

Reflection of the Month: Prayer and Prisons Week

Revd Bob Wilson is the Free Churches Faith Advisor to the Prison Service and here speaks about praying for Prisons Week in October.

Prisons Week this year is being held from 9th – 15th October and I would like to encourage as many as possible in the church to pray for all those affected by imprisonment.



There are currently around 85,000 men, women and children in our prisons with many, many more affected by the crime and hurt that these people represent. It was recently estimated for example that 200,000 children were affected by having a parent in prison.

As we grow in faith and realise just how much God loves each one of us, just how great is his mercy in forgiving, nurturing and encouraging us; then we find that we ourselves become more able to show mercy to others and to ask God to show yet more towards us.

We know we could always do better and although God calls us to perfection, only God is perfect. In this Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis, 'Lord, have mercy' is the shared, common prayer for Prisons Week, putting us all on holy ground and an equal footing as we draw closer to Jesus, the 'face of the Father's mercy'. Please do consider how you as a church may be able to engage in prisons week this year.

You could order prayer leaflets / posters for your church, with prayers for each day of the week from www.prisonweek.org

You could possibly invite a local prison chaplain to visit your congregation to share their experience of prayer at work.

You could hold a special service to raise awareness of all those affected by imprisonment.

Whatever you do, let me encourage you to pray. Prayer changes lives, and we can all cry out, for ourselves and for all those affected by prison, Lord, have mercy.



Bob's message is on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/160250520>

Web page links:

www.prisonweek.org

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/465238/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/Prayer_and_Prisons.a_spx

A new framework for local unity in mission

An exciting, significant, practical, ecumenical document

As part of CTE's remit to support and encourage local ecumenism, a working group of some of the National Ecumenical Officers have been working with the General Secretary. They have explored issues around local unity in mission, including the changing nature of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and the new ecumenical contexts in England.

A consultation document was published in March 2015 and sent to Member Churches and Intermediate Bodies for their responses. The results of the consultation were presented to CTE's [Enabling Group](#) in March 2016. (Visit the [archive page](#) for more information.)

The letter below and an entirely new report were sent in March 2016 to [Member Churches](#) and [Intermediate Bodies](#) for their further deliberations. They are asked to [respond to David Cornick](#) by 6 February 2017 so that the March 2017 Enabling Group meeting can assess the responses and discern the way ahead.

The dry account above gives no hint of the significance of this new report. David Cornick suggests that it 'may well prove to be one of the most significant practical ecumenical documents of our time'. He adds: 'The future is exciting. God has not finished with us yet!'

http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/257506/Home/Resources/Local_Ecumenism/A_new_framework/A_new_framework.aspx



Links between religious freedom and economic prosperity?

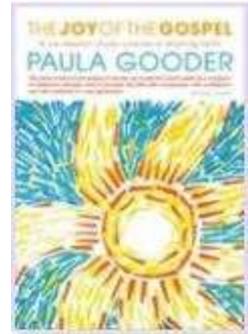
A seminar held on 2nd March 2016 at the UK parliament hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Baha'i Faith highlights the above links. It heard that there is a strong correlation between religious freedom, economic freedom, and other civil political freedoms.

Elizabeth Joy attended this seminar on behalf of Bishop Joe Aldred whose sabbatical she is currently covering. This seminar once again triggers the importance of addressing poverty as a Justice issue and empowering people at the grassroots to be employed in safe contexts that ensure religious freedom and economic prosperity for the well-being of individuals, families and nations.

Further information and report on this seminar is found [here](#)



The Joy of the Gospel: Study Course



English ARC has sponsored the *Joy of the Gospel* study guide by Dr Paula Gooder based on Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* reflections. The study guide was the 2016 Lent Course from *Church House Publishing*, but is intended for small groups to use at any time of the year, and by Christians in all traditions.

Written by Dr Paula Gooder (Theologian in Residence at The Bible Society) *The Joy of the Gospel* is a six-part course for parishes and small groups. A short film has been produced and released this week to promote the study guide and is now available to watch online. See the links below.

Widely recognised as offering wisdom and vision for all Christians in a culture that can be hostile to the Church, *Evangelii Gaudium* offers a positive and realistic approach to sharing faith in the modern world. Paula Gooder introduces its key themes to readers in all denominations and challenges them to consider its application in their own contexts.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, The Most Reverend Bernard Longley and the Bishop of Truro, The Right Reverend Tim Thornton, Co-chairs of the English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee, both write in the preface of the study guide about the impact it will have on deepening relationships between Catholics and Anglicans.

