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and how the Church can stop it

REND COLLECTIVE

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Chine Mbubaegbu:
This edition of the magazine
is full of 'double listeners'

idea-torial

"I had the privilege of attending John Stott's memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral in January.



I'll never forget being with 2,000 Christians in the heart of the City of London, surrounded by Occupy tents, giving thanks for the long life of a man who influenced 20th century evangelicalism in the UK like no other. The service took place at the same time as a Twitter storm was raging after US pastor Mark Driscoll claimed in an interview with *Christianity* magazine that there is "not one young, good Bible teacher that is known across Great Britain". The humility of Stott which was emphasised time and again at his memorial was in stark contrast to the desire to be 'known' for anything. Instead, he urged Christians not to be navel-gazers, looking only at ourselves, but to engage in 'double listening' – listening to the Word and the world. This edition of the magazine is full of 'double listeners'. From Heart FM DJ Simon Beale telling us about being a Christian on the airwaves (page 7), to the ACT Network who are equipping the Church to build relationships in urban communities (p21). Ruth Bancewicz tells us about life as a Christian listening to and exploring God's creation from a lab (page 9), while Andrew Wilson takes a theological look at nature as he attempts to tell us why exactly God created wasps (page 10). It's appropriate that the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity – founded by John Stott – shares with us some ideas about how to release whole-life discipleship (page 26). Up and down the country, there are unsung Christian heroes using their faith to impact the world around them. Once again we're partnering with *Inspire* magazine to launch the Inspire Awards. Look out for details soon on the *idea* page of eauk.org.

Chine Mbubaegbu
Editor

We're on Twitter! Follow us @idea_mag

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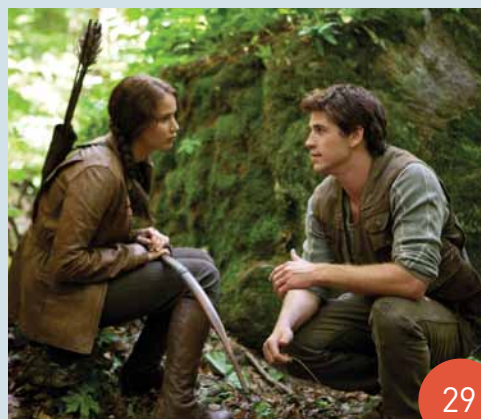
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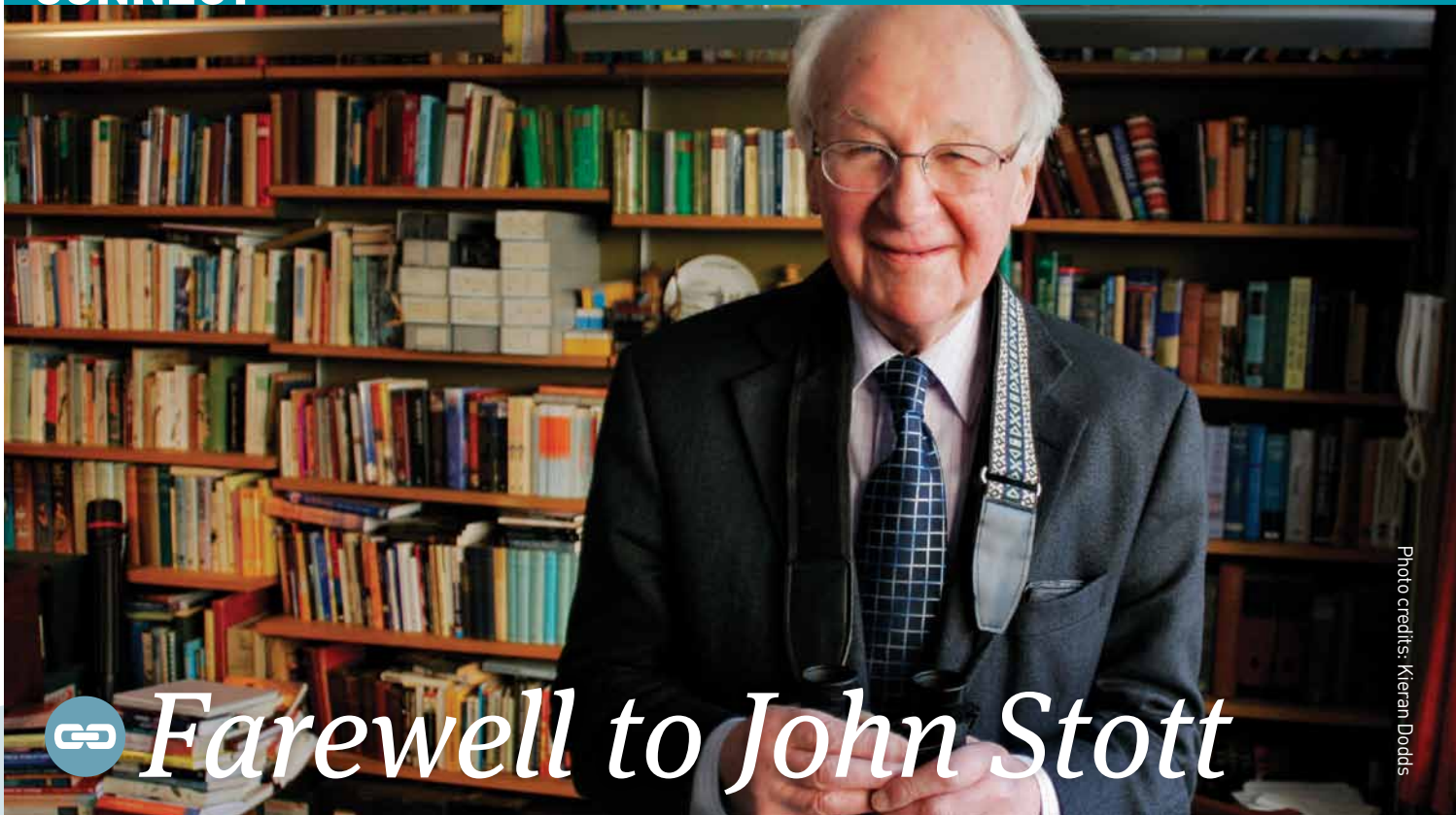


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Farewell to John Stott

Hundreds packed out St Paul's Cathedral in the heart of the City of London to celebrate the life of John Stott – one of the 20th century's leading evangelical thinkers – who died in July, aged 90.

