



### **New Year Reflection of the Month: 'All is Mist' from BRF.**



*Part of a New Year Reflection for 2018 from [Bible Reading Fellowship](#), a Body in Association with CTE, based on the book of Ecclesiastes.*

As you start the New Year how do we make sense of the optimism and pessimism, joy and sorrow, that we feel? Strangely, part of the answer is mist.

#### **Meaningless or misty?**

The start of the book of Ecclesiastes doesn't, at the first reading, offer a great deal of hope: 'All is meaningless', says the Teacher.

The word that the NIV translates as 'meaningless' is *hebel*. It recurs throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, as the teacher explores themes of wisdom, self-indulgence, abundance, work and so on. A more literal translation of *hebel* would be 'breath, vapour or mist' (the ESV and KJV translate it as 'vanity'). So, the text isn't saying that everything is devoid of meaning; rather everything is mist. ('Mist! Mist!' says the Teacher. 'Mist of mist, all is mist' etc.) The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: 'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.' (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, NIV)

Mist is fleeting – it's here for a time, and then burned away by the sun or blown away by the wind. Mist is unpredictable – we don't know when it will arrive and when it will leave; it can't be relied upon. Mist is uncontrollable – we can't grab it with our hands or put it in a bottle.

#### **If last year went well, or not so well...**

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity [mist] and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:11, ESV - read in context in 2:1-11)

At times, we can let our achievements (or failures) dominate our thinking, feeling pride at what we have done or guilt at what we failed to do well. However, we need to remember that our successes or failures do not determine our worth to God. He came to rescue us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). Also, we stand as those who have been forgiven by Jesus: 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1, NIV). We can surrender our pride and leave our regrets at the cross.

What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity [mist]. (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23, ESV—read in context in 2:18–25).

A sense of dissatisfaction with daily work is normal and part of our experience of life (and has been from the beginning - Genesis 3:17). The things we often work for here on earth do not endure. Instead, we're encouraged to lay up treasures in heaven where they cannot fade or be taken away (Matthew 6:19–20). We're charged with working as if we were working for the Lord, not human masters (Colossians 3:23–24).

### **The permanence of God**

Amidst the unpredictability of the world we live in, where everything is 'mist' - fleeting, unpredictable and uncontrollable - God remains unchanged, as we are reminded:

Yesterday, today, and forever, God remains unchanged (Hebrews 13:8).  
His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22–23).  
He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

So, when everything is mist and passing away, God is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17, NIV.

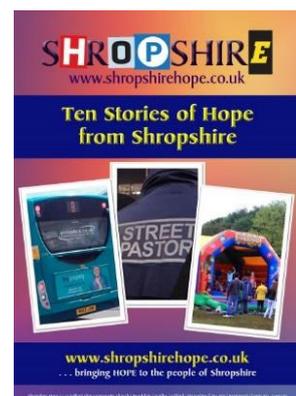
### **A prayer for the New Year**

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Numbers 6: 24-26 (NIV)

## **10 Stories of Hope from Shropshire 2017**

In December 2017, Rev Chris Densham wrote:

I started as Ecumenical Mission Enabler for Telford & Shropshire in September 2016 and what struck me very quickly as I travelled around and met people was the host of really good things going on. So, working with the Shropshire Hope team we put together this little booklet of 10 Stories of Hope. It could easily have been 20 or 30 stories! No doubt this could be replicated across the country as the church of Jesus Christ continues to be good news for their local community in countless ways"



[Download PDF 10 Stories of Hope from Shropshire 2017](#)

Rev Chris Densham  
Ecumenical Mission Enabler Telford & Shropshire

## **Christian Aid appoints New Chief Executive**

**Christian Aid is delighted to announce the appointment of Amanda Khozi Mukwashi as Chief Executive.**



Amanda has more than 20 years' experience, extensive knowledge and expertise in working to alleviate poverty, injustice and inequality, with a special focus on women's leadership, civic engagement and volunteering. Her most recent appointment was as the Chief of Volunteer Knowledge and Innovation for the United Nations Volunteer Programme, based in Germany, a post she has held since December 2012.

