

Review of 2015

An extract from CTE's report of 2015 to the Charity Commission. The full text is on CTE's website.

Strategic priorities

Our main focus in 2015 has been implementing the strategic priorities as agreed in 2014 and our report reflects that. It is, for the first time, organised into the strategic priorities of relationships, action for mission, and theological reflection. Those priorities help define the nature of Christian co-operation and the journey towards the unity for which Christ prayed on the evening before his death.

Relationships

Relationships are at the heart of our work. We bring Christians together so that they can both find their own identity in dialogue with others, and also experience something of the richness of Christ through their encounters with fellow believers. That means sustaining diverse networks of relationships at [intermediate](#) and national levels.

Part of that is achieved by personal contact, face to face meeting, conferences and consultations, but during 2015 we have also been reaping the benefit of the investment we made in 2014 to update and improve both our own website and the [Black Churches Directory](#), which is still the most significant on-line resource about that sector of English Christianity.

We also circulate an ecumenical news digest [CTe-news](#) monthly to well over a thousand subscribers.

We continue to invest considerable staff time in both the [website](#) and the maintenance of databases because these are essential tools for the building of relationships.

An exciting tapestry of local initiatives

Local relationships are the heartbeat of English ecumenism. The changing shape of English Christianity over the past twenty years (we have grown from 16 to 43 members since 1990) means that the pattern of local engagement is

no longer just 'the historic churches' working together, but an exciting tapestry of initiatives of considerable variety.

A new framework for local unity in mission

A critical piece of work for us in 2015 has therefore been the re-positioning of inherited patterns of engagement (particularly Local Ecumenical Partnerships – LEPs) within a new, looser and more permissive framework. A



[consultation document](#) has been produced, and churches have responded to it, and we hope that during 2016 we and our [Member Churches](#) will be able to take serious steps towards the adoption of a new framework for local unity.

Whilst launching that exciting new venture, we have done more work on the [on-line register of LEPs](#) to make registration and updating of

details smoother, and we continue to host and curate a range of helpful documents for LEPs, including the [Model Governing Document](#).

Supporting Ecumenical Officers

Local relationships are nurtured and sustained by a network of County and Denominational [Ecumenical Officers](#) whose work is of critical importance. During 2015 we supported that network in three main ways, focused through the work of our Training, Resources and Events Officer, [Jenny Bond](#).

- Firstly, there is the maintenance of relationships, providing support for Intermediate Bodies during County Ecumenical Officer vacancies, helping with [recruitment and professional appointment procedures](#) and with the induction of newly-appointed Officers, offering them a personalised induction session at CTE's London offices.
- Second, working with the National Ecumenical Officers, we redesigned the [annual training course](#) so that it changed from a 48-hour residential course to a process which involves a denominational induction session, a visit to a local ecumenical situation organised with the help of County Officers and a 24-hour residential course. We organise and administer this course on behalf of the churches.



- Third, working with a team of [County Officers](#) we planned and delivered their annual in-service Consultation. Our focus was on the response of ecumenical bodies to the changing needs of society. The Bishop of Rochester was the main speaker and [Jim Currin](#), CTE's Officer for Evangelisation, Mission and Media led a session on ecumenical mission opportunities. One of CTE's [Presidents](#) attended and preached at the main act of worship and the Consultation also engaged with the on-going work of developing a new framework for local ecumenism.

The Enabling Group

Our Governance processes also rely on relationships. That is expressed primarily through the twice yearly 24-hour [Enabling Group](#) (the meeting of members). Attendance at these meeting is excellent, and they have become opportunities for learning about the diversity of English Christianity as individual member churches take responsibility for explaining their ethos and life as well as leading worship. During 2015 Pioneer and the Elim Pentecostal Church were the members highlighted. Issues addressed in 2015 included Christian Ethnicity in England, new unity movements as a challenge and opportunity for CTE, the 2016 English Church Census proposal and, in the context of bible study, environmental issues and human ecology.

The balance of learning, reflection and business makes the Enabling Group a key tool for co-ordination between churches at a national level.

The Forum

However, the highlight of the year was our triennial [Forum](#). Forum is a unique meeting point, not deliberative, yet the largest and broadest ecumenical gathering in England (about 300 people). Under the guidance of Archbishop Doyé Agama (Moderator, pictured right) and the Revd Ruth Gee (Deputy-Moderator) we were boldly innovative.

Casting aside the usual pattern of distinguished visiting speakers and adopting the title





Churches Listening Together, we opted instead to listen to less frequently heard voices – of the Orthodox, the Pentecostals, and younger ecumenists. It was a remarkable event. Perhaps for the first time Christian traditions began to express and explain themselves with confidence in an atmosphere marked by respectful and receptive listening (which is of course not the same as agreement!).

The younger ecumenists' session marked the beginning of a partnership with the *Chemin Neuf* community, and the participants had clearly benefitted from their *Welcome to Paradise* experience in France for which CTE had provided bursaries. As Cardinal Nichols, one of our [Presidents](#), said, they modelled through their care for each other's spiritualities, the essence of the ecumenical journey.



