



CT-eNews

October 2020

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Reflection of the Month: A season for every activity

Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, our outgoing Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations, shares our reflection of the month for October 2020. Joe retires this month after working for CTE and CTBI for 18 years...

Wisdom literature reminds us, 'there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens' (Eccl 3.1). I guess this includes retirement. Knowing when to leave is in my view as important as knowing when to begin. Having said that, I claim no deep spiritual insight in announcing my retirement, only a sense that after eighteen years of ecumenical ministry with Churches Together I feel now is the time to vacate this space and watch what the Holy Spirit does next.



I well recall how in 1996, sensing a new season my family left the relative safety of denominational pastoral and oversight ministry in South Yorkshire and moved back to Birmingham. It required some courage! There began for me a season of what I like to call 'intercultural ecumenism', first, at the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership for six years, followed by eighteen years at Churches Together (CTBI and CTE). During these twenty-four years our daughters have grown up, grandchildren have arrived, my wife Novelette has established herself as a counsellor and psychotherapist and lately an NHS Chaplain. We did not foresee all that God had in store, but I am so glad we made that move way back then. In the word of Scripture, we with others planted and watered, God wrought abundant increase.

The image at the heart of my intercultural ecumenism is summed up in Revelation 7.9: in heaven...with the risen Christ centre stage, a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. The "realised eschatology" implied in the Lord's prayer, is the outworking of that heavenly picture here on earth. We are all represented there! No one is begging 'please include me'. No one is saying, 'your type isn't welcome here'. This has been my assumptive approach over the years, encouraging, enabling, empowering 'the least of these' to take their place at God's table, no human permission needed.

Most of all I have met and worked with some of God's best as close colleagues, friends and associates from different ethnicities, nationalities, churches and networks who together have managed to make me better than I really am. I shall miss you all greatly, but the mission of God goes on. I am not in the habit of giving advice to my successor, and all I will say is that this job is better viewed as a vocation of loving those God first loves. Putting people before policy is a good guiding principle, or as Jesus would say, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. My personal season of work here draws to an end, but a timeless God of all seasons beckons. Amen!

Photo credit: BBC Songs of Praise

Bishop Joe is retiring on 31 October. Before he goes, we wanted to tap into his wisdom for CTe-News on the following questions:

The most significant change he has seen in his 18 years at CTE:

I'd say the most significant change in English church life in the past eighteen years has been the confidence of the churches that have historically felt excluded or treated as such, but behave and are treated more now as part of the whole church of God.

The biggest challenge English ecumenism faces today:

Maybe the greatest challenges ecumenism faces in the coming years are likely to be in the areas of social and political justice and human sexuality. I pray the church will knuckle down in prayerful conversation and fellowship to find ways of living together in the face of increasing internal and external strains.

His favourite memory from his work at CTE:

If I had to choose just one, then it would be the installing among the CTE Presidents of a Pentecostal President (Eric Brown) back in 2013. It marked a kind of coming of age in the ecumenical journey for Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in England.

However there have been lots of other highlights for me – getting the CTE Pentecostal Forum up and running in 2014, working on reports on social disorder and human trafficking, helping to memorialise the contribution of African and Caribbean Servicemen in World War One and getting the chance to edit and publish books such as *The Black Church in the 21st Century*, and *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain*. I've had many wonderful opportunities.

Bishop Joe Aldred's contribution to Churches Together in England

*Many colleagues who have worked with Bishop Joe over the years have sent in memories and messages about the impact he has had on the ecumenical journey during his 'season' at CTE. Here is just a small selection, starting with a thank you from our **current General Secretary, Rev Dr Paul Goodliff:***

After over 18 years of service in CTBI and then CTE, our friend and colleague, Bishop Dr. Joe Aldred is retiring at the end of October. He thought he would continue until March 2022, and we would have been delighted had he done so, but for our own rather selfish reasons, I fear—we just do not want to say 'goodbye.' In our hearts, though, we understand that now is the time, and his decision is characteristically wise, and so reluctantly we do say 'farewell' to Joe as he retires, and glad in the knowledge that he will continue to contribute to the life of the churches in various ways.



Joe has made an outstanding contribution to the life of CTE as one of the leading black ecumenists in Britain and Ireland...

We all know of his work and achievements, but colleagues, current and former, will also recognise the character of Joe. He has been a friend as well as a colleague, generous in his support, unafraid in his challenge (although always gently offered) and wise in his counsel. We will miss his contribution to the work, but much more, we'll miss having Joe on the team.

