday 8 June, churches across Nottingham came together in a moment of prayer, reflection and solidarity, responding as a united church to the killing of George Floyd in the United States precisely two weeks before.

*[Read more of their story...](#)*



### **The reality of racial injustice: churches reflect**

CTE asked individuals from five of our Member Churches to share their reflections on racial injustice, including how their church is currently seeking to address racism, and what more churches can do to bring about racial justice.

#### **Reflections are provided by:**

**Catholic church:** Gloria Oham from the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ)

**Church of England:** Rev Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, a member of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) and diocesan BAME Mission and Ministry Enabler in Leicester

**Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG):** Dr Tolu Olarewaju from RCCG Living Waters Parish in Stoke-on-Trent

**Salvation Army:** Major Jonny Smith, Intercultural Mission Enabler

**United Reformed Church (URC):** Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

Here are the five questions we asked, with a selection of responses...

*[Read the full set of responses on our website...](#)*

**1. Recent events in America have brought the issues of racial justice into the spotlight, what are your reflections on the US situation?**

**Jonny (Salvation Army):** As I reflect on racial justice, these images of George Floyd's death are out in the open for all to see – it's horrible and completely wrong. However, even if none of this violent criminal behaviour was happening, we need to remember that racial injustice, both in the US and here, is still very present. Everything that I am reading would indicate that the system, in seemingly all walks of life, gives white people an unfair and unjust advantage over other people.

**2. What are your thoughts on racial injustice in the UK context?**

**Tolu (RCCG):** The history of racial injustice in the UK is linked to its relationship with its former colonies. Currently, there are obvious racial injustices in the country including an ethnicity pay gap, differences in employment rates, access to education, social mobility opportunities, and biases in the criminal justice system. Black and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals are also more likely to work in low-paid sectors with limited progression opportunities. Racial injustices in the UK context are intertwined with the social and economic systems that govern the UK and are often more subtle than the form that exists in the US.

**3. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus pandemic. What are your reflections on this?**

**Karen (URC):** I have seen comments scoffing that BAME people "have a chip on their shoulders" – how can a virus be racist? Or blaming BAME people for being the source/spread of the infection. Too many people seem completely dismissive of the obvious multiple socio-economic inequalities at play. I am 100% certain that if evidence showed that white people were four times more likely to die from Covid than Black people, there would not be such a haste to 'ease the lockdown' – without a vaccine, without a cure, without anything really having changed! Black lives apparently don't matter!

**4. How is your church currently seeking to address racial injustice?**

**Gloria (CARJ):** The Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) is an independent, black-led, lay-led association which seeks to work with others for a more just, more equal, more cooperative society. We try to listen to BAME voices and make them heard in the Church and the wider society. This is a form of education in which the oppressed teach the oppressor – if they are willing to listen.

## 5. What more might church and society do to address racial injustice?

**Lusa (Church of England):** We have witnessed a recent flurry of engaged responses from a number of senior Church leaders who have spoken out against the ongoing experience of racism faced by people from the global majority in the UK as well as in the US. They have called for a need to address and redress racism in its institutional and personal forms primarily within the Church and, more widely, across society. Many in the Church of England are now calling for an independent public inquiry to investigate, as a matter of priority, issues of racism within Church and society.

*[Read the full set of reflections on our website, along with a personal reflection from Rev Wale Hudson-Roberts, Justice Enabler for Baptists Together ...](#)*

## Coronavirus

### Places of worship to re-open for private prayer

From 13 June 2020, it is permissible for churches in England [to re-open their buildings for private prayer](#).

The government released [guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#) on 12 June 2020 (these apply to England only).

*[Read more on our website...](#)*

See also [the web page 'Preparing for when church buildings re-open'](#) which points you to further reflections and guidance on preparing for 'the new normal'.

### CTE Coronavirus Hub

If you are looking for guidance, resources or inspiration for your church during this difficult time, then visit our Coronavirus Hub at [cte.org.uk/coronavirus](http://cte.org.uk/coronavirus).

