



Reflection of the Month: 'Heresy- and people who are like you



Ashley Leighton-Plom writes:

This is a reflection on some words from Rowan Williams, the previous Archbishop of Canterbury. I'd like to share it as relevant to our ecumenical journey. It relates to the word 'heresy'.

Heresy, if and when we use the word nowadays, is normally understood among Christians to refer to beliefs about things like God, Christ, and salvation which are wrong – dangerously wrong.

The other common use of words like "heretic" today are slightly groovy, like when someone says, "I'm a bit of a heretic", and means something like "I'm a free-thinker, I don't conform to society". It usually has positive connotations, like independent thought and enlightenment beyond silly beliefs, someone who quests for truth and who is not afraid to challenge accepted assumptions to do so.

Until recently, those were the two meanings of words like "heresy" and "heretic" that I knew of. But I was recently introduced to a third – more original – meaning when I read a commentary by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, on 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and the topic of heresy.* In it, Williams says that the root of the word "heresy" in Greek is the verb "to choose" – 'haireisis' – also where the word "adhere" comes from. Heresy, then, has to do with choosing who and what you associate with.

Williams uses this meaning to argue that, for St. Paul, heresy is not holding incorrect beliefs about God, but is "choosing the people you are comfortable with... choosing something other than the full fellowship of believers" to associate with. If this is true, then both the Church's traditional meaning of heresy as "wrong belief", and society's positive use of heretic as "free thinker" are insufficient. "Heresy" could actually mean choosing to only associate with people who agree with you.

Williams develops this claim into a rather deep point about its significance. He says that what is wrong with being ungenerous in who we associate with is that we try to put a limit on God's grace. We try to limit God's ability to choose who he chooses, when we choose to associate less generously than he does. The inevitable consequence of this is that we end up believing in a God who is much less generous than the God who chooses to save people despite their depravity and their rebellion against him.

Ultimately, Williams suggests that the salve to this is learning to believe in the generosity of God to love whoever he chooses to love, and to learn to follow him in loving whoever he loves.

If heresy is choosing to associate only with the people you are comfortable with, something other than the full fellowship of believers, then it turns out that the ecumenical endeavour is the very definition of orthopraxy.

* Rowan Williams, 'What is heresy today?', lecture given at the International Centre, Telford, as part of a diocesan visit to Lichfield, on Saturday 6th November, 2010. You can access a transcript and audio recording online at:

<http://aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/articles.php/568/archbishops-lecture-what-is-heresy-today>

Leading church figures urge Christians to pray for Brexit, in WPCU for Christian Unity and Thy Kingdom Come



18th January 2019

In addition to [Churches Together in Britain and Ireland](#), and many church leaders issuing [a call to prayer re Brexit](#), Christian leaders across the UK through Churches Together in England, have also today issued a joint letter encouraging Christians of all denominations to join in the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#) which runs from 18-25th January 2019.

In addition, they also encourage all Christians to pray together during [Thy Kingdom Come](#) May 30th - June 9th.

[Listen to CTE Gen Sec on UCB radio speak about the letter](#)

The letter's central message urges Christians to 'pray together for Christian unity, in our life together, our witness and our longing to see the Kingdom of God in the midst of our world' and to 'find ways to give expression to our search for greater unity in obedience to the command of Christ that we love one another,' citing Jesus's last prayer on unity taken from John 17.

The leaders also encourage Christians not just to pray during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity but also to get involved in Thy Kingdom Come – a global ecumenical prayer movement in which Christians pray for more people to become followers of Jesus Christ.

[Download PDF of the CTE letter for general circulation](#)

'Supporting the Farming Community'

A letter for general distribution from the Churches Rural Group. Jan 2019.



>> [Download the letter for general circulation far and wide](#) <<

The weather made 2018 a challenging year for many farmers. For sheep farmers the problems began in the autumn of 2017 when prolonged cold and damp affected ewe fertility. The snow and cold temperatures of the 'Beast from the East' arrived at lambing time and there were losses of new lambs and ewes as well as cattle. This resulted in cash flow problems with fewer lambs to sell in the autumn and higher prices for replacement ewes.