Staff from the Evangelical Alliance, including General Director Steve Clifford, were among 2,000 people who joined Rev Stott's closest friends and colleagues, as well as the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London, at the memorial service on 13 January.

In a touching event including music from the All Souls Orchestra and tributes by Christians from across the globe, the congregation heard how many lives had been touched by the teaching, writing and friendship of the man affectionately known as 'Uncle John'.

Opening the service, Canon Mark Oakley of St Paul's said: "John eschewed public accolades and ecclesiastical preferment and would be embarrassed by any service that dwelt on him or his achievements rather than pointing to his Saviour, crucified, risen and ascended."

Reflecting on the service, Steve Clifford said: "John Stott lived his life simply as a follower of Christ. The celebration at St Paul's Cathedral gathered the Christian community from right around the world.

"We may never know the full impact of his life through his writing and preaching but when the history of evangelicalism in the past century has been written, John Stott will be recognised as a giant of the faith."

Born in 1921 in London, John Stott was a member of All Souls Church, Langham Place, all his life. Among his most celebrated writings were *Basic Christianity* and *The Radical Disciple*. He served as one of the Queen's Chaplains and was awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Years Honours list in 2005 – the same year he was named in *Time* magazine's top 100 most influential people.

Despite his accolades and influence, those who knew him described his humility and his dedication to seeing Jesus glorified above all else – both in the Church and society as a whole.

Paying tribute, Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general of the World Evangelical Alliance, said: "Although many of the 600 million evangelical Christians may never have heard of John Stott, almost without exception they will have been unconsciously influenced through what they or their pastors have read from his pen. The whole of the leadership of the WEA acknowledges with great thankfulness to God the legacy that John Stott has left behind to encourage and guide us."



Comms overhaul: all change!

As many of you will know, we at the Alliance have been working hard to refresh our communications so that we better reflect a relevant, 21st century organisation. For the past year, we've been working with

designers and web-builders, as well as getting input from our members, Council and Board. The time has finally come when you will be able to see the fruits of our labour. The feedback to the revamp of this

magazine has been amazing. So we hope that you'll all visit our new website when it goes live on 1 March and tell us what you think. Look out for new looks to our e-communications as well. Not signed up yet?

Visit eauk.org



Andrew Green: Discrimination against Christians is the subject of a parliamentary inquiry by Christians in Parliament.



Who cares that faith is being nudged out of society?

by Andrew Green, press officer, Evangelical Alliance

Newspapers certainly do. For the past while they have made mileage out of Christians being asked to tone down their religious habits – whether that is wearing a cross at work, medics praying with a patient or, as in recent cases in Devon, putting a stop to parish prayers. In December the Alliance was drawn into the conversation about Bideford Council being taken to the high court over their insistence on maintaining their 400-year-old tradition of prayers before council meetings.

The court case, which has been backed by the National Secular Society (NSS), met with scepticism from the press. *The Guardian* described the NSS as having an “intolerant impulse to inflict their views on others”. The charge is that prayers might embarrass atheists and other faiths. The high court judge has reserved judgement.

Discrimination against Christians is the subject of a parliamentary inquiry by Christians in Parliament. The committee heard from many Christian quarters including the Alliance’s Don Horrocks, head of public affairs, who spoke of the undue amount of discrimination against Christians in society.

The inquiry has been reported in *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. When its findings are written up – the job of Danny Webster, our parliamentary officer – we will expect further media interest.

Broadcast media are taking an interest in a Christian campaign to stop the promotion of marital affairs dating sites. Faithfulness Matters, a coalition that includes the Alliance, was conceived when its founder’s five-year-old son pointed out a maritalaffairs.co.uk billboard poster and asked: “What’s an affair, daddy?” The campaign, headed up by Jon Kuhrt, and which now counts the Church of England among its supporters, has focussed on

Global Personals, a successful business that runs most of the UK’s dating websites and is involved in sites encouraging illicit affairs.

Jon said on Radio 4’s *You and Yours*: “We don’t feel it is legitimate business for a responsible company to be involved in. These websites are toxic and businesses should consider whether they want to support sites that encourage infidelity.” Your press officer is leading the current press campaign for broader interest in this initiative by Jon Kuhrt. Please do visit their website at faithfulnessmatters.net.

What’s coming up ahead of Easter? Expect plenty of opinion around the issue of same-sex marriage in churches. The government consultation on marriage follows hot on the heels of National Marriage Week, of which the Alliance is one of the sponsors, and Valentine’s Day. That gives us plenty of encouragement to reflect on how the country views the definition of marriage and whether newspaper editors will support the traditional view.



WHY I’M A MEMBER

People have come to trust and respect the Alliance as a sound, biblical Christian voice in our nation. It helps us as a congregation to keep abreast of current issues facing the wider Church and is a source of real encouragement as we see God at work beyond our own sphere and family of churches. It certainly is a partnership that makes us more effective in promoting the gospel.

Pete Cowgill, senior pastor, Sutton Family Church

The Alliance welcomes the following new members

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Pembroke

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London Community Gospel Choir: We have the most powerful message.

