

Reflection of the Month: 'Light dependent people'



Jim Currin writes:

It's always interesting when our friend Mark is around, and he has been to stay with me and my wife for the last few days. Mark reflects a lot on life and asks interesting questions including about faith and theology. Sometimes, he also makes mischievous comments, like last night when he said, 'Ah -those light dependent people'! This phrase prompts this reflection.

There are lots of things you could know about Mark. Uppermost in my mind is that he is a greatly talented musician. He leads a worship band and inspired me to learn how to play the djembe drum, on which he is expert. He works in a music college as PA to the Director and coordinates the diary and meetings for the executive leadership team. Deliberately last to mention - Mark is also completely blind and has been since birth.

Maybe Mark's comment now makes more sense. We were looking for something in his dark room and asked if he minded us putting the light so we could look for it, to which he quipped (quoting a friend), 'Ah - those light dependent people!'

The phrase challenges what we as sighted people consider as normal. It also makes me think of how we see the 'other' and how we are all the 'other' to someone else. We naturally assume our way is normal and the 'other' is different. Interestingly, when Mark commented on how we must presume to believe he is surrounded by darkness, he replied, 'how do you know, it could be that I am surrounded by gold!'

I'd never thought of myself as being 'light dependent' before. Most of us are, and we take it for granted. Putting the light on, or finding a torch, is second nature, but to Mark it is unnecessary. By being different Mark shows me something about myself.

The same can be said of our ecumenical relationships. We are all so different and it sometimes takes 'the other' to help us see ourselves as we are.

This is the principle behind the CTE resource [Embracing the Other](#) which explores the theology and practice of Receptive Ecumenism in local Churches Together groups. 'The other' is also the principle behind mission and evangelism, like the lost sheep in Luke 15v6: "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep," said Jesus. Reaching out to 'the other' is also the principle we need to practice more and more in our increasingly divided world as we observe the golden rule to love one another.

Mark's comment was a bit cheeky when we needed to put the light on in his room, but it's also a great phrase with an extra deeply serious reminder. For Christians in relation to Jesus - we are all 'light dependent people'!

As an aside, as a blind person Mark has an interesting take when considering scripture references to darkness and light e.g. in John 1: 5 (NIV), 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' Mark translates this as, 'The presence gives shape to the void and the void cannot overwhelm it'. Also, he notes there is sometimes physical healing, but often references to the blind being able to see are about 'insight' and 'understanding'. 'Oh, now I get it!' is the way Mark puts it.

All these thoughts are captured in Mark's own piano arrangement of Sam Cooke's version of Amazing Grace which is itself (the way Mark plays it) 'amazing' and inspirational, not least as he hadn't played it for a year and it was off-the-cuff when recorded for us to hear him sing:

<https://vimeo.com/332751141>



Capt. Jim Currin, Church Army, is Evangelisation, Mission and Media at Churches Together in England, and retires at the end of June.

Praying for the Church in Sri Lanka



Rev'd Dr Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, says,

"Churches throughout England will want to pray for the church in Sri Lanka at this time of deep sadness and grief following the terrorist attacks upon its churches. The holy season of Easter, and especially on Easter Day, when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, has become for Christians in many parts of the world amongst the most dangerous of times. Just as its Lord was crucified, and buried, so the church is persecuted. But just as death could not keep its grip on Jesus, neither can the church of Jesus Christ be destroyed by those who wish it harm. The power of forgiveness and the courage of faith will bear witness to the Easter message the church proclaims."

Review of CTE's year

Churches Together in England has just published its Review of the Year, looking back at a most successful Forum, a remarkable Windrush service at Westminster Abbey and a host of other important and innovative initiatives.

2018 was a turning point for CTE, with a new General Secretary and a new Chair of Trustees. Jim Currin announced his early retirement, signalling more changes in the staff team, within which Joe Aldred was signally honoured for his lifelong service to faiths.

The Review also reports on CTE's steady and ongoing work of supporting local ecumenism and Intermediate Bodies as well as serving our Member Churches and Bodies in Association. It is based on the report which CTE will be submitting to the Charity Commission later this year. That report, together with the accounts will be made available on the website.

