

Green Shoots Flourish

2020-2022



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Churches Together in England (CTE) is the national ecumenical instrument for England.

Our purpose is to provide the space, the imagination and the facility to enable greater collaboration and fellowship between CTE's 52 national Member Churches, and our more than 70 Bodies in Association (national charities and communities that have a Christian identity and an ecumenical reach.)

We also support more than 40 Intermediate Bodies in England, most of which cover an English county or metropolitan area. Although all are independent of CTE, there is a close collaboration between the national and the county instruments, and both serve local Churches Together groups, making ecumenism a reality on the ground.

CTE was established in 1990, as a new ecumenical instrument that included, for the first time, the Catholic Bishops' Conference. Then there were 16 churches in membership with CTE, but over the 30 years since there has been a steady growth in numbers and breadth, until in 2022 there are 52 churches in membership. These are in six 'families' or traditions: Church of England; Catholic; Free Church; Orthodox; Pentecostal and Charismatic; and Quakers with Lutherans forming the sixth, each able to nominate its own President. Within each 'family' there are also differences arising from varied understandings of authority, ways of worship and the role of the sacraments, but none of these differences prevents the fruitful collaboration as sister churches in reaching our land with the gospel and serving our communities in Christ's name.

Member Churches

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles + Ireland

Apostolic Church UK

Apostolic Pastoral Congress

Armenian Orthodox Church

Assemblies of God

Baptist Union of Great Britain*

Calvary Church of God in Christ

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*

Church of England

Church of God of Prophecy

Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England)

Churches in Communities International

Congregational Federation*

Coptic Orthodox Church

Council of African and Caribbean Churches UK*

Council of Lutheran Churches

Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches

Elim Pentecostal Church

*Founding member of CTE in 1990

Evangelical Lutheran Church of England

Evangelische Synode Deutscher Sprache in Großbritannien

Free Church of England

Free Churches Group*

Ground Level

Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East

Ichthus Christian Fellowship

Independent Methodist Churches*

International Ministerial Council of Great Britain*

Ichthus Church Council

Joint Council of Churches for All Nations*

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Indian Orthodox Church)

Mar Thoma Church in Europe

Methodist Church*

Moravian Church

New Testament Assembly*

New Testament Church of God

Oecumenical Patriarchate

Order of St Leonard

Pioneer

Presbyterian Church of Ghana in England

Redeemed Christian Church of God

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers in Britain)

Ruach Network of Churches

Russian Orthodox Church*

Salvation Army*

Serbian Orthodox Church

Transatlantic Pacific Alliance of Churches

Unification Council of Cherubim + Seraphim Churches (Europe Chapter)

United Kingdom World Evangelism Trust

United Reformed Church

Vineyard Churches UK & Ireland

Wesleyan Holiness Church

Wesleyan Reform Union

CTE has a small staff team, led by a General Secretary (currently Rev Dr Paul Goodliff, until April, with Bishop Mike Royal as General Secretary-elect taking up that office from May 2022) and with three executive officers and an operational team.

Rev Dr Paul Goodliff

General Secretary

Bishop Mike Royal

General Secretary-elect

Jenny Bond

Principal Officer for Intermediate Ecumenism, Governance Support & Resources

Rev Dr Ben Aldous

Principal Officer for Evangelism & Mission

Shermara Fletcher

Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic & Multi-cultural Relations

Lorraine Shannon

Operations Manager

Sarah Ball

Senior Communications & Media Manager (Acting)

Lucy Olofinjana

Senior Communications & Media Manager (on maternity leave)

In 2017 CTE published *That they all may be one* (commonly known as the Theos Report) following extensive consultation with Member Churches. Its findings were developed in a new Strategic Plan, owned by the churches in 2021. The strategic aims are:

- 1** To inspire Member Churches to work more closely together in mission

- 2** To find new ways to support intermediate and local ecumenism

- 3** To find new ways to extend CTE's valued role of relationship-building

- 4** To create more opportunities for churches to do theology together

- 5** To increase the capacity of CTE to speak out in the public square

- 6** To strengthen CTE's own vision of its role and make this more widely known

- 7** To develop the work of racial justice for CTE and its Member Churches

Green Shoots Flourish, reporting on the two years covering the Coronavirus pandemic, can only touch the surface of all that is happening, but provides a snapshot of what ecumenism looks like in England.

In England, ecumenism has become part of the 'air we breathe' for such a wide group of churches, encompassing almost every tradition. The large majority of those who identify as Christians in England will belong to a church in membership with CTE, and this becomes even broader at the local level. What is happening now is like learning to breathe that air better so we might become fitter for the missional challenge.



Inspiring Member Churches to work more closely together in mission

Despite the continued disruptions from Covid, the work in line with strategic aim 1 was particularly fruitful in 2020–21. The *Learning to be Missionary Disciples Conference* originally scheduled for March 2020 took place on 16 to

18 November 2021 at The Hayes in Swanwick, drawing together 13 of our national Member Churches, 16 Christian charities (a number of which were Bodies in Association), three theological colleges, three other unity movements and three Intermediate Bodies. [The Mission Research Network](#) helped to gather missiologists and church leaders to consider the topic of mission, race and colonialism. The [MA Mission prize](#) is now entering its second year while [The Mission Research Library](#) was launched with a growing number of high quality MAs and PhDs made freely available to the wider public.

The [New Housing Areas Group](#) began the planning for the New Housing summit, a joint venture planned for June 2022 bringing together practitioners, senior church leaders, housing associations, developers and other new housing consultants to consider the challenge of seeing new churches come to birth on new housing estates.