In the film, Archbishop Bernard said:

"Paula's background, her scriptural expertise, the way in which she's presented this material; I think is going to enable groups to really get to the heart of what Pope Francis is setting out, and I think we'll see some fruits from this, particularly in coming together with a joint understanding of the churches mission and enabling us to look for practical ways of reaching out with the truth of the Gospel, into the societies where we live and that we've been called to serve together."

Notes:

Paula Gooder is an internationally known writer, speaker, educator and broadcaster. She is a member of ARCIC III and is closely involved with Anglican-Roman Catholic relations at the international level.

The study guide is available to purchase online as a book or ebook from Church House Publishing: <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/books/9780715147313/the-joy-of-the-gospel>

The film is available online at Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/152706011>

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/K9qq-Dw87kU>

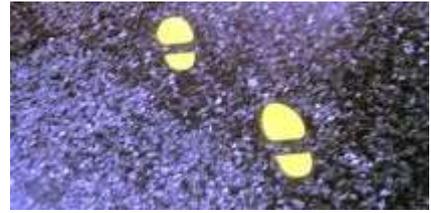
Free audio files accompanying each session are also available on:

Sound Cloud: <https://soundcloud.com/the-joy-of-the-gospel>

iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-joy-of-the-gospel/id1077775647?mt=2>

'English ARC' is the English Anglican – Roman Catholic Committee: www.cte.org.uk/englisharc

Luther 2017: Ecumenical Pilgrimage



Martin Luther, the Father of the Reformation spent most of his life (1483-1546) in the neighbouring German States of Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, located between Berlin and Frankfurt. This region known as 'Luther Country' is celebrating the Luther Decade. A 10 year build up to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Many events have been arranged and Pilgrimages are being planned to share in the historic commemoration. For many it will also provide an opportunity to visit and explore the former East Germany for the first time, including Eisleben, Wittenberg, Eisenach, Erfurt, Leipzig and Berlin. Our visits will be to the places associated with Martin Luther.

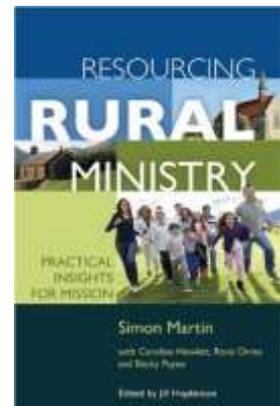
An ecumenical pilgrimage from the U.K. is on offer led by Rev John Robinson, a retired United Reformed minister. John has been leading Pilgrimages mainly to the Holy Land, Turkey and Italy for over 20 years and now welcomes this additional destination. The visit is planned for the school half term Monday May 29 - Friday 2 June 2017, flying from Bristol. The travel plans have been arranged by McCabe Travel one of the foremost religious tour operators and their German contacts; staying in 3 and 4 star hotels on a half board basis.

Whilst this will be a remembering of a man and events that transformed the Christian Church, it will inspire the Church today to be open to change today.

There is a brochure available with full information from John revjohnurc@outlook.com or telephone (01271) 813783

Resourcing Rural Ministry Practical Insights for Mission

BRF 2015, Simon Martin with Caroline Hewlett, Rona Orme and Becky Payne. Edited by Jill Hopkinson



This book is long overdue as it brings many of the resources for mission from the Arthur Rank Centre - which has resourced rural ministry and mission for 40 years - into one place. This is very welcome for clergy and lay people alike and from across the churches in England, especially as it is said that 1 in 6 of the population live in rural areas.

Written by national advisors and local practitioners alike, Resourcing Rural Ministry does exactly what it says, by providing a wide variety of ideas, resources, case studies and comment for anyone concerned with the rural context of mission.

Apart from all the helpful information, what I like best about this book is the layout. Under straight forward titles and in short sections it is easy to find what you might be looking for. Whether it be Messy Church, Multi-Church Ministry, or rural aspects of Ministerial Training, it also includes examples of more unusual ministry e.g. Forest Church and various aspects of theological reflection e.g. Robert Warren's diagram of Doing, Being and Living.

Resourcing Rural Ministry draws on various traditions including monastic and Fresh Expressions, as well as quoting examples from different denominations. It is a compendium or 'one stop

shop' for those who want to address the challenges of the rural church – especially practically.

As a practical guide, some may say Resourcing Rural Ministry is light in terms of political and social critique, and that it could have drawn more on major works on ministry and mission before it. I would say its strength lies in covering the contemporary ground brilliantly and with just the right amount of information and reflection to encourage every reader in the task of developing understanding, discipleship and rural ministry to get on with the task better informed.

