



# CT-eNews

February 2021

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## Reflection of the Month: Can the Church get into recovery?

*The Director of Evangelism and Growth for the Methodist Church, Rev Trey Hall, shares our Reflection of the Month for February 2021...*

The first time I attended a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, I went – or so I told myself – solely for research purposes: I was writing a sermon on addictions. Based on my relationship with active alcoholics in my family, I expected to find loads of people whingeing and blaming others for their problems.

But when I arrived, it was the atmosphere of a party. Someone welcomed me; someone else poured me a coffee; someone else helped me find a seat.



The meeting started, and the leader asked if anyone was celebrating anniversaries. People stood up to announce: “today I’ve got a year sober”, or a month, or a decade, or “today it’s been a week without a drink”. These celebrations were micro-testimonies, and as each person announced their day count, the crowd clapped and whistled and shouted out. It was like people crying “alleluia” at a revival. It felt like good church.

As this went on, I started to cry. The ink of my sermon notes got smudged by tears. The woman next to me reached into her purse and offered me a tissue. “Thanks,” I said, “I don’t know why I’m crying! I’m just here for research purposes.” And she looked at me with the eyes of love, compassionate yet deeply seeing. She knew – and in that moment I knew, too, though I wouldn’t fully acknowledge it for a while – that it was personal for me, not just professional.

The meeting continued and someone shared a fuller testimony of their recovery. They told the truth about what had gone down in their life – the stuff they’d done, the stuff that had happened to them, the losing, the falling, the failing. But also how they’d been found by a Higher Power they didn’t expect and a community that guided them into the process of spiritual transformation.

One of the prerequisites for getting sober is hitting bottom. That’s when you finally accept that there’s nothing else you can do to get better except to admit that there’s nothing else you can do. You’ve reached the end of your own power. But there is another power. At least that’s what AA says. Does that sound like anything else we’ve heard before, Church?

I wonder what it would look like for the Church to get into recovery? Perhaps our ecumenical movement would experience new spiritual power if we came together around our common need to admit failure. To confess the egregious stuff: our propagation of material and spiritual capitalism, our infection with racism (at once lifting up white people and oppressing people of colour), our homophobia. And more generally, to confess our need to let go, to relax and release the damned control freakery, to bless the flourishing of new forms of Christianity.

One effect of the pandemic is that we’re all hitting bottom in different ways. And as we sit there at the bottom of the sea, every church and disciple has an invitation to feel

afresh our own desperate need for God, to confess the sin that clutters our mission, to remember what we're for and to live differently.

If together we find the humility to do that, maybe we'll be surprised by God. Maybe we'll experience "the joy of being wrong", to use the language of theologian James Alison. Maybe we'll rediscover discipleship as a process of actual transformation not just for newcomers but for all of us as we undergo God together.

In AA, people are getting real and therefore people are getting healed. And that's the discipleship invitation to me, to you, to the whole Church of Jesus Christ, too. It's never just for research purposes; it's always deeply personal, whether we're just beginning the journey or have been on it for a long time.

*The Rev Trey Hall is the Director of Evangelism and Growth for the Methodist Church in Britain. He's a pioneer, ministry coach, American expat, marathon runner, and (terribly) failed improv comedy student. He lives in north London with his partner (also a Methodist minister) of fifteen years. He is passionate about helping diverse Christian leaders discover and engage in authentic evangelism that reaches new people in new places, brings spiritual joy to those who practice it, and centres us all in God's love and power.*

## Supporting coronavirus vaccinations

While the future of the pandemic remains uncertain, we know that one of the key tools we have to combat this — the most serious health emergency in a century — is the roll out of vaccines that provide some immunity from the more serious health risks. For too many, Covid-19 results in time spent on intensive care on a ventilator, with tragic numbers dying. This is not just another flu or serious cold, but a deadly infection.



There are many who have such serious reservations about the vaccines that they will refuse to take one when offered — perhaps 50% in some communities according to up-to-date evidence — and that is a cause of grave concern for the Government and for the churches. **Churches Together in England is therefore supporting the vaccination programme and efforts to provide answers to the questions that many have.**

The speed of development and approval of the Covid-19 vaccines has been remarkable, however the story did not simply start a year ago, but rather begins in the years of previous research to understand both viruses and the human immune system. The urgency and severity of this pandemic has required accelerated approval processes, but they are, nonetheless, thorough and rigorous.

Leaders from some of the churches have already had their first dose of the vaccine — either because they fall into the age groups currently being offered a vaccination, or because they work in front-line contexts such as hospital chaplaincy. Others are waiting, but will seize the opportunity to have the vaccine, not only for their own safety, but because of the safety it will bring to the whole community.

Local churches and cathedrals are being used as vaccination hubs, church members are assisting with transport and volunteering at those hubs, and, of course, many of those working to deliver the vaccinations as health care professionals are themselves members of our churches. We pray for them and for all involved in this vaccination process, for resilience, hope and protection.

