



September 2012

Electronic, ecumenical news from Churches Together in England

Click headings for more...

First a Reflection...

[Beginning again, with new enthusiasm](#)

Celia Blackden, Inter-Faith Officer with CTE, reflects at the start of a new Church year

Now here's the news from around the world...

[WCC Central Committee prays for justice and peace](#), affirms ecumenical signs of hope

[Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic leaders sign appeal for reconciliation](#)
Patriarch Kirill and Archbishop Michalik

[German Public Figures call for Church Unity](#) cautiously welcomed by Churches

[WCC statement invokes new understanding of mission](#) 'from the margins'

[Community of Protestant Churches in Europe consultation with Vatican](#)
beginning next February

[Churches pray and care for creation](#)
from 1 September to 4 October

[Memorial to victims of road accidents](#)
Service in in Chania, Greece

["The ecumenical movement must expand its commitment to women"](#)
says Revd Romi Márcia Bencke, newly appointed general secretary of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil.

[Pact of Citizenship binds Christians and Muslims together](#) says Tarek Mitri, former Lebanese cabinet minister

[Youth learn "different ways of living Christian faith"](#) as WCC stewards

And here's the news from around the land...

[National Day of Prayer and Worship](#) 29 September,
Wembley Stadium

[Action plan to stop child abuse in the name of faith or belief](#) by national group of community leaders

[Pastors take to the beaches to support coastal night life](#)
this summer at Whitstable

[Government should act on tax dodging](#) says Christian Aid

[Changing our communities – for good](#) 4 October, London NW2

[Arthur Rank Centre celebrates 40th Anniversary](#)
at Yattenden, Berkshire

[Royal Foundation of St Katharine bids farewell to its Master](#) Preb David Paton

[Racial Justice Sunday: Being an Inclusive Church](#)

[Aylesbury Churches organise family event at Stoke Mandeville](#) for Paralympics opening

[Disability Week 2012](#)
September 2 to 9

[Schools & Churches Together Around the A30](#) celebrate what they do for social justice

[Paul Kerensa at Greenbelt](#)
Operation Noah's comedian in residence

[Churches work together to tackle debt](#) Christians Against Poverty

[St Ethelburga's launches A World of Prayer](#) anthology edited by Rosalind Bradley

[Falmouth and Penryn Churches Together in the Community](#)
presence evangelism during regatta

[Agricultural Christian Fellowship in the last 50 years](#) 3 November, Stoneleigh Park

[Vision for the Church of the Future](#) Turvey Abbey, Sept 29

[Loving God; Loving Neighbour](#)
Sunday 7 October, Birmingham

[Organ Bursary Awards](#) Churches Together in Buxton

[Mission – Churches Together or Apart?](#) Reading, October 24

[50th Anniversary of Vatican II](#)
SFES lecture October 11, Heythrop
[Back to top](#)

For the current list of forthcoming events on the website, click [here](#).

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For your address to be removed from the alert list, click [here](#).

For news of the Churches Co-ordinating Group for Evangelisation of CTE, click [here](#).

Beginning again, with new enthusiasm

The holidays are over and it is time to go back to work. But going back after a break is also a time to begin again. Holidays may not always be what we hoped for, but in general terms they are a time of refreshment and recreation physically, and in many respects spiritually too. We have had a chance to listen to God more and deepen our faith perhaps through the beauty of nature, through reading and reflecting on 'restorative' and perhaps challenging Christian texts, through watching the commitment, focus and solidarity among the Olympic athletes, which is even more visible and admirable among the Paralympic athletes. At least that has been my experience.

So we start back with new energy, new commitment, new resolutions. It is time to begin again in our many types of relationship – at home, at work, in the extended family, in our neighbourhood. We are able to forget the small slights or inconveniences of preceding times, to be more merciful and return with a will to better communication, more dialogue, greater understanding of other people's experiences and views, greater patience and humility in listening to others and taking on board disparate views on the journey to agreement and positive outcomes. In a word, we want to love our neighbours more.

But beginning again can also happen every day, every moment, giving our lives new freshness and openness. It can also be focused on our ultimate goal. This short meditation written by Chiara Lubich illustrates what I mean:

To begin again. This is the thought which should guide my whole day. It is not when everything is fine that things are going well. It is when – sad or joyful, in good health or not – we offer everything to the Lord, trying to be another him.

Paul writes: I do not reckon myself as having taken hold of it; I can only say that forgetting all that lies behind me, and straining forward to what lies in front, I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.' (Ph 3:13-14)

A wonderful sentence. We must grasp the depth of each word. There are people who do forget the past, but they do not push on ahead; they don't even think about the finish line. Others forget the past and keep beginning again. But to forget and then push on with enthusiasm to the finish line is typical of a saintly person like Paul.

But what can stop us from trying to do the same?

From Chiara Lubich 'Here and Now: Meditations on Living in the Present' [New City online store](#)

[Back to top](#)

WCC Central Committee prays for justice and peace, affirms ecumenical signs of hope

The 60th Meeting of the World Council of Churches Central Committee met earlier this month at the Orthodox Academy, Kolympari, Crete. These are some of the highlights:

Christians and Muslims Together in the Middle East

Professor Tarek Mitri from Lebanon urged Christians in Egypt and Syria and other lands to move on from preoccupation with their minority status in a Muslim world. Too often they have opted out of politics and are easily seen as supporters of the status quo out of concern for their own safety. Too often Christians have been silent, even in the face of cruelty and injustice. What they need to do is show their Muslim neighbours, most of whom are not extremists, that they too share a concern for the common good, for the welfare of their countries in moves towards democracy and human dignity. Christians and Muslims are co-citizens, supporting peaceful efforts for a more democratic and inclusive political process.

The Church: Towards a Common Vision

Readers will know that the World Council of Churches held its first Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948. Soon after that it adopted a statement telling us what the World Council of Churches was and what it was not. It was not a 'Super Church' superimposed beyond and above the 145 or so member churches. Today there are 349 member churches from 110 countries and with a combined membership of about 560 million people. What is our Common Vision of the Church, the one Church we all claim, in different ways, to belong to? Each generation has to answer this question and in earlier years each Assembly of the World Council did so too. The first was at New Delhi which produced the justly famous and influential model of 'All in Each Place'. The late Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of the newly United Church of South India was its main author.

In the last few years, our own veteran ecumenist, Dame Dr Mary Tanner has been active in preparing a new statement. It was presented in draft form to the Central Committee and will be submitted for approval by the next WCC Assembly that is to meet at Busan, Korea in the autumn of 2013. In helping to introduce it, Dr Tanner said: 'We have come to understand something of an holistic vision of unity and need to go with an holistic approach where the different parts challenge and illuminate one another and contribute to a big, Biblical vision of unity'. The full text will be available shortly and can be downloaded from the WCC web site.

Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in a Changing Landscape

As with the Church, so we have constantly to review our understanding of mission. Here again we can be proud of the key role CTE plays as we rightly embrace Professor Kirsteen Kim of Leeds Trinity University, herself an acknowledged expert on world mission and the new Editor of the International Review of Mission, for her own major part in preparing this document. It is already available on the WCC web site.

In short summary it urges a major shift for the idea of mission that starts at strong centres, say Rome or London, where churches have long since been established and have a relatively secure place in their societies, to the periphery where Christians are very conscious of being on the margins. Olav Fykse Tveit, in the course of his ministry as the WCC General Secretary has visited such places and can vouch for the fact, as he told Central Committee, that there are remarkably strong Christian testimonies coming from churches which are less privileged and vulnerable. The document notes the strong lead given in such places by Pentecostal and charismatic churches. As we are often reminded in many parts of the world churches are growing rapidly and most of the world's Christians now live in the so called global south. The last WCC document on Mission was in 1982 so it was time for a re-think. A lot has happened in 'our changing landscape' since then.

And a Lot More!

Central Committee has the task of directing the WCC in between Assemblies and so hears reports from the General Secretary [from Norway] and the Moderator who currently hails from Brazil. It keeps an eye on finances which have been a major worry in recent years but constantly looks outwards to the needs of all its member churches. So there were strong expressions of solidarity for Christians in Pakistan and Myanmar[Burma] as well as the Middle East. We had shown our concern for Olaf and his own people in Norway after the tragedy and trauma they have lived through again in the recent court case of a demonic gun-man. We can look forward to celebrations in Brazil when the Olympic flame moves on from London for 2016. But I ponder the fact and the challenge that there are now 204 nations represented in the Olympic Games but only 110 in the World Council of Churches. There are places where our ministry of reconciliation as divided churches has only just begun.

Revd Dr Donald W Norwood is a Voluntary Reporter on WCC Events for CTE

[Back to top](#)

Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic leaders sign appeal for reconciliation

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church and the president of the Polish Catholic bishops' conference signed a joint message Aug. 17 urging Poles and Russians to set aside centuries of anger and prejudice and work together to maintain their countries' Christian identities.

The signing of the reconciliation "Message to the Nations of Poland and Russia" was the key moment of the first-ever visit of a Russian Orthodox patriarch to modern Poland. "We enter a path of honest dialogue in the hope that it will heal the wounds of the past, facilitate our overcoming mutual prejudice and misunderstanding and strengthen us in our pursuit of reconciliation," said the message signed by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Archbishop Jozef Michalik of Przemyśl, president of the Polish bishops' conference. The signing ceremony was broadcast live on Polish television.

Polish Catholic and Russian Orthodox officials had been preparing the statement for more than two years in an effort to overcome historical grudges between the two nations and long-standing tensions between the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church. A long history of battles over territory became more complicated during World War II when Poland was invaded by both Germany and Russia. After the war, Poland came under the influence of the Soviet Union. Under communism, the Catholic and Orthodox churches were subject to government pressure, with the minority Orthodox in Poland and minority Catholics in Russia suffering particularly harsh treatment.

The reconciliation message said, "Sin, which is the principal source of all divisions, human frailty, individual and collective egoism as well as political pressure, led to mutual alienation, overt hostility and even struggle between our nations. "Similar circumstances had earlier led to the dissolution of the original Christian unity. Division and schism, alien to Christ's will, were a major scandal; therefore we redouble efforts to bring our churches and nations closer to each other and to become more credible witnesses to the Gospel in the contemporary world," it said.

With the religious and political freedom that came with the fall of communism in the early 1990s, Patriarch Kirill and Archbishop Michalik said, the churches set out on a path of renewal, but still must face the effects of decades of official atheism and the growing secularism of modern societies.

Christianity "exerted a decisive impact on the identity, spirituality and culture of our peoples and of the entire Europe," the two leaders said, and maintaining the Christian faith is essential for the countries' future. The churches and their faithful must make "every effort so that the social life and culture of our nations not be stripped of principal moral values, the cornerstone of a viable peaceful future," the message said.

The patriarch and the archbishop expressed particular concern about "the promotion of abortion, euthanasia and same-sex relations," as well as attempts to remove religious symbols from public places. "In the name of the future of our nations we call for the respect and protection of the life of each and every human being from the moment of conception until natural death. We believe not only terrorism and armed conflict, but also abortion and euthanasia to be grave sins against life and a disgrace to contemporary civilization," the church leaders' message said.

While Patriarch Kirill and Archbishop Michalik said they recognized the autonomy of church and state, they encouraged cooperation to protect the family, promote education and assist the poor. The family, based on a permanent bond between a man and woman, "is a sound foundation of all societies. As an institution founded by God, the family warrants respect and protection as it is the cradle of life, a wholesome place of development, a guarantee of social stability, and a sign of hope for society," they said. [Back to top](#)

German Public Figures call for Church Unity

Public figures from the fields of politics, sport, culture and entertainment in Germany presented a statement in Berlin on September 5 making an urgent call for unity between the Catholic and Protestant churches. "Today, the church schism is neither wanted nor justified politically," the statement entitled "Ecumenism Now -- one God, one faith, one Church" reads. "Will theological factors, institutional habits and ecclesiastic and cultural traditions sustain the schism between the churches? We don't think so."

The statement calling for an end to the 500-year-old schism between the churches was signed by politicians including the head of the German parliament Norbert Lammert, Defence Minister Thomas de Maiziere, and head of the opposition Social Democrat Party Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Also among the 23 Catholic and Protestant signatories were TV host Guenther Jauch, head of the German Olympic Sports Federation Thomas Bach and author Arnold Stadler, as well as artists and academics. The statement said that both Vatican II, which opened 50 years ago next month and the Reformation, which is approaching its 500th anniversary in 2017, had a major impact that continues to be felt across different denominations.

The initiative calls for lay members of the churches to play an active role in taking these anniversaries as an opportunity for change. "We cannot and should not allow the problem of church unity to rest until the church leaders have reached an understanding of the Holy Communion and administration," the statement said. "And we cannot be satisfied with simply having the churches recognize each other." The issue of interdenominational Holy Communion is a hot topic in Germany, which is home to around 50 million Christians, split almost equally between Catholics and Protestants, who frequently intermarry. Members of both denominations have repeatedly called the rules that govern Catholic communion to be relaxed so that Catholics and Protestants could take Holy Communion together. In a statement responding to the "Ecumenism Now" statement, Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, chairman of the Catholic German Bishops Conference (DBK), referred to the issue as "a sore spot that keeps cropping up, and one that highlights the lack of common understanding in faith."

