



CT-eNews

October 2019

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Reflection of the Month: “It’s all about following the missionary Spirit”

Rev. Ben Aldous recently took on the role of Principal Officer for Evangelism and Mission here at CTE, following the retirement of Jim Currin.

Four months in to his role, Ben has had the chance to settle in, begin to meet with people from across the CTE family and get to know his colleagues a little better. Here he offers some thoughts on what he sees as our priorities at CTE with regards to mission and evangelism, and also shares a little of his background in the process...



1. It’s all about following the missionary Spirit

Much of my life over the past 20 years has been a somewhat messy, haphazard attempt at following the missionary Spirit.

In 1972, John V. Taylor wrote a wonderful book entitled *The go-between God*. In it he reminded the English church that the chief actor in the enterprise of mission is the Holy Spirit. In trying to follow the Spirit of God, I have often been surprised, overjoyed and, at times, dismayed about where God has led me and to whom. Whether leading a small congregation meeting in bamboo hut besides the Mekong river in Cambodia or praying for people outside the municipal courts in Cape Town, all was a response to discerning what the missionary Spirit was already doing.

Our mission and evangelism all find their meaning and shape as we respond to the *missio Dei*. In that sense we are not, as churches, doing anything **new**. We are doing something old – as old as the prophets, apostles and saints throughout history, in listening to God at work in the world and responding in bold humility.

In 2017, CTE asked Theos to undertake research exploring the current state of ecumenism in England. Out of [the findings of this report](#), we at CTE want to walk the fine line of both *servicing* the English churches in mission and *taking the lead* on occasion. Part of our role in leading will be facilitating a gathering in March 2020 at High Leigh, bringing together churches, theological colleges, Bodies in Association and others to discuss and learn together what it means to be missionary disciples in an age of anxiety.

2. Join us at the table

I love food. The best meals are with lots of friends and family sharing good food – preferably Korean, Japanese and Thai.

When I lived in Cape Town, one of my favourite events in the church calendar was FEAST. In partnership with local Methodists, Vineyards, Presbyterians and a Shona-speaking African-Initiated Church (AIC), we met to share a gigantic meal together, inviting anyone and everyone from the local community. It was amazing to see local police officers sitting and eating with street people, and well-off business-men sharing a spot with asylum seekers.

Food is a great leveller. Everyone gets hungry and thirsty. Our role at CTE, as the national ecumenical instrument, is to remind our brothers and sisters of the churches in England that we need to make room at the table for everyone. We need to practice being companions together on a pilgrimage towards Christ Jesus. This is especially important when we live in a world of increasing polarisation – what Antje Jackelén has described as the ‘dangerous cocktail of polarisation, populism, protectionism, post-truth and patriarchy’ (*The Ecumenical Review 71:1-2, 2019*).

Who we eat with says much about our priorities. I want our table to be more diverse. The landscape of English churches has changed in the last 30 years since the Swanwick Declaration. We are more complex and diverse. How can we learn what mission and evangelism means from our brothers and sisters from the Serbian Orthodox Church or the Redeemed Christian Church of God? Moreover, can we meaningfully partner with each other in sharing the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection? Not just blessing each other’s endeavours, but truly sharing our resources.

One of my favourite Asian theologians Kosuke Koyama asked whether the church would be willing to crucify its resources. Are we willing to move from the centre to the periphery, and truly share together our resources?

3. Are we willing to learn a new language, grammar and syntax?

If we are to do the above, we need to be open to learn. When I lived in Cambodia between 2004 and 2009, before I could do anything very useful I had to learn a new language. Those of you who have had that opportunity will know it’s both wonderful and frustrating. Khmer, the Cambodian language, has 23 vowels and a completely different script to English, based on ancient Pali and Sanskrit.

Being able to speak to my Cambodian brothers and sisters required the discipline to listen and learn. In ecumenical mission, I wonder how much we are willing to learn each other’s ways of thinking and doing? With such a rich diversity of theologies and understandings of mission and evangelism, can we listen to and speak with one another, or is it often lost in translation? If our ecumenical conversations are going to involve only chatting with those we understand or agree with, it will not encompass the whole church nor the whole world. Who are the ecumenical conversations dominated by, and how can we make sure we have a richer conversation?

2020 looks like being a year of renewed commitment to evangelism. [Advance 2020](#) is an evangelist movement that exists to promote and stir up the gift of the evangelist, building towards a huge year of outreach throughout the UK next year. Linked to this is Amplify which seeks to train the emerging Gen Z (11-18 year olds). The Anglican church are also looking to identify, train, release and mentor 1,000 evangelists, and are hoping to produce resources with the Methodist Church and others which will be freely available for the wider church in England.