We'd like to draw your attention to the following, which feature links to information from our Member Churches:

[Missional and Theological reflections](#), compiled by CTE's Principal Officer for Evangelism and Mission, Rev Dr Ben Aldous

[Help developing social media for your church](#)

[Mental health and wellbeing resources](#)



## **Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches and COVID-19**

In the midst of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Bishop Joe Aldred, Principal Officer for Pentecostal and Charismatic Relations at Churches Together in England, approached members of the CTE Pentecostal and Charismatic Forum\* to discuss:

- 1. COVID-19 in terms of challenges, opportunities and expected future impact.**
- 2. Financial impact of COVID-19.**
- 3. The effects of conspiracy and apocalyptic theories linking COVID-19 to 5G technology, and a vaccine to the mark of the beast.**

[A comprehensive summary of the Forum's responses and perspectives is available on our website...](#)

\* The CTE Pentecostal and Charismatic Forum comprises representatives from the 23 (of 50) CTE Member Churches that self-identify as 'Charismatic' or 'Pentecostal'. The Forum meets twice per year, in May and November, for prayer, fellowship, information-sharing and networking. Forum members constitute various ecclesial and ethno-cultural typologies, including: classical-Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics; African-majority, Caribbean-majority, and European-majority memberships.

## **The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on the BAME Community**

On 2 June 2020, the UK Government released the report [COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes](#), a review into how different factors – including ethnicity – have affected COVID-19 risk and outcomes. This was followed on 16 June by a further report [COVID-19: understanding the impact on BAME communities](#) – a summary of stakeholder insights.

Prior to this report being released, the [National Church Leader Forum \(NCLF\)](#) – an interdenominational group working to mobilise Britain's BAME Christian community – met to discuss the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) community.



They considered the following

- The social, demographic, economic and political factors contributing to BAME ill health
- What should government do?
- What should BAME people do?
- What should the black church do?

[A summary of the discussions is available on our website...](#)

[See also the recording of a webinar by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: 'Impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities'](#)

## **NCLF ten-point plan for churches post Covid-19 lockdown**

The NCLF then released a statement and ten-point plan for churches coming out of restricted movement post the Covid-19 Lockdown:

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” 3 John v2 (NIV)

Churches have a great influence on society, having tangible and intangible assets, practices and structures, spaces, and church leadership to assist with the responsible disseminating of relevant and truthful data and information regarding COVID-19, however in this time of crisis, churches become channels of support and hope. Leaders organise and gather for prayer and spiritual fellowship in online and digital spaces for their membership, and it is crucial this remains ongoing since for many it is a lifeline for prayer and solidarity.

The two dimensions that we want to bring to the attention of policy makers and observers are: the importance of religious beliefs and communities to people the world over and the extensive reach and presence of the communities and institutions involved; and secondly, the deeply embedded traditions of care for the vulnerable that are central to religious teachings and example. Beyond this, the significant presence of religiously owned and run care and support facilities and the links between social support and trauma healing, are vitally important now and will become more so in the future.

Evidence based research compiled as of 7th May 2020 tell us that BAME people are a staggering 90% more likely to die as a result of the Coronavirus. Data captured between 2nd March -10th April (ONS research) advised that black men are 4.2 times more likely to die from a coronavirus-related death, and black women 4.3 times more likely than white men and women. This is of concern to us as BME churches, and while we are working to better understand about what is causing this disproportional impact, we as Churches need to prepare ourselves and congregations to come out of lockdown.

Our outreach efforts have included consultation and dialogue with our constituency, and we have listened to testimonies, personal accounts and unpacked data samples. Combined, these experiences and advice have shaped and informed the action points listed in the plan...

*[Read the NCLF Ten-Point Plan in full on our website...](#)*

## **Quakers join launch of Build Back Better campaign**

Quakers in Britain, one of CTE's Member Churches, are co-launching [Build Back Better](#), a new campaign for a green and just recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The campaign says let's not go back to normal.

Build Back Better brings together a broad range of members including unions, youth campaigns, health workers, green NGOs and faith-based organisations, to campaign for a recovery that protects public services, creates good jobs and tackles inequality and the climate crisis.

The campaign is founded on five key principles:

- Secure the health and needs of everyone in the UK now and into the future, irrespective of employment or nationality.
- Protect and invest in public services.
- Rebuild society with a transformative Green New Deal – a plan to decarbonise the economy in a way that tackles inequality and enhances people’s lives.
- Invest in people – restructure public and private finance so it supports sectors that nourish society and safeguard the future.
- Build solidarity and community across borders – promote changes that end global power inequalities.