All insights are positive, and difficult topics are not ignored. This is well illustrated in a quote from page 42: 'Multi-church ministry brings with it a great many joys and opportunities, in working with different communities and congregations. It also has its own tensions and complications and can be stressful for lay and ordained alike. We know that it is possible for some churches in rural multi-church groups to grow and to do so consistently over several years. We also know that many rural congregations have reduced in size and others maintain regular numbers attending'. What follows this quote is a chapter exploring the issues, with a pragmatic approach, based on research.

In short, this is a book for everyone in rural ministry. Full of ideas and encouragement, notes and anecdotes, resources and analysis that has been 'rural-proofed' to be relevant and helpful. Drawing on resources from the Arthur Rank Centre e.g. Country Way (p39) and Journey to Faith (p110), it draws on 40 years' experience and provides the reader with a wonderful overview, guide and mission resource all in one place.

The book can be ordered from BRF: <http://www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857462626/>

Jim Currin

CTE Evangelisation, Mission and Media and Staff member on the [Churches Rural Group](#)

Paristamen invites bids for £20K grant on Christian Perspectives on Death and Dying

As a result of the legacy which The Paristamen CIO received in 2014, the trustees are delighted to announce our first invitation to bid for a large grant of £20,000.

Each year we will announce a theme or project area for our large grants, and we would expect to make a single grant of £20,000 within a very specific field.

For 2016, the chosen theme for our large grant is Christian Perspectives on Death and Dying. We are inviting bids for a £20,000 grant from charities with relevant expertise on death and dying issues to launch a significant new project to promote debate by churches and individual Christians on these issues – including the key legal and ethical issues.

[Please click here for full details of the programme – what we are seeking and how to submit a proposal](#)

If your organisation has relevant expertise and may be interested in submitting a bid please contact [The Paristamen CIO](#) at the earliest opportunity (and certainly no later than 4 April 2016).

The deadline for full applications is Monday 9 May 2016

A Methodist Address to the Bishop of Rome

Methodist Church News release: 12 April 2016

Secretary of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Gareth J Powell, with other senior Methodist representatives from around the world, was received by Pope Francis in a private audience at the Vatican last week, on the morning of Thursday 7 April.



The audience was followed by a meeting with members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU). During the audience the Revd Gareth Powell gave the following presentation to Pope Francis:

'Your Holiness,

We bring you the greetings of the Methodist people. It is a particular pleasure to greet you in the year when the English speaking Methodist community, here in Rome, celebrates 60 years of worship and ministry at Ponte Sant' Angelo Church. The work of that local church, and the ecumenical commitment of its ministers, has led to important exchanges of insights and wisdom as together we seek to proclaim the love of God. The dialogue between Methodists and Catholics continues to enrich our understanding of each other and also of ourselves. That the formal dialogue takes place at an international level is vital to our understanding of the breadth of God's creation. That churches in this City and in a whole variety of local communities give expression to our common faith in Christ is vital to our faithful search for deeper unity.

We are grateful to you for the encouragement you give that together we must strive to be one in faithfulness to Christ and the mission of the Church. Your Holiness's declaration of a Year of Mercy is one in which the Methodist people take a most particular interest. The proclamation of the mercy of a loving God stands at the heart of all that John Wesley, our founder, stood for. His brother Charles expressed it in one of his hymns; Prepare the vessel of thy grace, Adorn me with the robes of praise, And mercy shall be all my song; Mercy for all who know not God, Mercy for all in Jesu's blood, Mercy, that earth and heaven transcends; Love that overwhelms the saints in light ... [584, Methodist Hymn Book]

We are grateful to your Holiness for offering us fresh understandings of the Mercy of God. Your call to a renewed understanding of God's mercy is one that must surely find expression in our common endeavours and in the way that we live out our mission and shape our ecclesial communities. In this gift of a copy of the Hymns on the Lord's Supper by John and Charles Wesley you will find something of the Methodist emphasis on the depth of God's loving purposes. We pray that together we may find a deeper sense of our shared calling. Through our sharing in the celebration of the victory of love over death may we have a more dynamic and urgent sense of our mission. In these hymns and in all that we do as followers of the risen Christ, let us raise our voices in the proclamation of our common gospel and the offer of mercy'.