Prior to this she was the Director of Policy for VSO International, based in London, where she was responsible for programme policy and programme effectiveness across the whole federation and VSO global. She has also served as Head of External Relations and Head of Programmes at Skillshare International UK as well as Women in Business Coordinator at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa in Lusaka where she began her career in international development. Amanda has a Master's degree in International Economic Law from the University of Warwick, and a Bachelor of Laws degree, from the University of Zambia.

Dr Rowan Williams, Chair of Trustees, comments that 'Amanda comes with very special qualifications and aptitude for this enormous and exhilarating position. We are delighted to announce this appointment and look forward to welcoming Amanda.'

Amanda says 'I am humbled and absolutely thrilled to be joining such a family as Christian Aid. Christian Aid represents to me, much of the goodness found in humanity.'

Amanda takes up the position in April 2018 and Christian Aid is an [agency](#) of Churches Together in England.

## **Faith leaders call on UK Government to sign nuclear ban treaty**

Following the presenting of the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons, leaders from all faiths across the UK have called on the British Government to affirm the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The new treaty states that nuclear weapons, like chemical and biological weapons, are incompatible with international humanitarian law due to their indiscriminate effect. It presents a challenge to nuclear states that continue to rely on the threat of mass destruction in their foreign policy and security strategies.

The treaty seeks to reinvigorate multilateral disarmament and achieve a path to zero nuclear weapons. Signatories include Dr Rowan Williams and Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Great Britain.

Five churches: the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church and the Quakers are also calling on the public to join the campaign, with an online photo competition and the release of an animation for distribution on social media. [Click here to watch it.](#)

### **Faiths' Statement – Nobel Peace Prize**

We congratulate the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. As people of faith, we seek to build relationships founded on the basis of our common humanity, moral principles and international law. Our world must not remain divided into nations with nuclear weapons and those without. As we are seeing, the tension caused by this division can only increase with likely dreadful consequences for all.

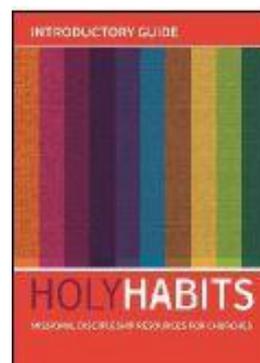
There is a need for creative political leadership to ensure that any attempt to justify the threat of mass destruction in any circumstance is wholly rejected. A world free of nuclear weapons achieved by building on established international norms is a global public good of the highest order. No country or government must allow itself to be left behind. Therefore, we call on the UK government to add its support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The [full list of signatories is available by clicking here.](#)

### **Holy Habits: a new book**

Missional Discipleship Resources for Churches, edited by Andrew Roberts, Neil Johnson & Tom Milton

Holy Habits is an adventure in Christian discipleship: an exciting new resource based on Luke's delightful portrait of the early church in Acts 2:42-47. The esteemed biblical commentator C.K. Barrett believed that Luke offered this portrait as a model for the church to imitate and that the ten practices - or habits - he describes in Acts 2 are as relevant and potentially transformational today as they were for the early church.



Wide-ranging and imaginative, Holy Habits consists of an Introductory Guide and ten booklets, one for each of the habits. Over 200 people have contributed to the series to provide stimulating, creative ideas to appeal across all generations. From Worship and Prayer, through Serving to Fellowship and Breaking Bread, there are materials to help churches and groups explore the habits and, more importantly, live them out in practice.

Andrew Roberts, author of the book *Holy Habits* (Malcolm Down Publishing, 2016) and one of the editors of the series, says: 'Our ultimate aim is to make new disciples of Jesus and to deepen the discipleship of those who are already following him. Discipleship is at the forefront of the thinking of all the major Christian denominations at the moment and is arguably the most important thing for us to engage with and resource. If our discipleship is not healthy, everything else will struggle as well.'