It was as if we had turned a corner into a landscape where the old questions of authority, ministry and Eucharistic sharing did not dominate. There was a new spirit of encounter and openness. For older ecumenists that may well be a frustration, but one ecumenical theologian in his mid-70s wrote excitedly that having been to all CTE's Forums, he considered

this the best. We also hope that the investment of staff time in using the website to make Forum paperless will pay dividends in the more efficient organisation of future Forums.

A good year for relationships

Relationships thread through all our work, as we work with national [Co-ordinating Groups](#) in Theology, New Housing and Evangelisation, or with the dynamic grouping of churches within the [Pentecostal Presidency Group](#), or with the vibrant meetings with 'the ecumenical voluntary sector' which are our [Bodies in Association](#), or with the [National Ecumenical Officers](#), or organise what has become an annual meeting and dinner between our Presidents and the leaders of our member churches at Lambeth Palace, generously hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We are also able to facilitate one-off meetings – a good example this year was the breakfast meeting with black church leaders and a consequent visit to Brixton we arranged with the American civil rights campaigner, the Revd Al Sharpton.

2015 was a good year for ecumenical relationships in England..

Action for Mission

Our work here falls into discrete categories. We have expertise in [Pentecostal and Multicultural Affairs](#), and our engagement with public affairs and government is focused here.

Our staff member in this area, [Bishop Dr Joe Aldred](#), served as a member of the Steering Group of the National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF) which published the first ever Black Church Political Manifesto for Action ahead of the 2015 General Election.

He also helped facilitate relationships between the NCLF and the Pentecostal Credit Union and contributed to policy conversations with both the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the Department of Communities and Local Government, as well as advising other government departments when asked.

He also served as a member of the Woolf Institute Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life which issued a major report in December 2015.

Modern slavery and human trafficking

A major focus in Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations (PMR) during 2015 has been promoting the anti-slavery/human trafficking agenda within that constituency.

We have been delighted to have the voluntary help of Elizabeth Joy of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in this work in 2015. We launched a new initiative – Churches Combatting Modern Slavery-Human Trafficking (CCMS-HT) – to raise awareness of the issue amongst Pentecostal Churches. That involved our input in preparing resources for Freedom Sunday 2015, linking with parliamentarians in our joint convening of an Anti-Trafficking Round-table in the House of Lords with Lady Butler-Sloss, beginning a [web information hub](#), and organising a successful conference on ‘Changing perspectives and priorities – affirming and combatting Modern Slavery-Human Trafficking.’



The CCMS-HT initiative has been complemented by a research project commissioned from the Cambridge Centre for Applied Research in Human Trafficking (CCARHT) to begin a conversation particularly with black churches to explore the nature of human trafficking and violence against women. The project, ‘Trafficking recognition and the impact on women for Pentecostal churches in the UK’ will be completed in 2016 and it is hoped that it will both raise awareness and stimulate action together with other partner churches and agencies in combatting this terrible reality. The Trustees agreed to fund this project from restricted funds given specifically for women’s work.

Obviously significant in its own right, this project also signals the intent of the Board to move CTE’s work more clearly towards the delivery of short-term projects.

Mission and evangelism

The second category of work is networking nationally those who are engaged in mission and evangelism. Our Mission, Evangelism and Media Officer, Jim Currin, collates a regular e-news bulletin for evangelism professionals, [Evangelism UK](#), which circulates regularly to 200 subscribers. CTE’s website also provides resources in [evangelism](#) and [mission](#) for local Churches Together groups – for example on how to set up and run Food Banks – and for those working in [New Housing Areas](#). During 2015 this part of the website underwent a major re-writing and is an excellent, well-received resource. Jim Currin also participated as a member of the National Steering Group for ‘Engage 2015’, which co-ordinated the responses of the churches to the Rugby World Cup.

Co-ordinating Groups

Important though those services are, the main thrust of our mission resourcing is focused in Co-ordinating Groups. During 2015 the Co-ordinating Group for Evangelism (CGfE) considered the ecumenical use of the Talking Jesus research, and produced a guide which is on our website. They were also delighted to identify ten ecumenical guests to participate in ‘Proclaim 15’, a major Catholic conference on *Evangelii Gaudium*, and then to produce a report on their responses. New Housing Areas remain an important mission concern, and our Co-ordinating Group continued to monitor what was happening across England, arranging site visits to three developments to meet with pioneer ministers and church leaders. The Group was also instrumental in the production of Penny Marsh and Ali Bolton’s *Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas* (Grove Books).

The Churches Rural Group continue to provide a forum for reflection on trends in rural life and rural ministry and evangelism. They ran a major conference, *Germinate*, in October 2015 attended by over 200. Their work can be followed on our website. During 2015 we also



participated in an initiative which will hopefully see the creation of a partner Urban Mission initiative.

Theological reflection

Theological reflection is woven into all that we do. For example, all courses that we run for Ecumenical Officers include theological input and reflection, and Bible Study or a theological reflection is part of each Enabling Group agenda. In a real sense all that we do grows out of theological reflection.