Churches Together in England is also working with the Government and people of all faiths and none, as we face this common challenge to our humanity. As we face this worldwide health emergency, now is the time to see how we can 'love our neighbour as ourselves', and as we do so, love God with all our heart, soul, mind and body.

*[Find a range of online coronavirus vaccine resources for churches in our full article...](#)*

## **Prayer for the Nation**

CTE President and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, and the Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, have issued a call to the nation to pause and reflect – remembering the more than 100,000 people across the UK who have died after contracting Covid-19, and all those who know and love them.

In an open letter, the Archbishops invited everyone across England – whether they have faith or not – to pause, reflect on the “enormity of this pandemic” and to pray. The letter also included an invitation to everyone – whether they have faith or not – to join the archbishops in pausing and praying each day at 6pm from Monday 1 February. Prayer resources can be found on [The Church of England](#) and [24-7 Prayer](#) websites. Acknowledging the wider impact of the pandemic on the whole of society through loneliness, anxiety and economic hardship, they invited people to “cast their fears on God”.

In the letter they also gave thanks for NHS and social care staff, who they described as “a blessing and lifeline for our nation”; for clergy, other frontline workers and “so many good neighbours”. They also urged people to support each other, both by following the guidelines to limit the spread of the virus, and in practical ways, reaching out in care and kindness.



On 1 February, [Archbishop Justin Welby led prayers over Facebook Live at 6pm](#) to launch the campaign. And on 2 February, he appeared on [Good Morning Britain](#) talking about numerous things including #PrayerForTheNation. This followed the Archbishop's interview on [BBC Breakfast](#) on 27 January, where he encouraged the nation by saying “God came and shared our sorrows, He's in the middle of this mess, He's alongside us...”

*Photo credit: BBC Breakfast*

*[Read more about this story and the Archbishop of Canterbury's appearance on BBC Breakfast on our website...](#)*

## Churches called to unite in prayer for our NHS

As Covid-19 threatens to overwhelm our health service and continues to inflict pain and loss, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, one of CTE's 50 national Member Churches, has brought together five pointers to help churches and individuals as you pray. These have been written by a senior A&E nurse in a large teaching hospital:



- Pray for all the NHS staff for their own safety, energy and peace in dealing with each and every patient.
- Pray for those in hospital leadership, for wisdom and for good decisions to give the best outcomes for patients.
- Pray for patients; for healing, for peace and ultimately to fight this disease and get home and pray for their relatives who feel helpless.
- Pray for the vaccine, that it will and is working against this latest strain of Covid-19.
- Pray for a reprieve and an end to Covid-19.

Christians are also encouraged to get in touch with people they know personally who are working in the NHS, letting them know you are praying for them and asking them how you can pray specifically.

This invitation to join in a time of sustained prayer for our NHS has been extended to all churches across England.

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

## Praying for the paramedics

*The Lead Chaplain of the [East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust](#), Lynda Logan, shares an insight into the challenges of ministering to 'our green family' in the current pandemic, along with a poem written by a frontline paramedic...*

Chaplaincy within the Ambulance Service is a challenging and demanding role to fulfil in normal circumstances, but during the Covid-19 pandemic it has become more daunting. At the start of the first national lockdown, chaplains were forced to stop visiting stations and instead, work from home. Maintaining a pastoral relationship with staff, without that much needed physical presence, has been and continues to be far from easy. Even with the help of a telephone, social media and meetings via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, any pastoral support always leaves a sense of helplessness and a question of whether or not more could have been done.

Many frontline crew have contracted the virus: some have managed to fight it off; some have been left struggling with Long Covid, and some have sadly died. Writing so many condolence messages this past year has been a heart-rending task. Staff have become stressed and worn out. The demand and constant surge is relentless, with



crew only getting 30 minutes break or down time during their 12 hour shifts. Each day, there is news of yet more staff members contracting this new variant and becoming extremely sick. They fear contracting the virus and passing it to their families. They feel that they are working and living on a war-time footing.

Chaplains' prayers are being increasingly sought, especially for crew and their families; for the new mother and her child who has been born into a family with Covid-19; for the relative who is not expected to live.



Members of the Ambulance Service, wherever they are nationally, speak of themselves as 'our green family'. They tend to close ranks in times of crisis and pull together as a family. They are resilient – they have to be. They play down what they experience on a daily basis – more than most people would ever experience just once in their lifetime – and their sense of humour is unique. This past year their 'green line' has grown thinner by the day, nevertheless, their professionalism and compassion endure towards patients – whether members of their own green family or the general public – despite their own human fears and frailties. They have and continue to shed many tears over the heart-breaking situations in which they have found and continue to find themselves.

Recently, David Tamarro, an Emergency Care Practitioner (a highly trained and skilled senior paramedic) and a Leading Operations Manager, who works in a large station within EEASt, has written a poem 'United in Hope'. Unable to sleep after a shift, he penned his reflections upon working on the front-line and expressed the hope surrounding the roll out of the vaccines. David hopes that you will feel free to circulate the poem within your churches and networks.