Basil Meade



Basil Meade has been the driving force behind the famous London Community Gospel Choir for more than 25 years. He spoke to *Anna Moyle* about choir life and his new book, *A Boy, A Journey, A Dream...*

idea: In your recently-published book you tell some fascinating stories of your early childhood in Montserrat. How did these experiences influence who you are today?

My childhood taught me values that I've learned to appreciate more as I've grown older. My father taught us that one of the key things in life is to earn your living by the sweat of your brow. Honesty, self-respect, and don't allow anyone else to disrespect you – he demonstrated all of those values. He taught us also, don't give up easily. He worked sometimes against the unexpected rain showers that would destroy the crops. When you've done a lot of the groundwork, and something comes along that spoils it, you don't throw your hands up and abandon your dreams and what you hope for. The lesson we learned was that the dream is still there to achieve, to realise what your heart longs for.

You write about how your choir helped change the perception of the black community in Britain, and also brought music from the Church to the outside world. What motivated you?

In our black-led churches we realised we were preaching to the converted. Jesus told us to go into the world and share with people who need to hear the message, the good news. We were blessed with the amazing gift of music, a language that cuts across all different religions and cultural barriers. We realised that, because we were getting phone calls from pop groups, people outside the Church wanted to hear it. We have the most powerful message ever. The package is good, and it's good for everyone to share it.

How difficult was it to achieve these things?

We faced difficulties in the pioneering days of forming the choir. We challenged certain things by the very fact that we were inviting youngsters from different denominations and churches. People who called on the name of Jesus, worshipped, sang songs, would have a problem with worshipping together. But the formation of the LCGC put all of that aside. The faith that we all agree on and believe in, let us celebrate that through music. The opposition was there, but if you're determined and you have a passion in your heart to achieve something, the challenges will come and that's what makes it all worthwhile.



CHECK OUT OUR VIDEO
INTERVIEW WITH
BAZIL MEADE ON
EAUK.ORG/SLIPSTREAM



Members of your choir have to be believing Christians, but you also record and sing non-gospel songs from time to time. How do you work all that out?

We were given many opportunities to sing in churches. But the LCGC was from the outset going out to the world. We present the art form, but within that is contained the message of our faith. And I think it's opening more doors: where the preacher will never get, musicians will get invitations to go.

What's your all-time favourite gospel song?

I love the old songs. Wherever we are in the world, I present *Oh Happy Day* and *Amazing Grace*. The audience will respond and react immediately because they are very well-known. These songs are characters in themselves – they will stand for many, many generations.

lccg.org.uk

This year Basil will be touring churches across the UK for 'An Evening with Basil Meade' to support the book; performing songs and speaking about his inspiring journey.





From the Heart (FM)

On Sunday mornings you can find him leading worship at his local church, but on week nights you'll find him broadcasting to millions as the host of the UK's number one late-night music show – *The Late Show on Heart*. Here, he tells us about his career and his faith...

idea: How did you get into the world of DJ-ing?

Like many presenters, I started in hospital radio on a voluntary basis while still at school. On Friday evenings, I'd go round the wards of my local hospital in Dartford, collecting song requests and helping out at the studio, hoping one day they would give me my own show. They eventually did.

What did you want to be when you were a child?

I've always been interested in the media. I either wanted to be a radio presenter or a TV cameraman. I used to turn my bedroom into a pretend studio, record jingles off the radio and present programmes to an audience of one – me. I stupidly gave myself the Breakfast Show which meant getting up at 6am.

What are your top three favourite songs of all time?

I've always found this an impossible question to answer as I've got a wide taste in music. But artists I enjoy listening to include U2, Coldplay, Stevie Wonder, Brand New Heavies, Sting, Deacon Blue, Jamie Cullum and James Morrison.

Tell us about your Christian faith.

I became a Christian when I was seven after a week-long children's event during the holidays. Although I was still very young, I had an absolute certainty that

I didn't want to live my life without God – a decision I've never regretted. I can't imagine life without Him. I'm so grateful that we're not left to battle through day to day by ourselves, but His promise is that He'll never leave us or forsake us. His love and grace amaze me.

Tell us a bit about your family.

I'm married to Esther – this year we'll be celebrating our 14th wedding anniversary. We have three children – Tom, 11, Naomi, 9, and Isaac, 6. All of them have made commitments to God which, as a parent, is one of the most exciting things to experience. We're all members of our local Newfrontiers church, where I regularly lead worship and we both lead a mid-week Life Group together.

Does your faith impact your work?

The world of radio and media can be an insecure, cut-throat business as your success is dependent on listening figures and in a marketplace like London, it's incredibly competitive. Also, because it's essentially your personality that's under scrutiny, you have to be able to handle criticism well and not take it too personally. Having a thick skin at times is essential! Knowing I have God watching over me, who has plans and purposes for my life makes a huge difference. Yes, it doesn't mean everything goes my way, but I do know God will provide my every need and my security is in Him.



BEHIND THE SCENES
AT THE LATE SHOW

What's the best thing about your job?

Working on stations like Heart and LBC 97.3 is a huge privilege. Heart isn't just one of the biggest stations in London, but it's part of a large UK network of stations and my Late Show goes out on all of them. LBC was the very first commercial station in this country and a station I've listened to for years – so to be part of their presenting team is very exciting. Both stations are broadcast from Global Radio's impressive Leicester Square HQ, a building I'd always wanted to work in. Lots of good things!

... and the worst?

Getting to bed at 3am!



Simon has worked in the radio industry for more than 20 years. *The Late Show on Heart* is broadcast Sunday to Thursday nights (10pm – 1am) and *The LBC Travel Show*, which he presents with travel expert Simon Calder, goes out on Sunday evenings (7pm – 9pm) on London's LBC 97.3. He is also a regular voiceover artist for Sky1, the Discovery Channel, the BBC, Argos, Universal and Ministry of Sound.