In all these endeavours we need to be truly open to the Spirit who draws men and women, boys and girls, young and old into relationship with the living Jesus. We can be a gift to the nation if we learn to work together more fully.

Ben Aldous is Principal Officer for Evangelism and Mission here at CTE, and can be contacted at ben.aldous@cte.org.uk

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

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020: resources now available!

The 2020 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a unique opportunity for mission and evangelisation, with plenty of opportunity to involve children and schools. Do be encouraged to start planning now!



This year's booklet and further resources are now available to download at www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

Produced by Maltese Christians with the theme of 'Unusual Kindness', the service invites us to include a boat in the place of worship – not something easy to organise at the last minute! All the photos in the pamphlet can be freely used, and details about which images you need to credit to Creative Commons can be found on page 29 of the pamphlet.

Let's make the 2020 Week of Prayer, 18th-25th January, a moment of outreach and evangelism!

Quakers join the Global Strike for Climate

With millions of young people across the world taking part in climate emergency strikes on 20th September, Anne van Staveren from Quakers in Britain tells us how those from the Quaker tradition got involved, including a meeting of stillness drawing together those from various Christian traditions and other faiths...



Hundreds of Quakers joined the global climate strike in solidarity with young people. Quaker groups from Exeter to Edinburgh turned out in numbers at local demonstrations, calling on politicians to take urgent action on the climate crisis. Swedish activist Greta Thunberg – welcomed with a standing ovation to Quakers' Friends House in April – and a global network of young activists had invited adults to take part in 'Fridays for Future' school strikes.

London-based Quakers, including staff working in Friends House, held a meeting for worship outside the Treasury before joining demonstrations along Millbank.

Later, people of all faiths gathered at Westminster Quaker Meeting House to meet in stillness together. People who are Quaker, Muslim, Unitarian, Jewish and Anglican all shared prayers for the climate and hopes for the future. Seventeen-year-old Quaker Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, who organises with the UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN), spoke about how her faith leads her to act. She heard Greta Thunberg's plea to politicians: listen to scientists.

"Climate breakdown will affect us all," said Anya. "But those most affected and those first to be affected will be the poor, those in the global south, and the homeless. [...] Our concern for justice, peace and the integrity of creation grows from our faith and cannot be separated from it. It challenges us to look again at our lifestyles and reassess our priorities and makes us realise the truth of Gandhi's words: 'Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means'.

"This is what calls us to act now, by striking, by standing together, by making our voice heard. As a Quaker I am called to act according to my principles and to stand up to the forces of greed and destruction that are destroying our planet, our only home, and destroying the lives of so many living things, including those yet to be born."

Support is practical and prayerful, helping UKSCN with advocacy work and meeting space. The Economics & Sustainability team for Quakers in Britain supports Quakers with their witness on climate issues as well as calling on the government to introduce policies in line with a 'net zero' emissions target, including support for renewable energy, an end to fossil fuel subsidies, and trade and investment policies which support a rapid global transition away from fossil fuels.



Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship for Quakers in Britain, said: "Faith organisations have a huge role in the climate movement, by spreading awareness within our own communities, and by asking grassroots groups and those hardest hit by climate breakdown what we can do to support them.

"As the phrase 'climate justice' suggests, the climate crisis is bound up with global inequality, exploitation and conflict. Our responses must recognise this. The interfaith events at the climate strike and the recent mass lobby of Parliament show that we are united across faiths in our concern about the climate crisis. Together we can amplify our voices as we call for an economic transformation that puts the poorest first and recognises our duty to the global south."

Read more about [ending the UK's contribution to climate change](#).

Anne van Staveren is Media Relations Officer for Quakers in Britain, known formally as the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. Around 21,575 people attend 475 Quaker meetings in Britain. Their commitment to equality, justice, peace, simplicity and truth challenges them to seek positive social and legislative change.

Photo credit: Ben Robinson for Quakers in Britain

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

Unique Bible experience coming to cities across England

Bible Society have produced three new resources to help churches in the UK engage with the Bible and share it with their family and friends...

Bible Society believe that when people engage with the Bible, lives can change – for good. Both in the UK and overseas, they take the Bible and find ways to translate and distribute it, create digital formats, advocate for its place in society and help people relate to and make sense of it in their everyday lives.



Representatives from our 49 Member Churches and ecumenical leaders from across England gathered together this September for our bi-annual Enabling Group meeting. During our gathering, Bible Society came to share some of their exciting new resources with us...

