



CT-eNews

March 2021

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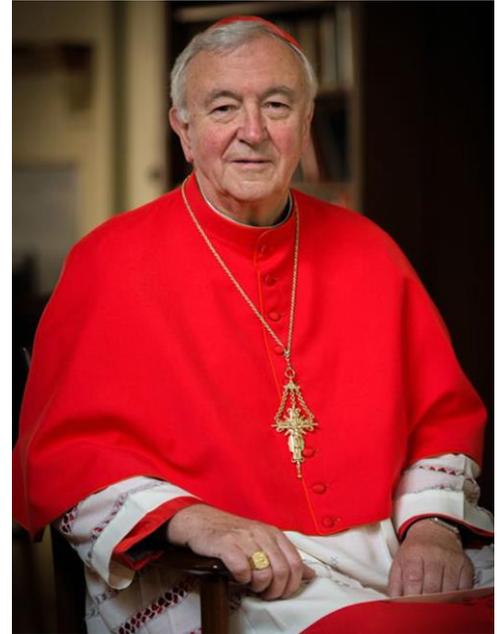
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Reflection of the Month: The Glory of the Cross

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster and a CTE President, shares our [Reflection of the Month](#) for March 2021...

Holy Week fast approaches (28 March is Palm Sunday). It is our tradition in these days to follow the drama of Our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection, step by step. We mark the exaltation of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem; the sombre tones of the Last Supper, with its command of humble service; the agony of his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane; the desolation of Calvary; the earth tremors of his death; the dawning realisation of the new life bursting from the barren tomb; the climax of the 'alleluias' of Easter Day. It is a journey like no other. The whole of our human nature and experiences are to be found there, embraced by our Blessed Lord in his sharing in our nature yet suffused with his divine compassion, love, and power, undefeated even by death itself.



Last year our celebrations of Holy Week were like never before, symbolised by the figure of Pope Francis, alone in a rain-swept St Peter's Square, yet accompanied by untold millions through television and the internet.

This year will have similar restrictions for many. Yet another feature now colours our Holy Week: the deaths associated with this pandemic: over a hundred thousand in this country and two and a half million worldwide. The cry of lamentation is piercing and widespread, giving extra bitterness and poignancy through the impossibility of shared grieving among friends and communities. This has cut to the heart of our humanity, as have so many other aspects of the lockdowns, shielding, and travel bans, eroding our patterns of family and mutual support.

It takes little imagination to hear the cry of the women of Jerusalem at the sight of Jesus as a reflection of our own laments. Jesus' words to them remind us that he is no dreamer, no false idealist, for he knows, from within, the continuing reality of human suffering in this broken world of ours. Indeed, as we stand at the foot of the Cross, either in the Liturgy of the Church or in the silence of our room, we know that he has absorbed into his flesh, like a sponge taking in water, all the destructiveness of our sinfulness and the impact of the ruthlessness of the created order.

It also takes little imagination to see that throughout this pandemic the 'green blades' have continued to rise, the precursors or first shoots of the work of the Holy Spirit in a pandemic-swept world: countless acts of random kindness, the growth of true solidarity, and determined service of the most needy, a deep appreciation of the importance of family ties. The list is long. This is the growth which need must nurture in the radiance of the radical power of the Holy Spirit, raising Jesus from the tomb.

St Paul tells us to glory in the Cross of Jesus. Yes, we have to not only glimpse but also grasp the glory of the Cross of Christ which alone can call us through every crisis and corruption. This glory is not a shield from harsh realities; it is not an escape route. Rather it is the unconditional embrace of those realities by the only person who has

power, in his divine nature, to overcome them and, by his embracing of our humanity, to share that victory with us, his sisters and brothers.

In our pilgrimage together we know that now we are gifted with the first fruits of his victory even as we await their fulfilment only when summoned by the Lord into the full glory of his presence.

As we light candles for all who have died, we do so not only as a promise to remember them but more importantly as a sign of the hope of eternal life, which fills our hearts with joy.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols is the Archbishop of Westminster, President of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and a President of Churches Together in England.

Vaccines – a beacon of hope

Since the beginning of the coronavirus vaccine roll-out, [our national Member Churches](#) have played their part in supporting this national health initiative.