Twitter: @SimonBeale

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WHAT I WISH THE CHURCH KNEW ABOUT...

Being a Christian IN A SCIENCE LAB

Christians serve God in every area of their lives. As part of our series on science and Christianity, science-faith writer Ruth Bancewicz explores the reality of serving God in the lab...

It's a while since I worked in a lab so, as part of my ongoing efforts to stay in touch with the lives of Christians in science, I recently visited one of the research centres at Cambridge University. At the invitation of someone from my church small group, I met with some early career scientists who get together every Wednesday lunch time for prayer and Bible study. Our conversation over sandwiches and tea revolved around the day-to-day experiences of a Christian who happens to be a scientist, and how often they feel misunderstood.

The idea that a scientist might be a Christian baffles many, both in and out of the lab. Many in the Church fail to

understand why a Christian might spend their days working on complex and specialised experimental systems with apparently little immediate benefit to society.

Science is a vocation. Those searching for money, stability or an easy ride should look elsewhere. God created the universe, and studying it with the tools of science is a demonstration of our gratitude to Him. One of the main drivers for any scientist is curiosity, and asking questions about the world and using our minds to understand it is an act of worship. What better response could there be to being given a world to live in, than to explore it from top to bottom?

Another big driver for scientists is the sense of wonder that comes from discovery. For Christians, the wonder provoked by the beauty and immensity of the natural world has always inspired worship. The Christian who is a scientist is especially privileged in seeing that beauty first-hand.

THE CHRISTIAN WHO IS A
SCIENTIST IS ESPECIALLY
PRIVILEGED IN SEEING
THAT BEAUTY FIRST-HAND.

The process of discovery is usually a long one. My friends in the group I visited used words like 'patience', 'resilience', and 'tenacity'. The daily challenges of life in the lab have helped them to grow as people and in their relationship with God. What do you do when six months of work has been lost, or your latest paper has been scooped? The lab is a crucible for spiritual development.

Every scientific project is aimed towards practical outcomes, but at times these may be very far off or difficult to explain. A scientist's faith might motivate them to work on projects that lead to more immediate technological outcomes, but even then progress towards such outcomes can be painfully slow. On the other hand, faith can give the hope required to work in a field where possible outcomes may only be realised far in the future.

A Christian's faith will affect the way in which they work alongside colleagues, and their ethics. At times it may even affect the way in which they interpret their results, because their faith makes them open to new scientific discoveries. It was belief in an independent Creator that drove the first scientists to get out and examine the world in the first place. We cannot second guess God - who are we to predict how things will be? What is out there is far more exciting than anything we could dream up.

cis.org.uk
scienceandbelief.wordpress.com
testoffaith.com

Dr Ruth Bancewicz is a research associate and leader of the Test of Faith project at The Faraday Institute for Science & Religion, Cambridge. She is also a trustee of Christians in Science.



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Andrew Wilson:
It's all part of the
groaning of creation

? Why did God create wasps?

Would an all-loving God create these horrid creatures? Theologian and church leader *Andrew Wilson* takes a godly look at these pests...



This is a fascinating question. Why exactly did God create these small yellow and black creatures who have been making a nuisance of themselves for centuries and spoiling everybody's fun?

I guess ultimately this question is about the goodness of God, creation and suffering. Why would an all-good God create an animal which looks very much as if it's been designed to cause pain to other creatures? Doesn't that cast doubt on His goodness? What's the deal here?

To be honest, this question could be asked of pretty much every creature. The sting of a wasp, like that of a nettle, and the charge of an electric eel, is a survival mechanism: a weapon the creature has to defend itself, prolong its life and hence also its chances of reproduction. The rhino has horns, the acacia tree has spikes, skunks have scent, and the bombardier beetle has a 200 degree Fahrenheit blast from its rear end (which, while we're on the subject, is the one I'd choose). All of these features, and many less obvious ones, are designed to help the creature survive (and that's without starting on the carnivores). It just so happens that we find wasps more irritating than most, because skunks and rhinos don't usually maraud around our gardens and sit on the jam scones.

Biblically, the struggle for survival, with all the defence – and attack – mechanisms it requires in animals, is part of the groaning of creation, the pining of a world that has been subjected to futility, desperate that it might one day be liberated into the freedom of the people of God (Romans 8:18-25). Human beings were commissioned to spread God's image and kingly

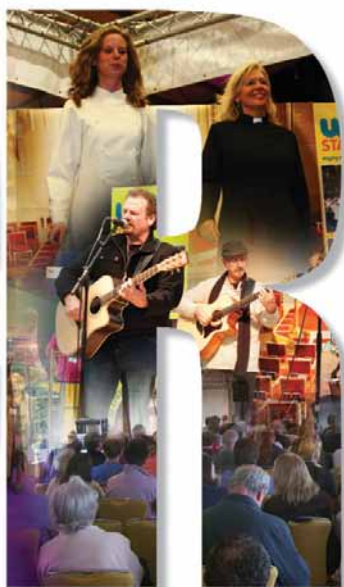
“WASPS ARE A
DAILY REMINDER
THAT THE WORLD
IS NOT WHAT IT
IS GOING TO BE.”

rule throughout the earth, subduing it and causing it to flourish as we went. But we rebelled instead, and creation is suffering the consequences (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:5-15; 3:17-19). Through our resurrected king Jesus, however, we have a certain hope of a resurrected world where there are no wasp stings, no tornadoes or earthquakes, no pain or death, and where wolves and lambs hang out together (Isaiah 65:17-25). In that sense, wasps are a daily reminder that the world is not what it is going to be.