- [Download the Review of the Year](#)
- Order free printed copies to distribute at your events by e-mailing [Lorraine Shannon](#) with the subject line: 2018 Review printed copy orders. Copies will probably be available in late April or early May.
- See [reports of past years](#)

Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid is an agency of CTE.

Christian Aid Week is held every year and many Churches Together groups will be collecting for vulnerable mothers in Sierra Leone.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/Christian-Aid-Week>



Review of the year

one in Christ Jesus • engaged in God's mission • empowered by the Spirit

Based on CTE's 2018 report to the Charity Commission. Full text: www.cte.org.uk/annualreports

Forum: 'I am with you always' – together in God's mission

Two aspects of the work of Churches Together in England dominated the year 2018. The first was the planning for, then running, the Forum 17-19 September at The Hayes, Swanwick, under the leadership of Ruth Gee, Forum Moderator, and Hilary Topp, Deputy Moderator (centre and left in photo). The Forum brought



Delegates were then able, in small groups, to formulate further questions which were presented to a panel of all the Presidents.

Forum is a delegate conference and it is up to our Member Churches and Intermediate Bodies to decide who attends but we did our best to encourage them to send young adults and certainly this Forum had a larger number of delegates under 35 than in the past. These young adults led worship and facilitated small groups, as well as being asked to pose questions to the Presidents. They were fully integrated into the dynamic of Forum and the feedback from them was very positive – as, indeed, it was from all delegates.

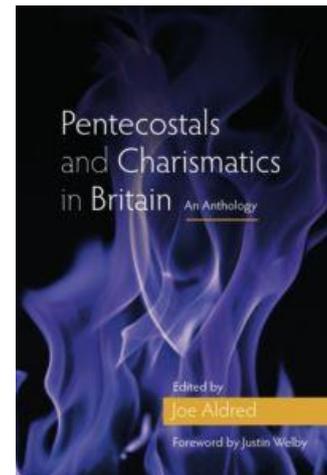
As well as workshops and a Bible Study session, this year's Forum had a Musician in Residence, Teresa Brown, who ran a workshop



New book launch invitation Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An anthology

Nicola Price from SCM writes:

Drawing upon the scholarship of eminent academics and practitioners in the field of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain* puts into the public domain theological and sociological literature that posits contemporary thinking in key areas of British Pentecostal and Charismatic thought.



Although part of a worldwide Christian spirituality, Pentecostals and Charismatics in the UK are rooted in British religiosity dating back to at least the 1920s. However, the emergence of migrant communities from the Caribbean and Africa since the 1950s has tended to attract popular attention and consequentially has come to represent the popular public face of Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain. Latterly, however, an intellectual base has begun resisting inappropriate categorisation and the anti-intellectual reputation that has attached itself to Pentecostalism.

Topics covered in the anthology include: the theological and doctrinal marks of British Pentecostalism, Anglican-Pentecostal relations, and the impact of the Vineyard movement on Charismatic and Pentecostal worship in the UK.

Edited by Joe Aldred, staff member at Churches Together in England, this stellar collection of essays includes contributions from some of the leading thinkers in British Pentecostal studies. The anthology comes at a time when Pentecostals and Charismatics are seen to be a crucial element in the diversification of academic theology, and a major centre of growth in the UK church.

Foreword by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Published by SCM 30 April 2019 £30.00, paperback SCM Press, Hymns Ancient & Modern, Invicta House, 108 Golden Lane, London EC1Y 0TG www.scmpress.co.uk

Book launch invitation:

Birmingham: Tuesday 7 May, 3pm, Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, European Research Institute, Room G53, University of Birmingham B15 2TT

London: Monday 13 May, 6.30pm, Roehampton University, Pentecostal Network, Adam Room, Froebel College, Grove House, Roehampton Lane, Roehampton SW15 5PU

Manchester: Wednesday 26 June, 7pm, Luther King House, Chapel Suite, Brighton Grove, Manchester, M14 5JP

All events are FREE to attend. Reduced launch price. To register please sign up: www.cte.org.uk/BOOK_LAUNCH_pcb

Flyer

To download a flyer with more information about this book, [click here](#)

