

Reflection of the Month: My Generation



Roger Johnson, a Methodist from Nottingham writes:

There's a rather catchy modern song which contains the words, 'I want to serve the purpose of God in my generation'. We don't hear it sung much these days.

Listening to Radio Nottingham recently I heard Rev. Steve Wild, who is here to open a rebuilt Methodist Church in Bingham, speaking about his year as President of the Methodist Conference. He was asked if he was saddened by the number of chapels that have closed. His answer was something along the lines, 'No, they have served their purpose well and we should celebrate that'. And the reality for many declining churches is that they have served their communities well in days gone by but are struggling to find relevance today, for a variety of reasons which may not be their fault.

Steve Wild made me think. What questions should we ask when a church is on its last legs and struggling to survive? Very often the driving factors are money (or lack of it) and an aging membership. But one question that I believe overrides both of these is 'are they engaging in God's mission to the people around them in this generation?' I don't believe it should be a matter of guilt to answer 'no' if things have changed and we need a fresh start. Neither should they feel guilty if they have inherited a building which served that purpose well in the past but is no longer what is needed today. Every organisation has to evolve with the times.

Some years ago I walked into a country pub one evening in the height of winter and was immediately attracted to the open fire. I was frozen and standing beside the fire, my body soon returned to normal. I felt God asking me what that fire would look like the next morning. My reply was that it would be a mass of grey embers and no amount of poking around would re-ignite the fire. The message God gave me was this – 'don't waste time raking over the embers of yesterday's fires – start new fires'. How often do we do things in church simply because it's the way we have always done it? It worked 50 years ago so it should work today – surely.

Having worked ecumenically for many years, I see good things and not so good things in all denominations. Some senior figures in Methodism have, in days gone by, predicted the total wipe-out of Methodism in Britain within a generation – and yet we are still here. As Steve Wild has found when touring the country as President of Conference, there are some amazing things happening. Many of the traditional denominations have suffered decline over the last century, some more than others, and Methodism has certainly taken the hit. The big question for Methodism, like all denominations is 'are we serving the purpose of God in this generation?'

Going back to Steve Wild – a man whose enthusiasm for Christ and his amazingly outgoing personality breathe new life into all who meet him – what makes him special is that he believes in the church. Yes, he's pragmatic about its future but will not allow bad news stories to eclipse the many good news stories. He said on the radio that the Holy Spirit is still working powerfully. As long as that continues, all will be well.

Roger Johnson spent over 10 years as a Methodist Evangelism Enabler and now acts as a freelance consultant. Roger writes a blog: <https://rogerjohnson.wordpress.com/category/bulletins/>

Proposed Church Census Cancelled



A steering group of denominational Statistics and Research, Communication and other officers has been meeting since Autumn 2015. Invited and facilitated by the Church of England's Head of Research and Statistics, Dr Bev Botting, the group has putting together a proposal for a national church census in 2016.

The work progressed to a draft dedicated website, a logo, and a registration process for the national networks of churches. The aim of the proposed census was summarised as 'Information. Celebration. Action'.

The plan was to gather information in October when some denominations collect statistics anyway, and to supplement that with additional questions about working together, social engagement, volunteer hours etc. The hope was to collate information from across the churches, celebrate what the churches are doing, and facilitate further action together.

The information was to be gathered electronically or on paper, in the form of a congregational questionnaire and collected individual personal profiles using an App. The tools were to be tested with a number of pilot churches prepared to report on how the questionnaires and technology worked in practice. The pilot churches were from different denominations, north and south, urban and rural.

However, shortly before the pilot churches could test the system, some major denominations did not sign up to the census. The reasons were various, but as David Cornick reported to CTE member churches, 'too much remained to be done in too short a time'. Without the participation of those major denominations (including the Church of England itself) the data produced would not have been useful enough to justify the exercise. However, a great deal of good work has been done and some excellent tools created. The steering group will be meeting again to consider how best to proceed, and how that work can be creatively deployed to help churches gather data to inform and guide their mission strategies.

NOTE: A Church Times article about the cancellation of the proposed census refers to the 'CTE steering group'. This is not accurate as the steering group is hosted by the Church of England. For clarification, CTE has had a member of staff on the steering group and web hosted the registration process of denominations to assist the process. The initiative for the census came from the Church of England.