Both the DBK and the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) cautiously welcomed the initiative -- with some reservations. "The idea for the "Ecumenism Now" initiative has had a very positive reception," Thies Gundlach, vice president of the EKD said in a statement. "It is an effort to see the future of ecumenism not only as the responsibility of church leaders, but also to remember that strengthening unity is the responsibility of all Christians. We are grateful to see that Evangelic and Catholic Christians are more unified than they are disconnected." But it is important, he said, to remember each denomination has its own basic theological understandings. "At the start of the 16th century, reformers developed a different view of the church that is even today at odds with some central beliefs of their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters," Gundlach concluded. "But the bottom line is, it is important to move with as much speed as possible on ecumenical matters, but to also have as much patience as possible." [Back to top](#)

WCC statement invokes new understanding of mission

The first ecumenical affirmation of mission since 1982, invoking a new understanding of mission and evangelism amidst a changing world and ecclesial landscape, has been presented to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The statement, titled "Together towards life: Mission and Evangelism in changing landscapes", was prepared by the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). It was presented to the WCC Central Committee, a governing body representing the 349 member churches, on Thursday, 30 August. The statement draws on insights

from Protestant, Evangelical, Orthodox and Roman Catholic mission theologies, and will be presented at the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea in 2013.

"The significance of the statement lies in its concept of 'mission from the margins', which emphasizes the universality of working for all Gods' people, as well as the creation, despite divisions and divides," said Dr Agnes Abuom, WCC Executive Committee member from Kenya. "The gift of the mission statement is that without attacking the old paradigm of mission values, it invokes new understandings which respond well to our different contexts, including that of migrant churches," she added.

Reflecting on the statement, the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said, "After several periods of mission and understandings of mission accompanying the ecumenical movement since the 19th century, this perspective is now where we are, acknowledging and appreciating the reality of the church and the gospel. We are a fellowship of churches in mission in all these contexts, and the impulses and the inspiration for our work come from all the many contexts in which we are doing mission."

Speaking on the different socio-political contexts in which churches work, Tveit said mission is "no longer an impulse coming from (a few) centres in the north. It is really a multi-centred reality. And my experience is that remarkably strong testimonies, with great integrity in words and action, are often given when the church represents a less privileged or even vulnerable position."

Commenting on the statement, Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and Durres, who is the Orthodox primate of Albania and a WCC president, pointed out the significance of mission in the lives of the churches. "Mission of the church, and every living member of it, means the obligation and the necessity to share the gifts which we have each received from God. This means to proclaim the truth, love and power revealed by Christ, the crucified and the resurrected one," he said. "To share with all everywhere, by the power of the Holy Spirit, with our presence, silence, speech, our acts of love, the fulness of life, the longing for justice and peace all over the world," he added.

Along with the statement, the CWME will also produce practical mission modules and training curricula. Other resources will include publications and multimedia, to be shared at the upcoming WCC assembly. [Back to top](#)

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe consultation with Vatican

Seven theologians will represent the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe in the first consultation with the Roman Catholic Church. The delegation will be led by Bishop Friedrich Weber (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brunswick), Catholica Representative of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany and Honorary Professor at the University of Brunswick.

The delegation consists further of Dr. John Bradbury, Lecturer in Systematic Theology and Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge; Dr. Stephanie Dietrich, Junior Professor of Systematic Theology at the Oslo High School for the Diaconate and Dr. Fulvio Ferrario, Profssor of Systematic Theology at the Waldensian Faculty in Rome; Dr Friedrike Nüssel, Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Heidelberg; Dr Miriam Rose, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Jena and Dr Stefan Tobler, Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Hermannstadt.

For the Roman Catholic Church the delegation will be led by the President of the Papal Council for the Advancement of Christian Unity, Cardinal Kurt Koch. The first round of conversations takes place from 7th to 10th February 2013 in Vienna. Possible themes could be the unity in diversity of the Church of Jesus Christ and the common challenges for the Christian churches in today's world.

For the CPCE, which can already look back on successful consultations with the Orthodox and Anglican churches as well as the European Baptist Federation, the General Secretary, Bishop Michael Bünker, explained: "The dialogue about the understanding of the church and the road to unity has the highest priority in ecumenism today. This makes me pleased about this series of conversations and hopeful for its outcome. The fundamental ecclesiological document of CPCE, The Church of Jesus Christ (1994), can supply a good starting point." [Back to top](#)

Churches pray and care for creation

Every year, from 1 September to 4 October, parishes and congregations in various parts of the world consecrate some time to reflect, celebrate and organize activities in relation to creation.

As of 2008, the WCC has invited churches to observe Time for Creation through prayers and actions. Over the years, especially through contributions from churches in the Pacific, Africa and Latin America, materials have been offered through the WCC website. This year, having been declared as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, the WCC is encouraging churches to focus on this topic. "In a world where energy is a critical issue, it is worth reflecting on it from a theological perspective", says Dr Guillermo Kerber, WCC programme executive on Care for Creation and Climate Justice. "Energy can be related to the Holy Spirit, to God's grace in us, to the action of the triune

God in creation. As St Gregory Palamas, a monk from Mount Athos from the 14th century, stated, 'God is in the universe and the universe is within God.... Thus all things participate in God's sustaining energy.' In practical ways, green churches and eco-congregations are especially looking at energy use."

After European churches were asked to provide resources this year, various materials from the European Christian Environmental Network, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Church of Scotland and others are available at WCC's Time for Creation website. As has been the case since 1989, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople has delivered a message for September 1 on the protection on the environment. In 1989, the late Patriarch Dimitrios I wrote, in part, "We must attempt to return to a proper relationship with the Creator and the creation. This may mean that just as a shepherd will, in times of greatest hazard, lay down his life for his flock, so human beings may need to forego a part of their wants and needs in order that the survival of the natural world can be assured. This is a new situation - a new challenge. It calls for humanity to bear some of the pain of creation as well as to enjoy and celebrate it. It calls first and foremost for repentance - but of an order not previously understood by many."

This year, Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople especially prays "that our gracious Lord, who granted this earthly paradise to all people dwelling on our planet, will speak to the hearts of everyone so that we may respect the ecological balance that He offered in His wisdom and goodness, so that both we and future generations will enjoy His gifts with thanksgiving and glorification." [Back to top](#)

Memorial to victims of road accidents

The World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit joined the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in honouring the victims of road accidents. "Every single human being is precious in the eyes of God as they are created in the very image of God," said Tveit.

He addressed a memorial service on Sunday, 26 August at the Christos Polentas park in Chania, Greece, the site of a memorial sculpture in remembrance of victims of road accidents dedicated as part of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020). The service was attended by Central Committee members, local church leaders, UNECE staff members and representatives of the state authorities.

