

Revealing God's Heart

John 17 reveals the heart of Jesus' mission. Speaking to his 'Abba' Father, Jesus prays 'Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.' It's a close relationship of mutual honour, a model for us as churches as we seek to show the world what God is like. Jesus' path to glory is by way of the cross. It is not always a comfortable journey. This way of the cross – giving ourselves, together, to God in his service – is also the path we must take in mission as we share Jesus' longing that people will come to know 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent'.



When Jesus prays for his disciples, God's glory is his priority. He knows that his followers will need God's protection and he prays that they will be equipped with God's joy as they are sent out to live out God's word. The emphasis is not on gathering away from the rest of the world, but on going out, full of joy, strengthened by God to finish the work Jesus started.

Amazingly, Jesus also prays for us 'that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you'. Jesus wants us to create communities of love, which show the world what God's love is like. He wants our churches to be characterized by love for one another, and the love that he has for the world, which sent him to the cross. Our unity and sacrificial love has a missional impact as Jesus said: 'the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me'.

HOPE aims to help churches make this prayer a reality as we work together in villages, towns and cities, putting our Christian faith into words and action in a rhythm of mission through the year. During 2014 HOPE was a catalyst for a focused year of mission, as churches throughout the UK used words and action to point people to Jesus. At the end of the year, the think tank Theos, conducted an evaluation. Their report examined the success of HOPE's aims to:

- create unity in mission, helping churches to do more together;
- help local churches integrate their mission, sharing the gospel with words as well as serving communities;
- leave a legacy of mission, resourcing churches to embed a rhythm of mission in their church life, and training and developing young people to lead in mission.

They found that HOPE has become much more diverse than it was in 2008; 67.5% of survey respondents who represented churches reported that they had collaborated with other churches through HOPE 2014. Of these, 85% were working with churches of different denominations; 90% of local practitioners said that HOPE 2014 helped them reach their neighbourhood. Four in ten respondents to the survey said that someone had come to faith after activities that were part of HOPE 2014.



Part of the legacy of HOPE 2014 has been the impact on young people: 32 Mission Academies were run; training, developing and encouraging 750 young people in mission. Also, local churches are adopting HOPE's rhythm of mission, reaching out in mission together at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. In its conclusion the report asked, 'What further steps can be taken to increase confidence in sharing the gospel?' As HOPE goes forward to a further year of focused mission in 2018, we would love to serve local churches as, together, we seek to respond to Jesus' prayer and commission to go out into our communities. Also, HOPE's book Sharing Jesus has been published to help churches to equip members to put their faith into words, sharing the gospel in relevant ways in contemporary society.

Copies are available from http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/257155/Sharing_Jesus.aspx. We'd love you to use this resource to equip your church, so we are offering the book at the special bulk order price of £60 for a box of 52 copies including p&p. Email the HOPE office office@hopetogether.org.uk to place an order.

[Link to the Theos report/evaluation PDF download from the Hope website](#)

[Link to video of Roy speaking to Churches Together in England re local groups doing word and deed mission](#)

Roy Crowne, executive director of HOPE, www.hopetogether.org.uk

CTE 2014 Annual Report advance summary



In advance of the full Annual Report which will be on the Charity Commission website as usual, a summary on 2 sides of A4 has been produced for all interested in the regular work of Churches Together in England.

Click here for the [Summary Annual Report 2014](#).

A new framework for local ecumenism A consultation paper



As part of CTE's remit to support and encourage local ecumenism, a sub-group of the National Ecumenical Officers have been exploring the issues facing Local Ecumenical Partnerships and the new ecumenical contexts in England.

The consultation paper downloadable below is the fruit of their work. It is not the final word but is meant to stimulate discussion and reflection. It has been sent to CTE's Member Churches and to Intermediate Bodies and responses are also invited from others with a heart for Christian unity.

- Read the covering note which is the first page of the document.
- Reflect on the questions in Annex 1.
- Send in your thoughts by 31 October 2015 to 'lep@cte.org.uk'.