[Link to the article in the Church Times](#)

Opportunities from Student Christian Movement Effective Student Work Training



SCM - a Body in Association of Churches Together in England - reports:

SCM is running a two day training course for chaplaincy assistants and university or church based student workers, to equip them with the essential skills and knowledge required for effective Christian student work.

This course is suitable for those new to their post and those looking to acquire new skills and knowledge, and will cover the following:

- Defining the context of Christian Student Work
- Student Engagement
- Leading workshops
- Social Media and Marketing
- Facilitating Bible Study
- Planning Interfaith Activities
- Managing yourself and others.

The course fee is £150, with a £25 discount for SCM Link Churches.

[Click here to find out more and to book a place](#)

Regional Development Worker

Student Christian Movement is seeking to employ a Regional Development Worker in the North West of England to start in September. The post will be based in Manchester, and is full time (35 hours per week) with a salary of £20-22,000 depending on experience.

The Regional Development Worker will be joining a small dynamic staff team, developing our work with students in the North West of England. The successful candidate will expand our network of student groups and link churches, organise events, deliver training and work with students, local churches and chaplaincies to improve and develop student outreach and engagement in the region. Experience of Christian student work within a church or chaplaincy context would be an advantage.

[Click here for further information, including details of how to apply](#)

Closing date: 12 noon, Friday 3 June 2016. Interviews: Week beginning 13 June 2016

Ecumenical Guests at a Prayer Meeting of 40,000 people

Roy Crowne from Hope Together reports:

Last Friday of April saw 40,000 people gathered for prayer at London's Excel Centre. The Festival of Life brings together members of Britain's Redeemed Christian Church of God and is hosted by RCCG's General Overseer Pastor Adeboye (right). To mark the Queen's 90th birthday, Pastor Adeboye was presented with a copy of *The Servant Queen* by the Anglican Bishop of London, Rt Rev Dr Richard Chartres, pictured with Roy Crowne, Rev Yemi Adedeji and Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf (Church of England Advisor for Mission and Evangelism) from the HOPE Leadership Team and Pastor Agu Irukwu of RCCG's Jesus House. Pastor Agu told delegates at the 12-hour night of prayer how Jesus House is using the book and encouraged them to do the same in their churches.



Link to Festival of Life: <http://www.festivaloflife.org.uk/>

Link to ordering copies of *The Servant Queen*:

<https://www.cpo.org.uk/range.aspx?range=4971&cat=3750&prod=V4971BT>

Link to Hope Together: <http://www.hopetogether.org.uk>

Every Tribe, Nation and Language: Growing Multi-ethnic Churches



A day conference for church leaders of all Christian traditions who are seeking to integrate people from different ethnic backgrounds into the life and mission of their church. The Conference organisers are excited by the prospect of a diverse group of Christian leaders gathering from across the midlands (and beyond) to explore together the challenge of growing multi-ethnic fellowships and sharing the Christian Gospel across ethnic and cultural boundaries. They hope the day will bring about new relationships between churches as partners in God's mission.

10.00am-4.00pm, Saturday 2nd July at the Queens Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Somerset Rd, Birmingham, West Midlands B15 2QH

Speakers:

- **Dr Harvey Kwiyani:** Harvey is an emerging younger generation African missiologist.
- **Rev Steve Hollinghurst:** Steve is a freelance trainer, consultant and researcher in contemporary culture, evangelism and new forms of church.
- **Gale Richards:** Gale was formerly project development worker for the Heart of England Baptist Association (HEBA) and currently combines her part-time role as
- **Dr Tani Omideyi:** Tani and his wife Modupe founded Love & Joy Ministries Association of Charities which includes Temple of Praise congregations, Liverpool Lighthouse Ltd. Facilitated by Dr Dulcie Dixon McKenzie, Rev Dr Colin Marsh and Rev Israel Olofinjana

There will be opportunity to reflect in groups on the questions they raise. We will ask whether ethnically diverse congregations are counter-cultural? This unique collaboration between Birmingham Churches Together, Queens Foundation and the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World will attract delegates from across the Christian traditions of Pentecostal, Anglican, Free Church and Catholic Churches.

The cost is £15 including lunch and payment is essential to secure your booking.

If you wish to attend, [please register using this form](#) by Friday 17 June
For any further enquiries email office@birminghamchurches.org.uk

Christian Resources Exhibition

ExCeL, London 17-20 May 2016



Bill Allen, from Christian Resources Exhibitions reports: Christian Resources Exhibitions (CRE) is one of the most ecumenical events in the Christian calendar. There is no other exhibition in Europe that features so many organisations from such a broad church.