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

CTE General Secretary 2008-2018, Dr David Cornick

Joe Aldred is an exceptional man. He has spent his working life defying logic – I still don't quite understand how he can fit at least twice as much work into a day as normal mortals! However, to work alongside him for the ten years that I was General Secretary of CTE, 2008-18, was a rare privilege.

I first met Joe when I attended a meeting he was involved with at the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership, of which he was the Director from 1996-2002. His reputation as a theologian, thinker and leader was considerable, and it had gone from strength to strength by the time that I arrived in Tavistock Square in 2008. Here was a man who was an acknowledged expert on the black-led churches and on black theology, a man who moved easily amongst Radio 2 DJs, government ministers, diplomats and church leaders...

The achievements were remarkable – the lingering legacy of knife crime, reports on child abuse and witchcraft, the creation of a Pentecostal Presidency for CTE, ['They also served', Modern Day Slavery, the Windrush service...](#)

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

CTE Pentecostal President & Chair of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) UK Pastor Agu Irukwu:

This tribute is a wonderful opportunity to say thank you to Bishop Joe Aldred; to thank him for his service to the kingdom of God in his role as Principal Officer for Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations in Churches Together in England (CTE). It is also an opportunity to thank him for his work in the larger body of Christ.

I have been privileged to work closely with him as CTE Pentecostal President and have found invaluable his dedication, huge capacity for work, his unflappable nature, his strategic mind, his passion and his desire to see the injustices of racial discrimination addressed. His scholarly mind and insight into the contemporary issues that we have faced will be solely missed.

Notwithstanding his retirement, I hope that we may continue to benefit from his wealth of knowledge and experience. I pray for God's grace upon him as he embarks on this next phase of his life's journey.

CTE President, HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster:

It's hard to think of the ecumenical world without Joe, but those of us who shared that space with him all join in giving thanks to God for his ministry, and wish him a long, happy, richly deserved retirement.

It gives me great pleasure to offer these words of goodwill and gratitude to you as you prepare to retire from your role in the CTE after 18 years of dedicated service.

In particular, your perspective, as the Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic & Multi-cultural Relations, has been invaluable and inspired so many people, within and beyond the Catholic community.

I do hope that you will have a long and very happy retirement. With my prayers and best wishes.

CTE President The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury:

Bishop Joe's contribution to the life of the church in England has been outstanding over many years – as a preacher, pastor and bishop; as a community leader and advocate; and as an agent for Christian unity he has made a difference everywhere he goes. In 2019, in the wake of both the celebrations surrounding the 2018 anniversary of the arrival of SS Windrush and the scandals that accompanied it, I was pleased to award him the Langton Award for Community Service: a small token of appreciation for all that he has done and continues to do. The award citation noted that:

His ministry has promoted community cohesion, challenged implicit and explicit racism and developed wider understanding of the importance and contribution of the African-Caribbean community in the UK. His contribution has been outstanding.

Thank you, Joe, for your ministry to date in the service of Christ. May he continue to bless and inspire you in retirement.

Moderator of The Council of African and Caribbean Churches UK, Archbishop Fidelia N Onyuku-Opukiri:

I have known Joe Aldred since the very late 1990s/early 2000s if my memory will allow me... He is a black man that worked with great self-confidence, yet very cautious in all his moves. He has done a lot to coordinate the Black and Ethnic Minority Churches of the CTE who are now the Pentecostal Churches of CTE. We appreciate him for all the highlighted programmes he took us through, his books and all he did to enhance our status. He is now a great man of experience. We will be very sad to lose him. But we thank God that he is only retiring from this group for more relaxed duties. Good for him and his family, but we will sincerely miss him very dearly.

Thank you so much Joe, for all you have achieved. We are wishing you very happy years with perfect health ahead for you and your family. In Jesus mighty name. Amen.

Former Director of the Evangelical Alliance, writer and broadcaster, Rev Dr Joel Edwards CBE:

Bishop Joe Aldred has been a monumental figure on the UK Christian landscape - and beyond. He has been a champion for Black Affairs and wider ecumenical relationships, combining creativity, organisational acumen, theological reflection, and public commentary from a Christian perspective.

Over the years I have been immensely encouraged by our private conversations and inspired by his public ministry. Having recovered from the news of his resignation from CTE I am now looking forward to his future contributions as a senior ambassador for Christ and common sense.

More than ever, I want to be like Joe when I grow up!