Virtual rallies are planned while social distancing applies. The campaign is encouraging people to write to their MP and supporting local groups to work together to build a people-powered mandate for a recovery that benefits people and planet.

Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship for Quakers in Britain, said: “The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the massive inequalities that already existed in our society. Quakers have been working for many years for a world where equality, justice and peace can flourish, and we need to work with others to make this vision a reality.

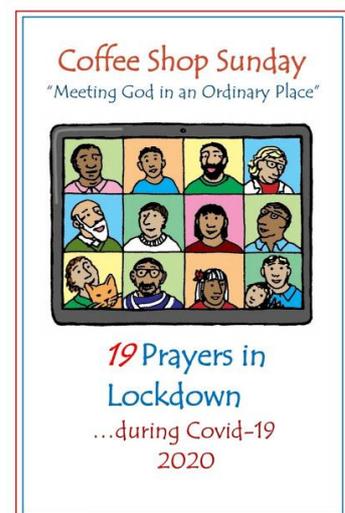
“We are delighted to be launching Build Back Better with so many other organisations today, and we look forward to supporting Quakers all over Britain to get involved with the campaign.”

Read more on [the Build Back Better website](#), and also in [a blog reflecting on how and why Quakers are involved](#).

[View the story on our website...](#)

## Prayers in Lockdown

The booklet “Prayers in Lockdown” was published on 1 June 2020. It has been written in collaboration by 25 people through [Coffee Shop Sunday](#), which is a new expression of Church and part of Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit. This has all been done ‘virtually’ and the 25 co-authors have never met. The entire project was completed in less than one month.



Each prayer has twelve verses and there are 19 prayers (symbolically 19 in recognition of Covid-19). Each prayer has a one-word theme. Two sentences in each prayer were written by a different co-author to inspire collaboration.

[Download the booklet here](#) (please acknowledge Coffee Shop Sunday). More copies can be ordered for a small charge from Trevor Gay at [coffeeshopsunday@gmail.com](mailto:coffeeshopsunday@gmail.com)

[View the full story on our website...](#)

## Music video brings Ipswich churches together

Dozens of people from churches across Ipswich have come together to sing a song about unity and hope in 'The Ipswich Blessing'.

Members of 43 Christian church denominations from the town have recorded themselves singing along to the song 'The Blessing' by Elevation Worship.

Those who were involved in the project include members of Anglican, Baptist, Elim, Free, Methodist, New Frontiers, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, URC and Vineyard churches.



[Enjoy 'The Ipswich Blessing' on Youtube](#)

## Coronavirus, Church and You survey

Researchers from York St John University are asking churches and churchgoers how they have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and what they think the future may hold.

"As we pass the most severe period of lockdown, it seems a good time to assess...Has it strengthened or weakened faith? How has it been for clergy and ministry teams trying to work in this new environment? How have those receiving ministry found this novel experience? Will virtual ministry become part of the post-pandemic landscape, and will this be a good move for your church," ask the survey authors Revd Professor Andrew Village and Revd Canon Professor Leslie J. Francis.

[The online survey](#) should take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete, and the closing date is 30 June.

[View the full story on our website...](#)

**\*\*\* THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL EDITION OF CTE-NEWS LATER THIS MONTH TO SHARE PERSPECTIVES FROM MORE THAN 20 OF OUR MEMBER CHURCHES ON LIFE DURING AND AFTER THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC \*\*\***

## Thy Kingdom Come

### **“An amazing opportunity to come together as the body of Christ”**

*Churches from over 65 different denominations in 178 countries took part in the global prayer movement Thy Kingdom Come this year, with plans having to quickly adapt due to coronavirus restrictions.*

*Marking the final day of 11 days of prayer, an ecumenical service was held on Pentecost Sunday, with leaders including His Holiness Pope Francis, the Archbishop of York and three of CTE’s Presidents; Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby; the Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, Archbishop Angaelos; and chair of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Agu Irukwu.*



*Thelma Commey, the current Methodist Youth President, also took part in the ecumenical service. Here she shares her reflections on being involved in this global movement of prayer...*

I truly love the heart of Thy Kingdom Come. Churches from all over the world coming together in prayer, in my opinion, is the most powerful gathering that could ever be. If everyone really prayed for their 5 five friends – or even just one friend – to come to know the love of Jesus, - or even just one friend- imagine the number of lives that have been and are being changed through the power of prayer! I am filled with joy and excitement just thinking about it.