[Read the 'United in Hope' poem by David Tamarro...](#)

*Photo of ambulances by Senior Emergency Medical Technician, Glorija Perry*

## Call and Care

Free video training is now available for local churches to equip their volunteers to offer telephone support to those in need in their community.

Call and Care, the new initiative has been developed by Premier Lifeline: the National Christian Helpline, with funding from the UK Government Coronavirus Emergency Fund.

At a time when meeting together is severely restricted, many churches are

# Call&Care

Brought to you by **Premier.**

already keeping in touch with the members of their communities, thereby reinforcing a sense of belonging and increasing well-being. The twelve short videos from Call and Care can help prepare the team of call-makers for their role.

For information, to view the free videos and to sign-up please [visit the Call and Care site](#).

[Premier](#), which started as a London-based Christian radio station, is a national multi-media organisation and one of [CTE's Bodies in Association](#).

**[Find a range of guidance, resources and stories in our CTE Coronavirus web hub...](#)**

## MA Mission Prize launched

Are you an MA student at a theological college in the UK working on research around the themes of mission, evangelism and church planting?

Have you recently graduated with an MA thesis in this field?

Is your theological college connected to one of the 50 national Member Churches of Churches Together in England?

Churches Together in England (CTE), alongside the Mission Research Network, is looking for high quality, recently passed MA theses to add to a small but growing repository of MAs and PhDs which will be made available on our website. Students can submit their work directly to CTE, or Theological Educational Institutions can propose the work of some of their best MA candidates. As a guideline, to be considered for the prize the submission will normally have received a mark of high 60s into the 70s.



The prize consists of a £100 cash gift and an opportunity for the MA to appear in an edited format (6,000 words) in the recently launched journal [Ecclesial Futures](#), published by Wipf and Stock.

We are looking for MA work that potentially falls into the categories below, following the Ecclesial Futures outlines (with any empirical work focusing on the UK context):

- Longitudinal studies in congregational development over three or more years.
- Diagnoses of why different churches flourish or die.
- Ethnographic studies of the cultural changes required in 'flourishing' churches.
- How local churches can learn to experiment and fail well, such that they learn.
- How might a whole denomination transform itself towards embodying the mission of God?

- Astute, hermeneutically aware bible scholarship on the future of the contemporary church.
- Implications for theological education of the local church 'as the hermeneutic of the gospel'.
- Contextual studies of transformative churches from wide-ranging places – from the deeply secular to say, animist/shamanist contexts and everything in between.
- What kind of leadership is required for the local church to embody the mission of God?
- What does a local church need to know before it can engage in mission?
- Systemic studies of local churches and the systems that support them.

However, we are also interested in receiving MA work that has a broader remit around mission and evangelism.

**The deadline for submission is 30 April 2021.**

If you have any questions about the MA Prize in mission, evangelism and church planting please [email our Principal Officer for Mission and Evangelism, Rev Dr Ben Aldous](#).

[\*Find full information on the criteria and process for applicants and this year's judging panel on our website...\*](#)

## Keeping up the momentum - an update on CTE's Racial Justice work

*General Secretary, Rev Dr Paul Goodliff, gives an update on the Racial Justice work undertaken by Churches Together in England in support of our Member Churches...*

As we move into the new year, CTE is committed to keeping up the momentum in the campaign for racial justice, supporting the work of our [50 national Member Churches](#) in this area.

Following the frank discussions between our Presidents and young black leaders, pastors and community workers, we have been able to bring young black Christians and senior leaders of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) together, each to hear the others' concerns. Two online events were organised and attended by senior leadership from MPS, including Commissioner Cressida Dick and those working most closely with black communities in London.





The events were productive, honest and hospitable, with police committed to listening further and taking action, while the participants from a range of churches had the opportunity to be listened to. The spirit of the conversation was epitomised for me by one young black leader assuring the police that they were prayed for regularly, and the police being keen to convene this group again.

### **'Change is a must'**

Senior Pastor of City Worship London, Emmanuel Akinfenwa, attended one of these meetings. He said "(It)...was very important for me in continuing the ongoing dialogue between members of the black community and police. As we know historically there is a huge wedge between our community and the police, but as a believer I believe in restoration and reconciliation. This will not be an easy task and though I know Metropolitan Police may be trying, I think this particular matter at hand is one that they must be willing to sacrifice for and make great resource available for. Many conversations have been happening for years, but our conversations and strategy meeting must bear fruit and translate into something that future generations will benefit from... I am willing to help and support beyond meetings. Change is a must."

The Chief Superintendent in charge of the Crime Prevention Inclusion and Engagement for the MPS, Jeff Boothe, said "These sessions were very important for the MPS. In order to provide a service to all sections of the community, we need to have conversations to understand each other's perspectives." He specifically asked for active involvement from our Member Churches with a recruitment drive to increase the number of females and Black and Asian and Minority groups within the MPS. He added "London and the MPS will be a better place if it has a police service which is truly reflective of the community which it serves."

Here is ecumenical work translating speech into action, and illustrating why working ecumenically for racial justice adds such value to the task. We hope to convene similar groups with police in other English cities throughout 2021.