Buildings have been turned into vaccination hubs; worshippers have donned hi-vis vests to become volunteer marshals; church leaders have used their voices as Covid-19 vaccine ambassadors.

Last weekend the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, [visited a pop-up vaccination centre at Jesus House in London, part of the Redeemed](#)

[Church of God](#) (pictured above). HRH [The Prince of Wales also visited](#) the church's centre on 9 March. The church and denomination is led by Pastor Agu Irukwu, CTE's Pentecostal President who said "We are grateful to God that at a time like this, His church can be salt and light, a beacon of hope in the nation."

Ecumenical groups, such as [Churches Together in South London](#), have issued joint statements encouraging uptake of the Covid-19 vaccine as the best way to control the pandemic and save lives.

And individual church leaders have given encouragement. The Anglican Bishop of Dover, the Rt Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin said: "When you are offered the Covid vaccine, please take it. This is our chance to show we care for ourselves and our neighbours. Don't let misinformation rob you of your opportunity to protect yourself and others."

Rev Dr Joe Aldred from the National Church Leaders Forum (and a former CTE staff member) said "The vaccines are the best way to protect ourselves from Covid and offer a way out of the pandemic. Most importantly, they are safe. I've had mind and I urge you to get yours when you are invited to."



Many of our [national Member Churches have hosted webinars](#) providing an opportunity for medical experts to answer questions and debunk many of the myths that have exacerbated vaccine hesitancy. This includes the [Church of God of Prophecy two-part webinar](#), co-hosted by CTE's newest staff member Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations. She said of the webinars: "They provided a great platform to demystify the vaccine, its medical purpose and processes, whilst giving the opportunity to listen and legitimise genuine concerns about the vaccine from a socio-political, theological, economic, and cultural perspective. The webinars also highlighted the need in this pandemic to focus on the nation's health from a holistic perspective, and areas such as mental health and health inequalities became a key topic of conversation and opportunity for action."

CTE itself also hosted two webinars in support of the vaccine programme. As well as question and answer sessions with medical experts, they provided the opportunity for church leaders across traditions to put the vaccine programme in a theological context.

In our first webinar on 18 February, Bishop of Woolwich Karowei Dorgu said "when we take the vaccine we help stop the NHS from reaching breaking point." And in our second on 25 February, Rt Rev Michael Beasley, one of CTE's Trustees, explained: "Tomorrow I'm going for my job. Why do I have confidence? The reason I'm confident of the process being used is that it is so rigorous."

Supporting Covid-19 vaccinations is just the latest aspect of how our Member Churches have been active in their communities during the pandemic. Over the next couple of weeks, as we approach the one year anniversary of the first national lockdown and of [#PrayersOfHope](#), we will be reflecting on their contributions.

[Read more about churches supporting the Covid-19 vaccine roll-out](#)

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

Call5 – help reduce isolation

The last year has been difficult for many with considerable isolation and loneliness experienced across the country, as well as a significant rise in people experiencing mental health issues. In one survey*, taken at the end of last year, one in four UK adults, told researchers they were feeling lonely.

Premier, the national Christian multi-media organisation, has launched Call5, a campaign to encourage everyone to use the telephone to contact those who might be in need of someone to talk to.



Call5 is a simple scheme where individuals sign up and commit to call five people they know. Although this is primarily a telephone-based project, it also includes contact through Skype, FaceTime, text, email or whatever the preferred contact method is for the people involved.

'Why "Call5"? We have five digits on each hand - looking at our hands is an easy reminder to call, by allocating a person to each digit. For the enthusiastic, there is always a second hand to use to identify five more people to call,' says the Director for Premier Lifeline, Jonathan Clark.

[Sign up to be part of the Call5 movement.](#)

Premier has also [launched Call and Care](#), which is free video training for churches to equip their volunteers to offer telephone support to those in need in their community.

[*Survey from the Mental Health Foundation, November 2020.](#)

[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...](#)

Thy Kingdom Come 2021

Thy Kingdom Come is an ecumenical prayer movement for evangelisation, uniting Christians in nearly 90% of countries worldwide from the Ascension to Pentecost.