Nowhere else can church leaders experience such a broad range of resources under one roof. Visitors can see stands featuring everything from furniture to films, pulpits to puppets, ways to

worship and what to wear. In addition, CRE provides inspiration, teaching and encouragement through a programme of seminars and arts performances.

CRE celebrated its 30th year in 2014 and hold multiple events every year throughout the UK. The largest is the annual event, CRE International which is now held at ExCeL, London with around 8,000 visitors and over 300 exhibitors in 2015.

[Please click here for complimentary and discounted tickets](#)
[Brochures can be viewed here](#)

Creative partnership with the Sinai Mar Thoma Church of North London



The Bishop of Willesden, Pete Broadbent, has signed an agreement with the Right Revd Dr Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Bishop of the Diocese of North America and Europe in the Mar Thoma Church, to work in a creative partnership with the Sinai Mar Thoma church of North London.

The Mar Thoma Church is a Syrian Christian church headquartered the state of Kerala, India, with followers across the globe. Traditionally believed to have been founded by Saint Thomas (Mar Thoma), in the year AD52, the church is one of the oldest denominations of Christianity.

The clergy of All Saints Harrow Weald, James Mercer and Peter Ward and the Revd Dr Thomas Philips of the Mar Thoma Church attended the signing. As part of the partnership, the churches have already held joint acts of worship and continue to explore opportunities for shared outreach and collaboration in mission action planning.

Bishop Pete said "We are already in full communion with the Mar Thoma Church, but it's great to cement that relationship with them and for one of our parishes to commit themselves to work hard on even closer relationships. Thanks to the people of All Saints' Harrow Weald for taking this seriously."

The Revd James Mercer, Vicar of All Saints', Harrow Weald, commented "It is a real blessing for us at All Saints' to be able to work and pray with such a creative and committed fellowship. Our shared acts of worship have been very exciting and colourful and the post-service curries are to die for!"

The Revd Dr Thomas Philip, Vicar of Sinai Mar Thoma church, commented "We welcome the opportunity that our new partnership with All Saints' offers to build friendship and trust across ethnic communities. We look forward to exploring what it will mean for us to be a recognised parish within the Diocese of London and sharing in the adventure of mission."

All Saints' work is a key example of the Diocese of London's Capital Vision 2020 of serving local communities in a way that is 'confident, compassionate and creative'. The innovative community work of the church was praised by the [thinktank ResPublica](#) in its report Holistic Mission: Social action and the Church of England in 2013.

The church is currently undertaking a major reordering of its iconic Butterfield church building (the [All Saints' Serving Harrow](#) or 'ASSH' project). Fundraising has begun to enable the church to install a biofuel boiler and underfloor heating and to replace the 1950's vestry block, which has reached the end of its usable life, with additional community accessible space and an

outdoor classroom to serve the on-site [Forest School](#). The project also seeks to enhance the church's built heritage and includes measures to lessen the carbon footprint of the church campus, in line with the diocesan [Shrinking the Footprint](#) environmental campaign.

This article and picture was published with permission from the [Diocese of London](#)

MORE Ecumenical Resources for the EU Referendum June 23rd



Further to the previous CTe-News, here is a longer list of various resources about the forthcoming Referendum on June 23rd 2016. The list is not in priority order and will be augmented further as more resources are available. The aim is to help groups of churches facilitate debate:

[EU Focus](#): website hosted by Christians in Politics, from all parties and for all denominations, including guidelines for holding hustings

[Europe.Anglican.org](#): Bishop Innes from the Anglican Diocese of Europe speaking to Christians of all denominations

[Premier Radio debate](#): between Christian leaders who take different view. ('Premier' is a Body in Association of CTE)

[Re-Imagining Europe](#): Blog from the Church of England and Church of Scotland, with the editorial support of Crucible

[Think, Pray Vote](#): Introduction article from the Joint Public Issues Team representing Baptist, Church of Scotland, Methodist and United Reformed Church.