### **Our networks**

We will be drawing on our network of [Ecumenical Officers](#) across English counties and large cities to help bring change in their localities. This group of County Ecumenical Officers has [begun meeting to discuss racial justice](#) and has committed to hold each other accountable to ensure real change occurs. We are already hearing from them about examples of local action, for example [church leaders across Birmingham signing up to a Racial Justice Charter](#) and [an aspiration to build more racially-mixed churches in Luton](#).

Our Trustees have also established the CTE Racial Justice Working Group, which meets for the first time later this month (February 2021). It draws together member church racial justice officers and others under the co-chair of two CTE Trustees, Rev Dr Lurliene Miller and Bishop Moses Owusu-Sekyere. It is hoped that this will provide a forum for racial justice officers to share work, good practice and collaboration, with the aim of ensuring that all member churches are racially-just places of work and worship, and ready to work across wider society to remove injustice and discrimination.

CTE will, of course, continue to work closely with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's Director of Justice and Inclusion, Richard Reddie, on shared initiatives such as [Racial Justice Sunday](#), which is now in its twenty-first year. We were also delighted that two of our Presidents, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby and Pastor Agu

Irukwu, head of the Redeemed Christian Church of God UK, took part in [a televised discussion on justice and restoration](#) as part of [Tearfund's Declaration week of prayer on TBN UK](#).

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic rages through UK communities in the third wave, and we are working with black churches as they try to reach their communities with assurance that the vaccines are an essential part of the fight against the virus, especially for its more vulnerable members. Already over-represented amongst those who have died from the coronavirus, it is more important than ever that the same community is able to have confidence in the immunisation programme. See [the CTE website for news of events to promote the uptake of the vaccine in every community, including webinars by a number of our national member churches](#).

It is our prayer and hope that attention to racial justice will generate real and lasting change throughout every sector of British society.

Photo credit: [James Eades on Unsplash](#)

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

## **Bill Snelson - May he rest in peace and rise in glory**

*A tribute to Bill Snelson, General Secretary of Churches Together in England from 1997 to 2008. Peter Whittaker, a personal friend of Bill and Beryl Snelson and former Chair of the West Yorkshire Methodist District, Chair of CTE's Trustees and Convenor of its Enabling Group, reflects on Bill's significant contribution to ecumenism in England...*

Bill Snelson became the second General Secretary of Churches Together in England in succession to Canon Martin Reardon.

During his tenure from 1997 to 2008, Bill encouraged and witnessed an expansion of the membership of England's Ecumenical Instrument, in particular from the Pentecostal constituency. One of his key gifts was the ability to look ahead. He saw the ecumenical potential of the Millennium and helped navigate the Churches through the celebrations and reflections surrounding it. Later he was instrumental in the Set All Free project, encouraging appropriate commemoration and learning by the Churches for the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. As CTE approached its 20th anniversary, Bill encouraged a major review. Its report *Moving Together*, challenged the Churches to continue their journey as pilgrims with Christ, the head of the Church.



It was said, with deep affection and with humour, that Bill wrote minutes of a meeting before it took place! The truth behind that observation is testament to his grasp of the complexities and sensitivities of subjects tackled within Churches Together in England.

His ability to create succinct notes was greatly appreciated by busy people engaging with topics and programmes.

Bill was and remained at heart a Parish Priest, caring and compassionate, but also challenging of others and himself. He always tried to enable a response to the Gospel, recognising in a secular and multi-religious context, that the Churches were better together. After serving in parish ministry in Leeds, as Curate and Vicar, in 1993 Bill became Ecumenical Officer for the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC), serving until his appointment to CTE. That was his 'apprenticeship' and rooted in that experience he was always supportive and understanding of the work of County Officers. In WYEC he witnessed and encouraged Church Leaders from three Anglican Dioceses, one Roman Catholic Diocese, two Methodist Districts, Baptist, United Reformed Church, and Religious Society of Friends areas. The work extended to Black Majority Churches and to the Lutheran Church. That early indication of Bill's understanding of the breadth of Church represented in our nation led to his insistence on the need for CTE to embrace a wider membership.

Bill made his own contribution to the debate on 'Communion', a difficult issue ecumenically, through his 2006 book *Enriching Communion*. In it he argues for a wider and perhaps deeper understanding of Communion than just the sharing of bread and wine at the Lord's Table.

After retiring from the post of CTE General Secretary, Bill continued to work for ecumenical relationships by association with the Anglican Centre in Rome, raising awareness of its work in England and serving as interim Director between two permanent posts. He exercised his priesthood in his local parish. In all Bill's ministry he was hugely supported by Beryl his wife of over 50 years. We give thanks for his work and witness. To God be the glory.

*[Read more tributes to Bill Snelson on our website...](#)*

## Being fruitful – reflections on WPCU 2021

Member Churches across the country celebrated the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) between 18 and 25 January this year. Even though the England was in a national lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, groups enthusiastically embraced online tools to 'gather'...