[Read these messages in full and see a gallery of pictures of Bishop Joe on our website...](#)

If you would like to add a message to Bishop Joe's retirement book then [please email Lorraine Shannon no later than Wednesday 14 October.](#)

Tackling racial injustice: CTE takes action

Churches Together in England has responded to the [Presidents' call for real change](#) to work towards racial justice:

- [Trustees](#) have set up a racial justice working group, under the leadership of trustees Lurliene Miller and Moses Owusu-Sekyere.
- CTE's [Enabling Group](#) will spend a key session at its forthcoming meeting reflecting on the issue and promoting change.
- [County Ecumenical Officers](#) (CEOs) and those with a brief for racial justice within Intermediate Bodies have committed themselves to learning more about racial injustice and to putting into place strategies for combating it.



County Ecumenical Officers discuss racial injustice

The first of two meetings of County Ecumenical Officers (CEOs) to explore racial injustice has already taken place. CEOs work within Intermediate Bodies across England, encouraging and facilitating unity among churches at the county/city level.

The aim of this first meeting, a webinar, was to learn about the history and the philosophical root of racism, and also to understand microaggressions, white privilege and white supremacy. In this session, CEOs were joined by Alton Bell, chair of the [Movement for Justice and Reconciliation](#), and Dionne Gravesande, Senior Ecumenical Relations Manager at [Christian Aid](#). [See the video of their contributions.](#)



CT South London
@CTSouthLondon

An encouraging morning meeting with @ChurchesEngland colleagues working out how to take forward our work so far on better racial diversity and inclusion in #ecumenical activity around the country. #ChurchesTogether prays for #onebody and not just for #BlackHistoryMonth 🍷🍷

11:36 AM · Oct 2, 2020 · Twitter Web App

A second meeting of CEOs will take place later this year. CEOs will use this opportunity to reflect on the first webinar, and to consider how to move forward, working out what relevant actions may be needed. In this they will be helped by [Karlene Kerr](#), special advisor for black, Asian and minority ethnic affairs in the Diocese of Norfolk.

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

Six Months On: Prayers of Hope

It is six months since the [Presidents of Churches Together in England issued a national call to prayer](#) for all those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

They invited Christians across the country to join together in prayer at 7pm each Sunday night.

To mark six months since [#PrayersOfHope](#) began, CTE General Secretary, Rev Dr Paul Goodliff, has written a special prayer:



Gracious Lord, six months ago we faced an uncertain threat from the coronavirus pandemic and stood on the verge of the lockdown. Then we lit candles of hope and prayed for our world. Scripture calls us to persevere in prayer, and so we pray again and again that you would have mercy on our world, especially in those places where the virus is still spreading out of control. Give wisdom and courage to all charged with leading the responses, from Governments to public health leaders, and especially to those Christians seeking to serve their communities.

Closer to home, schools have re-opened, students are preparing to go to Universities and Colleges, and many face uncertainty at work. Grant that the same mutual support experienced at the height of the lockdown may now be released again as we face social, economic and employment challenges. Guide Christians throughout these islands to lead by example in building a fair and compassionate society, and give courage as we witness to the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

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

The Prayer Shield: 365-day prayer initiative launched by CTE President

The Prayer Shield is a 365-day prayer initiative in the United Kingdom, launched this autumn by CTE's Pentecostal President, Pastor Agu Irukwu of the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Tens of thousands of Christians across the UK took part in the National Day of Prayer and Action on 22 March – just a day before the national coronavirus lockdown was announced. This followed a call to prayer by CTE's Presidents, encouraging Christians to pray in unison from their homes at 7pm.

Six months on, the Prayer Shield UK has been launched by CTE's Pentecostal President, Pastor Agu Irukwu, chair of the Executive Council of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (one of CTE's 50 national Member Churches).

As explained on their [new website](#), "The vision for the Prayer Shield is to unite thousands in forming a shield of prayer over the United Kingdom.

"It was inspired by a picture impressed upon Pastor Agu Irukwu's heart of a united Church engaging with God in prayer to establish His plans and purposes for the nation. For 365 days, Christian leaders of diverse denominations and expressions will lead daily prayers, declarations, and blessings for the nation.

"Join with us, for a few minutes every day, as we say a short prayer, make a declaration from God's Word and pronounce a blessing over the United Kingdom."

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



Prisons Week 2020: United in Lockdown

As many of us have had an insight this year into what it's like to be in lockdown, individual Christians and Churches are invited to pray for those who remain behind physical and emotional bars during Prisons Week which runs from Sunday 11 to Saturday 17 October.

Taking place for the last four decades, Prisons Week raises awareness and generates prayer. It motivates volunteers to step forward and give their time and gifts, in prisons and in their own communities. It provides an annual focus and reason for Christians to work together to make a difference for people who are out of sight and often out of mind.