In his speech, Tveit gave assurance of the WCC's support in spreading awareness about road safety. "We invite all our member churches and all people of good will to consider seriously life as a gift of God, a precious gift that has to be protected, and not to be spoiled because of lack of respect, lack of attention or lack of responsibility toward each human being," he said. Tveit shared the UN's concern for road safety especially in relation to the theme of the WCC's upcoming 10th Assembly "God of Life, lead us to justice and peace". The assembly will be held in 2013 in Busan, Korea. He said the assembly theme emphasizes the value and sacredness of human life. Tveit also mentioned the WCC's several collaborations with international organizations over humanitarian concerns, including the World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, Human Rights Council and United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

Apostolos Voulgarakis, vice regional governor of Chania, stressed the need for creating awareness about security in road activities. "The importance of road safety for the prevention of human life is extremely important. We must try to make people more aware and sensitive to these matters, so that our society can move ahead towards a safer future," he said. At the service, Tveit unveiled a plaque inscribed with his prayer "May the God of life enable us to justly and peacefully work for the safety of all who travel the many roads of our lands". He also inaugurated a chapel dedicated to St. Christopher, known as protector of travellers. [Back to top](#)

"The ecumenical movement must expand its commitment to women"

As the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC) celebrates its 30th anniversary, the event has been marked by the appointment of Rev. Romi Márcia Bencke, its first woman general secretary, elected in August. Bencke, a pastor of the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil, has been deeply engaged with the ecumenical movement. Coming from the small town of Horizontina in Brazil, she studied theology at the Lutheran School of Theology in São Leopoldo. She worked for congregations of migrants in Alta Floresta do Oeste and the Ecumenical Centre for Training and Consultancy for their "Faith and Citizenship" programme. She is currently pursuing her masters' studies in science of religions at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora in Brazil. In the following interview, Bencke spoke about being the first woman to serve as general secretary of CONIC and its implications for Brazil's religious scene.

What does it mean for you to be the first woman general secretary of the CONIC?

'A key demand of us as women active in the ecumenical movement has been that women should also start to occupy positions of leadership in the ecumenical bodies and churches. Therefore, the fact that I take this position may signal a small but significant change of direction in the spaces of churches and ecumenical bodies in Brazil. Having been selected for this position in a time when the president of CONIC is a Roman Catholic bishop also demonstrates an

interesting opening. I have received much support from many people from the Roman Catholic church and friends showing their joy in the fact that I take up this task. Another significant aspect of consideration is that the IBGE survey is also showing that most women in Brazil confess themselves as religious. So the fact that a woman is the general secretary of CONIC also emphasizes that the ecumenical movement must expand its commitment to women and their struggles. I also believe that we have a great responsibility to reflect on the reality of women in the Brazilian context, in which many women are living in situations of violence and aggression. Therefore, to be able to reflect and act on the role of Christian women and other religions in the defense of all women is a big challenge. I feel strongly responsible to lift the flags of women.'

[Back to top](#)

Pact of Citizenship binds Christians and Muslims together says Tarek Mitri

"Quite often, it is not the relationship between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority that was, and is, at stake but justice, political participation, human rights and national dignity," said Dr Tarek Mitri. He added that "community-specific anxiety could not overshadow the common worries of Christians and Muslims" in the Middle East.

Mitri, senior fellow at the American University of Beirut, is a former Lebanese cabinet minister and a former staff member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) responsible for the inter-religious dialogue and cooperation programme. He was addressing a public hearing on "Christians and changes in the Arab world" on 31 August during the WCC Central Committee meeting which is currently underway in Kolympari, Greece.

"For many decades, church leaders have tried to accompany their faithful along an arduous road. They privileged what the theologian Jean Corbon called the risk of existing over the fear of disappearing. They refrained from overplaying minority militancy and identity politics," said Mitri. Reflecting on the situation of Christians, he called the political situations in Arab countries a complex one. There, he said, churches have and should play a role in bringing Christians and Muslims together for the common good and in the common struggle for peace.

"The church institutions were defined not only in terms of their functions of preservation but by the gospel-rooted imperative of witness and service to the neighbour. Churches never perceived Christians and Muslims as two monolithic blocks facing each other, nor did they oppose rights of the minority to the aspirations of the majority," Mitri pointed out. Rather than focusing on the majority-minority dynamics, he stressed the significance of a reinvented "pact of citizenship" which "binds Christians and Muslims together" through political participation.

He went on to say that "the pact of citizenship that was a determining factor in various independence movements is to be re-claimed and enacted in the present longing of Arab peoples for freedom, dignity and democracy." Mitri also put responsibility in regard to a safe future for Christians on their Muslim co-citizens, along with the national governments and state institutions. "The future of Christians in the Arab world does not only depend on the contributions they are capable of, but also on the attention that their fellow Muslim co-citizens may give to them," he said. Mitri also asked Christians and Muslims to be "motivated by the sense of common good and recognition of the wealth of religious and cultural plurality that could spare the Arab world the sad face of uniformity."

[Back to top](#)

Youth learn "different ways of living Christian faith"

It might seem like a trivial task to help with the logistical arrangements of a major meeting. However, for the "stewards" of the World Council of Churches (WCC), this task means more than merely helping out. "Yes, we do get to help with documentation and logistical arrangements of the meeting. However, this is accompanied by learning about different ways of living the Christian faith and experiencing a multi-cultural environment," said David Rubén Romero-Mazzini, working with the Evangelical Youth Network in Peru. At the age of 26, Romero-Mazzini worked as a youth steward at the 60th Central Committee meeting of the WCC at the Orthodox Academy of Crete in Greece. The stewards' programme is designed for young adults aged between 18 to 30, who get the opportunity to participate in ecumenical events under the auspices of the WCC. At the Central Committee meeting, where one of stewards' tasks is to contribute to the "running of the show", they also engage in dialogue and get introduced to the council's work.

"I honestly knew little about the WCC before I came here. My involvement in the youth activities is restricted to my small church," said Judit Agota Kantor, 23. She comes from the Baptist Union of Hungary, and participating in the WCC Central Committee meeting is her first "international ecumenical exposure". Kantor came to Crete with no "real expectations" other than to learn about the work of the churches. This subject interests her greatly because she is also a student of international relations. Churches' perspectives on international issues is what makes the meeting a positive learning experience for her.

Given the tradition of stewards' programmes in the past, this initiative is considered a platform of ecumenical formation for young people. It is also said to be an opportunity where "ecumenical leaders are in the making". However, Nam Ki-Pyung, a 28-year-old student of theology from the Korean Methodist Church, has a different understanding about the role of youth in the churches. "Young people are always considered the 'future of the ecumenical movement'. However, I find something cliché about it. I think we are not the future, but the present of

the ecumenical movement,” said Ki-Pyung. For him young people in the churches have a great potential now. If they are given a chance, says Ki-Pyung, they can contribute fresh perspectives on issues of ecumenical concern.