But I'm not sure that's why God created them. I think God created wasps for three reasons. One, they look cool. Yellow and black look good together: just witness the way everyone wants yellowjacket wasps on their logos. Two, they keep humans humble. Without the wasp, we'd be all smug about being at the top of the food chain; wasps keep us in our place. And three, they make the Schmidt Sting Pain index possible – perhaps the most brilliant and eccentric scientific index there is (possibly apart from the Scoville Scale, for measuring the hotness of chillies). The yellowjacket wasp, for example, is given a pain index of 2.0 out of 4, with the following official description: “Hot and smoky, almost irreverent. Imagine WC Fields extinguishing a cigar on your tongue.” Brilliant.

So that's why I think God created wasps.



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North Korea tops persecution watch list for 10th year

North Korea remains the hardest place on earth to be a Christian, according to Open Doors' World Watch List 2012, but Sudan and northern Nigeria both saw persecution of believers rise dramatically in the past year.

Sudan and northern Nigeria, which has recently seen violent clashes between Christians and the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram, saw steeper increases in persecution than 48 other countries where Christians suffered abuse in 2011.

Northern Nigeria jumped by 10 places in the annual ranking, from 23 to 13, as guerrilla-style attacks and increased government restrictions made Christian life in the region even more difficult.

"Nigeria continues to be the country where the worst atrocities in terms of loss of life occur, with over 300 Christians losing their lives this year, though the true number is thought to be far higher."

North Korea tops the Open Doors World Watch List for the 10th year in a row. The country, which saw the death of its leader Kim Jong-il and who was replaced by his son Kim Jong-un last year, is extremely difficult for believers. People risk being killed for owning a Bible and Christians are routinely arrested, murdered or sent to labour camps.



But Open Doors believes there are signs of hope, with an estimated 400,000 believers in the country.

Eddie Lyle, CEO of Open Doors UK and Ireland, said: "For many, persecution against Christians appears to be acceptable, but every year, thousands of believers lose their families, their livelihoods and even their lives.

"Kim Jong-un and his government stand at a crossroads but the door is open for them to turn their backs on years of self-imposed isolation and the politics of fear.

"The history of the last 50 years has proved that walls erected by man which oppress even the most basic of human rights will not survive. Christians around the world are praying for a new beginning for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."



CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO, WHICH TELLS YOU MORE ABOUT THE WORLD WATCH LIST

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Church in 'The Dock' of the Titanic

by Paul Meneely

April marks the centenary of the world's most famous ship, the Titanic, built in Belfast by Harland and Wolff. It has been claimed that 'Titanic' is the third most recognised word in the world, after 'Coca Cola' and – thankfully – God. This is a remarkable feat considering the tragically short life span of what was at the time the largest passenger steam ship in the world.

The centenary will be marked by numerous events including the opening of the iconic Titanic Belfast visitor centre in the newly redeveloped Titanic Quarter. It will also see the launch of one of the most exciting expressions of church in Northern Ireland – The Dock.



Chris Bennett with his co-chaplain Karen Spence

Until recently, the former shipyard where the Titanic was built has been largely underused. Now an exciting regeneration project has seen the area begin to thrive and dramatically change the landscape of Belfast. At the heart of this you'll find Chris Bennett steaming ahead with an innovative idea – The Dock – a church on a boat moored in the heart of Titanic Quarter.

This boat reflects a new Belfast. Chris has a vision for The Dock as an area where churches and Christians work together to build community. "Titanic Quarter is a new development; in fact until last year no-one has ever lived in the area," he said. "This means that it's never been identified as belonging to one side or the other." This is unusual in Northern Ireland – a once in a lifetime opportunity to build a new sense of community.

The Dock will provide a shared space, inviting each denomination to provide chaplaincy on the boat and develop a singular sense of community where churches work together at the heart of an area that will include housing, business, retail and tourism.



As a dock acts as an area for building and repairs, The Dock will be an area where new relationships are made, and old ones are restored and celebrated. Northern Ireland needs an area like this more than most.

thedockchurch.org

Meet: David Smyth

The Alliance's new public policy officer introduces himself...

Who...am I?

First and foremost I'm a follower of Christ – perhaps an unnecessary thing to point out given that I now work for the Alliance. However I need to keep reminding myself that Jesus Christ defines me and compels me above my career history, education or interests. I've been married to Jude, a trainee midwife, for three years. We live close to Hillsborough, County Down, and love walking our dog around the lake there.

Where...am I coming from?

After studying law at Queen's University Belfast I worked on a farm and building site and then went travelling around the world for six months. I returned to Northern Ireland with a bigger view of the world and a greater determination to

be a servant for God's good in this land. I completed my legal training in 2008 and immediately prior to this I had been practising as a solicitor in the area of road traffic litigation.

Why...did I apply for this role?

I always wanted to work in applying God's timeless Word to our transient society. I believe that the Bible contains so much wisdom that can practically help to guide us and our government today. This job combines my love for God, His people, His Word and His world – an opportunity I couldn't miss.

What...am I excited about in the year ahead?

I'm looking forward to settling into my role and building upon the great work



that Lindsey Holley has done to date. 2012 is such an exciting year for the UK and Northern Ireland. Stormont will be finalising the Programme for Government in the coming months and I feel so privileged to be a part of the Alliance 'for such a time as this'.

✕ *Raising the bar together*

Evangelical Alliance Scotland national director
Fred Drummond shares his vision for 2012...

Imagine a place where Christians love one another with the passion of Jesus; where they live for justice and mercy on a daily basis – a people who will not speak the harsh language of a consumer culture but transform society with words of hope, encouragement and mercy. Could there be a people who care less about the size of the congregation and more about the advancement of the Kingdom of God?

together to talk about what it would take to see vibrant faith communities in every area of the country. In September we held a conference bringing around 130 leaders together to hear stories about what God was doing in the nation, building confidence, sharing ideas and vision. As an alliance we are ideally placed to bring individuals and churches together to share good news and we plan

to network and to be informed about policy issues, best practice, fundraising etc. The success and growth of Gweini in Wales has led to the development of a similar model in England called Serve. And so this year in Scotland we will also start exploratory talks to see if a united body around the same issues and principles could develop.