The prolonged drought in some areas meant that farmers began feeding their livestock in the summer with forage made for the winter months since there wasn't enough nutritious grass. Many will not have been able to produce as much silage as normal and this coupled with early feeding may have led to shortages and higher prices. Concerns about price and availability will add to the stress some farmers are experiencing. In the arable sector, the cold spring meant that some crops were sown late and established crops had their growth affected. Many crops were harvested early, but lack of water meant that some yields were low. There will be regional variations as to the quality and amount of grain, fruit and vegetables that have been harvested.

Add to this the fact that for some there have been significant delays with payment of subsidy amounts and payments for environmental schemes, finances that often contribute to over half of the farm budget. Uncertainty of when these payments would come through has led to severe cash flow problems and significant stress for the farmers involved. This has added to the anxiety many have over how things will be post BREXIT especially since the deal is still unclear. You may not have farmers in your congregations, but they may well be in your communities. Are there things your church can do to reach out to them? For example;

Can you pray regularly for local farmers? Could you send letters or cards to say you are thinking of them? Are there places where farmers meet in your area? if so, can the church be present? If your area has a rural officer or agricultural chaplain, why not get in touch and see how your congregations can be of help. We have listed some of the organisations that exist to help farmers perhaps you can publicise them in your networks. They also may be able to supply speakers for services and events as well as put you in touch with local representatives.

The Farming Community Network (FCN): www.fcn.org.uk
Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI): www.rabi.org.uk
Addington Fund: www.addingtonfund.org.uk

[Full details and contacts are in the letter to download and distribute.](#)

'Thy Kingdom Come' to be more ecumenical in Cheshire 2019



Andrew Taylor writes:

Plans are once again being made in Cheshire in readiness for [Thy Kingdom Come](#), between Ascension Day 30th May and Pentecost 9th June, with the ecumenical element of this prayer initiative becoming ever more significant.

There will again be prayer walks in each of the Deaneries of the Macclesfield Archdeaconry, with an invitation to the other churches in those areas to participate fully. Various Churches Together groups in the county, such as that at Northwich, are planning their own appropriate prayer events. The Methodist District has tasked one of their staff to promote and link up with all that will be happening.

In Chester, this year as last, there will be a high level of prayer activity, beginning each morning with a prayer walk round the city walls. 'Unity at the Cross' is a prayer event whereby the leaders of churches across Chester gather at the Cross, the very centre of the city, and pray around, north, south, east and west, for the city, its inhabitants, visitors, businesses and churches. This will be held within the 'thy Kingdom Come' period.

Over the Pentecost weekend there will be a major Mission in Chester, hopefully at the Chester City Football Stadium.

Prayer walks are being encouraged across the communities of the county, with smaller villages urged to pray for whatever are the elements of their locality, be that a school, shop, village hall or medical centre. Simple resources will be distributed to help these to happen.

Churches Together in Cheshire, taking on a pattern of events run last year in neighbouring Staffordshire, will be holding four events, hosted by churches of different traditions at the compass points of the county, using those vantage points to both pray into the county, and pray out of the county to the adjoining areas and communities. Each event will have attendance from at least one of the county's Church Leaders.

A group, convened by Lyn Weston, the Diocesan Missioner, and drawing on representatives from a wide range of church backgrounds and traditions, has been meeting each month to maintain an overview of all that is happening, giving thanks for all the Spirit-led initiatives that have developed.

[Thy Kingdom Come resources](#)

Andrew Taylor is the County Ecumenical Development Officer for Churches Together in Cheshire.

What is Churches Together in England?



A new introductory video on the 'About' page of www.cte.org.uk by Paul Goodliff: <https://vimeo.com/314464201>

Do use the Vimeo link to show this video for anyone interested in the question, 'What is Churches Together in England'.

Previous CTE chair to be Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle



Bishop Robert Byrne, a former CTE Director and Chair of Trustees and Convenor of the Enabling Group and, before that, the RC National Ecumenical Officer, will be the next bishop of Hexham and Newcastle diocese. Currently he is a bishop in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Birmingham.