After an initial two-year development in the Birmingham Methodist Circuit, Holy Habits is also being piloted in Bristol, Romsey and Dudley. Hundreds of people are already involved and church leaders in all the main denominations are expressing interest. For further information and orders, go to [brfonline.org.uk/holy-habits](http://brfonline.org.uk/holy-habits).

Launch events will be held in Selly Oak (27 January 2018), Bristol (10 February 2018) and Wolverhampton (28 April 2018). Andrew Roberts will also be speaking at all four weeks of [Spring Harvest 2018](#). There are plans to develop a new Holy Habits website with a range of videos and links to other resources, organisations and churches.

For further information, please contact [Eley McAinsh](#).  
*Bible Reading Fellowship is a [Body in Association](#) of CTE.*

## **New CEO appointed to Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre**



The Revd Claire Maxim, Rector of the villages of Ludgershall and Faberstown in the Diocese of Salisbury, will be the CEO of Germinate after the retirement of Jerry Marshall in 2018. Claire was originally an engineer, has an MBA from Henley Business School, a Diploma in Applied Theology from The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham, and is studying for a Professional Doctorate at the Centre for Rural Ministry Studies at the University of Warwick.

"Claire's appointment was a unanimous decision from a field of exceptionally strong candidates," said Chairman Howard Petch. "We are thrilled that Claire accepted the offer to be the next CEO of Germinate and to build on the foundations laid under the leadership of Jerry Marshall."

Germinate ([www.germinate.net](http://www.germinate.net)) is the churches' rural resource centre. The organisation helps rural communities flourish by encouraging and equipping local churches for mission and ministry, providing a wide variety of resources including leadership training, rural learning communities, conferences and the magazine *Country Way*. "This is an exciting though challenging time in rural mission as churches increasingly move towards lay leadership and work ecumenically with a 'mixed economy' of traditional and fresh expressions of church," said current CEO Jerry Marshall. "Claire's sense of humour, hands-on experience, ecumenical perspective developed at Queen's and her understanding of the wide variety of rural context will stand her in excellent stead."

"I am excited by the direction Germinate has taken over recent years, and look forward to continuing and extending that trajectory" said Claire Maxim. "There is a wide diversity of rural contexts so, in terms of communicating the Gospel, one size does not fit all. Germinate is ideally placed to encourage the sharing of ideas and to enable the peer support necessary to allow risk and failure as well as success."

(Claire will be working with the CTE coordinating group Churches Rural Group).

## 'Huge rise is people using winter Night Shelters'

Church and Community Night Shelter Impact Report Release dated 11th December 2017 by Housing Justice.

[Click here to view the full report](#)

During winter 2016/17 more people than ever before were forced to use church and community night shelters, according to research published by housing and homelessness charity Housing Justice.



Projects in the Housing Justice Church and Community Night Shelter Network provided emergency accommodation to almost three thousand (2923) people experiencing homelessness during the winter of 2016/17, an increase of 53% on the previous year's figure (and double the number of people receiving support in 2012).

Church and Community night shelters are voluntary led projects, encompassing people of all faiths and none who staff emergency shelters during the winter period to provide emergency accommodation for people with nowhere else to go. Guests are provided with a camp bed, bedding and a hot meal, usually in a church building, community building or other faith building. Most receive no funding from government or local authorities.

During the winter of 2016/17 on average, each shelter remained open for 102 nights, 40% of guests stayed in the shelter for less than a week, while 30 % stayed longer than a month.

Of the 53 community-based projects who were able contribute data for the year, each hosted an average of 55 people experiencing homelessness - if this ratio were replicated across the full network of Church and Community Night Shelter Projects across the country, it would equate to approximately 6,000 (projected figure 5,885). Just two years ago, this figure stood at 3,640 guests across 65 shelters, showing significant growth in the network's capacity.