Link to the webpage, consultation paper and email reply:

<http://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=441164>

Introducing Elizabeth Joy: CTE volunteer re Human Trafficking



Elizabeth Joy is the National Ecumenical Officer of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church/MOSC (Indian Orthodox Church/IOC) and has volunteered to assist CTE. After formal discussion it has been agreed that Elizabeth will work with Joe Aldred in a project that is developing with the churches in England to overcome the plight of women caught up in human trafficking/modern slavery.

Elizabeth is volunteering two days a week and will be engaged in following up various meetings and consultations, networking with denominational officers, and identifying new national Christian communities in England and developing the project.

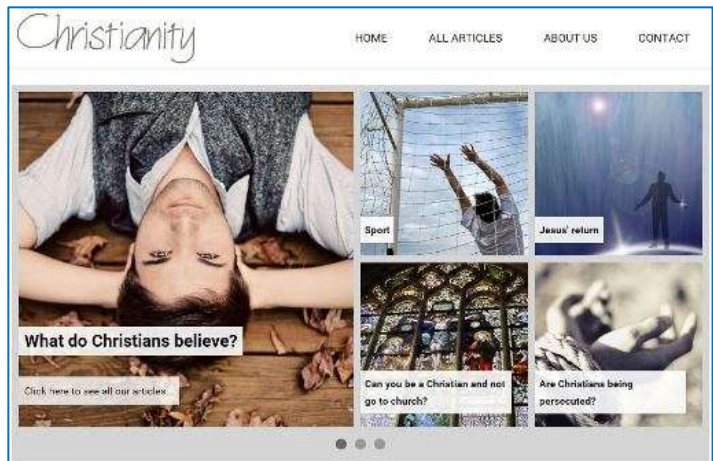
Elizabeth is a part-time PhD student at King's College, London where she is a Graduate Teaching Assistant. For eight years she was Executive Secretary for Mission Education at the Council for World Mission and was also General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of India, the Editorial Officer of the Bible Society of India, and the National Women's Co-ordinator for Church-related Programmes of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in India.

Colleagues at CTE warmly welcome Elizabeth and contact details have been added to the [Staff page of the website here](#).

Revamped website shows people can come to faith online

People can come to faith while sitting at their computer screens but not by stumbling upon Bible verses quoted out of context, mission workers were told this week during the re-launch of a unique website that answers people's questions about the Christian faith.

Every month, thousands of people look for answers to questions about Christianity on www.christianity.org.uk – from what do Christians believe about homosexuality to can I have my baby Christened? – demonstrating an appetite to know more. Many of them use the website to get in touch with the Christian Enquiry Agency for personal answers to individual questions.



British adults are more likely to be internet-literate than knowledgeable about the Bible, so churches must engage online as this is the place where seekers are found.

Research from the Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report 2014 showed 83 per cent of adults now go online using any type of device in any location and nearly all (98 per cent) aged between 16 and 34 are online.

But it's not just the young ones – there has been a nine percentage point increase in those aged 65-plus going online – up to 42 per cent.

At the other end of the computer screen, answering people's questions and replying to people's comments is Peter Graystone, co-ordinator of the Christian Enquiry Agency, which runs the website.

He said: "I am staggered at what people tell me about their spiritual thoughts behind the privacy of a computer screen. The longing for faith and meaning hasn't gone away. People who would never walk into a church on a Sunday morning to find answers will readily look for them in a search engine at midnight on a Friday.

"We always give people what they ask for, and nothing more than that. But if their question is, 'Does praying ever work?' it begins a conversation that might continue by email for months. And when we share our experience, Jesus makes himself known. In the goodness of God, people are coming to real faith online in a way I would not have thought possible some years ago.

Speaking at the launch of the revamped www.christianity.org.uk website, Gavin Calver – on his first day as director of mission at the Evangelical Alliance – said there is a clear need for Christians to engage with the cultural contexts in which they live in order to draw people towards God. "We need to re-imagine our style," he said. "The substance doesn't change, but the method has to. We need to change the method in order that people can hear us. We need to tell Jesus stories in a world that wants to hear them.