Bishop Byrne was born in Manchester on 22 September 1956. He was ordained priest in 1985 and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Birmingham on 13 May, 2014. Speaking of his appointment, Bishop Byrne said: "I am deeply humbled by the trust Pope Francis has placed in me with this appointment as Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle". "I look forward to making my home in the North East, with its rich Christian heritage, and also getting to know and serve the people, deacons, religious and priests of the Diocese. I ask all of you to keep me in your prayers as I pray for you."

Archbishop Angaelos preaches at WPCU in Kensington and Notting Hill



Chris Luxton writes:

On 22nd January, which was Day 5 of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), we had a joyful ecumenical worship service hosted by my church, St Philips in the Earls Court Road - under the auspices of the two local ecumenical bodies: Kensington Council of Churches (KCC) with Churches Together in Notting Hill (CTiNH).

KCC Executive was delighted, that our Vicar, the Revd Philippa Turner, had agreed with alacrity, and even more pleased to hear that she had visited Archbishop Angaelos, first Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, Orthodox President of CTE, and Moderator of CTBI and he had accepted her invitation to be our preacher!

As Archbishop Angaelos commented in his address, "How could anyone say 'No' to Pippa!?" He also reminded the congregation that the first ecumenical engagements for the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, was through the relationship between St Marks Coptic Orthodox Church in Kensington, and the Kensington Council of Churches thirty years ago. The Archbishop preached, inspiringly and topically, on "He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" Luke 4:18. Deacons from St Marks chanted the Gospel response Alleluia.

Who attended the service? The Vicar welcomed a fairly eclectic mix of nearly 150 people (including the Mayor of the Royal Borough) drawn from at least 19 member churches in KCC plus 17 local Notting Hill churches. We used the CTBI materials, put together by the churches in Indonesia, adapting the Order of Service, in which Archbishop Angaelos took a close interest; he chose the first hymn, 'Amazing Grace'. The Armenian Primate, Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, was also able to attend (see picture) and his Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, Grace Sargsyan read the first lesson from Deuteronomy 16, "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue." The Church of England local Ecumenical Adviser, Canon William Taylor read the 2nd lesson from Romans 12, 'Let love be genuine'. The congregation was asked to write on cards what commitment each of us can make to justice, which were offered to God on the altar, and to reps of KCC and CTiNH, so that we can consider how to enable our constituents to carry out these commitments.

A former KCC Chairman, the Revd James Mather (then Minister of Kensington URC) was spotted in the congregation, as was Mgr James Curry from Our Lady of Victories, who hosted last year's Service. St Philip's catering team pulled out all the stops for the joyous after-service Reception (we hoped to match Mgr Jim's wonderful hospitality!) to which most flocked, including the Mayor.

Picture. Right: His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos. Left: His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukyan. Centre, the Reverend Philippa Turner, who hosted the Unity Service. Photo credit: Chris Luxton, Kensington Council of Churches.

Church Leaders meeting in South London

Claire Crowley writes:

Meeting together at the invitation of Churches Together in South London (CTSL), these leaders witness to the friendship and shared purposes of South London's churches. Bishop Paul Hendricks, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark, offered a reflection at the invitation of Bishop Karowei Dorgu, Chair of CTSL. Bishop Paul talked about some of the ideas raised in Richard Rohr's book "Falling Upward", and the leaders discussed their relevance to ecumenism today.



Reverend Jongikaya Zihle raised themes from the resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's website explains that this year, the material originates from the churches of Indonesia, "where there is a strong emphasis upon the need for unity alongside the nation's ethnic and religious diversity. The resources also highlight issues of economic injustice and how religious pluralism can face challenges in the face of radicalisation. The theme is based around Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 'Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...'" <https://ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer>

Bishop Moses Owusu-Sekyere said, "Unity becomes even more essential, not only because of the commonality of our purpose, but also because of the mutuality of the threats we face in these challenging times." Rt Rev Moses Owusu-Sekyere is Deputy-Director & Greater London Regional Bishop, Apostolic Pastoral Congress.

Bishop Paul Hendricks said, "I find the Week of Prayer a great inspiration. Despite our differences, we are united in prayer with Christians all around the world. At a time when many of our societies are divided over political issues, we recognise with joy that people of different Christian traditions are also faithful followers of Jesus. We renew our commitment to learn from each other as we walk the path of unity together." Rt Rev Paul Hendricks is the Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark.