Cities to host a unique Bible experience

Between May and September 2020, Bible Society will be working with local churches to deliver a unique Bible experience in nine cities across the UK. **Home360** is an immersive film experience which tells the story of the Bible. Projected inside a nine metre Dome, the film can be seen by 30 people at a time.



Bible Society are asking local churches to support this project through the provision of small hospitality teams and by bringing their friends, family members work colleagues etc to come and see the film. In 2020, this experience will be taking place in the following nine cities: Hull, Exeter, Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester, Swansea, Brighton, Birmingham and Newcastle. Please look out for our Regional Events in November where you can find out more about this project.

For more information, please visit: biblesociety.org.uk/home360 or contact Campaign Project Manager Will.McGregor@biblesociety.org.uk

What do people in your community really think about the Bible and Christianity?

Lumino is a new online platform developed by Bible Society to allow Church leaders to access groundbreaking research insights on contemporary attitudes to the Bible and faith in England and Wales.

Lumino will offer users:

- (1) access to research data at both a national and local level
- (2) resources for those seeking to communicate the Bible and
- (3) access to a live data stream from social media to help understand the national conversation about the Bible.

For more information visit lumino.org.uk

The God who Speaks: A Year of the Word

The year 2020 will be the 10th anniversary of *Verbum Domini* - Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation on 'The Word of the Lord' and the 1,600 anniversary of St Jerome's death. These dates have motivated the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to make 2020 a year of focus on *The God Who Speaks*.



They will be celebrating, living and sharing God's word with their *The God Who Speaks* campaign, in partnership with Bible Society. Throughout the year, there will be a range of Scripture-based resources, creative events and activities to participate in all around the country. They have commissioned the artist Pete Codling to create an interactive artwork which will go on tour around the dioceses and Cardinal Vincent Nichols explores art and the Bible in the National Gallery through three videos.

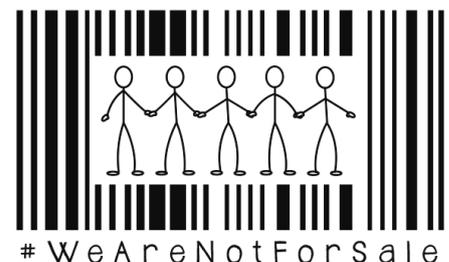
For a copy of their campaign brochure and further information contact Fleur Dorrell – fleur.dorrell@biblesociety.org.uk

The God who Speaks launches on 30th September 2019 – visit their website for more information: godwhospeaks.uk

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

Stand in solidarity with victims of modern slavery this October

Did you know that The Salvation Army has held the government contract to provide specialist support to adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales for more than seven years, supporting more than 8,000 victims in that time?



Ahead of Anti-Slavery Day on Friday 18th October, The Salvation Army are asking people to support their digital campaign to raise awareness of modern slavery in the UK.

They have produced a [#WeAreNotForSale temporary tattoo](#) with the theme of a barcode, symbolising how slavery treats people as objects that can be bought, sold and exploited. Victims are powerless, isolated and told there is no one who will help them – and The Salvation Army are working hard to change this...

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

The state of Diaspora Mission in the UK: some reflections

With Christians from all over the world considering the UK their missionfield, Ben Aldous, our Principal Officer for Evangelism and Mission, finds we have much to learn in our pilgrimage together..



I spent 24 hours this September at All Nations College in Ware with a wonderfully eclectic group of people from, it seems, almost every corner of the globe. Gathered to think, reflect, muse, confess and pray together around the topic of diaspora mission in the UK. With my CTE hat firmly on I was present to discern how these challenges around diaspora mission might be helpful in the conversations around mission and unity at a national ecumenical level.

We were gathered from Ethiopia, The Sudan, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, China, Ghana, Nigeria, Jamaica, Singapore, Kenya and many more. You may ask what this has to do with CTE? Surely, we are focused on churches in England? Indeed we are. But the English church landscape has changed quiet extensively over the past 30 years since the Swanwick Declaration in 1987. Those intervening years have seen growth of migrants coming to the UK for economic reasons but also reasons connected with war, famine and politics...

... I came away thanking God for the being able to meet Peruvian missiologists, Ethiopian and Lithuanian church planters, Brazilian and Nigerian strategic leaders who are shaping the ecclesial landscape of England in dynamic ways. We have much to learn in pilgrimage together.

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

Homeless Sunday 13th Oct 2019: Resources available

Churches are being encouraged to take part in this year's Homeless Sunday on 13th October.