Our advocacy work continues to take up a lot of time and energy. The main area we are focusing on is the government consultation around the introduction of same-sex marriage. We've been working with the Scottish government to host two Evangelical Leaders Consultation Meetings to provide an appropriate space for leaders to communicate effectively with government officials and also be equipped to mobilise their churches. Also, we are grateful to God for opening a door for us to take a few key evangelical church leaders to meet personally with Deputy First Minister Nicole Sturgeon. We have also been working in partnership with Care, Christian Institute, the Catholic Church and others to coordinate the Scotland For Marriage campaign. Please remember us in your prayers as we wrestle with this difficult situation.

We continue to promote areas of mercy and justice through the work of Just Generation.

Prayer continues to be central to our work as we are convinced that uniting to seek God has huge significance. Several times in the last year we have worked with partners to call for days of prayer and repentance. These days have been significant in the lives of both individuals and congregations and more are planned for this year.

Lastly, we long to see a new generation of leaders coming forward in the nation. A group of gifted young Christians, called to work in all spheres of society; a group who are mentored, supported and unleashed upon the nation in the power of Jesus. We have had a meeting bringing together young and established leaders and we will be developing this further this year.

God is great, His love is wonderful and we pray that together we will continue to know His favour. Please pray for us as we work towards this vision.



A vision of the Church working in unity – praying, sharing and supporting one another to see transformation take place – in urban and rural areas, workplaces and creative hubs, schools, universities and homes for the elderly. The people of God united, in the power of God, to transform society – witnessing prisoners freed and chains being broken.

That is our vision for Scotland. This is what we work towards.

Last year we brought groups together to discuss a strategy for mission for the nation. On several occasions key leaders of churches and organisations came

to have another conference later this year. This network of mission-focused conversations around sharing the gospel today is something we have invested energy and time into and we will continue to do so. We believe that 2012 could see these discussions move on significantly, bringing forward exciting and tangible results.

One of the really positive stories of the Alliance working in Wales has been the development of Gweini. Gweini is a council of the Christian voluntary sector in Wales working together to speak with one voice into all levels of government,

Presumed consent battle reaches fever pitch

by Gethin Russell-Jones

The UK has seemingly been surprisingly united in its view on organ donation. Until now. Historically, people in the UK have been given a choice whether or not to donate their organs after death by carrying a donor card or signing a national register. But all this could soon change in Wales.

The Welsh government says it plans to have a new law in place for presumed consent of organ donation by 2015. The legislation would require people to opt out of donating their organs when they die, rather than opting in by signing the donor register. Presumed consent.

This announcement has generated furious debate among the nation's leading personalities and institutions. Leading the charge against presumed consent is the Archbishop of Wales, the Right Rev. Dr Barry Morgan. In an address in September, he said: "Organ donation surely ought to be a matter of gift. If one takes organs without consent, on the assumption that by not opting out, a person is tacitly assenting, then that is no longer a free gift to others.

An organ donation ought to be precisely that, a gift, an act of love and generosity. Giving organs is the most generous act of self-giving imaginable but it has to be a choice that is freely embraced, not something that the state assumes. Put more crudely, it turns volunteers into conscripts. Presumed consent is not really consent at all, merely the assumption that there are no objections."

Other Christians are also involved in debating this hot topic. CARE and CICC (Cymru Institute for Christianity – sponsored by Evangelical Alliance Wales) hosted a seminar in January with the title Presumed Consent – Is there a Christian view? Dr Trevor Stammers of St Mary's College, London, outlined the issues



IT HAS TO BE A
CHOICE THAT IS
FREELY EMBRACED

involved and chaired a lively discussion.

Elfed Godding, national director of Evangelical Alliance Wales, said: "This debate is really kindling the public's imagination and it's good to see so many people expressing their views. Evangelical Christians are to be found on both sides of the argument, indicating that biblical truth cannot be contained within one standpoint."

What would Jesus do in Wales?

It's never too early to prepare for a national election. Even though voters in Wales have only recently elected a new group of Assembly members, work has already begun on the next campaign. Evangelical Alliance Wales has secured funding for a three-year project enabling the organisation to develop a manifesto in time for the next Welsh government poll in 2015 or 2016.

The project will be overseen by Welsh government liaison officer, Jim Stewart, and managed by Tony Ford. Speaking

of the project's aims, Jim said: "We are hoping to provide a Manifesto for Wales to reflect a significant Christian view in time for the next Welsh government elections. We will seek to positively share the outcomes with all the main political parties and media and increase our engagement with the political process.

"This will be done in part though the depth of our consultation, in which we will involve large numbers of everyday Christians as well as Christians who are experts in their field."

The consultation will involve the setting up of at least 30 topic groups as well as direct correspondence with key national Christian leaders. A broad range of topics have been identified, including health and wellbeing, environment and climate change, justice, faith schools, social cohesion, and children and young people.

Reflecting on the scope and vision of the project, Jim said: "This is a highly ambitious enterprise and we want to apply the insights of the Christian faith to every aspect of public life."

2012 WHAT'S GOING ON?

BY CLAIRE MUSTERS

With so much going on in 2012, you may be feeling slightly overwhelmed. But as many of the nationwide events provide brilliant scope for evangelism we don't want you to miss out. Here's a practical guide to what's being planned.

MORE THAN GOLD

If you are a sports fanatic, simply wanting to reach out to your community or active in the creative arts, then the opportunities the Games open up to your church are endless. With 90 per cent of the population expected to watch the Games, and the extensive media coverage there will be, putting on events with an Olympic theme will be an easy way to connect with your neighbourhood.