Building New Communities in the North East

Chris Beales writes:

Across the North East England, large numbers of new homes are being built. My research identifies significant new housing developments being built or planned in each of the 12 local authority areas across the region. The challenge for us all is how to "build good community" and my aim has been to lay the foundations for new strategic thinking and action by Churches and others, working with landowners, builders, planners, communities and all involved.



After a brief summary of the current housing situation across the country and in North East England – and the huge challenges facing Church and society – I survey the history of housing and communities in the region since the first half of the 19th century and then look, in particular, at some significant developments since the Second World War. In exploring present and future trends and requirements, I describe offsite construction and modular housing initiatives and also some innovative ideas to address housing need.

I explore at some length what this all means for the Churches and for effective Christian engagement, before concluding: “If ‘Christian Hope’ is to have real meaning and substance in relation to housing and community – and especially new housing developments – it must be rooted, earthed, realised, incarnated in practical, purposeful action. The time has come to put community development (in all its meanings) at the heart of Christian life and witness.” Two workshops were held during 2018, in Newcastle and Darlington, on the theme of A House or a Home? – and these are summarised in my report ([available here](#)).

[Link to the paper in CTE web area for the Churches Group New Housing Areas](#)

Wellspring on Wellesley

The old Cambridge Military Hospital Tower rises over the rooftops of the new housing development. Wellesley, named after the Duke of Wellington, will be home to 3,800 households over the next 15 years or so, a tasteful mix of private, affordable and social housing.



When the plan to develop the old MOD sites in Aldershot was first announced over ten years ago, the local churches were quick to establish relationships with the local planners and developers. Over the next ten years Aldershot Churches Together would meet to pray and seek God’s blessing for the new housing development and provision for a church plant. Today with nearly 400 homes occupied and a new phase of building nearly completed, The Wellspring Aldershot, a missional community has been established on Wellesley with the continued support of Aldershot Churches Together and funded by the Church of England and the Methodist Church. Drawn from the local churches a small team of ten would be pioneers are exploring how a Jesus centred community might emerge out of this new neighbourhood.

Led by the Rev Jackie Maw, the team has been active on the development for two years. With no café or pub on site at present where people might ordinarily gather, there was a need to bring the community together so that the important work of listening could take place. So, the ‘ministry of fun’ was launched. This has included a royal street party, quiz nights, bike rides and the now traditional Street Nativity with real donkeys on Christmas Eve.



They plan to build community craft café and establish it as a social enterprise that will provide the finances necessary to take them beyond their initial funding. As yet, that building is not available, but the new primary school is proving to be a rewarding community partner who are happy to offer hospitality and the new Ceramics Painting Course, the next step in their community engagement, is being held in their premises.

"Two years in" says Jackie, "we are being regarded as people to be trusted, people who care and real and genuine friendships are being made along the way. In the past few months we've had our first wedding enquiry and those conversations about God, life and belief are becoming more frequent and open. We are grateful for the prayer support of the churches in Aldershot and together as we see God's Kingdom come in our neighbourhood, we discover that Jesus is already here, building his church, we're just joining in!"

You can find out more about The Wellspring Aldershot by visiting our website <https://wellspringaldershot.uk/> or visit our [Facebook page The Wellspring Community](#).

'Sing Christmas': Churches Together and BBC Radio



Many years ago [Churches Together in Lancashire](#) followed Leicestershire in teaming up with the local BBC Radio station and hosting 'Sing Christmas' - a Carol Service with a difference that can reach up to 10,000 people.

Here Anton Muller from Lancashire explains '[Lancashire Sings Christmas](#)' which can be replicated by other county Intermediate Bodies of Churches Together. <https://vimeo.com/314456366>

Below is a document with more information for networks in other parts of the country to consider preparing for Christmas 2019.



Download a background document: '[What is Lancashire Sings Christmas?](#)

Website: [Lancashire Sings Christmas](#)

Dementia-friendly churches: a project growing in Cumbria

David Richardson writes:

It is just three years since Churches Together in Cumbria (CTiC) launched a project to “make every church in the county dementia-friendly by 2020”.

We believe nowhere else has anything quite so ambitious ever been attempted. The project has been led by me, a churchwarden from Kendal, and who had been a Trustee of Alzheimer's Society.