"A lot of us lock ourselves away in the Church and speak a language only the Church speaks, so when we encounter people who don't know Jesus, we find it hard to relate to them. We need a more incarnational form of ministry at times that gets in among people."

Dr Bex Lewis, research fellow in social media and online learning at CODEC, St John's College Durham, warned of the potential dangers of Christians bombarding their social media contacts with Bible verses without any context, but encouraged people to form real, in-depth relationships.

"Social media is about relationships," she said. "How do we encourage people to make those online relationships real? A lot of social media is about getting to know people and finding a starting point for conversation. A huge amount of it is listening. It's not just about pushing content out."

In 2014, there were more than 300,000 views of the www.christianity.org.uk website, with visitors ranging from school pupils wanting help with their religious education homework, to people who felt depressed and needed a listening ear, to those who are opposed to Christianity.

Peter Graystone added: "Just write christianity.org.uk on the bottom of posters, emails or anything that is read by people beyond the walls of a church. It's so easy, and it's free. We'll do all the rest."

To find out more about how churches can support this ministry, visit www.christianity.org.uk/cea

Update on Parish Nursing



[Parish Nursing Ministries UK](#) is poised for further growth and more and more churches and nurses are exploring health ministry as part of their mission and outreach programmes. The first UK book on Parish nursing is now published by Wipf and Stock, and available through all good booksellers, Amazon and Kindle. (Rediscovering a Ministry of Health Wordsworth, H.A. 2015)

This summer, Helen will be moving on into an ambassadorial role for the organisation and they are delighted to announce the appointment of CEO elect, Ros Moore. Ros comes with immense experience in national nursing leadership and management. For the last six years she has been Chief Nurse for Scotland. A known and well respected nurse leader across the UK and internationally, she was voted as one of the profession's most influential leaders of 2014 by readers of the Nursing Times. She is based in Yorkshire and is an active member of her local Methodist chapel.

We believe, together with the Regional Coordinators, Educators and Advocates, we will make a great team to take this very relevant, timely and exciting ministry to the next stages of its growth.

[Click here to read the article published in the Baptist Times.](#)

The Spirit of Catholic Renewal: Signs, Sources, and Calling



The Centre for Catholic Studies is delighted to be presenting The Tablet 175th Anniversary Conference on 2-4 November 2015, hosted by Ushaw College. A premier international conference analysing the current Catholic moment.

This promises to be a truly remarkable event, with speakers including HE Cardinal Walter Kasper, Stanley Hauerwas, Elizabeth Johnson CSJ, Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator SJ, and many more.

[A draft conference programme can be viewed here.](#)

The conference is also being supported by the Australian Catholic University, Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain and Bloomsbury T&T Clark, and The Bible Society (a Body in Association with CTE).

[Click here for further details, downloads, and online booking](#)

Support the most vulnerable, says Churches in open letter to Prime Minister

Leaders from four major UK Churches have signed an open letter to the re-appointed Prime Minister, David Cameron, congratulating him on his election and encouraging him to hold 'truth, justice, peace and wellbeing' at the heart of the government.

With a focus on 'loving our neighbour', the letter reminds the Prime Minister that a wholesome society should be concerned for the weakest and most vulnerable, both locally and globally.

The letter, signed by leaders of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, highlights several of the key concerns that the Churches believe should be high on the agenda of the new government, calling for:

- a full review of the impact of the benefits sanctions system
- a postponement of further spending on Trident and a serious re-assessment of the need for nuclear weapons
- assertive international action to uphold human rights and deliver humanitarian assistance in Syria
- action to make freedom of religion a human rights priority in all aspects of foreign policy

"Remembering our neighbours is vital for a healthy society," said Rachel Lampard, leader of the Joint Public Issues Team, which works on behalf of the Churches. "Whilst policies protecting the most weak and vulnerable of society may

not always be the most popular, they are necessary to live out the common good, regardless of political perspective.”