More Than Gold, an umbrella organisation representing the main denominations, was set up to help churches make the most of the Games. Whatever size of church you belong to, and wherever you are in the country, there are things you can do. In the run-up to the Games, guest events can help you make links with other sports-interested people. These could include a sports quiz or a sports tournament with a dinner and guest speaker after. Work with events you already do – if you hold holiday clubs why not put on an Olympic-themed

one during Easter? You could also offer volunteers to host an athlete's family or provide accommodation for an overseas mission team member. The latter are supporting local churches as they seek to reach out – so if your church would like their help contact More Than Gold. Your church could also team up with other local churches to put on community festivals – timed for key points in the Games, such as the Torch Relay or opening or closing ceremony. These could include fun, all-age games and even art and theatre performances.

David Willson, CEO, is excited about the possibilities: "The world's premier sport event is going to see one of the largest inter-church initiatives in the history of the UK. It is going to open the eyes of the public, local authorities, government and the media as to how significant churches can be in serving their community. It is too good an opportunity for any church to miss."

London's Burning is an initiative seeking to prepare the spiritual atmosphere around the Olympic site. If prayer and/or mission are your focus why not get involved? Project director, Rosy Ashley, says: "2012 is an immensely exciting time for London and the UK and we have a commitment to ensure God's love is released on the streets." London's Burning has partnered with Burn 24-7 to hold 30 days of non-stop worship and prayer starting on 14 July and running throughout the Olympics. They are also working with Healing on the Streets to send healing teams out to sites during the Olympics. Pentecost Sunday, 27 May, will see 9,000 worshippers gather at Leyton Orient Football Stadium next to the Olympic Park, to hold a unique, one-off day of prayer and worship.

morethangold.org.uk

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THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE LUNCH

For those that love hospitality, why not jump on board a large, national celebration and host a Big Jubilee Lunch? Up to six million people are expected to take part in the fourth annual Big Lunch on Sunday, 3 June, which is now an official part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The Eden Project, which organises the Big Lunch each year, has asked HOPE to help mobilise churches to get involved. HOPE encourages local churches to be involved in community and do more mission together, in word and action. As one of the few institutions in nearly every single town, village and city it is hoped that church members will use creative ways to serve their neighbours, working with them to hold a once-in-a-lifetime street party that will be remembered for decades.

The Queen's Chaplain is writing a special Grace to be said at the start of the Big Jubilee Lunch – the nearest thing we've had to being a nation at prayer since 1942. Plans are being made for the Grace to be televised at the start of the Big Jubilee Lunch on giant TV screens around the country.

Roy Crowne, executive director of HOPE: "The Diamond Jubilee is a major opportunity for churches to join with their communities to host a Big Jubilee Lunch in a local street. Link with HOPE so that what you do locally has the impact of a national campaign, attracting maximum publicity." hopetogether.org.uk

PENTECOST FESTIVAL

Those interested in media, the arts, technology, comedy, film, debates and worship and prayer will want to get involved in Pentecost Festival, taking place during 18–27 May. There is so much going on: Open Source, the Festival's new media and technology event, a day of Festival Fun in Hyde Park, and a spectacular evening of worship with Hillsong, HTB and Jesus House.

The largest Christian-led festival in London, it is co-ordinated by Share Jesus International in partnership with other Christian organisations. As well as praying for the festival, the team needs volunteers so if you enjoy working behind the scenes or upfront meeting people consider working with them.

Team leader Eunice Obianagha comments: "This is going to be a big year for the Church... We're really excited and hope Pentecost Festival will be a good representation of God's love for the people of London."

pentecostfestival.co.uk

GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER (GDOP)

If you have a heart for prayer you really won't want to miss this event. On 29 September at Wembley Stadium GDOP London are hoping to gather 85,000 people to come before God and ask for His divine intervention in the affairs of our nation.

The initiative is an inter-denominational event and a growing number of leaders are supporting it. They want to see people from every town and city sending representatives so that the whole nation can come together to pray and also tell stories of what God has done in all the initiatives during this jam-packed year.

This is definitely an exciting year – decide what you can be a part of and then get stuck into the opportunities it opens up for you and your church to impact your community.

gdoplondon.com



Timeline of events

18–27 MAY

– Pentecost Festival at venues across central London

26 MAY

– London's Burning prayer and worship event at Leyton Orient Football Stadium

3 JUNE

– Queen's Diamond Jubilee Lunch

JUNE–SEPTEMBER

– International missions teams over to help church outreach initiatives

14 JULY–12 AUGUST

– London's Burning non-stop 24/7 worship and prayer at The Cornerstone

27 JULY–12 AUGUST

– The Olympics

29 AUGUST–9 SEPTEMBER

– The Paralympics

29 SEPTEMBER

– Global Day of Prayer at Wembley stadium



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THE CHILD EXODUS

and how the Church can stop it

BY CHINE MBUBAEGBU

Mass child exodus. One generation from extinction. Teen apostates. These are just some of the headlines representing the dire state that the global Church is in when it comes to the next generation. Everywhere you turn, doomsayers are signalling the end of Christianity as we know it. As populations age, we will be tackling a new generation of young people for whom Christianity is not part of a collective memory.

What is particularly alarming is the rate at which we are losing those who grow up in the Church, but whose faith does not transition into adulthood. According to Christian Research, the Church in the UK will have lost an estimated 1.1 million children between 1990 and 2020.

They also predict that in the year 2020, 183,700 children aged under-15 will attend church compared to 375,300 in 2010. Unless we do something about it now. According to statistician Peter Brierley, it is possible to buck the trend if action is taken. He says the rise in the number of youth workers in recent years

has meant that the Church has not lost as many young people as it could have done. He says that fewer people have left the Church than would have if we had not had as many of these dedicated workers. A mere 104,200 under-15s left the Church between 1998 and 2005, compared to a predicted 256,000. A job well done?

