

Reflection of the Month: Two factors that inhibit unity?

Joe Story writes:

My wife Catherine and I have a very broad Christian experience. We were involved in a range of churches before I was ordained as a Baptist minister in the early eighties. I later became manager of a large ecumenical Christian bookshop in Northampton, where I also organised cross-church events and, for nine years, I produced the local Churches Together newsletter.



In 2007 I had the opportunity of initiating and helping to form a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the small Baptist Church where I was part-time minister and a small Anglican Church, both located on a deprived housing estate on the edge of town. After uniting, we had one building, one bank account and one set of services. We concentrated exclusively on the estate where we were situated and gradually grew.

Following retirement, Catherine and I decided to address a question which concerned us. Northampton town, still not yet a city, hosted around sixty Christian denominations and it seemed to us that many of them operated in isolation from each other. We decided to try and learn why, by visiting as many of the different churches as we could.

To date we have been to about a quarter of the 140 or so churches in the town. These have included Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, U.R.C., and Salvation Army, as well as newer Churches like New Frontiers, and Vineyard. We have also been to a number of independent churches, some of the smaller denominations, and to renewed cults like Grace Communion (previously Worldwide Church of God) and the Jesus Army.

Our investigations have necessarily been superficial, and any findings and conclusions we have come to are obviously subjective and tentative, but it seems to us that two reasons for separation are becoming more prevalent. There have been a number of historic reasons for division between churches since the initial split between East and West. After the Reformation, divisions developed based around the nature of ministry and church government, and then came disagreements of doctrine in such matters as baptism, election, and the end times.

However, from our visit, it would seem that there are two more recent factors which may warrant some discussion. The first of these is the gathering of like with like, where church identities appear to be largely shaped by a cultural, social, musical or ethnic

demographic make-up. The second factor appears to be style of leadership, especially when it seeks to gather a congregation centred around one or two people. If these factors are increasing, might they by their nature, inherently limit future church unity or co-operation?

In spite of the fact that Jesus was obviously aware that His followers would be different racially, culturally and socially, and that there would be differences of personality, style and theology, it is noteworthy that His prayer, in John chapter 17, was for a unity that would overrule these differences.

Having worked in a local Ecumenical Partnership where there were differences of doctrine and church government, and, at one time, ten different nationalities in a congregation of three dozen, I know that it is possible to function creatively and spiritually where there is a mixture of people from different church, social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. From our experience of the ecumenical partnership, the shop, and Churches Together, we know that that there can be some real measure of co-operation between those who differ. We believe the prayer of Jesus will be answered, but might it perhaps involve a challenge to recent trends?

The Revd Joe Story is a retired Baptist Minister in Northampton.

New Methodist NEO is CTE Forum Moderator

Jenny Bond writes:

Ruth Gee has been appointed Methodist National Ecumenical Officer (NEO). She takes over on 1 September 2018 from Neil Stubbens who leaves the post on 1 August to move back into pastoral ministry.



Ruth has been Chair of the Darlington District of the Methodist Church since 2008. She was President of the Methodist Conference in 2013-2014 and is the Moderator of Churches Together in England's [2018 Forum](#). She brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new role.

[Read more about Ruth](#)

Thy Kingdom Come

Among the many resource for prayer 10th – 20th May the CTE Presidents have been recorded in conversation with the Archbishop of Canterbury. 3 CTE Presidents will also be at an ecumenical Beacon event to which everyone is invited: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/thy-kingdom-come-pentecost-beacon-tickets-44218700323>

CTE Presidents supporting
10th - 20th May 2018
'Thy Kingdom Come'

Personal, family, church prayer for
new followers of Jesus.
Resources, videos, social media,
Beacon events, gatherings,
Novena, prayer groups, etc

'Pray in your way': 85 countries,
across all churches, including
Westminster Central Hall 7pm
Sunday 20th May 2018

Click here

Spirit of Windrush: Contributions to a Multicultural Britain



A Service of Thanksgiving, Westminster Abbey at Noon on Friday 22nd June 2018

Joe Aldred writes:

We are holding a national event to mark the 70th anniversary of the docking of the MV Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks on 22 June 1948 which brought more than 500 Caribbean men and women who responded to an invitation to come to a country in recovery from the Second World War and in need of help from British subjects who were also Commonwealth citizens.

The service will involve worship, music, carefully chosen words, lessons and prayers and will touch on the themes that are relevant and strident, namely the invitation, the recognising of struggle following the invitation and the creative, unique and significant contributions made by the citizens and their descendants since then.

The preacher will be the Rev'd Canon Joel Edwards and in attendance will be national political and religious leaders as well as members of the diverse communities that make up multicultural Britain.

Admission is free but everyone must register and receive a ticket which will need to be accompanied by personal ID for attendance on the day.