On 9 March 2021, their team hosted a virtual launch event to unveil plans for this year's Thy Kingdom Come, taking place from 13-23 May.

Acknowledging that Britain is approaching the early stages of a phased return to socialising, after what has been an extremely challenging year, the aim is for Thy Kingdom Come to be a blessing and to serve the Church where the need is greatest; by providing free, spiritually nourishing resources for all, to deepen and refresh their faith.



Now in its sixth year, Thy Kingdom Come has grown from an initial call to prayer from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Anglican Communion, to a worldwide ecumenical prayer movement uniting Christians from across 65 different denominations and traditions.

New resources for 2021 will include an [11-part children's video series called Cheeky Pandas](#) (seen in the picture) – packed with Bible stories, prayers, animation, worship songs and interviews with special guests including CTE Pentecostal President Pastor Agu Irukwu and his wife Shola (Jesus House), adventurer Bear Grylls, CBeebies presenter Gemma Hunt and Revd Nicky Gumbel (HTB and Alpha), to name a few.



The video series (which will be available from early April onwards) can be used as part of church at home, gathered church (online and offline) and in school assemblies. Similar to last year, the series will be the main content in the Family Prayer Adventure Map and App.

For youth, Thy Kingdom Come are working with the Archbishop of York's Youth Trust to produce a selection of youth resources including a series of video reflections from young influential Christians such as the current Methodist Youth President Phoebe Parkin, rapper and author Guvna B, Worship Leader Elle Limebear, Spoken Word Artist Joshua Luke Smith and many more.

Other new resources include [this year's Novena and the Prayer Journal](#), written by the Archbishop of York with the express intention of inspiring readers to re-encounter the love and joy found in Jesus Christ.

The award-winning [Thy Kingdom Come app](#), available in nine languages, will for the first time, include audio content from 24/7 Prayer's Lectio 365, with audio reflections from Pete Greig, Archbishop Justin and 24/7 Prayer GB UK Director, Carla Harding.

[Explore the Thy Kingdom Come 2021 website for more details on this year's plans.](#)

[Order resources for your church, including printed copies of the Prayer Journal and Prayer Adventure Map.](#)

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

Solving the Housing Crisis

The Church of England has published a major report calling for a collective effort by Government, local authorities, landowners and property developers as well as the Church to tackle an acute shortage of truly affordable homes.



[The report, *Coming Home*, from the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community](#), concludes that the Church of England should lead by example and deliver more truly affordable homes on its own land.

The Commission has identified new ways in which the 6000 acres of strategic landholdings of the Church Commissioners could be used and recommends a new Church Measure which would ensure that dioceses and parishes can use church land for social and environmental benefit.

Published after two years of research, the report warns that the housing crisis has left an estimated eight million people living in overcrowded, unaffordable and sub-standard accommodation with increasing numbers of families unable to put down roots in their communities.

The Archbishop of Canterbury and CTE President, Justin Welby, said: *"The Commission has laid out an exciting and compelling vision for housing in our nation. I welcome the challenge to the Church, which is uniquely placed thanks to our resources and our committed and continuing presence in every community, to work to build not just more houses but truly affordable houses and stronger communities. My prayer is that the work of this Commission will help us achieve God's desire for all of His children to find 'home' here on Earth as a taste of the eternal home we are offered in His Kingdom."*

To provide direction for these initiatives, the Archbishop of Canterbury will ask the General Synod, the church's national assembly, to confirm that meeting housing need is an integral part of the mission of the Church of England. And the newly-appointed Bishop for Housing, the Right Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani will lead a team supporting local dioceses and parishes to help meet local housing need.

[Read more on the *Coming Home* report](#)

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

New Housing events

On 4 March, more than eighty people working in the area of mission and housing attended the first in **a series of events on 'being Christ-like in a new housing context' from the New Housing Hub, Fresh Expressions and Churches Together in England**. There will be two further events on 10 June and 7 October 2021. These are free and open to practitioners in this mission field. For more information [contact CTE's Principal Officer for Evangelism & Mission, Rev Dr Ben Aldous](#).

MA Mission Prize reminder

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.

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.