Central to the project has been the recruitment of volunteer “Dementia Enablers” – CTiC coined the term – who seek to make their local church (or chapel or benefice or circuit) more aware of, and more responsive to, the needs of people affected by dementia in terms of the church’s welcome, worship and environment.

To date, 118 Dementia Enablers have been recruited, covering over 150 places of worship and being drawn from across the county and from no fewer than nine denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Church of Scotland, the King’s Church, Methodist, Quaker, Salvation Army and URC).

Training and support is offered to Dementia Enablers through an annual Development Day, a regular newsletter and opportunity to meet other Enablers locally. Initiatives that can be directly traced to the project include the introduction of dementia-friendly ‘tea services’ in a number of places around Cumbria.

Support from churches has made it possible to recruit a Dementia Project Officer, Yvonne Povey, who will steer the project through the concluding two years of its existence. Her aims are to increase the number of Enablers, to strengthen the support that they receive and to ensure that the aims of the project become embedded in local church life for the longer term. Further, she will be taking to steps to make the wider community – including statutory bodies and the third sector – aware of the project and its impact.

As part of the project CTiC holds an annual Churches’ Dementia Conference. The November 2018 one is pictured above.

The conference is open to everyone and gives a wider range of people, from within the county and beyond, chance to learn more about the project, to hear from someone who personally is living with dementia and to receive an update on the progress of research. For further information about the project, or to book a place for the November 2019 conference, please go to www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk.

Free Churches Group Commission on Social Cohesion



From the Free Churches website:

Social cohesion has been near the top of the political agenda for well over a decade now, from the [Cantle report](#) into the riots of 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, through the 2012 Government [Migration Advisory Committee report](#) into social cohesion and integration, to the [Casey review](#) into opportunity and integration published in December 2016. Much of the discussion in these reports (and beyond) has been about the role of 'religion' and 'religious' groups in local communities. With this in mind, the Free Churches Group recently commissioned an eighteen-month research project looking at the relationship between the Church and social cohesion in England. The project will be conducted by Theos, the UK's leading think tank on religion and society issues.

The research will be framed around a series of case studies, taken from across the country and selected on the basis of existing concerns surrounding social tensions. These studies will provide a body of original research into the challenges that churches face when responding to social cohesion concerns in their local areas. Our findings will be published as a major report into the nature, challenges and opportunities for the Church's response to social cohesion today, as well as a series of 'how to' booklets aimed at churches looking to deepen their engagement with social cohesion and policy makers hoping to engage with churches on these issues. Over the course of these investigations, we will discover what is already been done by churches in response to social cohesion concerns, and evaluate the impact of these initiatives through consultation and conversation with community leaders and a broad range of local faith communities.

The project will aim to consider the following central research questions:

- What are churches already doing at the local level to aid social cohesion?
- How is this activity connected with, embedded in and legitimised by churches' ongoing gospel mission?
- What are the factors emerging from this activity that can be seen to move communities towards social cohesion?
- What are the factors emerging from the research process that that can be seen to move communities away from social cohesion?
- What lessons are there for churches looking to engage in these issues?
- What lessons are there for statutory bodies and community groups who wish to work with and draw on the resources and leadership of the churches in England to foster social cohesion?

[Click here for the latest commission updates](#)

For any questions about this project and its aims, please contact [Paul Rochester](#) at Free Churches Group or [Madeleine Ward](#) at Theos.

Joint meeting of Anglican and Catholic Bishops

The Catholic bishops of England and Wales and Church of England bishops met in Leicester from January 16th to 17th for their biennial conference.



Together 27 Anglican and 27 Catholic bishops explored a diverse range of subjects including opportunities for closer collaboration at a regional and national level. Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Archbishops Justin Welby and John Sentamu were present throughout. Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop Welby addressed the gathering.

Dr Paula Gooder and Professor Paul Murray, members of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, led the bishops in reflection on its latest document *Walking Together On The Way*. Drawing on their rich experience of walking together as fellow pilgrims, the bishops considered the life of their global communions. They explored similarities and differences between the structures of their churches.

