

Review of 2016

An extract from CTE's report of 2016 to the Charity Commission. The full text is [on CTE's website](#).

Strategic priorities

During 2016 we have continued to implement the [strategic priorities](#) which we identified in 2014 – relationships, action for mission, and theological reflection. The ecumenical landscape is continually re-figuring, reflecting the increase of partner churches, particularly locally, but also nationally. As this report shows, we are sensitive to those shifts, and our strategic priorities allow us to respond freely and creatively to those changes. Our goal remains the pursuit of the journey towards the unity for which Christ prayed on the evening before his death.

Relationships

2016 began for us on a note of sorrow as the staff team attended the funeral of our former colleague [John Bradley](#) in early January. John had devoted a great part of his ministerial life to working for Christian unity, first as a County Officer in Devon, and for many years as our Field Officer for the South of England. What was deeply moving and profoundly encouraging, however, was the gathering of friends and colleagues both present and past from the widest spectrum of places and churches. It spoke profoundly, not just about the respect in which John was held, but also about those deep bonds in Christ which bind us in spite of theological difference and ecclesial nuance, and it reminded us of our responsibility to nurture those deep bonds and provide the space and soil in which they can grow.



At the heart of our work

That is why relationships remain at the heart of our work, and that means sustaining a diverse series of networks, meetings, conferences, consultations and encounters which allow

people to meet. It also means attending carefully to infrastructure. We devote a good deal of staff time and resources to our website because it is a working space for those in the ecumenical front-line. It has nearly 3,000 pages of news, information and resources. During 2016 there was an average of 8,047 page requests each day. We also maintain on the home page a live Twitter feed of news between the Churches, Agencies and Bodies in Association of Churches Together in England. On average we re-tweet about forty five messages per day. We also maintain [The Black and Multi-cultural Churches Directory](#), which has over 2,000 entries and remains the most significant on-line resource about that sector of English Christianity.



We have developed our monthly ecumenical news digest [CTe-news](#), inviting a wide range of contributors to produce an opening monthly reflection. It has a circulation of just over 1,100, and is an admirable well-received digest. [Evangelism UK](#) is a much more specialised news service which circulates to just over two hundred evangelism professionals.

The heartbeat of English ecumenism

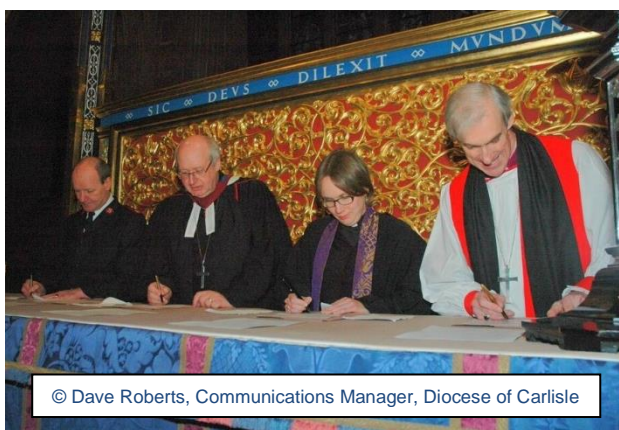
Local relationships are the heartbeat of English ecumenism, and they are changing. That is partly because there are more partners (CTE has grown from sixteen to forty-four members since 1990), partly because the focus of local church engagement is community-focused mission, and partly because shrinking resources mean that some long-cherished institutions are no longer viable. What is encouraging is that new patterns of ecumenical engagement in mission and joint working are emerging.

We have been hard at work in 2016 with our member churches and their Ecumenical Officers in creating a new, more flexible and permissive framework for local ecumenical work ([A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission](#)). During 2016 we took drafts of that document out to

consultation, and we hope that it will be launched in 2017.

Alongside that, we continue to monitor what is happening, to reflect on it in our own thinking and to engage creatively with new developments – for example, we welcomed Roger Sutton of the ‘Gather’ movement to our September [Enabling Group](#), and are partnering with them in planning a major conference for October 2017 called ‘Movement Day’, aiming to bring together 600 participants from ‘unity for mission’ organisations across the country.

At the same time we rejoice in developments like the [‘ecumenical county’](#) plans in Cumbria, where on Advent Sunday 2016 The Salvation Army joined the Church of England, Methodists and United Reformed Churches in signing the *Declaration of Covenant Partnership*. Alongside



partners who have signed a *Letter of Companionship*, they seek together to bring the good news of God’s love to all the people of the county.