Personally, it was a privilege to play a part in Thy Kingdom Come this year. I am truly grateful for the opportunity, including taking part in the Pentecost Sunday ecumenical service, and writing the Methodist Prayer Journal Jesus loves all. When the journal was published, I was amazed to hear how far it had reached around the country. I heard many personal stories, through email, of how people were not just reading it but bulk ordering and sharing it around their community. This alone was evidence of the love of God in the hearts of believers. To think that I had have a part to play in the spreading of the love of Jesus is a true honour.

Watching the Thy Kingdom Come service on Pentecost Sunday morning was a beautiful experience. It looked just like the kingdom of Heaven- – people of all ages, races and abilities coming together simply to worship our God. The Holy Spirit had unified nations, just like he did on the first ever Pentecost Sunday. When I heard the Lord’s Prayer in different languages – including Twi, the language of my motherland – I was reminded of how universal the gospel truly is. God is



not limited to my 21st century English context, but actually He is present and powerful in all contexts.

Thy Kingdom Come is an amazing opportunity for churches across the globe to come together as the body of Christ. When we do this, we present a rich diversity which allows people from all backgrounds to relate to the gospel and see their place in the body of Christ. We also present unity, which is a unique and powerful image for our world which is so divided. When Christians gather, we prove that God's love, through His Spirit, allows us to love irrespective of our differences. What a way to present Christ to the world as a saviour for all!

*Thelma Commey is a 19-year-old Ghanaian woman who has had the privilege of experiencing God's undeniable love. Giving her life to Christ when she was 11, she found a relationship that would transform her. Thelma is currently serving as the Methodist Youth President, working full-time for one year to serve the children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain – one of CTE's 50 Member Churches.*

[Watch the Thy Kingdom Come 2020 video](#)

The Thy Kingdom Come team would [welcome feedback](#) from anyone who took part in this year's events, via an online survey.

## Thy Kingdom Come in Leicestershire

Christians across the Diocese of Leicester joined with Christians around the world in a commitment to pray for 24 hours a day during the 10 days of Thy Kingdom Come.

The global wave of prayer took place between the days of Ascension and Pentecost, and gave life to new and innovative ways to pray collectively during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among a number of online events, a webpage of resources to guide and encourage prayer, and regular, collective prayer over video chat, there was also a prayer wall to write on and a Facebook Page to post to...

[View the full story on our website...](#)

## Thy Kingdom Come unlocked in Cornwall: the South West Prays

*by Roger Mills, Missioner, Churches Together in Cornwall*

Isaiah 43:18-19: Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

It was all going so well. Renewal would be the theme. On the eve of Pentecost, Christians would be stationed at one-mile intervals across the entire 630 miles of the South West Coast Path ([www.southwestawake.com](http://www.southwestawake.com)), praying simultaneously at 2 pm for the coming of



the Kingdom. In Cornwall, an additional web of inland prayer walks would link churches of different denominations across the county. On Pentecost Sunday, two Beacon Events would unite us in praise, at Liskeard for those in East Cornwall, and at Gwennap Pit (the open-air amphitheatre near Redruth, where John Wesley preached to thousands) for those in the West...What could possibly go wrong?

Then came lockdown and it was soon apparent that none of the plans could go ahead. What to do? Well, Thy Kingdom Come is about prayer, so pray we would...

*[View the full story on our website...](#)*

## **Churches come together in creative lockdown fundraising for Christian Aid Week**

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, Britain's longest-running fundraising week, [Christian Aid Week](#), took the innovative approach to shift its fundraising efforts online – with the organisation's supporters up-and-down the country embracing the challenge with zeal.

The annual fundraising week unites 50,000 volunteers and 12,000 churches to fundraise to help some of the world's poorest and most marginalised communities.