The bishops also discussed how they might work together to address issues of national importance, including the UK's relationship with the EU, recognising the unique role the Church plays as an instrument of reconciliation and peace in society. The spirit of the meeting was expressed by Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Ripon, who said: "All good conversations start round the table over a meal. "This 24 hour period has been a highly stimulating and honest time of sharing: prayer, fellowship, laughter and mutual support. I would like to think that the body of Christ has been enriched by this time and look forward to other opportunities to engage together."

The Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Reverend Bernard Longley commented: "This meeting has highlighted how very far we have come in our fraternal discussions in the past 50 years. We have a strong bond, we are dealing with the same problems which we must continue to tackle in our different ways and support each other in our love for Christ and His flock. "This meeting has been frank and realistic. I am both encouraged and strengthened by this sincere dialogue and our friendship as brothers and sisters in Christ. We journey onwards in hope - we have so much in common - in this drama of Redemption." The bishops gathered together for Evensong at Leicester Cathedral and for Mass and Morning Prayer at Holy Cross Dominican Priory.

Faith Leaders speak out on Refugees



Quakers in Britain

In advance of MPs returning to Parliament on Monday 7 January 2019, faith representatives published a letter in the Sunday Telegraph on 6 January 2019 urging the government to rethink its approach to immigration and to move away from a hostile environment towards a culture of sanctuary.

Full text of the letter:

“As representatives of faith communities, we are dismayed by the current debate around immigration. The long-awaited Immigration white paper is misguided and disjointed, the promised engagement unclear, and the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill a missed opportunity.

“Urgent action is needed to create a more humane system. Refugee families must be kept together, and close family members allowed to join their children in the UK. The right to work after six months should be extended to all people seeking asylum. There must be a time limit on immigration detention, an end to the detention of vulnerable people, and a genuine discussion about the often impossible standards of proof required by the immigration system. The first reaction to those arriving in boats should not be to disbelieve their stories.

“Today is Epiphany, the twelfth day of Christmas; the story of the flight of the Holy Family echoes the plight of refugees around the world. We say to the government: let us help you transform the hostile environment, not into a compliant environment, but into a culture of sanctuary.”

Signed by:

- John Adegoke, Chair, Unification Council of Cherubim & Seraphim Churches, Europe Chapter
- Rt. Revd Jonathan Clark, Bishop of Croydon
- John Collings, Secretary of the Church & Society Committee of the National Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church
- Dr Patrick Coyle, Chair of Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales
- John P Cross, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland
- Most Revd John Davies, Archbishop of Wales
- Revd Canon Aled Edwards OBE, CEO Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales
- Derek Estill, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church
- Bob Fyffe, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
- Revd Fleur Houston, Churches Refugee Network
- Rt. Revd Richard Jackson, Bishop of Lewes
- Revd Dr Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader, Baptist Union of Great Britain
- Derek McAuley, Chief Officer, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
- Kathy Mohan, CEO, Housing Justice
- Revd Judith Morris, General Secretary, Baptist Union of Wales
- Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain
- Rt. Revd Joanna Penberthy, Bishop of St Davids
- Most Revd Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross & Caithness, and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Details available from [Quakers in Britain](#).

Summary of the CRG meeting 07.01.19

The Churches Rural Group (CRG) is a co-ordinating Group of CTE, bringing together representatives of Christian denominations and other organisations concerned with rural life and ministry to discuss issues of common interest.

At the meeting in January 2019, we were pleased to welcome Heather Major, who will act as a link with the International Rural Churches Association (IRCA) and rural church networks in Scotland. Topics discussed included:

Brexit and rural churches

Political and practical uncertainties about Brexit are likely to continue for some time. The CRG discussed ways in which village churches could offer help and support for their local communities, and particularly farmers and agricultural workers who may be feeling under pressure. There are many good examples of rural / agricultural chaplaincy around the country, and the CRG has prepared a short paper with background information, suggestions for building relationships now and contact details of organisations that can provide practical help.

[Link to document on CTE website here.](#)

'Germinate' news.