Registration was via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/spirit-of-windrush-a-service-of-thanksgiving-tickets-44188760773>

Pray for Schools fortnight

Pray for Schools (PfS) is network steered by a group of organisations and aims to make every school a 'prayed-for school'.



CTE is a formal 'friend' of *Pray for Schools* so shares this information about the PfS fortnight 10th-24th May 2018, that is planned to link with the prayer initiative *Thy Kingdom Come*. This year's theme is from Colossians 4 v 2-3: '*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ...*'

The vision of Pray for Schools fortnight is to bring together people from local churches and others involved in education – parents, students, teachers, governors, staff and volunteers – to pray strategically for schools in their area and those involved in them.

Resource materials are available in a [2018 PfS Resource pack: link here](#)

Thy Kingdom Come: <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/prayerresources#families>

Unity as an Experience of God

Callan Slipper is the National Ecumenical Officer for the Church of England and has lived most of his adult life with #Focolare, founded by Chiara Lubich.



In April 2018 Callan was invited to share in a World Council of Churches session on the contribution of Chiara Lubich to the international cause of Christian unity, by providing a reflection and paper entitled, 'Unity as an Experience of God: A Glimpse of Chiara Lubich's Spirituality of Unity'.

The occasion was a combined celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the WCC, which is being marked by church leaders and events throughout the year, and the 10th Anniversary since the death of Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement.

The paper is now available as a Resource section of the CTE website under Theology/ Reflections of Unity: [Unity as an Experience of God](#).

The session was video recorded: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woh9smKJ4nM>

WCC congratulates new CTE General Secretary

The World Council of Churches has today, 2 May 2018, has sent a congratulatory message to Paul Goodliff, who takes over as CTE General Secretary in the autumn.



Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC General Secretary, writes:
We congratulate you on your appointment as the new General Secretary for Churches Together in England. As you have acutely observed, we are in a time of renewed commitment to the ecumenical process, and ecumenical life in England is a vital part of that process.

As you serve the churches of England, we look forward to continuing together with you on our mutual Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Your input as a delegate to the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism was highly valued and we will continue to support you as you draw others into transformative discipleship.

May you continue to have the health and strength to embrace the mission of God as we journey together.

- [Visit the press release announcing Paul Goodliff's appointment](#)
- [Download Paul's full biography](#)

Elim appoints Olivia Amartey as New Executive Director

Press Release: Monday 30 April 2018

Elim Pentecostal Church has appointed Olivia Amartey, former senior leader in the NHS and Deputy Chief Officer, Operations, Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, as the charity's new Executive Director.



Olivia, who is an ordained Elim Minister with extensive senior leadership experience in the NHS, the Anglican Church and Third and voluntary sectors, is also widely recognised as the founder of Martha's Oasis, a social enterprise featured on Channel Four's 'The Secret Millionaire' in 2008.

Reporting to the National Leadership Team, Olivia will be responsible for overseeing the charity's operations, administration, and strategic planning, strengthening Elim's mission and ministry while ensuring the organisation's compliance with the legal requirements and responsibilities of the charitable sector.

Olivia will continue as Minister at Crosspoint Church, the Elim church plant she pioneered in Great Barr, North Birmingham, in 2015. Commenting on her new role as Executive Director, Olivia said:

"This role demonstrates that there are other equally and vitally important ways to serve the body of Christ other than in pastoral ministry. As a Movement we need the right policies and procedures in place to underpin our mission. Further, we need to deploy sound business practices that empower us to fulfil the mandate to progress the Kingdom of God.

"The Elim Movement represents nearly 5,000 churches across the UK, Ireland and overseas, and I'm excited to be a part of this challenging vision, supporting the National Leadership Team, the General Superintendent, and the local churches towards dynamic growth. Elim has a fresh approach to sharing the gospel of Christ. It knows where it is going and has a strong heart for people and the diverse communities that they serve. Deploying effective business leadership and skills to achieve this mission is my top priority."

After coming to faith, Olivia's formative years were within the Church of God of Prophecy. In 1998 she joined Elim initially as a member of Zion Christian Centre in Halesowen. She then moved to Birmingham Christian Centre in 1999 where she served in various leadership positions including as an Assistant Pastor with responsibility for outreach, and culminating as an Elder and Minister in Training under Senior Pastor, Mark Ryan.

Olivia takes up her new role in July.

[Click here for a copy of the Press Release.](#)

MAPS Project Manager

Bridge Builders Christian Trust in Stevenage are looking to appoint a Mentoring and Pastoral Support (MAPS) Project Manager.



The work of the Project Manager includes: working with and going into schools on a regular basis to support and meet with children who are going through any kind of emotional difficulty, meeting with children on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, keeping up to date and accurate records and working with and leading volunteers in this work.