Praise for the book

'It's so good to have this long overdue book out there. It's like an exciting family reunion in a public space. A must read for everyone who wants to catch up with two great movements on the UK Christian landscape.' -- Joel Edwards, International Director, Micah Challenge

'... a passionate and insightful introduction and analysis by leading scholars and practitioners that is destined to become a standard resource for anyone interested in the history, diversity, and significance of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Britain and beyond.' -- Wolfgang Vondey, Director, Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, University of Birmingham, UK

'Anyone wanting to understand these traditions in their contemporary expression will be advised to reach for this book first, and find within it contributions that are both carefully crafted academic explorations of aspects of those movements, and thoroughly readable introductions. As churches continue to respond to the changing culture of Britain today, no observer can ignore this movement in its rich cultural and theological diversity, and this book, edited by my colleague Bishop Joe Aldred, deserves its place on every thinking Christian's bookshelves.' -- Paul Goodliff, General Secretary, Churches Together in England.

RC/URC Dialogue Meeting

Bishop Paul Hendricks writes:

The second meeting in the current phase of United Reformed Church - Roman Catholic dialogue took place in early April, at the Highbury Centre in Islington. This brings together six representatives from each church, from England, Wales and Scotland, currently co-chaired by Rev Dr John Bradbury and Bishop Paul Hendricks.

Co-chairs of the RC/URC dialogue



Bishop Hendricks

Rev Dr Bradbury

Like many of our national ecumenical dialogues it follows a five-year programme, meeting overnight twice a year. In the first of the previous five-year phases, the emphasis was quite theological, looking at key documents from our two traditions and reflecting on our teachings on topics such as the universal call to holiness, revelation and authority, belonging to the Church, ethics and pastoral practice. The second phase was more experiential, exploring how we live our faith in our two denominations, including how we understand and value Scripture, the Eucharist, ministries, baptism, marriage and sacraments in general. This sharing of experience has been found to resonate with the principles of Receptive Ecumenism, as we compared the areas in which we struggle and in which we find encouragement.

In the current phase, the aim is to find ways of supporting local ecumenism and the next meeting will bring us together with members of a local ecumenical partnership. With this in mind, we have begun by exploring some of the tensions between our faith and contemporary culture. The first meeting last November, included a reflection on 'Discipleship and Consumerism'. Is there an element of the 'consumer' in our attitude towards our religion?

In our recent meeting, we included a discussion on 'Sainthood and Celebrity'. Saints are role models — but they're disproportionately clergy or martyrs. Does the fact that we have an exalted view of saints, discourage people from believing that we too are called to be saints? Some saints had a meteoric rise in popularity after their death, having been relatively obscure during their lifetime. Does this suggest an element of celebrity? How do we make sure people understand the difference between praying to saints and praying to God? In popular culture and in churches that don't have much emphasis on saints, there can still be places that are rather like shrines.

These encounters are very stimulating and beneficial for those who take part in them, but we are aware that they need to bear fruit in the world outside, so to speak. With this in mind, the membership of the group includes lay people as well as clergy, pastoral workers as well as theologians. Engaging with local ecumenism is part of this practical focus – and we are also conscious of the need to communicate effectively with what might be called the wider constituency within our own traditions, as well as with our those who make up the structures of our churches.

A new approach to Church Unity: juridical ecumenism

This new work for unity explores ways in which church law, rules and conventions might converge to deepen ecumenical endeavours. A seminar, hosted by CTE, will give an account of the work done so far by the Christian Law Project.

In particular, it will report on the set of principles with wide ecumenical convergence which have already been published. It will also explore with English churches the ways in which juridical ecumenism might contribute to our unity and mission together.

Speakers

- The General Secretary of CTE, Dr Paul Goodliff, is the Baptist member of the panel that developed the Principles, and will host the event to be held in central London at [CTE's offices](#).
- Professor Norman Doe of the University of Cardiff is a leading expert in religious law and Director of the Centre for Law and Religion.
- Professor Mark Hill QC is the Chair of *The Ecclesiastical Law Society* and a leading canon lawyer in the Church of England. He is Chancellor of the Dioceses of Chichester, Leeds and Europe.



Who, where and when?