[Think, Pray, Vote](#): Resources from the Joint Public Issues Team

[Church of England Prayer](#): for the Referendum

['Why Should Christians Care About The EU Referendum?'](#) article from Premier

[Should we leave the European Union?](#) article from the Evangelical Alliance (Note also links to related articles)

[World Council of Churches re European Identity](#): Panel discussion fielding ideas

[The EU Referendum: How should we decide?](#) E181 from Grovebooks £3.95 in print and PDF

[Extra Web Resources re EU Referendum from Grovebooks](#): supplement material relating to E181 above

[The EU Debate and the Gospel PDF](#): Address by Revd Dr Keith Clements, at [Faith in Europe](#) AGM 2016

[Thinking Creatively about Europe PDF](#): Address by Rt Rev and Rt Hon Rowan Williams at [Faith in Europe](#) AGM 2015

[Sermon at Europe Day Service PDF](#): Very Revd Dr John Arnold, Vice President [Faith in Europe](#) May 2016

2016 Sabbatical paper: The Ecumenical Context of Jamaica by Bishop Dr Joe Aldred

At the beginning of 2016, Joe Aldred, a member of staff at Churches Together in England, spent two months on sabbatical in Jamaica reflecting on the socio-economic and political context of the island and what role churches working ecumenically might play in its postcolonial nation building.

Joe's findings in *The Ecumenical Context of Jamaica*, featuring ecclesiology, mission and colonial legacy is [available here as a PDF download](#).



Summary of Churches Rural Group Meeting 13th April 2016



Introduction. The CRG brings together representatives of Christian denominations with a significant rural presence and other groups and organisations concerned with rural life and ministry to discuss issues of common interest on behalf of Churches Together in England. The meeting in April 2016 included:

Missional Listening. 'I have a passion for rural ministry – it's often the place where revival starts!' said Simon Mattholie, CEO of Rural Ministries, during his presentation to the CRG. He noted that many rural church plants and mission initiatives have begun with the best intentions and high commitment of volunteers but failed to reach maturity. Could this be partly because there has not been enough investment in listening, hearing and seeing where God is already at work in a particular community and joining in with him? Time to 'hang around and interact,' prayer, discernment and engagement are needed to work out what is actually happening and what mission and church might look like in each context. Part of this process involves 'spiritual archaeology' to understand issues from the past that continue to have an impact on and affect the current context, as well as identifying gathering points, flows of people and seasonal patterns. Good news will be different in individual communities: there are no quick fix solutions, but a missional listening offers a process with thought-through, transferable values and principles. Simon will be leading a workshop on 'Missional Listening' at the Germinate Conference (details below) for those who would like to hear more about this project, or he is willing to send out background papers. He can be contacted via www.ruralministries.org.uk

Farming issues. Farming Community Network has had a large increase in its caseload, due to the aftermath of the flooding earlier in the year and to the cash flow problems caused by delayed payments from the RPA as the new system is being introduced. Members of the CRG noted concerns about the current bureaucratic culture which relies on computer programs to impose sanctions, regardless of individual extenuating circumstances.

Please note: Christopher Jones would be pleased to receive any comments or reflections on the 'disconnect' between action on food poverty and the poverty being experienced by farmers. (cj@agriculturalchristianfellowship.org.uk)

Dates for your diary:

Germinate Leadership Annual Lecture: 17 May 2016, Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park
Revd Dr Michael Volland, author of *The Minister as Entrepreneur*, is delivering our 2016 Germinate Leadership lecture. Please publicise! Cost is £10 including lunch, reserve places by emailing janetb@germinate.net .

Rural Mission Sunday, "Sow and Grow", 17 July 2016

Celebrate rural mission! Look out for materials in the next issue of *Country Way* or download here: <http://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/about-arc/support-arc/item/9407-rural-mission-sunday>

Germinate Conference: 15 October 2016, Coventry

The CRG / ARC day conference for lay and ordained rural church leaders across denominations with case studies, workshops and resources. Key note speakers are Revd Dr Roger Walton, President of the Methodist Conference 2016/7, on discipleship; and Pete Atkins, Team Co-ordinator for Fresh Expressions. Full details: www.germinate.net/go/germinate



And finally re Church Census: As a Rural Group we discussed a proposed national Church Census to be conducted in October 2016 and agreed to encourage rural churches to take part. PLEASE NOTE: since the meeting it has been agreed to cancel the proposed census for Oct 2016 and for the Census steering group to work out next steps.