The Revd Sally Foster-Fulton, Convener of the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland added, “The very significant growth in the number of people voting in Scotland – up 7.3% from the last General Election – and the sweeping victories for the Scottish National Party means that the UK Government must engage with the Scottish Government and people as an absolute priority. The Scottish people have voted in huge numbers for change and that must be respected.”

“The implementation of government policies is always difficult when resources are limited,” the Revd Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said. “Whilst we applaud some of the achievements of the previous government, such as the reduction in unemployment, a commitment to combat climate change and ensuring 0.7% of the national income is given in overseas aid, it is important for the new government to remember the key foundations for both domestic and global policies: truth, justice, peace and wellbeing.”

The Revd John Proctor, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, added, “Our churches are particularly concerned about the places and communities our society too often overlooks. We care that the needs and hurts of all our people should inform those who lead our country and write our laws.”

[Read the complete text of the open letter here.](#)

For a Europe of Freedom Freedom and liberties: a Christian approach

The following is a statement from the Joint Committee of the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences on the occasion of its annual meeting in Rome from 6 to 8 May 2015.



The CEC-CCEE Joint Committee annual meeting took place in Rome from 6 to 8 May at the invitation of **Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco**, President of the Italian Bishops’ Conference and CCEE Vice President.

Participants discussed the theme Freedom and liberties: A Christian approach. Reflections were offered from Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox perspectives.

A highlight of the meetings was an audience with **Pope Francis** on Thursday, 7 May. The Holy Father emphasised the need for churches in Europe to “find common answers to the questions which contemporary society puts to us Christians.”

Participants also met with British Ambassador to the Holy See, **Sir Nigel Baker**, who stressed that states and churches share a common interest in preserving Christian values for the sake of promoting democracy and peace in Europe.

Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, greeted participants on Friday morning. The Rome meetings were marked by prayers according to the traditions of the denominations present at the meeting. Participants concluded their gathering with the adoption of the following message on the theme of the meeting:

We Europeans enjoy immense freedom in our daily lives. We live in debt to earlier generations, who struggled to build a social order where the common good and freedom of persons could exist in harmony. On this 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, we remember sacrifices made in a violent battle against deadly ideologies. This struggle for freedom gave rise to the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, which highlights that freedom is always paired with duties and responsibilities. In the shadow of this dark period in history, we recommit ourselves to a vision of freedom for the flourishing of all. In a pluralistic Europe, we are convinced of a need for a Christian vision of human freedom. We consider that freedom is part of ourselves because God created us free. Our Christian freedom is God-given, rooted in Christ, and calls us into a life of service of one another. Christ challenges us to use our freedom to bring about the Kingdom of God in the here and now. There is no freedom unless this freedom is with and for others. Freedom rooted in truth often conflicts with those found elsewhere in our societies. Notions of freedom that support individualistic satisfaction and meaningless consumption at the expense of others are all too common. As we gather in Rome, we discussed a number of aspects of freedom oriented to responsibility to God and to neighbour:

- We call for a freedom that denounces oppression and violence against women in the name of any religion.
- We call for a freedom that rescues migrants in the Mediterranean, and works for an end to the causes of desperate migration and allows for all to live peacefully in their homelands.
- We call for a freedom that speaks words of solidarity in the face of anti-Roma prejudice.

- We call for a freedom committed to the end of worldwide modern day slavery and human trafficking according to the 2 December religious leaders' pledge on the abolition of slavery.
- We call for a freedom that names Creation as sacred gift, especially as faith communities strive to share their vision on environmental questions and accompany the Paris climate change talks in December (COP21).
- We call for a freedom that chooses hope over despair, and lives in solidarity with young people in their struggles to build careers and raise families.

Seventy years after the end of World War II, we pray for lasting peace in Europe and the whole world, which is the fruit of all justice.

In all that we do, may we return to scripture's cry, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another." (Galatians 5:13)

Full report: <http://www.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=1806>

Proclaim'15 Request for Prayer

HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols, one of the six Presidents of CTE, invites all Christians in England to share in prayer for Proclaim '15.