- The seminar, *Juridical Ecumenism: a new approach to Church Unity*, is being organised by the Juridical Ecumenism Project and the Christian Law Project and hosted by Churches Together in England.
- It takes place on Thursday 20 June 2019, 11.30 am to 3.00 pm at the office of Churches Together in England, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH. Download the programme below.

Book now

The cost is £25.00, to include refreshments and lunch. Spaces are limited, so early booking is advised. [Click here to book your place.](#)

More information?

- Visit [the web page](#)
- Contact [Paul Goodliff](#), CTE's General Secretary
- or, for practical information, [Lorraine Shannon](#), CTE's Administrator.

 [Juridical Ecumenism seminar programme for 20 June 2019](#) (60.5KB)

 [Principles of Christian Law \(Ecclesiastical Law Journal\)](#) (112.3KB)

National Sports Sunday

Warren Evans, Chief Executive of Sports Chaplaincy UK writes:

As Christians, we know that prayer has the power to change things. However, what could be the impact of the whole church praying for the community of sport on a particular day?

The community of sport has approximately 30 million members, spreading over 151,000 sports clubs and 6,700 gyms across the UK. That is a massive mission opportunity for the church to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their own locality.

Last year, we took a punt at Sports Chaplaincy UK to call a day to prayer and celebrate with our chaplains what God is doing and challenging people to go further. It was amazing to hear stories of chaplains from across the different streams and churches rising up. That's why we decided we need to establish something for the long term for the whole church. Since then, we have been talking to Church Leaders, sporting ministries and others to see how we can commit to praying intentionally for the community of sport in every church in the land.

National Sports Sunday is about seeking God for what He might have you do, say and pray for this growing community. The doors for Christians to engage in chaplaincy are wide open – sometimes, in ways I don't think we have recognised, but that is not the only response. This is why I'm putting out a call for you to see how you can use your interest in sport and passion for prayer and tie them together.



We need chaplains, but more importantly we need Christians to engage intentionally and actively. I've said before, if your child is involved in a local sports club, why not simply offer the prayer 'God wherever you are at work today, please help me to join in?' If you're a Pastor, have you thought about not just going to the gym, but pastorally and sensitively offering to pray for the staff and trainers?

I believe this is not a one off, but that National Sports Sunday should become a regular day in the church calendar for us to pray for the community of sport.

We are delighted that the Coptic Archbishop of London and one of the CTE Presidents has written a special prayer for this year's National Sports Sunday and I want to end with that, as something you might pray in your church in a couple of weeks time.

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the gifts You constantly give us and first and foremost, the gift of Your Spirit within us that strives and yearns for fellowship.

We give thanks for all those who provide opportunities for our fellowship through the various sporting activities that are available, and that become, for so many, a source of support in their daily journey, knowing that they do not journey alone but amongst friends and companions.

We give thanks, at a time of great uncertainty through our Nations, that we are still able to gather across all lines and experience the fellowship that is provided through these various experiences and events.

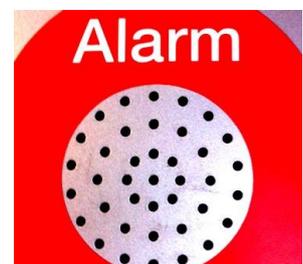
We ask your blessings upon those who partake, that You may grant them the spirit of graciousness and sportsmanship, and that they may be reminded of the true and ultimate goal, of not only winning the game but of being in fellowship and journeying to Your Kingdom, and that in doing so they become a light and an example to all those witnessing their good works. Amen

To find out more, please visit our website: www.nationalsportssunday.org.uk
Sports Chaplaincy UK is a [body in Association](#) of CTE

Aid should help the poorest

A letter in the Guardian, Easter Sunday, from faith leaders

As people of faith, our values compel us to speak out for the world's most vulnerable people. We have come together ahead of the comprehensive spending review to urge the government to maintain the aid budget and protect the quality of UK aid.



In 2015, faith communities were proud of the UK's commitment to the sustainable development goals. We must keep our promise to the world's poorest. We believe that Britain has a moral responsibility to continue to provide 0.7% of gross national income in aid, and to influence other governments to do likewise. While the world has seen unprecedented progress in tackling extreme poverty, there is still a long way to go to

meet the sustainable development goals by 2030. The UK has a proud record of supporting international development and is well respected around the world. It is critical that we continue this leadership and generosity.