### Churches Together in Cornwall

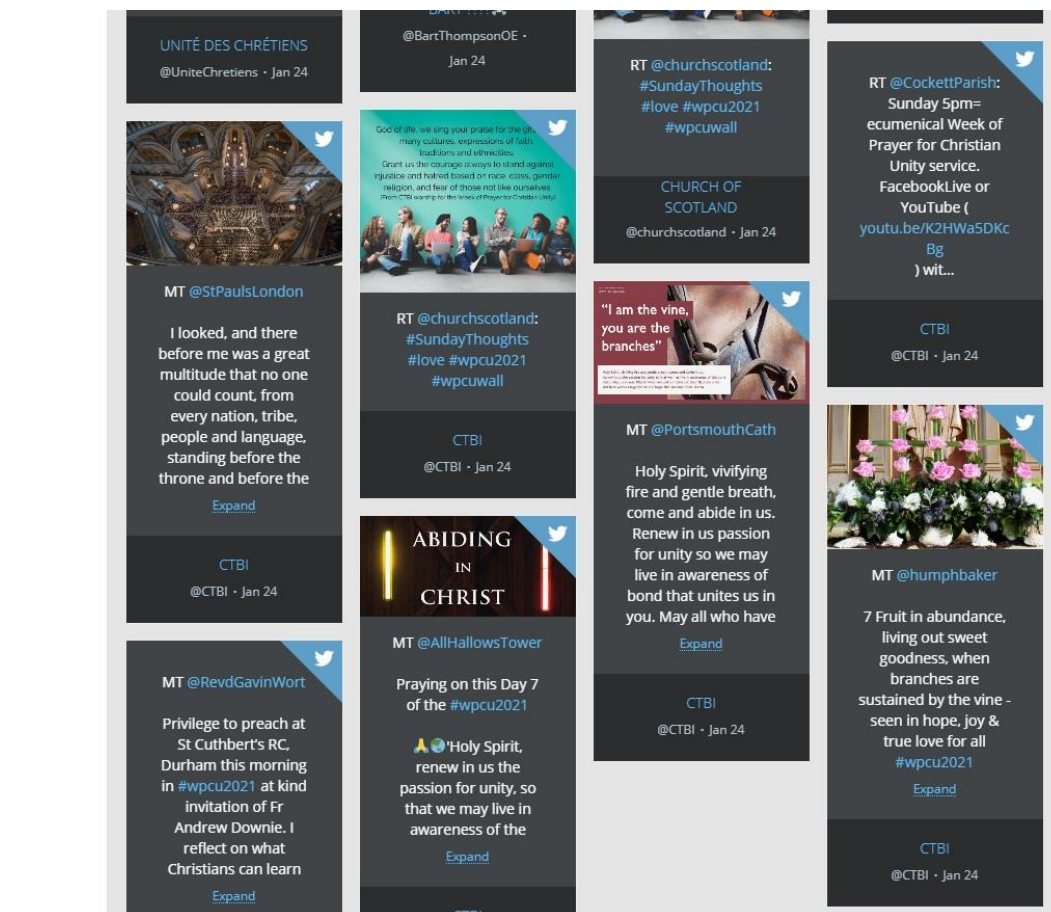
(CTC) reported that going online led to an at least ten-fold increase in the numbers they able to reach during WPCU. Missioner, Roger Mills shared that "An integrated programme of daily services at Noon, daily podcasts from local church and community leaders, a 24/7 Prayer Chain and accompanying Prayer Board, coupled with daily social media posts on themes and actions of the day together with Sunday services from local Churches Together groups resulted in well over 1000 engagements."



The CTC podcasts were a new initiative. These were daily reflections from local church and community leaders on the theme of the service for that day. Published at 6am, these were widely distributed on Twitter, Facebook and Spotify. CTC have caught the 'pod-casting bug' and are now planning more editions for future events including Racial Justice Sunday and Fairtrade Fortnight.

Churches Together in Reading, like many local groups, held a joint service on Zoom. Members of eight different denominations took part. The Ecumenical Officer for Churches Together in Berkshire, David Hare, reports that it was so popular that latecomers were not able to join as the limit of 100 attendees had been reached. Those who missed the event were however able to [catch up on YouTube later](#).

[Churches Together in Lancashire](#) were joined for their zoom service by the Deputy General Secretary for CTBI, Peter Colwell. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland coordinate the WPCU and commissioned [this year's resources on the theme 'Abiding in Christ'](#) from the ecumenical Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland.