That ‘rejoicing’ translates into tangible support in the work that we undertake with local [ecumenical officers](#) (both County and Denominational) and [Intermediate Bodies](#). All staff share in this, but [Jenny Bond](#) (the Officer for Training, Resourcing and Events) acts as the first port of call for enquiries and support.

We have continued to provide support during County Ecumenical Officer vacancies, helped 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.

The [training course](#) for new Ecumenical Officers continues to be refined and improved in collaboration with our National Ecumenical Officer colleagues.

Supporting County Ecumenical Officers

We worked with a team of County Ecumenical Officers from the South-West to produce a well-attended annual consultation for County and National Ecumenical Officers at High Leigh. The theme was *Five Ecumenical Imperatives and the Reformation*, drawing on the work of the international Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity [From Conflict to Communion](#), and the advice of CTE’s Presidents on [commemorating the Reformation](#). The intent was to equip Officers to produce and manage commemorations of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran reformation in their own areas. The Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, one of CTE’s [Presidents](#) attended and preached at the main act of worship.

Bringing Member Churches together

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 meetings continues to be impressive. One member described the experience in 2016 as ‘multi-lateral, multi-vocal, multi-level conversation and theological reflection and listening together’.

The Enabling Group has become an opportunity for encountering the diversity of English Christianity and its underlying unity in a shared discipleship in Jesus Christ. During 2016 the [Unification Council of the Cherubim and Seraphim Churches](#) (European Chapter), which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016, and the United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation, who share a common history, shared something of their ethos, worship and life with the meeting.



During the year the Enabling Group received presentations on ecumenical developments, thought together about the ways in which the [500th anniversary](#) of the Lutheran reformation of 1517 could be commemorated, worked on the new framework on local unity in mission and celebrated the ecumenical launch by the Presidents of the [Thy Kingdom Come](#) prayer initiative for 2017.

The balance of learning, reflection and business makes the Enabling Group a key tool for co-ordination between churches at a national level. That encounter is sometimes reflected in wider national encounters. For example, 2016 saw the first ever [English Orthodox-Pentecostal meeting](#) to discuss bi-lateral relations and possible co-operation in mission. We hope that will be built on in 2017.



More routine but crucial networking...

If relationships are especially highlighted in the Enabling Group, they form a thread which runs through the more 'routine' work which is seen when [Co-ordinating Groups](#) of church professionals – those responsible for ministerial training, for HR management, evangelism and mission, new housing and theology and unity – meet. Much of that is necessarily 'under the radar' of publicity and news, but such networks facilitate sharing resources, working together, and co-operation which are essential to ecumenism.

More noticeable is the profile of our [Bodies in Association](#), whose meetings we host alongside our colleagues in CTBI, and our servicing of the [National Ecumenical Officers](#) meetings – but once again, relationships are key.

National Pentecostal Forum

A highly significant ecumenical development during 2016 has been the consolidation of the National Pentecostal Forum – a bi-annual meeting which brings together representatives of twenty national Pentecostal and charismatic CTE members – which acts both as a forum for developing policy and to deepen relationships and understanding within that sector of church life.

Young people

We have also sought to follow through the innovative work of the [2015 Forum](#) which sought to listen to the voices of young leaders, gathered together through a partnership with the *Chemin Neuf* community. Together with the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England, we

provided twelve bursaries each to fund young leaders to attend *Chemin Neuf's* follow up celebration to *Paradise in the City* at Lodz in Poland.

The Church of England's Secretary for Theology and Ecumenism and CTE's [General Secretary](#) were then part of a day's de-briefing session with those young leaders. We then engaged them further in a presentation to the [Presidents](#) and church leaders at Lambeth Palace in October. We intend to continue that focus at our [2018 Forum](#) for which planning is already underway.

It was deeply moving to see how these young people responded to Christian difference with openness and generosity, yet with a rootedness in their own church life and to feel their 'holy impatience' with disunity. For some it was the first time they had met Christians of different denominations and spiritualities and was a salutary reminder of the iterative nature of ecumenism. It also raises the critical strategic question of how best the churches can nurture that age-group and encourage their ecumenical participation.

Action for Mission

Our work here falls into discrete categories. We have expertise in [Pentecostal and Multicultural Relations](#) (PMR), and our engagement with public affairs and government is focused here. Our staff member in this area, Bishop Dr [Joe Aldred](#), is also key to many initiatives within the wider black community. We have been delighted to have Mrs Elizabeth Joy working alongside him as a volunteer during 2016.