At the Central Committee meeting in Crete, more than 20 stewards worked in support of and coordinated by WCC staff. They contributed to the prayer life, documentation, logistics, as well as helping attendees of the meeting in particular ways. Yet, for Jean Nenda-Nyeche, the meeting means “widening of horizons”. “The reason why I applied for the stewards’ programme was to extend my perspectives on ecumenism. While we get to help in running the meeting, it is also an opportunity for us to listen to the ecumenical and church leaders,” noted Nenda-Nyeche, 25, a steward from St. Paul Anglican Church of Athens, Greece. [Back to top](#)

National Day of Prayer and Worship

Organisers say this event could be the single biggest mobilisation of Christians for prayer for a generation and will engage one of the widest known collaborations of denominations, Prayer Networks, local Christian groups and media organisations in years. You are invited to join Guvna B, All Souls Orchestra, Audacious!, Hillsong, Noel Robinson, Lara Martin, Graham Kendrick, Noel Richards, Godfrey Birtil, LZ7, Sound of Wales and tens of thousands of other believers as we worship together and celebrate all that God has been doing in 2012.

To book tickets, go to www.ndopwembley.com

[Back to top](#)

Action plan to stop child abuse in the name of faith or belief

Child abuse is never acceptable wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes. Abuse linked to belief, including belief in witchcraft or possession, is a horrific crime which is condemned by people of all cultures, communities and faiths.

This action plan, which has been developed through partnership of the National Working Group between central government and local statutory partners, faith leaders, voluntary sector organisations and the Metropolitan Police, is intended to help raise awareness of child abuse linked to faith or belief and to encourage practical steps to be taken to prevent it. Our top priority is the protection of children and young people. This plan makes absolutely clear the importance of identifying children who are suffering or are likely to suffer harm and of taking action to keep those children safe.

Scope

This is not about challenging people’s beliefs, but where beliefs lead to abuse that must not be tolerated. This plan aims to address certain kinds of child abuse linked to faith or belief. This includes belief in witchcraft, spirit possession, demons or the devil, the evil eye or djinns, dakini, kindoki, ritual or muti murders and use of fear of the supernatural to make children comply with being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation. The beliefs which are the focus of this action plan are not confined to one faith, nationality or ethnic community.

This plan does not include in scope child abuse within culture or faith contexts in general, for example female genital mutilation or forced marriage. Nor does this plan consider child abuse in faith settings which are incidental to the abuse, for example, sexual abuse by paedophiles in a religious community.

Background

Following a Roundtable meeting chaired by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Tim Loughton, in February 2011, a National Working Group was set up, chaired by the Department for Education, to develop a national action plan for England. The plan encourages activity nationally and locally to raise awareness and understanding of abuse linked to faith or belief, to develop the skills of practitioners and to support communities to prevent such abuse.

The plan is organised into four themes: engaging communities; empowering practitioners; supporting victims and witnesses; and communicating key messages. The full action plan identifies key problems and solutions under each of the 16 actions and includes a number of short case studies profiling some of the work already being undertaken to tackle abuse linked to faith or belief.

Child abuse is never acceptable wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes. Abuse linked to belief, including belief in witchcraft or possession, is a horrific crime which is condemned by people of all cultures, communities and faiths. Child abuse is condemned by people of all cultures, communities and faiths, and is never acceptable under any circumstances. The National Working Group applauds the work being done in communities to tackle this form of abuse and to stand up to the perpetrators. Everyone working or in contact with children has a responsibility to recognise and know how to act on evidence, concerns and signs that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Standard child safeguarding procedures apply in all cases where abuse or neglect is suspected, including those that may be related to particular belief systems. The number of cases of child abuse linked to faith or belief in spirits, possession and witchcraft is believed to be small, but where it occurs it causes much distress and suffering to the child. It is likely that a proportion of this type of abuse remains unreported. Abuse linked to faith or

belief may involve a wider context, where the child is treated as a scapegoat in circumstances of family stress, deprivation, domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health problems.

Members of the National Working Group

Jeanette Pugh (*until 24.7.2012*) Alan Reiss (*from 24.7.2012*) (Chair, Department for Education), Dr Joe Aldred (Churches Together in England), Debbie Ariyo, Justin Bahunga and Teamirat Seyoum (Africans Unite Against Child Abuse - AFRUCA), Thomas Bikebi and Romain Matondo (Congolesse Family Centre), Simon Bass and Bob Pull (Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service – CCPAS), Mike Box (Home Office), Dr Ash Chand and Naureen Khan (NSPCC), Christine Christie (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse - CAADA), Mor Dioum and Stephanie Yorath (Victoria Climbié Foundation), Andy Elvin (Children and Families Across Borders - CFAB), DCI Sue Inwood and DS Terry Sharpe (Metropolitan Police Service), Pastor Jean Bosco Kanyemesha (Peace International), Reverend Nims Obunge (The Peace Alliance), Michael Mackay (Association of Directors of Children's Services - ADCS), Elaine Ryan (London Safeguarding Children Board) and Rachael Takens-Milne (Trust for London). [Back to top](#)

Pastors take to the beaches to support coastal night life

Volunteer 'Street Pastors' took to Whitstable's beaches on Friday nights throughout the summer in what is believed to be the nation's first ever scheme of its kind to operate on the beach.

The Street Pastors were not there to evangelise or convert people to Christianity, but to offer support to Whitstable's night time beach goers. Throughout the summer, they wandered the beaches, offering assistance to anyone who needs it. That may involve giving away water or flip flops, helping people to get a taxi home, or simply providing a listening ear. All of Whitstable's 14 churches joined forces to put the pastors on the beaches after the idea was hatched by the local police and Tankerton Evangelical Church. They identified a problem with young people drinking on the beaches at night and making themselves vulnerable.

Lee Russell, Co-ordinator, says, "We are really grateful for the support of all the churches working together, in providing pastors, members of the prayer team, and financial backing." "It's a fantastic thing having this common vision," added the Revd Helen Letley, Minister of St John's Methodist Church. "This is about discipleship in action and demonstrating who we are as Christian people, so offering God's love in terms of active assistance."

Street Pastor schemes, set up and supported by the [Ascension Trust](#), are widespread, with over 10,000 trained volunteers in around 250 teams throughout the UK. But this is believed to be the first project to put pastors on Britain's beaches. Pastors receive a full 12 days of training, which includes sea safety. "My dream is that this is a good news story in our town," said the Revd Steve Coneys, Team Rector at Whitstable. "This is something which round the country seems to be received as unambiguously good news. Ordinary people get this." [Back to top](#)

Government should act on tax dodging says Christian Aid

This autumn, Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty are joining forces to take the campaign for Tax Justice on the road, with a seven-week Tax Justice Bus Tour.