The organisers, who are representatives of Christian denominations and Christian organisations working in prisons or supporting prisons ministry, have prepared day-by-day prayer literature to enable the Christian community to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons. Each day focuses on a different group of people: prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities, those working in the criminal justice system and the many people who are involved in caring for those affected by crime on the inside and outside of our prisons.

[Prayer guides are available on the Prisons Week website.](#)

There is also [a powerful introductory film](#) to share.

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

Week of Prayer for World Peace 2020

The Week of Prayer for World Peace will take place from 11 to 18 October this year.

This interfaith event has taken place each October since 1974. It began with 'A Call to Prayer for World Peace' which was signed by many Faith Leaders, including Lord George Macleod, Trevor Huddleston, Kenneth Slack and Bishop Wilfrid Westall. They wrote: 'Believing that God is calling us to pray with new purpose and deeper understanding for peace and justice among all people, we invite our fellow believers of all faiths to join in a Week of Prayer for World Peace.'



Communities from New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Germany, Australia, Italy and many more countries now join in.

There is a different peace-related theme for each day including, this year, the remembering of the end of World War 2 and working together with courage through the coronavirus pandemic. A [study guide](#) is available and offers participants prayers around each theme. There is also a section of prayers for young people.

This year the 'Annual Gathering' which starts the week - on Sunday 11 October 3.30 to 4.30pm - will take place online for the first time. [Contact one of the organisers, Keith Scott](#), for details of how to join in.

[Visit the Week of Prayer for World Peace website](#)

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

Sam Sharpe Lecture 2020: 'Man against the System'

As part of Black History Month, CTE Member Church the Baptist Union is hosting its annual Sam Sharpe lecture, delivered by Bishop Wilton Powell of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Sam Sharpe Lecture 2020: 'Man against the System'

An online webinar on Monday 12 October, 7pm.

This year's Sam Sharpe lecture will be delivered by Bishop Wilton Powell, OBE - former National Presiding Bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy.

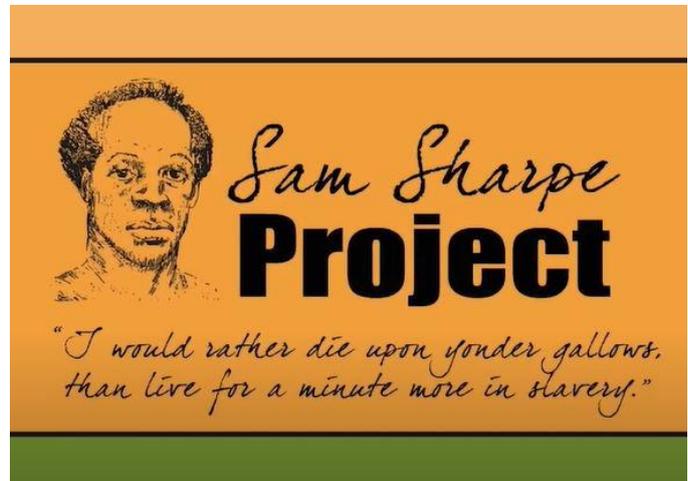
He will grapple with one of black history's perennial questions; how did Sam Sharpe upset the status quo and usher in a semblance of hope for the global black family?

The Moderator will be Dr Dulcie McKenzie, with other contributions from Sam Sharpe partners Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed and the Revd Karl Johnson (Jamaica Baptist Union).

The lecture is free to attend and there is no requirement to book in advance.

[Get more information and join the webinar](#)

[Read more about the Sam Sharpe project on our website...](#)



Scripture a Uniting Gift? – A Society of Ecumenical Studies webinar

Wednesday 14 October from 6.00 pm to 7.30 pm

Holy Scripture is a gift shared by all Christians but there are many differences of approach to the Bible in our worship, theology and personal devotion. In the Roman Catholic Year of the Word, three distinguished speakers – Dr Andrew Davies, Janet Scott and Fr Henry Wansborough - will reflect on approaches to Scripture in their own tradition and will consider together the ways in which we can deepen our understanding of scripture by listening to those from different backgrounds.



[Find more details and how to book a ticket...](#)

National landmark to answered prayer granted planning permission

Planning permission has been granted for a new national landmark to answered prayer in Coleshill, to the east of Birmingham.

It is intended that building work commence in Spring 2021, with completion in late 2022. When opened, the 'Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer' is expected to attract 300,000 visitors each year. Those visiting the site will be welcomed at a visitor centre, complete with bookshop and cafe. Visitors will be able to walk around the wall, which will consist of one million bricks, each one of which will host a story of answered prayer. The stories on each brick will become visible through mobile phone technology.



Photo credit: CGI created by Renderloft, designed by Snug Architects

The stated aims of the Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer are to preserve the Christian heritage of the nation, to ignite faith for prayer at the national level and to reveal Christ to the nation.