Based at the Bridge Builders Resource Centre in Stevenage, project work is undertaken in primary schools and churches in Stevenage and the surrounding areas.

This post is a paid position and is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

For full job description go to <http://www.bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk/vacancy>

Closing date for applications: Friday 1 June 2018

Christian Aid Week 2018

Press Release Tuesday April 17th, 2018

Christian Aid urges the British public to Stand Together with displaced people for Christian Aid Week



This year's Christian Aid Week (13-19 May www.caweek.org), the organisation is highlighting the plight of the millions of people displaced around the world, but who remain within their own countries. Today, more than 40 million people are internally displaced by conflict, accounting for approximately two thirds of those who find themselves forced from their homes. A further 24 million were displaced by disasters in 2016 alone. Yet, because they haven't crossed a border, the general public rarely hear about them.

Despite the huge number of people affected, situations of internal displacement receive almost no political attention, funding or support. In Haiti, thousands of people regularly experience some of the worst natural disasters on earth. The country is one of the poorest in the world, and a high number of its inhabitants live in precarious houses or have been uprooted from their homes entirely, making them especially vulnerable when another disaster strikes. More than seven years on from the devastating earthquake in Port-au-Prince in 2010, an estimated 38,000 people are still displaced.

In November 2016, Hurricane Matthew wreaked yet more havoc across the southern coast of the country, killing 546 people and destroying homes, businesses and

infrastructure. Up to 90% of some areas were destroyed. Vilia was left homeless by the earthquake in 2010 and her mother was killed. Bereaved and homeless, for Vilia, her husband and their seven children, life became a struggle. They didn't even have a safe place to sleep. Christian Aid's local partner, KORAL, helps local people prepare for disasters. In the aftermath of the earthquake, it reached out to Vilia and built her and her family a new home, that was safe, stable and strong enough to stand up to natural disasters.

Christian Aid is asking its supporters to ask their MPs to stand up for the millions of people worldwide who've been forced to flee their homes
This Christian Aid Week, people can help to change the lives of people displaced due to disasters or conflict by donating online at www.caweek.org or calling 08080 006 006.

visit <http://www.christianaid.org.uk>

Christian Aid is an [Agency](#) of Churches Together in England

National Church Leaders Forum calls for a stop on gun and knife violence



National Church Leaders Forum - a black Christian voice – Press Release 6th April 2018

Over the past four months more than 52 young people across Britain have lost their lives to gun and knife violence, much of this has happened in London. One murder is one too many, and murders of this magnitude is unacceptable! Much good work with young people, particularly vulnerable one is being done across the country, however the current situation has become critical for our and urgent action needs to be taken.

All people are born of the substance of the Divine Image of God and worthy of the greatest human fulfilment.

NCLF also expresses concern for the well-being of young people everywhere, the international prevalence of high murder rates in cities with poor socio-economic conditions particularly amongst children and young people currently caught up in war zones such as Syria. We pray for cities in Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, the United States, South Africa, Columbia, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, El Salvador, Guatemala all featuring in the top 50 worst for murder rates. NCLF cites the need for international dialogue about the spiritual, social, economic and political conditions in which young people live today.

Together with the Government, Police, other National Bodies, Church and Community Organisations we want to build constructive and just solutions. The family remains the foundation of any healthy and progressive society; if the foundation be broken then we must rebuild stable and healthy families that strengthen shared community values.

The National Church Leaders Forum calls for:

- Better parenting and special attention where fathers are absent from young people's lives
- A national moment of mourning for victims of gun and knife crime, through prayer and reflection
- Increased resources for specialist organisations and initiatives dealing with deterrence and withdrawal from gangs
- Increased funding for local youth project working towards social, economic and political aspirations And NCLF supports
- The call for an urgent roundtable discussion with office the of the Home Secretary to discuss the issues and develop constructive community partnership initiatives
- The London Mayor's call for empowering the police for a 'targeted stop and search' program in the areas of high risk
- Teaching of social responsibility, self-reliance, self-determination

For more information contact NCLF Co-Chairs Pastor Ade Amooba and Dr R David Muir
Email: info.nclf@gmail.com
Website: www.nclf.org.uk

'With you, always...' Unity, mission and the love of God



This is a reflection by David Cornick to CTE's Enabling Group in March 2018.

[Download this article as a pdf.](#)

This is the church where I worship, where I am a member. Emmanuel URC, Cambridge. Emmanuel, 'God with us'. For those of us whose spiritualities have been shaped by a congregational understanding of church, those words have been cashed in the realities of togetherness, of shared discipleship and Christian living. So it's the realities of church that surround us in stained glass – an odd selection you might think – two Elizabethan martyrs – Barrow and Greenwood, the MP for Cambridge and eventually Lord Protector of England, Oliver Cromwell and his 'foreign secretary', the poet John Milton, and the first two ministers of what became the Great Meeting, the seventeenth century congregation from which Emmanuel eventually was born. All of them walked the streets of our city and the courts of its colleges. Our stained glass is a powerful reminder that Christians are to be found on all sides of history, losers as well as winners. God does not desert those who end up on the wrong side of history. So, we remember each Sunday that God with us through Word and Sacraments in our fellow church members, Christ keeping his promise that wherever two or three are gathered, there he is in the midst of them.