A bright red London bus is touring the length and breadth of Britain and Ireland, to promote the simple message: It's time for Tax Justice for the poorest communities at home and globally. In an age of austerity and spending cuts, tax avoidance is morally unacceptable: tax dodging costs lives. It effectively amounts to robbing the poor – in the UK and in poor countries – of the money that should be spent on education, health and welfare. The Bus Tour is a great opportunity to build support for Tax Justice via the local and regional media, with local and national politicians, church leaders, campaigners and supporters in the churches and other sympathetic audiences (eg trade unions). [Back to top](#)

Changing our communities – for good

Are you passionate about making a difference in your community? Serve.Transform is a chance to meet people with the same vision, share ideas and experiences and get practical tools to help you and your church really have an impact. Whether you're just starting out or already experienced, you'll come away encouraged and empowered to better serve your neighbours.

4 October – Jesus House, Brent, London NW2 1LT, 10am–4pm

12 November – The Lighthouse Group, Hope Park, Bradford, 10am–4pm

Guest speakers:

John Sutherland, Borough Commander of Camden (London) including worship led by Andy Flannagan

Neil Wain, Former Assistant Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police (Bradford)

Pastor Tani Omideyi of Liverpool Lighthouse (Bradford)

Seminars include:

- A new era in community fundraising *with Emma Ives, Director of BigSmallCharity*
- Community Franchising Workshop *with Matt Bird (Chair of The Cinnamon Network) & Mark Kitson (formerly of Costa Coffee)*
- Envisioning New Volunteers *with Roy Crowne, Executive Director of HOPE Together*
- Working for local authorities *with Dave Wakelin*
- Anointed for the marketplace *with Charles McLachlan*
- Unity movements around the country *with Roger Sutton of Gather Network*
- The 10 keys for Impact *with Tearfund's UK Impact team*
- Theology of Integral Mission *by David Westlake, Integral Mission Director at Tearfund and Director of Serve*

[Back to top](#)

Arthur Rank Centre celebrates 40th Anniversary

The Arthur Rank Centre was founded in 1972 at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, home of the Royal Agricultural Society of England. It is the national focus of the Churches' relation to rural communities, including the agricultural industry. It has had a key role at times of crisis in the countryside such as the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease and continues to support farmers through the Rural Stress Helpline and Farm Crisis Network. Many ministers from different Churches have been trained and orientated to rural ministry through its courses which are in great demand.

The 40th Anniversary was celebrated at the Tithe Barn, Yattendon, Berkshire, on September 7th by invitation of Lord Iiliffe. Guests were welcomed by Mr John Stanley, Chairman of the ARC Board of trustees and the Service of Thanksgiving was introduced by the Director, Revd Dr Gordon Gatward. Pam Rhodes of Songs of Praise interviewed Revd John Clarke, ARC Director from 1988 to 1999, Revd Canon Barbara Clutton, a rural priest and Rural Affairs Advisor for the Diocese of Coventry, and Revd Graham Jones, National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The sermon was preached by Rt Revd Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter.

[Back to top](#)

Royal Foundation of St Katharine bids farewell to its Master

On 20th September 2012 the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in Limehouse, East London, will be saying a fond farewell to its Master, David Paton. He will be retiring to the South of France after a wonderful six years at St Katharine's, having overseen a busy period of change for the Foundation. He will be succeeded by Revd Mark Aitken, who has been Headmaster of St Lawrence College, Ramsgate since 2004.

[Back to top](#)

Racial Justice Sunday: Being an Inclusive Church

Every congregation thinks they are a friendly and inclusive church. Yet the reality can often be very different. When we listen to the experiences of those who feel on the outside we realise how far we have to go. This year's Racial Justice Sunday materials explored these issues in stories, hymns, prayers, reflections and homilies.

The experience of Tessa could be the story of many: "I have felt excluded so often that it was difficult choosing one incident. Sometimes I wonder if my exclusion has anything to do with being a woman or that being black has more to do with it? I had been attending a particular church for almost a year and had gotten into the habit of staying for coffee after the service, when a lovely woman came up to me and said, 'Welcome, is this your first time?' and, calling her by name, I politely explained to her that I had been attending for several months now."

These and many other stories tell us much about how far we have to go to be more inclusive. Limbert Spencer, a member of the writing group from the Salvation Army, comments: "Our Churches have a tremendous opportunity to evidence God's Kingdom on earth by taking deliberate action to include members of Britain's minority ethnic communities in our congregations. Most institutions find it almost impossible to respond positively to the idea that action is necessary if they are to include their minority ethnic communities, and thereby begin to reap the potential benefits of ethnic diversity.

Whether it's the times of the service, the music that accompanies the singing, tea/coffee after the service (or not), the way the house groups are organised, how the Sunday school is run, not to mention who sits on which 'pew', we are generally more comfortable with the way things are, with what we have become used to. We get familiar with the familiar. However, whatever the cause, we believe that the Church would begin to grow in our cities if church leaders were to:

- declare their commitment to inclusion and ethnic diversity
- develop programmes to reach out to minority ethnic Britons and
- teach and encourage Church members to recognise the value of ethnic diversity.
- The black majority Church may also need to face the challenge of ethnic diversity in their congregations and leadership"

[Back to top](#)

Aylesbury Churches organise family event at Stoke Mandeville

On the opening night of the Paralympic Games, 14 churches from Aylesbury Church Network worked in partnership with the local District Council, Global Games Sports, Youth for Christ, Through the Roof, Fusion and More than Gold to bring about an opening night festival at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium.

Through the day it had been pouring down with rain, but it just cleared at 6pm as the festival was about to start. A decision had been made not to cancel or move indoors - but after a short while you would not have known it had been raining. As the pictures show, the sun came out! Using the walkways, portaloos and a tent from the previous night's Flame celebration at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the churches provided the big screen, marquees, chairs, display areas and games equipment to host a wealth of activities - before folk used the 500 seats to watch the opening ceremony from London on the big screen.

The free event - at the birthplace of the Paralympics - was fully inclusive. The boards helped wheelchairs get about on the grass, the multi-sensory tent was popular, everything said was signed, and a wide variety of sport, arts and crafts, activities and games with some specialist equipment was available to try. More than Gold had challenged the churches to organise the event, as the Aylesbury Church Network had experience of putting on an annual Party in the Park. In the event they organised three events: the Paralympic Festival, a Family Fun Day, as well as Church in the Park. See their [website](#).

Speaking of the Games to More than Gold on night and about the rain, organiser Revd Martin Kuhrt, Vicar of the Church of the Holy Spirit, Bedgrove, said, 'I hardly believed I'd be standing in the sun and seeing so many people of all abilities having such fun.' From Fusion - a network helping churches work together in running open crowd community festivals - Marty Woods organised big games including races, limbo, tug of war, parachute games and said, 'The great thing about this event is that everyone is equal. Everyone has something to offer, no matter what their ability or disability. Everyone is important.'