[For a wider view of many of the events from WPCU 2021, take a look at CTBI's Twitter wall.](#)

[Catch up with CTE General Secretary, Rev Dr Paul Goodliff's, reflection for WPCU.](#)

[Watch a recording of the World Council of Churches ecumenical prayer service from the final day of WPCU 2021.](#)

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

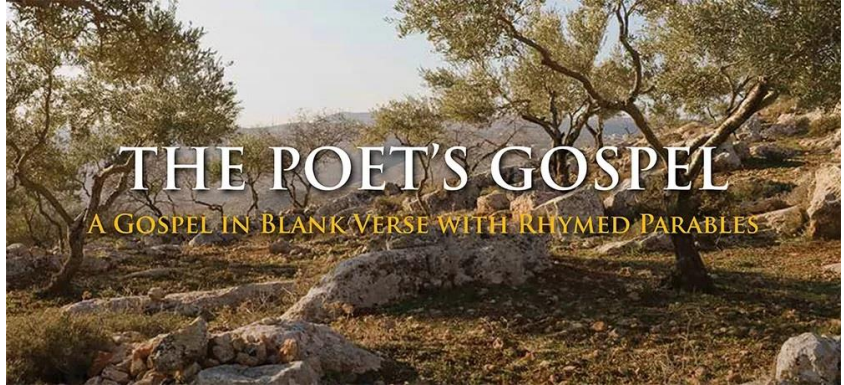


## Lent study 2021 - The Poet's Gospel

Former CTE General Secretary, David Cornick, reviews this year's [\*Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Lent study\*](#) - The Poet's Gospel: a gospel in blank verse with rhymed parables.

This year's Lent course is grounded in one man's spirituality. John Alan Davis is in his 90s. He is a retired headmaster, a poet and a dramatist. As Bob Fyffe notes in his introduction to the course, Alan wrote this gospel as a spiritual exercise whilst his wife was suffering from dementia and after her death.

It brought him comfort, and it will bring us not just comfort but new insights, unsettling challenges and new ways of encountering Jesus.



The gospel is written in blank verse, and it deploys the work of all four evangelists. That in itself produces striking juxtapositions which force us to think – the beatitudes with the parables of the astute manager and the Great Banquet, and the blending of the synoptic and Johannine accounts of Holy Week for example. That in its turn might make us alert to the value of the four individual tellings of the Jesus story that we have in our Bibles.

The poet's eye makes us see anew. Parables are re-cast in rhyme, with a dramatist's ear well attuned to the realities of human emotion. Here he touches the heart of the parable of the prodigal son:

Find sandals for my boy's sore feet  
Slave he'll no longer be.  
Go, kill the fatted calf  
He's home and loved and free.

The final stress on 'free' opens up the long vista of redemption.

The book is divided into 23 parts, each with a beautiful accompanying photo, which could themselves be occasions for mediation. The Lent course selects five of them, linked loosely by the theme of discipleship, each with a couple of thought-provoking questions. Accompanying that, are sound files which can be downloaded from CTBI's website, of Alan reading the gospel. His voice, so full of drama, takes the text into new dimensions – and is a 'must' for Lenten groups. The audio file of Holy Week is also available on the website.

It is a rich resource for Lent.

[Download \*The Poet's Gospel\* Lent study e-book and sound files from the CTBI website.](#)

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

## Lent video course

[Christianity.org.uk](http://Christianity.org.uk) will also be hosting a new Lent video course, with in-depth teaching on each book of the Bible. The course was written and presented by esteemed bible scholar Rev Dr Helen Paynter, in conjunction with the Baptist Union.

The Lent course will be [available free-of-charge on Christianity.org.uk](http://Christianity.org.uk) to individuals and church groups wishing to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible. Over the 40 days of Lent, the course will cover the background and context to each of the 66 Biblical books.

## Pentecostal Credit Union - 40th anniversary

*The [Pentecostal Credit Union](http://Pentecostal Credit Union) has just celebrated its 40th anniversary. The PCU's Head of Marketing and Communications, Elaine Bowes, explains its origins, philosophy and what it offers today...*

### Our Roots

The Pentecostal Credit Union (PCU) was founded in 1980 by Rev Carmel Jones. PCU was born from a desire to address the financial inequalities and exclusion that Black communities and Black Majority Churches were experiencing at that time. Its first meeting was in Rev Jones' living room in his house in Balham South London, and from that most humble beginning has grown one of the strongest credit unions in the UK today. So PCU has grown from a vision – a vision of social justice translated into action – making a difference to many people's lives.

Individual and corporate membership of PCU spans all the main Pentecostal denominations in the UK.

### Who we are

PCU is rooted in the Pentecostal Faith. We are a not-for-profit financial co-operative, owned and run by our members – who are drawn from Pentecostal congregations across the whole of the UK. PCU provides a safe, ethical, and convenient way to save and to borrow at fair rates of interest. Through our services, we ensure that any individual, church group or business that practices the Pentecostal faith can receive financial support. Since 1980 PCU has provided an ethical and trustworthy alternative to high street financial institutions. So, we are inspired by our faith and directed by our members to achieve our vision to be the preferred finance partner for every Pentecostal Christian household in the UK.



### Investing in our members

We believe that everyone who travels with us should be enriched by the journey and to ensure that this is the case we offer:

- free financial capability workshops to our members and churches in our common bond community, called Moneywise.
- a long-term leadership development programme to our Junior Savers aged 11 - 18 - Our Youth Shadow Board
- a business development programme for those of our members who have entrepreneurial ambitions.