The conference held in October 2018 was well received, with high approval ratings for venue, programme overall and the separate elements of the day. People engaged in rural mission and ministry shared ideas and experiences of building fruitful relationships within their communities, with the keynote address by Bishop David Walker reflecting on different ways of expressing faith and a sense of belonging. The address and other footage from the day can be found on <http://germinate.net/training/germinateconference/germinate-conference-2018-resources/>

Other news:

1. [Rev Dr Mark Betson](#) has been appointed as National Rural Officer for the Church of England.
2. [Applications for the next Germinate leadership course](#) are now open.
3. ['Seeds of prayer.'](#) a helpful monthly resource for individuals, groups and church services, which includes seasonal and current topics for prayer for rural life. <https://www.worldprayer.org.uk/call-to-action/hope-for-the-countryside>

Book the dates:

[15 May: Germinate lecture](#) at Kings Park Conference Centre, Northampton. George Dunn, CEO, Tenant Farmers Association, will speak on 'Salt, light and feet of clay – celebrating the ministry of lay people.' Details from <http://germinate.net>

[14 July: Rural Mission Sunday.](#) Theme – 'Living the life.'

[23-27 September.](#) Conference at Lee Abbey on 'Faith and the future of the countryside.' <https://leeabbeydevon.org.uk/programme/faith-and-the-future-of-the-countryside/>

Landmark year for Bible stories in primary schools



Helen Crawford writes:

This year, Bible Society are celebrating an amazing 20 years of [Open the Book!](#) From its beginnings in a Bedford school in 1999, this Bible storytelling programme is now in one in six schools in England and Wales, delivered by an incredible 16,788 volunteers. Twenty years on, we're not about to take our foot off the pedal! With a multi-faith pilot, international growth and a vision to bring the Bible to life for every child in every primary school, we're more excited than ever about seeing God's word at work through Open the Book.

Perhaps it's time for you to join the gang? Find out more about [becoming an Open the Book storyteller](#) and how to get a team together for your local schools.

Bible Society is a [Body in Association](#) of CTE

Sector Minister advert Ecumenical Milton Keynes Christian Foundation



MK Christian Foundation
Growing people and community through social enterprise

Salary Package: £37,500 plus pension (if ordained a stipend at denominational rates, housing and pension)

An exciting opportunity, for someone lay or ordained, to be part of the leadership of an innovative, mission focused ecumenical charity that uses social enterprise to grow people and community.

As Sector Minister you will:

- Hold, develop and communicate, with others, the mission, vision and values of the MK Christian Foundation, with our particular expression of the Christian Faith and way, with its emphasis on the practical working out of the gospel;
- Ensure the growth and development of the community of our staff, trainees, volunteers and other service users enabling them to participate in delivering our mission and values;
- Oversee the on-going sustainability of the organisation, working with others to develop projects, new enterprises and expanded contracts that deliver our mission and Strategic Plan.

You will be:

- An effective leader who enjoys working collaboratively and empowering others
- Creative and entrepreneurial, taking ideas through to practical fruition

- Committed to working ecumenically and with other faith communities
- Able to reflect theologically, translating Christian traditions in ways relevant to community experience
- A good communicator, comfortable with public speaking
- Strong financial literacy and experience of contract management

This post will require an Enhanced DBS check. This post has an Occupational Requirement under the Equality Act 2010, Schedule 9 Part 1 that the post holder be a practising Christian as set out in the person specification.

We value diversity and welcome applicants from all sections of the community. Applications will only be accepted on the forms provided (No CV's)
For an application pack please email Stephen.norrish@mkchristianfoundation.co.uk

Deadline for applications: Midnight on Sunday 17 March 2019.

Interviews: We are using a two stage interview process with first interviews on Friday 29 March and second interviews on Monday 8 April 2019

And Finally ...

Student Sunday: 17th February 2019

Join students and churches around the world in February each year to mark the Universal Day of Prayer for Students or 'Student Sunday'. SCM has produced a resource toolkit for 2019 that can be used by churches, student groups and individuals. You can [download a copy of the 2019 Student Sunday resources here](#). The theme this year is Wondering and Wandering.



Student Christian Movement is a [Body in Association](#) of Churches Together in England

And ...



Racial Justice Sunday 2019

Resources are available from the URC and the Catholic Church in England and Wales, plus Black History Month resources can also be adapted.

10th or 17th February 2019

Or a Sunday of your choice



<https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-2019>

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