Again, speaking to [More than Gold](#), Revd Keith Edwards, minister of Aylesbury Methodist Church said, 'It has been brilliant to see everyone being included. Our team of over 250 volunteers includes some with disabilities. We just wanted to make a fantastic start to the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympic Games.' Lynn Watts said, 'I saw a partially sighted man, led by his wife, walk across the sensory path we created of grass, sand and pebbles. It was truly magical to see the expression on his face.' Well-known Christian singer Marilyn Baker, who is blind, sang a blessing for the crowd before the people took their seats - now dry - to watch the big screen of the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Paralympic Games.

Two members of staff at Churches Together in England were present. John Bradley is the Field Officer (South) and a wheelchair user. Among other things, John helped with car park duty as a volunteer. John said, 'I got involved as CTE's link with [Churches for All](#), the network of Christian disability charities which is one of our Bodies in Association. Despite the rain and having to get publicity out during August, it was very well attended and it was great to see families out together.' Jim Currin, CTE Secretary for Evangelisation, took photos and said, 'This festival shows how churches of all traditions can work together in a fantastic way to serve the local community. The planning hours and hard work have paid off, and this is a good example of how churches and agencies have worked together in partnership.'

[Back to top](#)

Disability Week 2012

Churches across the country have demonstrated major support for Britain's first-ever 'National Disability Week' which has been staged to coincide with the London 2012 Paralympics.

Organised by Premier Christian Media's 'Premier Life', in partnership with Churches for All, 'National Disability Week' aims to 'Redefine Ability' in the church and a week of special programming on Premier Christian Radio - Britain's largest Christian broadcaster - includes interviews and discussions with Christian Paralympians and people working in the area of disability. "We have been delighted by the enthusiasm of churches to get behind the new initiative and the way in which they have reached out to disabled people in their communities," said Jonathan Clark of 'Premier Life'. "Disability Sunday [September 2nd or 9th] provided the opportunity for churches to involve, enable and include disabled people in church services across the UK. and to focus on Christian attitudes towards disability issues."

A Disability Sunday 'pack', designed to assist churches taking part, provided links with London 2012 and underlined the message that the promotional week is about shining a spotlight on the abilities of disabled people. Dr Gordon Temple, Chief Executive of Torch Trust and a leader of Churches for All, said, "Churches have been presented with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reach out to ten million disabled people in their communities. It's all about inclusion." Further details from www.disabilityweek.org.uk

[Back to top](#)

Schools & Churches Together Around the A30

In an area without a Churches Together group, parishioners and pupils at the edges of four dioceses have been invited to join in an unusual ecumenical morning.

Schools and churches of all sorts dotted across Windlesham, Lightwater, Bagshot, Virginia Water, Ascot, Sunningdale, Sunninghill, and Englefield Green are among those contacted to celebrate, debate and update what they each do for social justice and those in need – on their doorstep, nationally and overseas. *Harvest of Hope* is on the morning of Saturday 13 October, at St Mary's School in South Ascot, Berkshire.

It has been arranged by two local Anglican and Catholic parishioners involved in the field of social justice, peace, and equality. Their aims include providing a practical opportunity for making new connections and sharing experience and common values in action for social justice. It is also a chance to explore such related issues as what makes a Just Church, and discuss how to translate words into action. They also want schools to have a public showcase for their commitment to those in need.

The programme mixes expert briefings, discussion, music, artwork, and time for reflection.

- The morning includes actions in support of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on the following Wednesday, in which many UK schools will again be taking part.
- Harvest of Humanity is a visual showcase of the social justice activities by local schools, parishes and other groups.
- Grow Your Own Good Citizens is a series of short personal briefings. These include poverty-related problems for the area police, Food Banks, social justice education in schools, and animating parishes.
- Fruitful Silence allows everyone to reflect on Hope – prompted by thoughts sent in from many wellwishers in the world.
- A Gallery of Hope is the creation of local primary school children, invited to make banners and bunting showing their own faces and messages of what they hope for.
- Sowing Seeds in Hearts & Minds is a chance to debate some hot topics, and to prepare a message about *Harvest of Hope* for the new Secretary of State for International Development

Full details are [here](#). Some of the morning's material will later be available on line. The event is free, and open to anyone – though booking with hughgibbons@just1.org.uk is advised. [Back to top](#)

Paul Kerensa, Operation Noah's comedian in residence, at Greenbelt

When comedian Paul Kerensa was asked to write a show devoted entirely to climate change his first thought was to drive away - very fast. 'But all that carbon emission isn't good for the environment,' quips Paul. 'Climate change is quite dry (forgive the pun) as far as comedy's concerned. Anything involving the death of ecosystems doesn't strike you as "laugh a minute"'.

In spite of initial reservations, Paul has become comedian in residence for [Operation Noah](#), the Christian climate change pressure group. Paul presented his show at this summer's Greenbelt Festival over the August bank holiday weekend, and his embryonic act can also be seen on [YouTube](#).

In a 'Brief History of Climate Change', Paul touches on God as creator (sleepless after forgetting to make curtains at the end of the first day), Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood. He relates the story of Jesus calming the storm on Lake Galilee as 'the first example of man-made climate change.' Another landmark was Gutenberg's first printing press in 1440. 'He was originally going to launch it in 1439,' says Paul, 'but saw a note saying "Do you really need to print this?"' Paul, who makes a living writing jokes for TV and radio shows like The News Quiz and The Now Show, tackles everything from over-consumption, Top Gear and Jeremy Clarkson to G8 summits and the impact of rising sea levels. 'We'll be just a bit further from France,' he says, 'so it's not all bad.'

Ruth Jarman, of Operation Noah's communications group, hopes comedy will circumvent the denial psychology that comes into play when people are faced with the implications of climate change. 'Humour allows us to engage people who have not thought through the issues,' explains Ruth. 'Climate change should not be a "green" issue, it should be the concern of everyone.'

Operation Noah is encouraging churches to use the YouTube highlights of Paul's presentation as a resource during this year's 'Creation Time' in September. The charity has a number of relevant resources for use during services in September, based around their Ash Wednesday Declaration, launched in February 2012. [Back to top](#)

Churches work together to tackle debt

The national charity, Christians Against Poverty (CAP), is finding that more and more churches want to work together to open debt advice centres.

CAP started in 1996 when its founder John Kirkby, armed with a £10 donation and a heap of faith, went to visit the first client drowning in the sea of debt. Last year alone, CAP helped over 21,000 individuals. In each case this has only been possible because a local church has partnered with CAP. Whilst CAP provides the expertise and experience in setting budgets, dealing with creditors and handling client accounts, the church provides the hands, feet and voice that initiate and support the client relationship. CAP is so successful in seeing people become debt free because by working through the church, people get face-to-face advice and are supported until they have paid off all their debts or until legal remedies are complete.