We believe in the economic empowerment of our members so that they can fulfil their potential and achieve their aspirations.

## **COVID-19 and the Future**

COVID-19 has brought many challenges for our members, and we have developed an approach to not only try to ease the financial responsibilities that they have with us at this time, but also to support them through these difficulties. We believe that the COVID-19 economic recovery will be a digital one - we have already witnessed the turbo charge in our digital and technological advances because of lockdown. At PCU we remain vigilant in this regard and are committed to continue to support our members in the Covid recovery as far as we can by providing support to those that need to upskill and reskill for the changes that are already upon us and that will continue.

In this time of crisis and uncertainty we remain committed to providing the best service that we can to our members, which includes being as flexible and as compassionate as we can be – as we all cope with the challenges presented by COVID-19. As a Christian organisation we move into the future with hope, and embrace at this time the scripture 1 Peter 5:10:

*"After you have suffered for a little while, The God of Grace, The One who called you into His Eternal Glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself restore, empower, strengthen and establish you."*

[Find out more about the Pentecostal Credit Union.](#)

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

## **The not1 campaign: Peterborough churches unite to tackle homelessness**

*After managing the winter night shelter, churches in Peterborough have cemented close links with each other and with their local authority. This allowed them to respond quickly at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and to launch the continuing campaign that not 1 person should be living on the streets in their area. The Light Project Peterborough (LPP) is coordinating the campaign. CEO Steven Pettican shares their story...*

Fifteen churches from across the denominations had been working together on the night shelter and hundreds of volunteers amassed over 7,000 volunteering hours opening their doors for 123 nights straight to get people out of the cold. Of the 57 guests in this winter season, 47 were cared for, supported, and 'loved' off the streets.

Then the beginning of our local campaign to say not 1 person should be on the streets now or at any time. Within a day, the LPP leadership mobilised staff, church volunteers and community members to offer 24-hour support at one of the local hotels. Within a week, 80 people previously sleeping on the streets were being fed, having their health needs met and laughing with volunteers on the joys of having a clean bed and their own shower!

At the height of the pandemic, the LPP team were leading the church and community to care for 120 people in three hotel settings. This work continues and the kindness of those helping just keeps on giving! The law has changed a number of times, with our government leaders doing their best to make the best decisions, but in Peterborough we have used [our not 1 campaign](#) to lead the way on working with civic partners, other charities, community members and church communities to say "why should we stop! If we can get everyone in once, then why can we not keep this going?"

The stories of change and the response to work together to change the system are what inspire us most. Can we, the church, say "not 1" with one combined voice, in words and actions? Not 1 person on the streets, not 1 person cold and unloved, not 1 person left to rot in the wet whilst we all walk by?

[Find out more about the Light Project Peterborough and the not1 campaign.](#)

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

## A prophetic word on unity kick-starts a local partnership

*Highworth Churches Together (URC, Methodist, Anglican and independent), near Swindon, run a Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre, hold Life Skills and CAP Money courses and are about to open up a Job Club. A member of the town's Community Church, Andrew Wilson, tells us how their story began...*

"I was on the leadership of the Community Church from 2003 - 2011. During that time, I came across [Christians Against Poverty](#) through *The Times*' 100 Top Employers award. Having investigated the Debt Centre option, we realised we didn't have the funding for it. We did start doing a CAP Money Course and a few years later the Debt Centre Manager from nearby Swindon came along and did a church talk and encouraged us to either support their centre or set up our own.



Around the same sort of time, the four churches in Highworth decided to go on a weekend retreat to Lee Abbey in Devon. We'd never done anything like that before, but during that weekend another person who was using Lee Abbey for a retreat gave a prophecy. "You were the churches in Highworth, you will be known as The Church in Highworth". He didn't know us at all, but it struck a chord and from that time a prayer group was formed with members from each of the churches. This prayer group and a



few other things started to draw us closer together. One year we performed The Passion for the town. We had 3,000 people in the Market Square hearing the Gospel. Not bad for a town of 8,000!

Over time our interest in CAP resurfaced and the churches decided that a debt centre would be a great opportunity for The Church in Highworth to serve the community in a way that none of the four churches could do on their own. With the combined resources of the four churches, we were able to open our own debt centre five years ago.

Our Debt Centre Manager works really hard to make sure that all four churches know what's happening through the centre, which keeps everyone on board. As I say, none of the churches could ever have run it on their own, so it has enabled us to have a vehicle for people who had the time and gifts to serve to actually impact their community. We have seen many people make commitments to Christ. Some have joined with one of our congregations and some with other congregations in our area. The four churches are very different and bring different things to the ministry including prayer team members, befrienders, cooks and all-important funding. The united heart to see people find Jesus means it has not been an exercise in growing our individual churches but God's Kingdom.

You've got to believe that God's answering that prayer. Even in Lockdown, our Centre's existence was never questioned because everyone sees the transformation of lives in our town."

Andrew's involvement with [CAP](#) has continued. He is now Region Director - South England & Wales, Head of Life Skills Christians Against Poverty.