[For full details on the criteria and process for application, check out our website.](#)

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.](#)

Firm Foundations: the life of a construction site chaplain

Rev Ewen Huffman is the Chaplain on Europe's largest construction site at Hinkley Point C in Somerset. We invited him to share some insights into his unique role...

So, I'm a one-man ecumenical movement: an ordained Baptist Pastor, seconded to the Church of England (Diocese of Bath and Wells) and paid for by Hinkley Point C (HPC), the largest construction site in Europe, to be their Chaplain to all faiths and none! In myself, background, theology and disposition I'm an AngloBaptiCostal and, as far as I know, I am the only salaried chaplain to the Construction Industry. It's not for the faint-hearted, but it is the most astonishing and fruitful place to be.

Working with other denominations and dispositions has always been a thrill for me. One of the highlights of my life was leading the unity work in Winchester when I pastored there. It felt like a special team for a special task and time. I also had the privilege of working with the Evangelical Alliance and their [Gather unity movement](#). So working across and without denominational boundaries is second nature to me.

And now, after 30 years as a Pastor, I find myself without a congregation, without the encompassing of Christians... on the coal face for the kingdom of God. And it is possibly the most significant and fruitful thing I've ever done!



HPC already cares for workers' physical needs (with a full-blown medical centre) and mental health (with over three hundred Mental Health First Aiders, of which I am one), but has pioneered the path of caring for the whole person with the appointment of a Chaplain for 'spiritual and pastoral care' (in January 2020). It's a bit of a radical and caring appointment for an industry like this!

To be honest, I'm astonished at the reception, favour and opportunities I have been given. It may well be that the Covid situation has accelerated that welcome – but I think we all feel 'now was the right time to appoint a Chaplain'. I have continued to be on site even during lockdown, giving encouragement and practising our strict social distancing protocols.

My work falls mainly into five areas:

1. Pastoral (being a friend, sounding board, listening ear and often signposting);
2. Presence (just 'being there': around site, at events);
3. Ceremony (e.g. leading prayers before a historic concrete pour or for safety before a tunnel boring machine launches);
4. Community (bringing people together, doing site videos to encourage people, running a choir – virtually during Covid) and liaising between HPC, the local community and their charities for some of our community charity gifts)
5. Spiritual (helping people with spiritual questions, bereavement, leading a small but growing Christian community, liaising with and encouraging other faith communities).

Christians have so much that is taken for granted.

In the main area of my remit, 'spiritual and pastoral care', two things stand out. Pastorally, a little bit of the pastoral care, that is common in our churches, goes such a long way and is so appreciated! Christians have so much that is taken for granted!

And spiritually, just being here, present – having someone with the office of Chaplain – seems to remind and stir dormant or lost faith (and questions) in people.

Also, it has been such a privilege to work with those of other faiths and encourage and learn from them while respecting our diversity and difference – especially the Muslim Community (they were behind the site's Christmas Tree competition and our Christian Community are going to buy their Eid meal next year).

From here: we've got an Alpha Course starting this spring and, once Covid allows, I want to build a team of Volunteer Chaplains so that every area of site has a familiar face. I also want to run parenting, parenting-teenagers, and marriage courses. All before the majority of workforce leave and the site starts to go live in 2025, producing 7% of Britain's electricity through carbon neutral nuclear power for the next 60 years. And helping Britain achieve our net zero carbon goals.

[Watch a short video \(voiced by Ewen\) produced at the end of 2020 to get a sense of the scale of the HPC project.](#)

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

Opportunity for young adults to attend the WCC Assembly – apply now

**World Council of Churches Assembly,
Karlsruhe, Germany
21 August – 10 September 2022**



**World Council
of Churches**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) welcomes applications from young adults to serve as stewards at the next Assembly in 2022.

You need to be between 18 and 30 years old in August 2022, and it provides an extraordinary opportunity to engage ecumenically with the world church. Many now deeply involved ecumenically look back to their service in this way as truly transformative – could that be your experience, too?

[Details can be found on the WCC website, together with application forms and further details.](#) Applications need to be made directly to the WCC.

The deadline for applications is 10 April 2021.

Churches Together in England is prepared to consider assistance with travel costs to the Assembly for suitable candidates who are [part of a CTE Member Church](#). If your application is successful, [please contact our General Secretary Paul Goodliff for more information](#).