In 2015 a significant evangelisation initiative called Proclaim '15 is being launched to support, inspire and encourage new expressions of parish evangelisation. A project of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, it is designed to affirm the good work that is already being done by the Catholic community, and to provide resources and events to profile and develop new expressions of Catholic joy and missionary outreach.



This is the first event of its kind in a generation and will bring together an extraordinary group of speakers, workshop leaders and representatives from every diocese in England and Wales to celebrate joyfully and confidently their Catholic Faith, and to explore how better to share it.

850 evangelisation representatives will be in attendance, with a quota of day passes having been assigned, equally, to each diocese. The event is primarily offered for members of diocesan evangelisation teams and commissions, as well as to a wider group of co-workers directly working in support of existing diocesan strategies and plans. The the CTE co-ordinating group, The Churches Group for Evangelisation, 10 ecumenical guests will be present at Proclaim '15 to share in the event, pray, and reflect afterwards at the request of the planning group.

The following prayer is for Proclaim '15. Christians are invited to pray regularly and especially on July 11th, in all traditions, for the conference and for the Holy Spirit 'to go out to the whole world to proclaim'.

PROCLAIM '15 PRAYER

You are welcome to reproduce the initiative prayer in print and use it on electronic platforms.

Loving Father,
You so loved the world that you sent us your only Son,
that we might believe in him and have eternal life.
May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this day
and live the Good News with joy.
Through the power of your Holy Spirit,
help us to "go out to the whole world and proclaim"
our faith with confidence.
Give us the courage to witness to the Joy of the Gospel
by our words and actions.
Help our parish to become more welcoming and missionary,
so that you may be known and loved by all people.
We make this prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever,
Amen.

[Information, resources, and introduction video re Proclaim '15](#)

Engage 2015 and the Rugby World Cup latest



[Click to view engage2015.co.uk](http://engage2015.co.uk)

Here are some headlines from Engage 2015 and Fusion Youth and Community, working together with Hope, Scripture Union, Christian Vision for Men, Christian Publicity Organisation, John Paul II Foundation for Sport, chaplains, CTE etc. etc.

The next events in the Equip tour are:

- Leicester** – June 9th, Tuesday, 7:30pm
Robert Hall Baptist Church, 147 Narborough Road, Leicester, LE3 0HB
- Birmingham** – June 20th, Saturday, 9:30-12:30pm
Connect Church UK, Dolphin House, 54 Coventry Road, Birmingham, B10 0RX
- Milton Keynes** - 22nd June, Monday, 7:45-9:30pm
The Church of Christ the Cornerstone, 300 Saxon Gate, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 2ES
- Gloucester** - 28th June, Sunday morning, time TBC
St Mary's Hartpury, GL 19 3DE
- Leeds** – 8th July Wednesday, 7:15-9:30pm
South Parade Baptist Church, Headingley Building, Kirkstall Lane, Leeds, LS6 3LF
- Manchester** – 13th July, Monday, 7:15-9:30pm
Elmwood Church Eccles Old Road, Salford, M6 8AG
- Newcastle** – 14th July, Tuesday, 7:15-9:30pm
Platinum North Suite Newcastle Falcons, Brunton Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE13 8AF

Materials for the church GAME OF LIFE Resource Pack are going into production, ready for launch at the end of June. Among other components this resource is stuffed with a large range of materials and ideas for Children & Youth work in Schools, Churches and Communities.

The Games Changers material is stuffed full of creative concepts for a 4 day Holiday Club over the summer or during the October half term break.

With the final at 4.00 pm on October 31st why not put on a rugby themed Light Party as an alternative to Halloween (or alternative to the final for some!) – outlines to follow.

Then there's using rugby itself to build relationships through tag or touch rugby events. Again there's all you need to know about how to do this in the resource pack.