Other organisations have drawn on the expertise of our PMR work – Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's *Churches Forum for Interfaith Relations*, the *One People Commission* of the Evangelical Alliance, the *Inter-Faith Network* and the *National Church Leaders Forum* – as it seeks to represent the 'voice' of black Christianity in Britain. That range of collaboration is an indication of the respect in which our expertise is held.

Combatting slavery and human trafficking

Two projects have been of particular significance this year. We have continued to put resources and energy into the promotion of the anti-slavery/human trafficking agenda particularly

within the black Pentecostal sector. That initiative – *Churches Combatting Modern Slavery-Human Trafficking* (CCMS-HT) – continues to raise awareness of the issue amongst Pentecostal Churches. The online [information hub](#) is now well established.

That 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* has been running through 2016 and will be published in 2017.

Recognising their contribution

We have also been running and managing a Heritage Lottery funded project: [They Also Served](#) – *The Contribution of Black African and Caribbean servicemen and servicewomen to WW1*. This eighteen month project ran through



2016, directed by Dr Angelina Osborne, and will conclude with a commemorative event in Birmingham in July 2017. It is hoped that it will raise awareness during the centenary of the First World War of this regrettably often neglected narrative, and in its turn deepen our appreciation of our shared and multicultural history.

Evangelism and mission

The second area on which we focus is through the work of Capt. [Jim Currin](#) CA on evangelism and mission. One area of work which has had a high profile in 2016 is [new housing areas](#). The Churches Group for New Housing Areas was pleased to collaborate in research which led to the publication of *Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas* (www.grovebooks.co.uk) by two

Baptist Ministers, Revds Penny Marsh and Ali Boulton, and to stage the launch of the publication in June. It was accompanied by an article from a Catholic perspective by Fr James Cassidy in *One in Christ* (Dec 2016).

The celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday saw many local Churches Together groups run local events – street parties, festivals, all age events – and we were pleased to act as a resource for information and co-ordination. It was also a joy that our Presidents and the General Secretary were able to take part in the memorable service of national thanksgiving at St Paul's.

Thy Kingdom Come

However, the most hopeful development of the year was the way in which the Archbishop of Canterbury's prayer [initiative for evangelism](#) between Easter and Pentecost rapidly became ecumenical. We were pleased that other national church leaders and denominations responded in 2016, and even more delighted that by the end of the year CTE's Presidents agreed to adopt the initiative for 2017 as an ecumenical venture from the very beginning.



Jim Currin has been a key player for us, co-ordinating the ecumenical dimension of this in the planning process. We hope and pray that it will continue to bear fruit across the country.

We were also part of a small consortium of denominations and agencies who gave consideration to the possibilities of a [Church Census](#) in 2016. Ultimately the decision was made not to proceed, but the process itself was a significant learning experience and our hope is that the experience will be helpful in planning future quantitative research into mission initiatives.

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.

Theological reflection is fundamental to all that we do. All our courses and events include Bible Study or theological reflection.

The [Theology and Unity Group](#) has done sterling work over many years in receiving and discussing dialogue reports and considering theological issues of particular ecumenical significance. 2016 was no exception. *Sharing the Faith at the Boundaries of Unity: Conversations between the Church of England and the Baptist Union of Great Britain*, the WCC's *Called to dialogue: religious and interfaith dialogue in conversation*, the international Methodist-Catholic report *The call to holiness: from glory to glory, Amoris Laetitia*, the Anglican-Orthodox report *A hopeful anthropology*, the Chieti report of Roman Catholic-Orthodox dialogue and the Baptist-Roman Catholic international dialogue all fell under its aegis. We also said farewell and thank you to the Group's indefatigable Secretary, David Carter, and are now taking the opportunity to re-think how the churches can engage together in theological reflection. David's valuable paper, [A history of TUG 1996-2016](#), is available on our web-site.

National Pentecostal Symposium

We were delighted to host the first ever national [Pentecostal symposium](#) at Kensington Temple in November 2016. Over two hundred representatives of Pentecostal and charismatic churches gathered to worship and reflect together. It was an occasion of celebration, recognition, and academic reflection. Papers



were given by Dr Andrew Davies on the history of Pentecostalism, Dr Daniel Akhazemea on Pentecostal diversity, Dr Anne Dyer on Pentecostalism and ecumenism and Dr David Muir on Pentecostalism and socio-political and economic engagement. Our hope is that this will eventually result in publication, and that the symposium will be the first of many such events which will allow a popular engagement with Pentecostal theology and spirituality.