Homeless Sunday, organised by the national Christian homelessness charity Housing Justice, has been part of the Christian calendar for more than a quarter of a century. It is an opportunity for churches of all denominations and people of all faiths to unite and show solidarity with those experiencing homelessness and to reflect and plan practical action on homelessness.

Co-patron of Housing Justice Dr Joe Aldred, a CTE staff member, is encouraging churches across England to get involved: "For many of us it is a challenge to conceive what it means to be homeless, because it is the kind of unfortunate life experience that cannot be fully understood without going through it. A profound aspect of the Incarnation is that God in Jesus came among us, was born in a stable, exiled in Egypt for safety, and later told his disciples that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. God in Jesus understands homelessness and so calls upon his body, the church, to help those who are homeless today."

The focus this year is 'The impact of volunteering on the volunteer', apt as Christians and church communities are at the forefront of the response to the rise in homelessness including the most visible aspect, rough sleeping. There were just 65 night shelters operating across the Housing Justice network in 2013, and today there are 125 across England and Wales. Around 500 or more churches across the country usually take part in Homeless Sunday, and it is hoped that the number will grow this year.

[Find free Homeless Sunday resources on the Housing Justice website...](#)

Black church and mental health conference: Healing our broken village

New Testament Assembly, a Member Church of CTE, will be hosting for the 11th year its annual Black Church & Mental Health Conference:

Healing our Broken Village. The conference takes place on 24th October 2019, with keynote speaker Professor Sashi P Sashidharan. The focus of this year's conference will be on the newly launched South London Ethnicity & Mental Health Improvement Project.

Significant and persistent ethnic inequalities are embedded in mental health care in the UK. People from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds have unequal access to mental health services, more coercive and negative experiences in mental health care and show worse outcomes compared to majority ethnic groups.

Although this adverse care trajectory for BME communities is widely acknowledged and has been confirmed over the years, nothing much has changed. There has been a systematic failure to challenge, understand and correct this discriminatory pattern of



health care. Currently, there are no specific initiatives or programmes in the NHS to address this problem.

The Ethnicity & Mental Health Improvement Project is a practical attempt to systematically monitor the disparate pattern of mental health care and reduce ethnic inequalities in service access, experience and outcomes in local mental health services.

The conference takes place on Thursday 24th October, 2.30-7.30pm at New Testament Assembly in Tooting, London. [Find out more about the event and register here...](#)

Celebrate the Canonisation of John Henry Newman

His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and one of CTE's Presidents, warmly invites you to a service of Solemn Vespers to celebrate the Canonisation of Cardinal John Henry Newman.

The service takes place on Saturday 19th October 2019 at 3.30pm at The Metropolitan Cathedral of the Precious Blood, Westminster, London. [Find out more on our website...](#)

And finally...

Remembrance Sunday resources

Remembrance Sunday takes place this year on 10th November.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have produced resources which are available to download or order, including an order of service, Powerpoint presentations and free ebook versions of *Beyond Our Tears: Resources for Times of Remembrance*.

[Access Remembrance Sunday resources on the CTBI website...](#)



Brexit toolkit from The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army have produced a document *The Brexit Toolkit* to provide guidance on how to respond to the possible impact of Brexit on churches and communities.

To receive a copy, please contact David Evans, Territorial Ecumenical Officer for The Salvation Army at David.Evans@salvationarmy.org.uk





Education Sunday – share your story

Did your local churches or Churches Together group take part in Education Sunday? If so, we'd love to hear your story, and inspire others to take part in 2020. Please contact Lucy at lucy.olofinjana@cte.org.uk

Join the conversation on the challenges facing Christian youth work

A reminder that those involved in Christian youth ministry and training are invited to join a strategic conversation on 15th November 2019, exploring how we can face the challenges of this important ministry. This event in Birmingham will be hosted by the UK Christian Youth Work Consortium and the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work. [Find out more...](#)



Prisons Week: 13th-19th October

For forty years, Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature to enable the Christian community to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons: prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities, those working in the criminal justice system and the many people who are involved in caring for those affected by crime on the inside and outside of our prisons. Find more information and prayer resources at prisonswalk.org



Within: Milton Keynes day conference exploring everyday faith

Milton Keynes Mission Partnership extend a warm invitation to their day conference on Tuesday 8th October, exploring a breadth of different approaches to spirituality.



The day aims to promote the Oxford Diocesan priority of deepening spirituality via #EveryDayFaith, harness and promote the approach to mission of HeartEdge – an international ecumenical movement for renewal, and encourage confidence amongst God's people as we live out our faith in the world. [Find out more...](#)

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