With schools entering the final lap of the summer term, it's a good time to be talking to them about your involvement with them around RWC 2015 in the first half of the autumn term. And here there is a cornucopia of options based around RWC 2015 most of which will be in a resource pack including: Collective worship for primary & secondary schools; Lunch club materials for primary & secondary schools; RE lessons for Key Stage 2 & 3; The Games – a whole morning programme for 8 – 11 yrs; A creative prayer space for secondary schools.

www.engage2015.co.uk

Pioneer Connexion

A project/network in evangelisation bringing team and building together ..

The relationship between The Methodist Church and the Pioneer Network began in earnest in 2010 and has been steadily growing ever since. Our video stories will help you to gain something of a picture of how it began and



is developing.

Whilst there is no formal "covenant" between our churches, recognition from the Methodist Church and Pioneer has come in a number of ways:

Pioneer's successful application to become a member of Churches Together in England was sponsored by members at the highest level of the Methodist Church. Pioneer was invited to attend the 2014 Methodist Conference as an Associate Member of Conference, fully recognising Pioneer's status as an Ecumenical Partner.

Part of the work of Pioneer Connexion is being funded by a Methodist "Mission & Ministry" Connexional grant, recognising the "connexional significance" of the work being undertaken. Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church, was the opening keynote speaker at the 2014 Annual Leaders Conference. Billy Kennedy, leader of the Pioneer Network, was invited to address the 2013 Methodist Conference.

Many Methodist Circuits and Districts are now involved directly in our partnership projects and a number of these have been co-funded by a combination of Pioneer and Methodist Circuit/District funds.

October 2014 saw our second Pioneer Connexion leaders summit meeting at Methodist Church House in London, jointly hosted by Billy Kennedy and Martyn Atkins with approximately 75 attendees.

[See the latest video 'Our Story 2015'](#)

Faith in Foodbanks: Joint Public Issues Report



Across the United Kingdom, in towns, cities and rural communities, there has emerged a rapidly growing network of foodbanks. Some are relatively small "community larders" while others operate on an almost industrial scale. Local churches and congregations have often played a key role in their establishment.

Why is it that we are one of the wealthiest nations in the world, yet an increasing number of our population are reliant on foodbanks to sustain their families? How is it that some of our key producers of food struggle to maintain a basic livelihood while some food retailers and distributors announce enormous profits? Is it right that something which began as a way of providing an "occasional stop-gap in an emergency" is becoming more of an ongoing necessity for some? Are foodbanks, and churches, becoming unofficially part of the welfare state?

Faith in Foodbanks?

"The situation is complex, and few of us will feel equipped to fully engage in the debates that emerge. But we have stories to share, and some of those stories are extremely powerful. When presented with honesty and integrity they have the power to challenge all of us, to change hearts and minds. They most definitely have the power to change the policies and attitudes of those who do have the direct power to make a difference."

Revd Ruth Gee, President of the Methodist Conference 2013-14

These resources from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and Church Action on Poverty have been put together to help churches explore issues raised by foodbanks, and to make connections between the work of these foodbanks and the life, worship and witness of local churches and fellowships.

[Link to the JPIT Report faith in Foodbanks](#)

General Secretary of the Free Churches Group



[The Free Churches Group](http://www.freechurches.org.uk), an ecumenical body representing over twenty nonconformist denominations from a wide variety of traditions, seeks to appoint a General Secretary to work from its offices in Tavistock Square, London.

The General Secretary is expected to provide both spiritual and strategic leadership in managing the staff and programmes of the Group.

It is a requirement of the post that the General Secretary be a practising Christian, but both lay and ordained are eligible for appointment.

Expressions of interest and requests for information packs should be submitted in writing to "The Moderator, Free Churches Group, 27 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HH" or by e mail to info@freechurches.org.uk by 15th May 2015 to be returned by 12th June 2015.

Interviews for those short listed will be held on 25th June 2015.

Reflection on the British Trust for Tantur Journey of Reconciliation, 20–30 April 2015

Jenny Bond writes:

Thirty-two people, lay and ordained, from twelve different denominations, joined this fully-funded ecumenical educational tour of the Holy Land. All participants had a strong ecumenical commitment and were in some kind of leadership in their Church.