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

Put on a Passion Play in your community

[Wintershall](#) - the organisation which has traditionally performed a Passion Play in Trafalgar Square - is inviting communities to join [One Good Friday](#) and stage their own plays for Easter 2021. They offer a Passion script, a comprehensive Production Manual and help and advice to each location. The cast, production team and volunteers would be from the local community, pulling together to make a difference and to share the story.

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



Southwark Christian Unity Commission now online

Since the 1970s the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Southwark has had an active Christian Unity Commission. It now has a new 'home' online with its own website. The website will now be the Commission's main vehicle for communicating about its work.

The Commission's bulletin - Together in Christ (TiC) - containing a wide range of material on Christian unity originating in Southwark and beyond, has been published three times a year since 1983. It is now being published, in a separate section, on the website. where you can also get free access to an archive of digitalised versions of earlier editions of TiC

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

Library corner – two book reviews

Two new books on ecumenism have reached the shelves this month...

Episkope: The Theory and Practice of Translocal Oversight

In Episkope, CTE General Secretary, Paul Goodliff, and Roger Standing together with experienced church leaders drawn from across the churches, establish the common foundations that inform conversations about translocal ministry and map present models and experience of ecclesial oversight.

[Read a review from the Anglican Bishop of Portsmouth, the Rt Rev Christopher Foster on our website...](#)

Church Laws and Ecumenism

Church Laws and Ecumenism: A New Path for Christian Unity, edited by Norman Doe (Routledge, 2020), will be of particular interest to church lawyers, ecumenists and religious sociologists, and marks a significant step forward in the new discipline of juridical ecumenism.

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

Job Opportunities:

County Ecumenical Officer, Churches Together in Somerset

Churches Together in Somerset is seeking to appoint a new County Ecumenical Officer to work with church leaders, churches and other appropriate groups across the region of Somerset, BaNES and North Somerset from March 2021.

Part time (8 hours a week)

Closing date 30 October

[For full details view this job advert on our website...](#)

Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic & Multi-cultural Relations, CTE

Churches Together in England (CTE) is seeking to appoint an able and inspiring person to lead its work with Pentecostals, Charismatics and multiculturalism.

- Full time/Flexible over 5/6 days per week including weekends/evenings, travel
- Home based, accessible to London



The ideal candidate will

- be an able communicator both written and spoken
- be skilled at brokering and developing relationships
- have ecumenical experience, especially with Pentecostal and Charismatic churches
- take responsibility for racial justice work
- share in the responsibilities of the staff team

Closing date 30 October

[For further information, including an application pack see our website](#)

And finally...

Climate Sunday

Local churches are encouraged to hold a local Climate Sunday any time during a one-year period from 6 September.



Free resources are available to suit every tradition and style of worship. Read more [on the CTBI website](#) and find resources at climatesunday.org/resources

Neighbour Sunday - Sunday 18 October

Neighbour Sunday is a partnership between the [Neighbourhood Prayer Network](#) (a CTE Body in Association) and [Faith in Later Life](#). It took place for the first time in 2019. A toolkit to help local churches and individuals to build community and pray for their neighbours is being developed. All the downloadable resources will be free and available from Friday 19 September.

Restoring Hope

As part of Good Money Week (24 to 30 October), the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (a CTE Body in Association) is [organising a series of online events](#) - to explore the way in which our faith, finance and the wider economy interact.

The flagship session is [an evening conversation with Dr Ruth Valerio \(former Archbishop of Canterbury\) and Dr Rowan Williams](#) (Global Advocacy and Influencing Director, Tearfund).



Day of Prayer for the Media – Sunday 1 November

[Christians in Media](#) are encouraging church leaders to set aside time in their meeting on the 1 November to pray for your local, regional, national and social media: to pray for those in your congregation who work in, and with, media.

[Get inspiration from video prayers from their guest contributors](#)

Annual Healthcare Chaplains Study Day – Wednesday 4 November

The Free Churches Group is hosting the Annual Healthcare Chaplains Study Day online, on the subject of "Trauma and Response: a theological reflection". This is an opportunity to step back, draw breath and reflect on the impact of the experience of trauma.

The session will be led by Revd Sue Shortman, a Methodist Minister in the Birmingham District, with opportunities for discussion in break-out groups.

This event will be held via Zoom between 2 and 4pm. [Booking is now open via Eventbrite](#).

Interfaith Week – 8 to 15 November

The aims of this week are to:

- increase awareness of faith communities in the UK, celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs

[Visit the Interfaith Week website](#)

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