With the famous red envelopes unable to be delivered by Christian Aid's dedicated volunteers, virtual fundraising ideas were launched to encourage the nation to continue to give, as well as creating a digital envelope that supporters could pass on to neighbours, friends and family...

In Kingston, Surrey, six ministers from different denominations came together clock up two million steps between them to raise money for some of the world's poorest communities during Christian Aid Week.



The ministers – rector of All Saints' Church, Kingston, the Rev Jonathan Wilkes; Fr Martin Hislop of St Luke's Church, Kingston; minister of Kingston Methodist Church, the Rev Dr Karl Rutledge; vicar of St John the Evangelist, Grove Road, Kingston, the Rev Mark Stafford, and ministers of the United Reformed Church in Kingston the Rev Lesley Charlton and the Rev Suk In Lee – surpassed their £15,000 goal and have continued to raise an incredible amount for the international charity.

Kingston Christian Aid Group member, Ian Williamson said: "We are amazed and gratified by how generous people in Kingston and around have been in these difficult times.

"We had no real expectation of getting a response as large as £16,000! We think that they too realise that though things are difficult enough for us in the UK, these times are - and will be - much harder for those that face the threat of Covid-19 in places where soap is an unaffordable luxury, water is precious, health services not so developed, and living conditions (particularly in places like the refugee camps) hugely overcrowded."

*[Read the full piece on our website...](#)*

## Supporting agricultural key workers

The [Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy](#) has, like many ecumenical organisations, had to adapt its work during the current coronavirus pandemic.

Founded 20 years ago in response to the foot and mouth crisis of that time, the chaplaincy has always valued its rural constituency. Now, officially recognised as key workers, farmers are widely acknowledged as vital to getting food on to our tables.

Operating under the auspices of [Churches Together in Cheshire](#), the chaplaincy has grown into a team of approximately 15: farmers, clergy and agricultural specialists. However, the aim of the Chaplaincy remains unchanged: to be a free confidential service offering a listening ear, practical help and care to the whole farming community in a non-judgmental way. The farming community is acknowledged as one where there are real concerns about mental health, and the occupation is overly represented in suicide statistics.

Whilst, thankfully, foot and mouth is no longer prevalent, farming is pressed by many other demands: financial pressures, tenancy issues, government grant uncertainties, bovine TB, Brexit and changing regulations, the vagaries of the weather, long hours and social isolation. And then add the coronavirus crisis into the mix. "We are acutely aware of the pressures of falling milk and potato sales due to lockdown and the pressure on sheep, beef and pork prices," says Lead Chaplain, Sharon Mayer.

The chaplaincy, which has members from Methodist, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Free Churches, has risen to the challenge of keeping in touch with individuals and families under the current constraints. Social media ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) is increasingly popular. Phone contact is maintained with those who are most vulnerable, advocacy and interventions with government departments continue. "Meet and Eat" lunches have been adapted to "Lunch In Your Living Room" with a delivery of food and a socially distanced chat on the doorstep. Chaplaincy members have cooked some meals themselves and have also had support from local caterers.

The work of the Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy and recognition of its effectiveness is reflected in the grant support that it receives not only from the churches of Cheshire, but from health authorities and charities, and the wider farming industry.

Visit [the Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy website](#) to see more of their work.

*[View this article on our website...](#)*



## And finally...

### Telling the Story

*Telling the Story – the origin and development of Local Ecumenical Partnerships* has been reissued by the Council for Christian Unity to enable us to understand better these enduring structures.

[View this story on our website...](#)

### Young songwriters invited to shine for WCC Assembly

The [World Council of Churches \(WCC\)](#) is inviting young people to enter an ecumenical song writing competition. This creative opportunity is part of the planning for the WCC 11th Assembly, which will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany in September 2022.

[View this story on our website...](#)

### Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) workshops

[ECCR](#) are running their [Money Makes Change interactive workshop](#) online in July, for anyone who'd like to explore how to better connect their faith with their finances for a fairer world! The three sessions (on 1, 8, 15 July) will use material from their interactive workshop resource. There's a morning and an evening group and places are limited, so sign up early to avoid disappointment!

For the morning group (11am - 12:30pm), [Book here](#)

For the evening group (8pm - 9:30pm), [Book here](#)

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