When I was little, one of my favourite toys was a kaleidoscope. Each time I turned it, I saw a different multi-coloured and very beautiful pattern. I feel as if I have come back from the Holy Land with another kaleidoscope, still multi-coloured and beautiful but with some dark and ugly colours amid the beauty.

I wasn't sure what to expect from this, my second trip to the Holy Land. The first was a deep pilgrimage experience, over Palm Sunday and Easter, the echoes of which still inform my prayer and my reading of scripture. It had also been with only one other person. I was therefore anxious about being in a large group, so went early to Jerusalem. This gave me time for rest and pilgrimage.

I was extremely fortunate in these days to have tea with Dina Wardi, a psychotherapist who works with second generation holocaust survivors. I had little idea about her before my visit but our conversation began my journey into the heart and pain of the Holy Land, a journey navigated so skilfully by the British Trust for Tantur.



The Tantur programme was intense and challenging. We left the house at an hour when I am usually still fast asleep, came home late or just in time for supper and then listened to a lecture in the evening before

collapsing into bed. I did no evening socialising and learnt to sleep in the coach. There was little time to process the experience and yet I don't know what I would have omitted.

Our encounters with the different stakeholders, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, were the most moving part of our Journey of Reconciliation. We viewed the Wall from Tantur's roof and were silenced by its menace as we walked towards the Checkpoint in Bethlehem. We engaged with students at Bethlehem University, students who are able (with a certain amount of difficulty) to visit Europe but who are prevented from visiting Jerusalem, just six miles away. We stood on a hilltop with an Orthodox priest who was matter-of-fact about the water shortages in his village and the swimming pools in neighbouring Israeli settlements.

From the roof of Christian Peacemaker Teams we saw the settlements in the heart of Hebron, the only Palestinian city with Israeli settlers living side-by-side with Palestinians yet separated from them in a system reminiscent of apartheid. We saw blocked-up roads, houses and shops and could only imagine the fate of their evacuated owners. We walked along the ghost town which is Shuhada Street, accessible only to Israeli Jews and foreigners like ourselves. We visited the mosque which contains the tombs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Joseph and Leah and were told of the Israeli-American settler who in 1994 walked into the mosque and opened fire at kneeling worshippers, killing 29 and wounding at least 125 others. Since then the mosque has been divided, with part of it reserved as a synagogue with a bullet-proof shield in the tombs of Abraham and Sarah, (accessible through windows from both sides). We were told it took two years to obtain permission to erect the shield. Hebron was perhaps the place where the contrasting narratives of Israelis and Palestinians were most clearly set out, narratives woven through our fortnight in the Holy Land.

Moving on from Hebron, we visited the *Tent of Nations* farm, whose Palestinian owners registered their land through Ottoman, British, Jordanian and Israeli governance and who are now challenging, through the courts, the Israeli Government's 1991 declaration that it has become state land. In the meantime access roads are blocked to traffic and both water and electricity have been cut off. The owners have been remarkably imaginative, turning the farm into an education project and enlisting help from abroad, including from American Jews who installed solar panels for them. We visited the Roots project and sat in a field, listening to a Rabbi and a Palestinian activist speak together about the need for peace and reconciliation.

These encounters with the Palestinians were intensely moving, yet how could they be compared with Yad Veshem's testament of the Holocaust? We had no guide here but progressed at our own pace, in deep, horrified silence, through the halls which record evil, cruelty and endurance. For me there was an added dimension, gifted by my meeting with Dina Wardi, an awareness of how this trauma still blights the lives of Jews to the second and third generation. On my way home I read the book she gave me, *Auschwitz: Contemporary Jewish and Christian Encounters*, a remarkably open and stark account of her visit to Auschwitz in the company of Catholic sisters and priests. As I read the last words of the book on the descent to Manchester airport, I felt as if I had been on yet another journey, deeper into the heart and complexities of the Holy Land. Our Tantur trip was punctuated with worship, snatched moments in holy or historic places and sometimes as we travelled in the coach. On one occasion we joined our voices in the Taizé chant, 'O Lord, hear our prayer; when I call, answer me; come and listen to me.' That chant echoed throughout my fortnight for I had no answers and often no questions, just a deep awareness of the kaleidoscope of stunning scenery, amazing buildings, ancient and holy places, injustice, oppression, contrasting narratives and deeply held beliefs and strong desires.