Find new ways to support intermediate and local ecumenism

[Ecumenical Officers](#) are the backbone of local ecumenism. At Intermediate level (for counties or cities), ecumenically appointed officers work alongside their denominationally appointed counterparts supporting local ecumenism.

They are supported by [National Ecumenical Officers](#) (NEOs), appointed by their Churches, who resource and train them in collaboration with CTE staff member Jenny Bond.

Since 2020, NEOs began to meet weekly on Zoom for an hour throughout the height of the pandemic. This has evolved into a monthly meeting with the broadest of agendas, helping churches to liaise on significant matters of public concern such as the migrant crisis and proposed legislation.



A new programme of consultation with Intermediate Bodies, meeting regionally, is responding to the challenges many of them face, not least in financial support. This task of ‘re-imagining intermediate ecumenism’ is in its infancy, but already it is becoming clearer that at the heart of effective ecumenism, at every level, is a commitment to fellowship and prayer that builds strong friendships — ecumenism must be lived as well as organised.

There is also important ‘behind the scenes’ work, and in 2020 we published a new toolkit to support *A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission* assisting those on the ground who work for greater local ecumenical endeavour.

Find new ways to extend CTE’s valued role of relationship-building

Participating in the leadership of CTE, the Enabling Group, continues to reflect England’s Christian diversity and mirrors the relational heart of ecumenism. Relationships remained at the heart of our work in 2020–22, with an increasing sense that this is “so that the world may believe”: deepening collaborative mission and evangelism between Member Churches is at the forefront of its concerns.

Two new Member Churches joined CTE in 2021, one ancient, and another a new church: The Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East (a church in the Orthodox tradition) and Vineyard Churches, UK and Ireland (a Charismatic church).

In 2021 we saw considerable growth in membership of Bodies in Association, with five joining in 2020, and 11 in 2021, bringing the number to 71.

Amongst our families of churches, CTE has provided the structure for the Pentecostal and Charismatic Forum, and it has been regularly represented at the Church of England’s Council for Christian Unity.

Creating more opportunities for churches to do theology together

The response to the pandemic by churches was varied and often quite pragmatic. The closure of church buildings for public worship in March 2020 resulted in many services going online, an aspect that has continued with a hybrid form of delivery. Member Churches worked together to establish a project entitled Post-Covid Theology which shared with local churches and congregations questions about mission, worship, pastoral care and spirituality, and began to provide some provisional answers.

Increasing the capacity of CTE to speak out in the public square

It has been the role of Presidents to represent the Member Churches of Churches Together in England in the public square, and so in 2021–22, with three changes to their personnel, a new face of the Presidency is emerging.



Two Presidents stood down from their roles as their time-limited tenure ended: Archbishop Angaelos, the Orthodox President and Pastor Agu Irukwu, the President appointed by the Pentecostal and Charismatic Forum. Their successors are Archbishop Nikitas of the Oecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, and Bishop Tedroy Powell of the Church of God of Prophecy, appointed by the Pentecostal and Charismatic Forum. In addition, Rev Dr Hugh Osgood, Moderator of the Free Churches Group and its President, steps down from that role in March 2022, with his successor, Rev Helen Cameron taking up the reins in April 2022.

Strengthening CTE's own vision of its role and make this more widely known

Conversations about how CTE pursues its aims take place from time to time, most especially about the way in which it acts to support its Member Churches and serve as a catalyst for ecumenical work and vision. The launch of the new website in October 2021 strengthened the support of the ecumenical work of members. Increasingly stories of good ecumenical collaboration and deepening fellowship will populate the site and inspire others to emulate the work described.

Amongst other developments associated with this were the transition of the monthly CTE-News to a more responsive and flexible format, and the opportunities that gives to share the news of Member Church activities of an ecumenical character. Engagement with CTE's two social media channels, Twitter and Facebook, has continued to grow. Twitter followers reached 2,950 (up 19%) and Facebook followers reached 1447 (up 20%) by the end of 2021.

The themes which dominated CTE's communications in 2021 were the same as those in 2020 – coronavirus, racial justice and our new website. As the country moved in and out of various rules and regulations CTE worked with our Member Churches to support the vaccination programme and to overcome vaccine hesitancy. This included hosting two webinars with leading medical and theological figures.

Developing the work of racial justice for CTE and its Member Churches

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 sparked world-wide renewed concern for racial justice, and CTE through its Presidents contributed to the extensive call for greater racial equality in England and gathered national and young adult leaders across the country. CTE's [Racial Justice Working Group](#) was then established, comprising of racial justice officers, Member Churches and others with specialist skills and knowledge.

The work of the new Racial Justice Working Group has proved fruitful in 2021 and has met three times to begin to shape its working groups around themes of campaigns, accountability and theology. [Issues of racism](#), health inequalities, criminal justice, responses to government reports and provision of equal opportunities have been highlighted through statements and webinars such as the '[Unity in a Racialised Society](#)' diversity webinar which gathered church leaders, racial justice officers and county ecumenical officers to consider the impact of racism to the commitment of unity.

Representation was made to the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, and to commemorate the murder of George Floyd a media campaign called the "[Candle of Justice](#)" was rolled out. A wide range of Christian and mainstream media outlets picked up on this project and the campaign will become a more permanent fixture in the CTE calendar for 2022 and beyond.



Churches Together in England is the national ecumenical instrument supporting and encouraging churches from a wide range of traditions to work together in unity.

FIND OUT MORE: cte.org.uk/about

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