*Photo credit: Christmas Party 2019 by Highworth CAP*

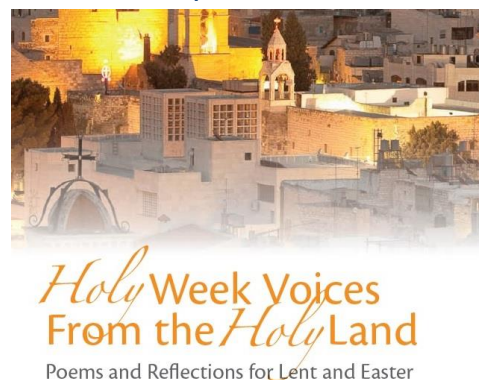
## Library corner: Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land

This new prayer resource, published by one of CTE's Bodies in Association, the [Friends of the Holy Land](#), brings the reality of Easter in the Holy Land to life.

The physical reality of Easter is captured in the book which brings together voices from the first Holy Week with those from across the Holy Land in today's Covid-hit world.

With forewords by CTE Presidents Archbishop Justin Welby and Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land juxtaposes immersive poetry from a priest who experienced Lent and Easter in lockdown London, with reflections from Christians living in crisis in the Holy Land in a new prayer resource.

Facing the pain of a closed church during Lent and Easter 2020, when Covid restrictions put pay to foot washing, vigils and corporate celebrations, Fr Richard Nesbitt of Our Lady of Fatima church in White City, penned poems through the eyes of those who experienced the first Easter.



These 15 poems, which take the reader from Bethany to Jerusalem and Emmaus, are

written in accessible language from the perspective of key players in the Holy Week drama from Judas to Pontius Pilate and Mary Magdalene. Each is placed side by side with scripture and reflections from Christians, across a range of denominations, who are living in Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan in a time of global pandemic.

Proceeds from the book will help fund the work of charity [Friends of the Holy Land](#) which supports vulnerable Christian families across the region with education costs, unemployment relief, house renovations, medical and emergency needs.

[Orders for hard copy books can be placed via the website](#), by phone on 01926 512980, [or by email](#). An eBook will also be available from the website.

[Read more about this book on our website...](#)

## Jobs

### Web Content Assistant: CTE

Churches Together in England (CTE) is seeking to appoint an organised and efficient web content assistant for a fixed term of 25 days, over approximately 12 weeks.

2 days per week (half-days will also be considered)

25-day fixed term contract

Home-based

Living Wage (£9.50 per hour, or £10.85 per hour in London)

**Closing date: Monday 8 February 2021 at 9am**

Interview date: Friday 12 February (online)

Start date: week commencing 22 February 2021

[Get full details of this opportunity...](#)

### Mission Enabler: Churches Together in All Lincolnshire

Churches Together in All Lincolnshire, (CTAL), is seeking to appoint a, 'Mission Enabler', to work with church leaders, churches, denominations, and other appropriate groups across the region of Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, and North East Lincolnshire from April 2021. This is a paid, part-time post, (18hrs per week), with a degree of flexible working.

The post holder will:

- Encourage and develop ecumenical working in the mission and growth of God's Kingdom throughout the region
- Enable good communication between denominations, churches, local CT groups, and other partners
- Coordinate the various meetings and activities of CTAL

**Closing date:** Friday 19 February

[Find more information about this role on the CTAL website...](#)

## And finally...

### Event: The voice of women in Christian worship and leadership

The Oliver Lyseight Annual Lecture for 2021 will be given online on Saturday 13 February at 1pm by Rev Dr Carol Tomlin. It is organised by the New Testament Church of God Leadership Training Centre and is open to all.



[Book your place...](#)

### Christian Aid's changemakers virtual conference

If you support Christian Aid or volunteer to encourage others to give, act and pray during Christian Aid Week, then sign up for this virtual conference from **22 to 26 February**. Share ideas around fundraising and campaigning and be inspired by stories for Christian Aid Week 2021, which focuses on the impact of Kenya's climate crisis.

[Find out more details...](#)

### World Day of Prayer: Friday 5 March

Women of the Republic of Vanuatu (located in the South Pacific Ocean) have prepared this year's service. People of all ages are called to 'Build on a strong foundation' and live in unity, love and peace in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity.

[Resources are available to download...](#)

### Census Day: Sunday 21 March

The census is a unique survey that happens every 10 years. It gives a snapshot of all the people and households in England and Wales – the most detailed and valuable information about our society. Everyone in the country will receive a letter asking them to take part. This will help to inform decisions on services that shape our community, such as schools, doctors' surgeries and bike lanes. Please do this when the time comes.

[Visit the census website for more information and help...](#)

### Thy Kingdom Come 2021: 13 to 23 May

The global, ecumenical prayer movement, Thy Kingdom Come, is now in its sixth year. Keep an eye [on their website](#) for news about plans and resources for this year, which will include an 11-part, family-friendly programme and a prayer journal written by the new Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

[Explore Thy Kingdom Come...](#)



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