Underpinning this huge rise in guests at night shelters is the significant rise in rough sleepers since 2011, (134%) owing to issues such as welfare reform and the ending of a tenancy in the private rented sector. As demand grows church and community night shelters are undergoing a rapid expansion; two years ago, there were 65 shelters operating in the network. Today, there are 107 projects in the Housing Justice Network. Throughout the year, the network saw contributions from 4,284 volunteers across the country, contributing a total of 273,605 hours. This equates to an average of 6,673 hours per shelter, representing a significant investment from each community.

Kathy Mohan, Chief Executive of Housing Justice said; "Today's figures show that the housing crisis is becoming a homelessness crisis with such a significant rise in the numbers of people being forced to sleep on camp beds in church halls up and down the country .

Typically guests staying in night shelters will not be recorded in street-counts and official measures of homelessness. Street rough sleeping, and potentially street fatalities would be higher without these incredible projects and their volunteers.

The government must take note of the work grassroots projects are carrying out and work with them to achieve better outcomes for guests in night shelters. Most of all the government should look urgently at what can be done to support these projects, increase bed spaces and plan more sustainable housing solutions for night shelter guests”

Housing Justice, a Body in Association of CTE, 11th December 2017.

## **Christian lands in Jerusalem could be confiscated warns UK Church leaders.**



[An article in Christian Today](#) on 22nd December reads:

Church leaders from across the UK have rallied around the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, in his campaign against a bill making its way through Israel's parliament.

The Patriarch has just completed a visit to Britain as part of an international tour focusing on the plight of the Church in the city. Theophilos, regarded as the most senior Christian figure in the Holy Land, has highlighted a proposed Bill of Church Lands, signed by 40 Knesset members, that would allow the Israeli government to confiscate lands leased by Churches to third parties.

This week he met with Prince Charles as well as government ministers Alistair Burt and Rory Stewart alongside other parliamentarians and the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Church property near the Jaffa Gate has been leased to Jewish settlers in a controversial deal. UK Christian leaders have backed the Patriarch. Coptic Archbishop Angaelos of London said: 'Property rights and religious freedom are at the bedrock of any democracy. The proposed bill curtails both. I join the Patriarch of Jerusalem and church leaders in the Holy Land in calling on the relevant authorities to reaffirm their commitment to the Status Quo.'

Free Churches Moderator and a President of Churches Together in England, Hugh Osgood, said: 'This proposal represents an intolerable infringement of the Status Quo and the legitimate rights of the Churches and should be recognised for what it is: an attack on the property rights of the Christian community. We urge religious and political leaders in the United Kingdom and around the world to join us in speaking out against this threat to religious freedom, which would set a dangerous precedent for other faiths in the Holy Land.'

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has written to the Patriarch and other Church leaders in Jerusalem expressing his 'solidarity' over the proposed legislation, saying it represents 'an intolerable infringement of the Status Quo and the legitimate rights of the Churches

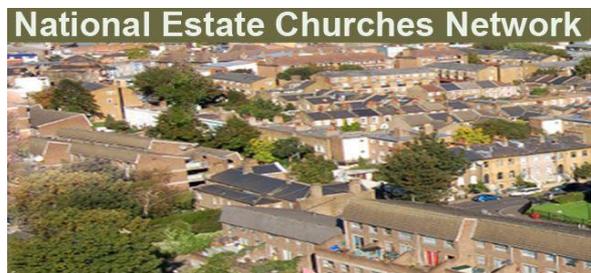
and should be recognised for what it is: an attack on the property rights of the Christian community. We urge religious and political leaders in the United Kingdom and around the world to join us in speaking out against this threat to religious freedom, which would set a dangerous precedent for other faiths in the Holy Land.'