Staff sabbaticals

2016 saw a number of [staff](#) sabbaticals which have resulted in theological reflection.

- Joe Aldred spent some time assessing the nature of ecumenism in Jamaica. His paper [The ecumenical context of Jamaica](#) is available on the website.
- Jenny Bond worked on the ways in which her experience and skills as a spiritual director have implications for the practice of ecumenism.
- Jim Currin returned to the questions around paradox and the gospel – his reflection: [Paradox in the gospel: some reflections for evangelisation today](#) is on the web site.

Theological resourcing

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 2017. He also contributed a paper on how to commemorate the reformation to the Enabling Group (which is available [on the web-site](#)), and a paper on 'Abiding in John's gospel: balancing the ecumenical debate' to a meeting of the [Theology and Unity Group](#).

All staff members have been involved in giving papers to Churches Together groups at local and intermediate levels across the country.

Governance issues and general remarks

The Board regretted the decision of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England to reduce their funding of CTE by £80K as from 2017, not least because no prior conversation had taken place with ecumenical partners. However, they took the decision to respond by initiating a review from the [Theos Think Tank](#) on the nature of English ecumenism and what the churches seek from CTE as the National Ecumenical Instrument for England over the next five years. That research began in the autumn of 2016 and will be concluded by the middle of 2017, at which point the churches will be engaged in a process to consider how they wish funding to be handled.

In the meantime careful financial control will be exercised as we will be in a period of deficit financing which is sustainable in the short term but clearly not in the long term.

Key Performance Indicators

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 2016 we welcomed the *Ixthus Church Council* as [members](#) and *The Friends of the Holy Land* as a [Body in Association](#).

Another Key Performance Indicator is those willing to lend us their support, 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 the Revd Canon Billy Kennedy continued to serve us as [Presidents](#). A wide range of church leaders of all denominations participate in our work in many other ways.

Working together with others

We continue to work in partnership with the *Inter-Faith Network* of the United Kingdom, the *British Trust for Tantar*, 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 Ecumenical Instruments and *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*.

The General Secretary was privileged to be part of the CTBI writers' group producing the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* material. The Society of Jesus also drew on Jenny Bond's expertise to lead a day on 'Women in the Church' for an international group of ordinands at Valladolid. Joe Aldred remains an Honorary Research Fellow at Roehampton University.

During the year we have reached an agreement with the Free Churches Group about the rent of [office](#) space.

Plans for the future

CTE is committed to developing working arrangements with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, with the National Instruments in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and with the Free Churches Group who generously allow their [Education Officer](#)'s expertise to be available to us.

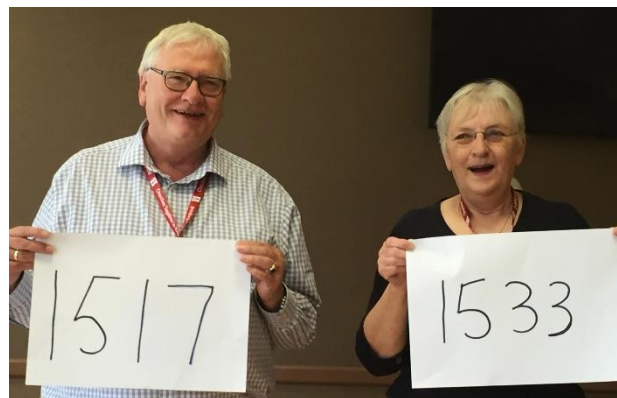
Our future plans will be intimately connected with the reception of the Theos review and what it tells us about the ecumenical needs and aspirations of our member churches over the next three to five years. The [Board](#) will be actively engaged with Theos during 2017 with a view to bringing the process to a conclusion during the early months of 2018. Finance and funding – recognised in our risk assessments as being our major vulnerability – will be a critical part of those discussions. The Board will also review the [staffing structure](#) of CTE in the light of the General Secretary's impending retirement after the [2018 Forum](#).

We hope those actions will allow us to keep delivering 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.

2017 is an important year theologically because it marks the [500th anniversary](#) of the Lutheran reformation and the eventual emergence of Protestant pluralism and Tridentine Catholicism in Western Europe. In a sense it is those events which set the agenda for the ecumenical movement and how we handle the legacy of the reformation(s) will therefore be an important aspect of our work during the year.



Download the full report with the accounts
www.cte.org.uk/annualreports