However, that reflection also results in specific pieces of work. During 2015 CTE's Theology and Unity Group continued to analyse pertinent issues and documents, considering the priesthood of all believers, the nature of catholicity, relations with continental European churches, the WCC document 'Who do we say that we are? Christian identity in a multi-faith world', and the ecclesiology of LEPs.'

We brought together representatives of the black churches and Anglican leaders to consider the ecumenical consequences of possible changes in the theology of marriage, and brought the same constituencies together for a discussion of the WCC document 'The Church: towards a common vision', and have helped establish an Anglican/Pentecostal Group for theological engagement. They have considered, and released, three papers – 'The spiritual state of the nation' (Clifford Hill), 'Theological education and training in Pentecostal Churches' (David Muir) and 'The Pentecostal and Charismatic Constituency within the British Church' (Hugh Osgood).



Within the wider theological community, Joe Aldred gave a paper at Roehampton University on 'The Church: oneness, diversity and unity', and another on the 'Theology of Place' in Birmingham.

He continues to be a member of the Steering Group of the Black Theology Forum at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham.

Jim Currin contributed a paper on 'Theology and praxis of Ecumenism and Evangelism: a perspective in England 2015 at a conference organised at St John's College, Cambridge in July 2015 on *Evangelii Gaudium*.

David Cornick spoke to the Ecumenical Marian Pilgrimage at Walsingham on 'The changing ecumenism landscape.'

The General Secretary is part of a small group preparing a resource on 'Receptive Ecumenism' which CTE hopes to publish as a web-resource during 2016.

During 2015 we also worked with the British Trust for Tantar to identify participants for their intensive course at Tantar on reconciliation. We handled the bulk of the publicity and administration and helped ensure that as wide an ecumenical group as possible was able to participate in what is a unique opportunity of theological education and reflection.



Governance issues and general remarks

We have spent considerable energy in 2015 in trying to widen the financial support of the organisation amongst our membership, and we report some quietly encouraging success – we have increased our funding from the non-historic members, but as a Board we are conscious that we are still too heavily reliant on the generous funding of the seven 'historic funders', all of which have pressing claims on their diminishing resources. We will continue to address this problem along with our members so that we can arrive at a more equitable solution.

We are delighted to report that in 2015 we created a Finance Committee and we hope that its work will result in a strengthening of the performance of the Board in this critical area.

Growing the membership

Key Performance Indicators for an umbrella body must include the number and influence of those who wish to join it, or remain in its embrace. It is a pleasure to report that we are dealing with a number of applications from churches who wish to join, and that during 2015 we welcomed as [Bodies in Association](#) Premier Christian Radio, the Society of St John Chrysostom, the Ecumenical Marian Pilgrimage Trust and the Petra Institute for Children's Ministry UK.

Another Key Performance Indicator is those who are willing to lend their support to us, or work in partnership with us. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, HE Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain, Bishop Eric Brown, the Revd Dr Hugh Osgood and Billy Kennedy continue to serve us as [Presidents](#).



A wide range of church leaders of all denominations participate in our work in many other ways.

We continue to work in partnership with the Centre for Catholic Studies at the University of Durham, the Inter-Faith Network of the United Kingdom, the British Trust for Tantor, the *We Gather* network of the Evangelical Alliance, Together for the Common Good, Hope Together, the National Church Leaders' Forum, and the *Chemin Neuf* community (amongst others) as well as the other National Instruments and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

We continue to rent office space from the Free Churches Group.



Plans for the future

CTE is committed to developing working arrangements with [Churches Together in Britain and Ireland](#) and the National Instruments in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and also with the [Free Churches Group](#) who generously allow their [Education Officer](#)'s expertise to be available to us. We will also be negotiating an on-going agreement with the Free Churches Group about the provision of office space.

Reflecting English Christianity

Our structure and ways of working have enabled us to respond to the changing landscape of English Christianity over the past decade. As that landscape continues to evolve, we will keep our structures under review to ensure that we can accurately reflect the nature of English Christianity in our working and enable the fullest participation from the diverse churches and bodies which make up our membership.

During 2016 we will continue to give considerable attention to the ways in which we are funded, in consultation with all our members, and that work and those conversations will doubtless continue into 2017.

We will continue to address the problem of an equitable basis for funding between our members, and (as reported last year) we will continue develop a project based management element of our work to deliver some of goals. As part of that, we will seek to continue the work begun at Forum in the ecumenical formation of young adults.

We hope that our reading of the landscape and our attempt to ensure a fairer distribution of the costs of running CTE between our members will allow us to build on our strategic priorities of building relationships across denominational and confessional boundaries, resourcing churches for active participation in their communities in service and mission, and reflecting theologically on ecumenical activity.

We will continue to seek all avenues for using our expertise in mission, education, theology and multicultural issues to the benefit of our members.

Download the full report with the accounts:
<http://www.cte.org.uk/annualreports>