'...the virgin shall conceive', said the angel to Joseph, 'and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel' (Mt 1:23), Matthew tells us as his gospel opens, and he closes it by bringing the rhetoric theologically full circle. For Jesus, the one in whom God was with us for thirty-three years, with us in Nazareth and Jerusalem, with us and for us in Gethsemane and Golgotha, with us in the mortality of Holy Saturday and astonishment

of Easter Sunday, in his last words in the gospel says 'I am with you always to the end of the age'. (Mt 28:20). Or as John summarises it, '...the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and lived among us...' (John 1:1,14)

The Anglican theologian Sam Wells, presently Vicar of St Martin's-the-Fields, writes, 'I believe "with" is the most important word in the Christian faith.' [1] It's the most important word because its God's biography. There is nothing in God which is not 'with', whether within the dynamics of the trinity, or in the overflowing love of the trinity summoning forth a creation which in its immensity and intricacy delights, confounds and intrigues the very ablest of scientists. Without God's passion to be 'with' us, there would be no creation. 'He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world', *Ephesians* muses, '...he destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will...' (Eph 1:4-5).

For the full paper visit the [CTE web page link here](#)

And finally ...

Most readers for whom 'GDPR' is relevant will probably have already acted upon the following, but in case not, or you are involved in keeping records on other people and this is new, here is a resource page on the CTE website that was brought together by Jenny Bond.

GDPR and ecumenical organisations

The Data Protection Act (1998) will be replaced by new European regulations (GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations) which become law on May 25th 2018.

The period 1998-2017 has seen an explosion in social media and electronic storage and the regulations take account of that and seek to protect all of us as individuals from the misuse of our personal data. They have at their heart a simple principle – that an individual's personal data is precious and needs proper protection.



The paramount right to privacy

The new regulations place the individual's (data-subject's) right to privacy at the centre of legislation. That is expressed in three main ways. First of all, the data-subject must give consent to their data being held. Second, the organisation handling that data must keep it secure, must not misuse it, and only use it for the purposes for which it has been supplied. Third, the data must be accurate and as far as possible up to date.

Six principles

Article 5 of the GDPR sets out six underlying principles which will ensure those rights:

1. Transparency: data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.

2. Purpose limitation: data must be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes. (Non-profit religious organisations have a legal right to collect religious data under condition 9 (2) (d) of the Regulations.)
3. Minimisation: data must be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed.
4. Accuracy: reasonable steps need to be taken to ensure that data is accurate and up to date.
5. Retention: data should be kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it was collected.
6. Security: data should be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate *security* of the personal data, including protection against *unauthorised* or *unlawful* processing and against *accidental loss, destruction or damage*, using appropriate technical and organisational measures.

And article 5 (2) states that the Controller (which is the organisation rather than a named individual) shall be responsible for ‘...and able to demonstrate’ compliance with the principles.

What must we do?

CTE will not be offering model documents because all ecumenical bodies, including Churches Together groups and Intermediate Bodies are different. However, it is clear that compliance involves:

- Conducting a data audit to see what information you actually have
- Obtaining consent from those whose data you hold. The main difference in the new regulations is that you have to obtain consent. An opt-out email will no longer suffice. You need the permission of all whose data you hold to retain it, and you need to have evidence of that.
- Those who provide us with their data have a right to know what we are doing with it. That information is usually contained in a privacy policy.
- All organisations need to provide evidence of their accountability and so Trustees will need to have a Data Protection policy in place and ensure that an annual review of the policy is undertaken.

All organisations will need to review the security of their data, whether kept electronically or manually.

Further help

A great deal of information is available from the Office of the Information Commissioner and some of the major English denominations to help churches and religious organisations and charities comply with these new regulations. As you set about the business of compliance, you may find the following material helpful:

- [The Office of the Information Commissioner – guidance for charities](#)
- [Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes](#)
- [Church of England parish resources](#)
- [Baptist Union of Great Britain](#)

Final note regarding GDPR and CTe-News, as stated in the email for the April edition:

Under the new GDPR guidelines CTE needs your express permission to send you this mailing re CTe-News. It is our understanding that we only have your name and email address because you have already subscribed with that information and requested this email. We are therefore pleased to continue sending you notifications when CTe-News is ready for distribution. As described in each mailing you can unsubscribe at any time by contacting website@cte.org.uk. Do use the same email address if you have any questions about CTe-News.

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