Present: Jerry Marshall (Chair & ARC), Elizabeth Clark (ARC / Methodist / URC) Jim Currin (CTE), Roger Greene (IRCA /Agricultural Chaplains), Christopher Jones (FCN / ACF / ATP), Simon Mattholie (Rural Ministries), Barry Osbourne (Smaller Free Churches Group / REN), Ann Wright (C of E / IRCA Europe).

Download a PDF copy of this CRG report

Reflection and Statement re 'Reformation 1517' in England

Reflections on the Presidents' statement about the 500th anniversary of the Reformation

This is a paper from Revd Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, exploring the Presidents' 5 'R's as a way of engaging with the whole question of how we commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. The 5 Rs are: Rejoice, Remember, Reforming, Repenting, and Reconciliation.



Download the PDF paper: Reflections on the Presidents' statement about the 500th anniversary of the Reformation

Short web address for the Presidents' Statement and Reflection: www.cte.org.uk/reformation

Taizé Community young adult gathering in Birmingham 2017

Hidden Treasure

Inner life and Solidarity

Friday 28 April - Monday 1 May 2017
for 16-35s



In cooperation with the churches of the city, the Taizé Community will be facilitating a young adult gathering in Birmingham next year, over the Early May Bank Holiday weekend, 28/04-1/05, 2017. Brother Alois, prior of the community will take part.

Main events over the weekend will take place in city-centre churches: St Chad's Cathedral (Catholic), St Philip's Cathedral (Anglican), The Church at Carrs Lane (Methodist and URC), and St Martin in the Bull Ring (Birmingham's ancient parish church).

The meeting is being held with the blessing of the presidents of Birmingham Churches Together, Archbishop Bernard Longley, Bishop David Urquhart and Reverend Ian Howarth. Support has been expressed by other Church leaders (see below).

16-35 year-olds are invited for the full weekend. 16-18 year-olds may alternatively come for a one day programme, just on the Saturday. The prayer gatherings will be open to people of all ages.

In ~8 host neighbourhoods of the city, local people of different churches will be working in teams during the coming year to prepare accommodation and a programme for the young participants.

As with all gatherings led by the brothers of Taizé, a regular community prayer will be at the heart of the weekend. Brother Alois, prior of the international and ecumenical monastic community, will speak at some of the evening prayers. Birmingham Church leaders are being invited particularly to the Saturday evening prayer.

Afternoons: workshops in the city-centre will celebrate the myriad ways in which people of faith in Birmingham and beyond are striving to make the world a better place: interfaith relations, the welcome of refugees and asylum seekers, engaging with the sick and with prisoners, living more ecologically, becoming aware of the problems of human trafficking, the arms trade and inequalities in financial systems. Afternoon activities will also include music and the arts, and questions of faith, vocation and Christian community life. A church will be set aside for those seeking a time of quiet reflection and prayer.

Contact information

[Download a PDF flyer for more information.](#)

www.taize.fr/birmingham

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Contact: taizebirmingham@gmail.com

Phone in Birmingham: Matthew and Steph Neville 07521214342 or Mike Branscombe 0781726762

In Taizé, France: Brother Paolo +33 385 50 30 30

Commendations, welcome and invitation from Birmingham Church Leaders:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/468196/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/Taiz%C3%A9_Community_in.aspx

And Finally ... Ecumenical Honours awarded

The ..

Archbishop of Canterbury conferred the Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism to:

- His Grace, Bishop Angaelos OBE, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom and Chair of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
- His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain, a co-president of Churches Together in England
- Canon Simon Stephens OBE RN, retired CofE priest from St Andrew's Moscow, for services to the Eastern Orthodox Church

Links:

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2016/04/first-ceremony-for-archbishop-of-canterburys-new-awards.aspx>

<http://www.copticcentre.com/bishop-angaelos-conferred-lambeth-cross-by-archbishop-of-canterbury/>

<http://eurobishop.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/fr-simon-stephens-is-honoured-by.html>

Also ..

Her Grace Most Reverend Prophet F N Onyuku-Opukiri on behalf of the College of Bishops Worldwide presented the Holy Spirit Revealed Award to Bishop Dr Joe Aldred on 23 April 2016 for 'Diligence in Church Unity' at a ceremony in London recently.

And ...

Billy Kennedy, a president of Churches Together in England, is now an Ecumenical Canon of Winchester Cathedral. Billy leads the Pioneer Network and the New Community church in Southampton:
www.newcommunity.org.uk



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