There are now 205 centres in the UK and CAP's vision is to see a centre in every town and city within the next few years, a total of 500 centres. Increasingly churches are working together to open a centre in their community. In response to this CAP has launched new agreements and procedures to facilitate this. Matt Barlow, CEO said "We are totally committed to the local church. There are so many benefits when churches in a locality work together that we want to do all we can to support them. By developing methods designed specifically for this we hope we will enable more and more churches to open centres and see lives transformed".

Debt is a major and increasing problem in society today. It means families do not get adequate food, it causes relationship breakdown, illness and tragically in some cases suicide. The church has a part to play giving hope to those who have lost all hope. To find out more, visit the [CAP website](#) or contact CAP church partnership at opencentre@capuk.org or ☎ 01274 760580.

See also the review of John Kirkby's book *Nevertheless* on the [CTE website](#).

[Back to top](#)

St Ethelburga's launches A World of Prayer

A new anthology of prayers from many different traditions was launched at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, London, with eight of the contributors reading their prayers and discussing inter-religious perspectives on prayer.

Eight of the contributors and the editor, Ros Bradley, were present to read their prayers and discuss inter-religious perspectives on prayer. They included Dr Swee Ang, Bruce Kent, Simon Keyes, Zoya Phan, Canon Patience Purchas, Christina Rees, Amjad Mohamed-Saleem and Jonathan Wittenberg. A World of Prayer is edited by Rosalind Bradley and published by [Alban Books](#). Proceeds from sales go to St Ethelburga's Centre.

[Back to top](#)

Falmouth and Penryn Churches Together in the Community

Falmouth and Penryn Churches Together were able to have a spot in one of the squares in the town for the week's yacht regatta. They booked a place for their tent as being "The Church in the Community" promoting Street Pastors and FoodBank. This 'presence evangelism' is meant to show that the local church is alive and has an important part to play in its community and it's an ideal way to engage in one-to-one evangelism.

During the week they gave away over 800 packs with a Gospel leaflet which led to many good conversations over the week. There were encouragements from Christians who came to the tent to help plus those who have prayed for this outreach each day. "It's been a privilege to offer and put into people's hands something that you know has the ability to change their lives for good and see many reading it there and then", said Phil Misselbrook, "all because it's telling them about the Saviour Jesus Christ."

[Back to top](#)

Agricultural Christian Fellowship in the last 50 years

The Agricultural Christian Fellowship will hold its 2012 conference at the Jersey Cattle Society, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, on 3 November, 9.15 for 9.45am – 4.00 pm, with the theme 'The Seeds that have been sown – Crops or Weeds?' They will look first at farming in the last fifty years, and how farming families have experienced it, and then examine how ACF has carried out its purposes during this time. Finally they will look ahead to their 2013 Conference which will be about the future of farming, farm families and the ACF. Contributors will include Lord Donald Curry, Dr John Wibberley, Professor John Hodges, Professor Tim Gorringer and, of course, farmers and their families.

[Back to top](#)

Vision for the Church of the Future

Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire is holding a Christian East/West Day on September 29th with the theme 'Vision for the Church of the Future'. The contributors will be Fr Robin Gibbons, a Greek Melkite priest and university lecturer in Oxford, Revd Jo Spray, a licensed priest for St. Albans and Oxford Dioceses, and Sister Esther, a Benedictine Sister at Turvey Abbey.

Prior booking is essential. For bookings and further information, contact Sister Lucy at Turvey Abbey at lucy.brydon@btinternet.com

[Back to top](#)

Loving God; Loving Neighbour

A Church service hosted by West Midlands Churches and the Conservative Christian Partnership in partnership with The Lighthouse Group, Trussel Trust, TWR and World Vision will be held at Birmingham Christian Centre (Parade, B1 3QQ) on Sunday 7th October from 6.30pm to 7.45pm. Christians from all over the region will welcome the Conservative Party Conference to Birmingham. Doors open at 6.00pm for a performance from Aberdeen Street Gospel Choir.

[Back to top](#)

Organ Bursary Awards

Churches Together in Buxton is delighted to announce that two awards are being made from the Organ Bursary Fund. Katy Beale from Great Longstone has been awarded the Golsoncott Award, while the Bingham Award goes to Charlotte Jardine from Bakewell. The awards are named after two Trusts that have made substantial contributions to the Organ Bursary Fund; these donations, along with generous gifts from individuals in Buxton and elsewhere, have enabled the Bursary Committee to go ahead and launch the scheme.

Katy and Charlotte are students at Lady Manners School and participate fully in the range of musical activity on offer there. They are also involved in music outside school and both performed in this year's Buxton Music Festival. Katy started piano lessons when she was just 7 years old and her fluent and assured playing impressed the panel at the audition. She has just completed her GCSE exams and starts A level courses at Lady Manners School in September. Charlotte's musical education started at a similar age when she took up the violin. She did not take up the piano until she was 12 years old and in under three years she has made remarkable progress with her keyboard skills. Charlotte is due to complete her GCSE course next year.

Both girls are planning to start organ lessons with Andrew Cummings FRCO in the autumn term. In the first instance, the awards are for one year, but the Committee will be working hard to ensure that there are funds available to extend the awards beyond the first year. As well as Katy and Charlotte, there are several promising younger candidates who have expressed an interest in auditioning for the scheme in future. John Anfield – organist at Buxton Methodist Church – would be pleased to speak to anyone who might be able to help support the initiative in any way. His telephone number is 01298 25664.

[Back to top](#)

Mission – Churches Together or Apart?

The Inaugural Owen Jewiss Memorial Lecture will be given on Wednesday 24th October, St Barnabas Church, Emmer Green, Reading, at 7.30 pm. Many remember Owen, who sadly died last year and was so passionate about ecumenism. This is the first of what will be an annual event. The lecture will be aptly entitled 'Mission - Churches Together or Apart?' and will be delivered by Revd Rosemary Fletcher from Lambeth Mission and St Mary's. The event will be part of the Reading International Festival.

[Back to top](#)

50th Anniversary of Vatican II

On the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, in appreciation of its ecumenical significance, the Society for Ecumenical Studies has organised a lecture to be given by The Most Reverend Kevin McDonald Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Southwark with a response by The Revd Dr James Hawkey, Minor Canon and Sacrist, Westminster Abbey. It will be on Thursday 11th October 2012 from 6.30pm - 8.00pm in the Marie Eugenie Room, Heythrop College, University of London, Kensington Square, London, W8 5HN. Admission is by free ticket; please apply to secretary.sfes@gmail.com

The lecture will be preceded by the AGM of the Society at 5.45 pm.

[Back to top](#)