We also are extremely concerned to ensure that the primary focus of British aid remains poverty alleviation and that we deliver the highest quality aid programmes to the world's most vulnerable people. We add our voices to many in asking for reassurances that the government will prioritise providing aid to the least developed countries, ensuring the proportion they receive is protected from further decline. British aid programmes should prioritise vital social sectors such as health and education, promote gender equality, protect the environment and support local solutions to build capacity and increase sustainability. To have confidence that aid is being spent effectively, we also need to know what the government is doing in our name. All aid programmes should be fully transparent and accountable.

We pray to the government that its discernment and compassion for the poorest and most marginalised will guide its work.

Right Rev Paul Butler, bishop of Durham

Right Rev Susan Brown, moderator of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland

Harun Khan, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Great Britain

Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen, Manchester Reform Synagogue

Shoshana Boyd Gelfand, J Hub director

Arshad Duad, vice-chairman Balham Mosque and Tooting Islamic Centre

Abdulkarim Gheewala, chair, Federation of Muslim Organisations Leicestershire

Rabbi Aaron Goldstein, senior rabbi, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, chair, Conference of Liberal Rabbis and Cantors

Lynne Green, general secretary of the Baptist Union

Pete Greig, international director of 24-7 Prayer International and senior pastor of Emmaus Road, Guildford

Paul Harcourt, national leader of New Wine

Kamran Hussain, Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, senior rabbi to Reform Judaism

Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris, principal of Leo Baeck College

Rabbi Lea Muhlstein, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue

Rabbi Jeffrey Newman, emeritus rabbi, Finchley Reform Synagogue

Rabbi Danny Rich, senior rabbi and chief executive of Liberal Judaism

Rev Canon David Richards, rector of St Paul's and St George's (Edinburgh)

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild, past chair of the Assembly of Reform Rabbis

Mufti Shahbaz, Blackhall Mosque, Edinburgh

Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick, convener of the beit din, Reform Judaism

Right Rev Ric Thorpe, bishop of Islington

Rev Nigel Uden, moderator of the general assembly of the United Reformed Church

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, senior rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK

Rev Michaela A Youngson, president of the Methodist Conference

Muslim Council of Scotland

Tzelem, the Rabbinic Call for Social and Economic Justice in the UK

Birmingham Central Mosque

New Housing Pioneer Ministers Hub CTE is a partner in the network

Jim Currin writes:

More than a hundred pioneer ministers met together on Saturday 30th March 2019 for a national day conference about mission and ministry in new housing areas. Representatives came from across church traditions and received teaching and workshop opportunities, both to meet with other ministers in their local region, and in seminars to discuss particular topics of common concern.

Hosted by Ali Boulton and Penny Marsh, both Baptist Regional Ministers, the day was a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Fresh Expressions, and Churches Together in England.

More information is available from www.newhousinghub.org and here is a brief glimpse of the day in this video: <https://vimeo.com/332414961>



And Finally ...

Tens of thousands witness on Good Friday

Across the country many of the (estimated) 2000 local Churches Together groups organised a Walk of Witness on Good Friday. This one in Lancaster gave away Palm crosses to bystanders and finished with a dramatised reading of the Holy Week Passion narrative.



WCC Annual Review now available online

As of 25 April 2019, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Annual Review 2018 is available for download online. The annual review records many of the WCC's activities undertaken in 2018 and continuing into 2019.



"From the papal and patriarchal visits to the return to our founding location in Amsterdam, it was a banner year," reflects WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other/wcc-annual-review-2018/view>

General Director to leave Evangelical Alliance

Steve Clifford has announced that he is stepping down at the end of 2019 after 10 years at the helm of the Evangelical Alliance.



Commenting on his decision, Steve said, "As church leaders from one part of the evangelical community, my wife Ann and I have been both challenged and enriched to experience the incredible diversity of the evangelical church and to see first-hand the phenomenal contribution the church is making in its communities. There is a rumour that the church is finished; let me tell you from my experience: the church is wonderfully alive and passionately serving Jesus." <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/steve-clifford-to-step-down-as-general-director-of-the-evangelical-alliance-after-ten-years-service>

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