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

Ecumenical Easter eggs

The ecumenical relationships in the Herefordshire town of Ledbury have grown richer and deeper over the last six years.

An initiative which started on Maundy Thursday 2015 to pray together for 24 hours led to a commitment for Churches Together in Ledbury to meet every Thursday at 7am to pray. Now that has extended to a weekly ecumenical worship service on Mondays.

It was the rhythm of prayer, worship and relationship building which saw the development of LEAF (Locally Encouraging All to Flourish), a new ecumenical charity which is in the process of becoming a CiO (Community interest Organisation). LEAF is committed to seeing the community of Ledbury thrive through partnerships with Christians Against Poverty, running the Alpha course, the Bible Society's Open the Book programme and more.

Out of this robust ecumenical vision, Churches Together in Ledbury have been thinking about ways to bless the most vulnerable children in their community. Using the Easter eggs from the Meaningful Chocolate Company, LEAF is providing Easter eggs with messages of Christian hope to all children on free school meals in Ledbury's two primary schools. This has been paid for by ecumenical funds, as well as offers from local Christians willing to contribute.

Tony Hodder, a pioneer minister at Ledbury Parish Church and CEO of LEAF says, "the good history of working together at Churches Together in Ledbury means we can harness resources quickly."

What is your local Churches Together group doing for Easter 2021?

Please [email your ecumenical Easter stories \(with a photo we can share\) to our communications team](#) or use the hashtag #ChurchesTogether on Facebook or Twitter.

To get them into the next edition of CTe-News, we need to have your Easter stories by Wednesday 7 April.



Jobs

Project Leader - Disciples in the Community: The Congregational Federation

1-year fixed term
37.5 hours per week
£27,456 per annum

The Congregational Federation is a voluntary association of independent local churches across England, Scotland and Wales, and we have a great opportunity to join our Christian charitable organisation whilst working in a varied and interesting environment.

They are seeking to appoint a highly motivated Christian (with a strong commitment to the ethos and principles of Congregationalism) who will have the responsibility for facilitating the process of producing a contemporary resource relating to discipleship and community engagement. The individual will share this new resource with Congregational Federation churches, alongside helping them develop the skill of active listening.

Closing date: Sunday 14 March 2021

[For further information and an application pack, visit the Congregational Federation website...](#)

Ecumenical Social Responsibility Officer: Churches Together in Cumbria

Churches Together in Cumbria wishes to appoint a person who will exercise a creative and enabling role assisting churches in Cumbria to work together in matters of social, political and economic import affecting the county and country, formulating appropriate Christian responses to such issues in consultation with the Social Responsibility Forum, its chair and Trustees of CTiC.

This post is for 20 hours a week and anticipated to be for 3 years subject to a probationary period. It is home-based, with some travel to meetings.

For enquiries about this post contact the President of CTiC Andrew Dodd by telephone on 01539 436451 [or e-mail.](#)

Closing date: Wednesday 31 March 2021

[A job description, person specification and application form can be downloaded from the CTiC website...](#)

And finally...

Welcome to Shermara Fletcher

On 1 March, CTE's new Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations, Shermara Fletcher, took up her post. With roots in the Church of God of Prophecy, [Shermara is a millennial Pentecostal leader](#) with significant experience in community organising, ecumenical engagement, leadership development and public speaking.



[How to contact Shermara...](#)

Connected Communities: Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Churches Together in Britain & Ireland have produced a new resource on Antisemitism which is created jointly with the Council of Christians and Jews. It enables churches to explore the issues and challenges around antisemitism which is at historically high levels in the wider context of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

[Find out more...](#)

Mission, race and colonialism seminar

CTE's Mission Research Network, in association with the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology, are holding an online seminar on Mission, race and colonialism on **Wednesday 26 May 11.00am-12.30pm**



[Find out how to book your place...](#)

Want to keep receiving the CTE monthly newsletter?

This is just an early warning... Over the next couple of months we are changing how we produce and send this CTE monthly newsletter. As part of that process, to keep to GDPR regulations, we will need you to re-subscribe to this publication. We don't want to lose you as a reader so please look out for an email explaining what you need to do. Thank you!

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