Between these encounters we visited the holy sites, the places where Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again. Our guides taught us history and geography – I had never before realised the importance of geography! – bringing archaeological sites alive for us. We splashed through Hezekiah's water tunnel to the Pool of Siloam where Jesus sent the blind man to wash and visited the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed a crippled man. We sailed on the Sea Galilee, walked through fields of wheat and tares and celebrated Eucharist at Peter's Primacy, afterwards paddling along the shore and remembering Jesus' invitation to 'come and have breakfast'.

I was glad to be in all these places and yet grateful for my extra two days in Jerusalem as a lone pilgrim before joining the group. In that time, as well as pottering with huge enjoyment in the shops and stalls of the Old City of Jerusalem, I visited the Holy Sepulchre – or the Church of the Resurrection, as our Orthodox brothers and sisters call it. (I rather prefer that!) Jesus' incarnation was somehow far clearer as I walked streets which he walked and stood wordless in the place where he probably died.

Three times I popped into the Holy Sepulchre church in the hope of finding a fairly short queue to the tomb of Jesus, but in vain. On Monday afternoon, my last chance, I gathered up all my patience and

joined the queue, Donald Nicholl's *The Testing of Hearts*, in hand. It was a queue like no other: a crowd at the back channelled into a funnel shape by security barriers so that at its apex was a single person, waiting their turn for a few seconds in the tomb. For the most part we were silent, except for quiet snatches of conversation in different languages. I particularly noticed a small group of Indian women behind me, gently protective and supportive of a very elderly woman leaning heavily on a stick. After about an hour I arrived at the front of the queue but the man in charge stopped me by moving a barrier across. The pause fortuitously enabled me to watch a succession of priests from different Orthodox Churches incensing the tomb. Then, finally, it was my turn. Behind me the Indian woman with the stick walked with difficulty and thereby gave me at least two minutes alone in the tomb, in the place of resurrection, before she joined me and before the impatient tapping of the queue-controller impelled me to leave. In those two minutes there was nothing of the tourist in me, just a pilgrim kneeling in the place of resurrection. In a later sharing session at Tantur we were asked who had made the most impact on us. For me it was that elderly woman for whom the long hour of standing must have been hard but who radiated joy when finally she too arrived at the place of resurrection.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem were both places full of contradictions and conflicts, and in both we saw displayed forms of worship and devotion alien to me and to most of our group. Yet those two places hold for me the essential experience of the Holy Land. There God chose to become flesh as a small defenceless baby. There God was vulnerable to violence, torture and death in a land occupied by the Romans. The land is still occupied, people still oppressed and subject to violence. The Holocaust casts its dark shadow over Israelis and Palestinians alike, even if its effects are quite different. Yet in the wilderness there are flowers of peace and reconciliation.

My kaleidoscope is both beautiful and ugly. I stop twisting it, trying to find a clear pattern and can only hand my confusion over to God: O Lord, hear our prayer.

Jenny Bond, Churches Together in England
Training, Resourcing and Events. 7 May 2015

And finally ...

The General Secretary of CTE, the Revd Dr David Cornick, is on sabbatical study leave until the end of July.

Bishop Dr Joe Aldred is the acting General Secretary, an event which coincides with the publication of Joe's autobiography: 'From Top Mountain'.

The book tells the story of Joe's life from childhood in the rural district of Top Mountain located in the hills of St Catherine, Jamaica, to his current ecumenical role serving the churches in England.

www.hansibpublications.com

Available from Joe direct: joealdred@btinternet.com



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