Last month, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said: 'I join other Church Leaders in calling for all parties to uphold the Status Quo and resist weakening it. I believe that a continued Christian presence in the Holy Land is of paramount importance.' The issue of Church land has dogged the reign of Patriarch Theophilus since an employee of his predecessor Irenaios used a power of attorney to sell valuable properties near the Jaffa Gate to a right-wing settler group in 2004. The Church challenged the legality of the transaction, which it said would contribute to Christians being expelled from the Old City, but has so far failed in the courts. It has lodged an appeal to the High Court of Justice.

## 'Tooled Up: the Craft of Estates Ministry'

Revd Andy Delmege writes:

The National Estates Churches Network (MECN) is an ecumenical charity with most major denominations represented on the executive, striving to promote and resource mission and ministry on urban estates.



At the NECN Conferences this year, we will be launching the Estates Church Toolkit, an online range of resources that we know work to help support ministry on social housing estates. We will also be sharing in stories from Estate Churches around the country.

The Conference days will begin with a welcome over tea and coffee as you arrive, followed by a keynote address by me as the new Chair of NECN and Urban Estates Missioner in Diocese of Birmingham. There will then be presentations from Estate Churches, telling rich stories of their lives and their ministries and looking at what has helped them to flourish (as well as what has been difficult). There will also be available, throughout the day, a Marketplace of organisations and groups who provide helpful resources for Estate Churches across the denominations. Midday Prayer will be followed by a sandwich lunch which is included in the cost of the Conference. The afternoon session will see a panel of estate practitioners, thinkers and influencers present and take questions from the floor.

The cost of the day will be £25 including a simple sandwich lunch - if that charge prevents anyone from attending then please contact NECN. Both venues are wheelchair accessible on the ground floor, including toilet facilities. Queries, dietary preferences or any other specific requirements should be notified to us [via email](#).

Blackburn Cathedral Monday 16th April 2018 10.00am-3.00pm. [Click here to book](#)

Birmingham Cathedral Wed. 18th April 2018 10.00am-3.00pm. [Click here to book](#)

## Ad: CEA Digital Evangelist (P/T)

The Christian Enquiry Agency has been in existence for over 25 years and is looking to recruit an enthusiastic, evangelistic, creative and strategic person to the role of Digital Evangelist.



This is an exciting opportunity for the right candidate(s), and we would love to hear your ideas for taking us into the next stage of our online developments. You will be of strong and broad theological background, and technologically competent on a range of online platforms for a P/T Digital Evangelist.

- Are you passionate about enabling people to ask the important questions of life, love, death and everything?
- Can you offer strategic thinking and creative flair in a fast moving world of social media developments?
- How might you increase our reach beyond the 15,000 contacts we have per month?
- Do you know first-hand how Jesus can change your life?

In turn, you will be supported by a strong Board of Trustees, as well as trained evangelists and prayer supporters who will engage with you at different levels and in a range of ways.

[Click here for further information including the job description, person specification and application process.](#)

**Closing date for applications:** noon on Wednesday 31 January 2018

**Interviews:** w/c 26 February 2018

## And finally ...

***Thy Kingdom Come* 'Champions' Launch invitation.**



THY KINGDOM COME

In preparation and to help coordinate the various possibilities for local and regional prayer for evangelisation, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May to Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018, there is an invitation for church leaders and Christians in positions of significant networks to volunteer and attend a launch event for *Thy Kingdom Come* (TKC) 2018.

If you have been a 'Champion' for TKC before then pleased come again to the launch event as there are new resources and people to meet. If you could be a new 'Champion' it will be great to meet you and share in the national briefing.

If you can be a 'Champion' to promote, facilitate, and encourage the effective use of the resources being produced by the TKC team, with groups of churches in your area or region, please email Jim Currin at CTE in the first instance: [jim.currin@cte.org.uk](mailto:jim.currin@cte.org.uk).

CTe-News is provided free for subscribers @ [www.cte.org.uk/news](http://www.cte.org.uk/news)

The launch events are in York on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>, or London on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January. Numbers are limited and the prospective 'Champion' needs to have the time and network to work with a group of churches indicating they would engage with the resources for *Thy Kingdom Come*: <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/>

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