Thursday's events followed a dedication of the new Methodist Ecumenical Office of Rome (MEOR) held at Ponte Sant'Angelo. The MEOR initiative is aimed at promoting greater understanding of the worldwide communion through education programmes and the welcome it can offer from its location just across the Tiber from St Peter's Basilica. The Revd Dr Tim Macquiban, Director of MEOR, said: "We ask all to hold the ecumenical work of the office in your prayers at this important stage of its development. "This initiative gives Methodists worldwide the opportunity to contribute in a continuing ecumenical dialogue, promoting ecumenical understanding through the likes of educational programmes."

CEC grieves loss of life, condemns violent attacks in Brussels



Press Release No: 22 March 2016. Brussels

This morning in Brussels rush hour commutes and early morning flights were violently disrupted by multiple attacks. Current reports describe at least 26 deaths as a result of two explosions at Brussels Airport, and further explosions at a metro station in the core of the European Union district.

The Conference of European Churches grieves this loss of life and disruption of peace. We condemn the violent attacks and urge for peaceful responses in the hours and days that follow. We pray for those who have lost their lives, their families and communities, and for the people who risk their own safety for the sake of helping others.

"In this season of Lent and Holy Week, we lament such outbursts of violence," said CEC General Secretary Fr Heikki Huttunen. "As we heal together as inhabitants of Brussels and Europe—and brothers and sisters in humanity—we need to find our way anew, and must all contribute to building societies where everyone feels secure and partakes of the common good."

The Conference of European Churches asks that our Member Churches and all people of goodwill think of Brussels, Belgium, and Europe, and pray for peace. For more information or an interview, please contact:

Erin Green, Communication Coordinator, Conference of European Churches.

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/464180/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/CEC_grieves_loss.aspx

On the occasion of HM the Queen's 90th Birthday



A special opportunity for you and your church to pray for and build relationships with your community.

<https://www.premier.org.uk/Projects/Society-Sunday>

Premier is a [Body in Association of Churches Together in England](#)

Tveit addresses global security issues at York Minster



Global security has been a key concern of the ecumenical movement for more than a century, and was in many ways integral to the very formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the mid 20th century. On 6 April, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit addressed this very issue in a contribution to York Minster's lecture series Global Security and the United Nations: 70 years on.

In his speech, entitled WCC and the UN: common heritage and shared challenges, Tveit noted that "The pursuit of peace and justice has been an integral part of the WCC's mission since its foundation, and the historical context in which the WCC was born has had a profound and lasting impact on its life and work".

Tveit continued, "But even in the process of its formation, the WCC was confronted with and obliged to respond to the reality of war and its consequences, genocide and other crimes against humanity, and mass movements of refugees and displaced people." Today, "the WCC continues to play an important role in promoting accountability to the provisions of international human rights law through national and international processes, and regularly cooperates with the UN, regional inter-governmental human rights bodies, and other international non-governmental organizations dedicated to the cause of human rights", said Tveit.

"The past seventy years have imposed severe tests on the intention of this fellowship of churches to witness credibly to the universality of Christ's church in a divided world and to God's purpose for the whole of humankind and creation", Tveit reflected, and continued by saying that nonetheless, "communities of faith are, at a very fundamental level, communities of trust and hope – and our characteristic message and contribution must reflect this. Hope is a defining quality of faith."

[Full speech: WCC and the UN: Common heritage and shared challenges
WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace
York Minster's lecture series Global Security and the United Nations: 70 years on](#)

New Website from CTBI

A one-stop shop for the church in these islands, collating news, policy, practical action, events and resources from a wide variety of sources:



<http://focusonrefugees.org>

Refugee crisis continues: Church and Christian organisations call for concerted and ambitious action

Ahead of a meeting of the European Council, five European ecumenical organisations have written to EU political leaders urging action on the refugee and migrant crisis. The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the Conference of European Churches (CEC), Eurodiaconia, EU-CORD, and ACT Alliance EU call on European governments to fulfill their promises and obligations under international law.

The letter calls on the EU to increase civilian search and rescue efforts in the Mediterranean region, while at the same time creating safe and legal passages for refugees and appropriate support services once in Europe. Safe passage must include sizable refugee resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, as well as private sponsorships and family reunion, among other mechanisms. Such an approach is necessary to prevent refugees from risking their lives or resorting to smugglers.

The refugee crisis is a challenge for both the EU and its neighbourhood, requiring extensive cooperation and collaboration with countries beyond the EU's external borders. The letter expresses concern with the proposed EU-Turkey deal, which includes a blanket return of refugees to Turkey and a so-called 'one in, one out' plan for Syrian refugees, leaving out refugees from other countries, such as Afghanistan and Eritrea.

"European states must not shift the responsibility for refugee protection on other countries, they have to share and take the responsibility and alleviate the countries most affected by the current refugee crisis, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey," Doris Peschke, general secretary of CCME commented.

The letter welcomes EU participation in peace processes, and calls for enhanced efforts to end conflict in Syria. All must pay heed to the example set out by many people in Europe in welcoming refugees, providing services and humanitarian assistance and extending a hand of friendship. Together, CCME, CEC, Eurodiaconia, EU-CORD, and ACT Alliance EU call on European governments to develop more humane responses for refugee protection. Europe can and must do more to protect the lives and dignity of the most vulnerable among us.

[For the full text of the letter, please click here.](#)

For more information or an interview, please contact [Erin Green](#), Communication Coordinator, the Conference of European Churches.

Housing Justice Press Statement

Homelessness is a problem for the whole community and requires a response that involves the whole community?



As the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon George Osborne was unveiling his latest Budget in the House of Commons this lunchtime, a Parliamentary Reception to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the Catholic Housing Aid Society was being held in the House of Lords.

Following an announcement in the Budget that this Government has pledged to nearly 110

million pounds to support those who are homeless and other agencies, Alison Gelder, Chief Executive of Housing Justice said:

"As Chief Executive of Housing Justice, I welcome the sentiments expressed by the Chancellor today. It feels very right for us to be holding a Reception to mark the Diamond Jubilee of the Catholic Housing Aid Society today in the House of Lords as George Osborne is giving his budget speech in the Other Place.

Measures to tackle homelessness, especially here in London, have been widely trailed in recent days. More money to tackle homelessness has to be a good thing. Of course the devil will be in the detail and the proof in the eating of the pudding. As we welcome the Chancellor's apparent realisation that something needs to be done to help people who are a long way from being able to take advantage of home ownership deals, we at Housing Justice will be watching what happens carefully so that our supporters in churches can hold him to account, ensuring that the promised funds are delivered.

We will also need to make sure that the 2,000 plus shelter guests are among those who benefit from the new accommodation that will be available. At the moment many things are only available to homeless people who have been through the hostel system, processed by what some call the homelessness industry. Our shelter guests should not need to face the dangers of institutionalisation in order to be helped. Church and Community Night Shelters don't need big chunks of government money to do a great job – but our guests really really need genuinely affordable homes (not hostels) to move on to. Let's hope this will make a difference.

Homelessness is not something that can be solved by charities like us, by the churches, or by the Government working alone. Homelessness is a problem for the whole community and requires a response that involves the whole community.

Full statement:

http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/463715/Home/News/Latest_news_articles/Housing_Justice_Press.aspx

Housing Justice is a [Body in Association](#) of Churches Together in England

Vacancies

[Chaplain - Child Services](#)

Based in Milton Keynes 30 hours per week. Completed applications by 20 April 2016

[Mission Enabler](#)

Is sought by Telford Christians Together and Churches Together in Shropshire. Completed applications by midnight on 27 April 2016

[Ethical Money Church Development Officer](#)

Working from home with easy access to the Birmingham and Wolverhampton area. Completed applications by 29 April 2016



Ecumenical Resources for the EU Referendum June 23rd



Here are various resources about the forthcoming Referendum on June 23rd 2016.

The list is provided in alphabetical order and will be augmented as more resources are available:

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: from the Joint Public Issues Team representing Baptist, Church of Scotland, Methodist and United Reformed Church.

For general reference visit the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887>

And Finally ... 2 changes at CTE

Dr Angelina Osborne

Angelina is now working as the Project Manager and Researcher for the '[We Also Served](#)' project for Churches Together in England, working on bringing to life the experiences of African and Caribbean troops in the First World War to the church and wider community in the Midlands. Angelina works two days a week (Monday & Wednesday) and can be contacted by email or telephone: [Email Angelina Osborne](#).
Tel: 07960 944203



Bishop Robert Byrne

Bishop Robert is the new [Chair of the Board](#), replacing Rt Rev Christopher Foster. Bishop Foster is Church of England Bishop of Portsmouth and remains on the Board, and grateful thanks were expressed at the last [Enabling Group](#)). The Board are the Trustees of the Charity and the Directors of the Company, and the Rt Rev Robert Byrne is a Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Birmingham (pictured).



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This mailing is from Churches Together in England and is sent once a month

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