Clearly not. The Bible tasks us in Proverbs 22:6 to “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”. With so many children choosing not to stick with the faith, have we failed? And what can we do about it now?

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 22:6

CHURCH AND CHILDREN

In the Alliance's latest research booklet *How's the Family?*, published in February, it was revealed that 45.5 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that “in my church many young people have stopped attending on Sundays in their teenage years”.

There is lots of research about just why this is. Most of the religious beliefs, behaviours and expectations that define a person's life have been developed and embraced by the age of 13, according to Christian Research. If there isn't a firm foundation in the Bible and the Christian life before that, children are more susceptible to succumbing to peer pressure, to doubting the faith and seeing church life as alien to the real world.

It would seem there is something in the waters, and a recognition that there needs to be a radical step change – a rescue mission in search of our young people. Christian groups and organisations seem to be sitting up and taking notice of these bleak statistics. This is why we're providing a forum to explore the issue in detail with key Christian leaders from across the evangelical spectrum at our Council meeting on 1 March.

Krish Kandiah, the Alliance's executive director: churches in mission, says: “These are awful and scary statistics. We need enough of us to try and make a difference because it doesn't bode well for the future. Will the Church be dead in 2020?”

He says for UK Christianity to continue to be alive and kicking in the next decade, it will take the Church as a whole sitting up and taking notice. And this means the whole Church, as a family, rather than tasking youth workers alone with the responsibility of keeping young people in church.

It's the intentionally inter-generational churches that might keep more young people and foster an environment in which they can transition into adulthood, rather than churches which keep children's work and youth ministry isolated from the main life of the church.

“We are the household of God. We're adopted into God's family. And if that's to

be more than just a metaphor, we have to make church ‘family’ rather than ‘event’. It's relatively easy to leave something that you feel is an event. It's relatively easy to leave something that you view as a provider or a service. But it's harder to leave a family – if you feel this is a family of people that love you and have been through thick and thin with you.”

Take a moment to think about your church. How does it ‘do’ children's work? Are you encouraged as an adult in the church to be active in the lives of younger members? Is the church regularly informed of what's being taught in Sunday School? Does what is being taught to the children bear any relation to what the adults are hearing in the sermons?

The Alliance's research found that over two thirds of evangelicals agree or strongly agree that investing time, people and resources in the outreach and discipling-making of children and young people should be the Church's highest priority. Despite this, less than a third said they know about children's ministry within their church.

If children's work is more connected, then that could in turn enable the young people to be more connected to the Church as they grow older.

“Inter-generational contact is one of the main drivers behind resilient faith, according to the Fuller Youth Institute in the US,” says Krish. “We have isolated children from the wider church and we have not helped them. Many of these children have not experienced adult church and so many of them do not have a role model of what it is to be a normal Christian adult. They don't know what their future looks like within the church context.”

Care for the Family is leading the way on this subject with its Getting Your Kids Through Church Without Them Ending Up Hating God initiative, which aims to help prevent a generation of young people being lost to the Church.

Care for the Family's founder and chairman Rob Parsons OBE recently spoke about what inspired him to start the project. “It was when I was at Spring Harvest some years ago where I witnessed one of the

most moving dramas I've ever seen. Some fresh statistics had just been released about the rate at which young people leave the church. The Big Top was crammed with people – many of them under 20 years old. The narrator began by shouting out: ‘Age 10’. A few children stood up and left, symbolising the number of 10-year-olds who had stopped attending church.

It takes a **WHOLE CHURCH** *to raise a child.*

“Then the narrator shouted, ‘Age 11’ and more children left. With every jump in age, more and more kids headed for the exit. Suddenly, at ages 15 and 16, an avalanche of children seemed to be walking away from the faith of their childhood.

“Those of us who were adults watched open-mouthed as child after child left. My heart broke – I felt absolutely impotent to stop the tide. And I felt incredible guilt. I'm certain that most people in that audience felt the same – but we're not meant to. Most parents, youth leaders, and church leaders don't need another dose of guilt about how we could have done things better. But I sensed later that it could, perhaps, be helpful to consider some of the reasons behind many young people's decision to leave church.”

NON-CHRISTIAN CHILDREN

Even if we retained all the children that attend our churches and Sunday Schools each week, we still need to think about those who have never set foot inside a church building and have no concept or experience of church.

We as a Church have a vision to see the good news of Christ transforming lives, but how will they believe if they have not heard? The Alliance's *How the Family?* found that only a tiny minority of respondents said their churches offered significant outreach activities for non-churched children and young people.

"It seems that even if churches are relatively successful in bringing youngsters from Christian families to faith, too many are drifting away and outsiders are not being gathered in large numbers," says the Alliance's research manager Greg Smith.

"As Christians committed to sharing the gospel and making disciples, what can we do about this? It is noticeable that there is a lack of outreach activities for children and young people from non-Christian families and less confidence in its quality compared with all the other ministries. Is this another example of Christians being happier talking to their own kind than in reaching out to unbelievers?"

Despite the bleak statistics, it's clear that the Church is waking up to the present reality and endeavouring in different ways to see how best we can move from 'rescue work' to seeing both children who have the privilege of growing up in the Church stay in the Church – and bringing the non-churched into relationship with the true and living God.



Recommended reading:

GETTING YOUR KIDS THROUGH CHURCH WITHOUT THEM ENDING UP HATING GOD (*Monarch*)

by Rob Parsons

YOU LOST ME: WHY YOUNG CHRISTIANS ARE LEAVING CHURCH... AND RETHINKING FAITH (*Baker Books*) by David Kinnaman

ALMOST CHRISTIAN (*OUP*)
by Kenda Creasy Dean

ONE GENERATION FROM EXTINCTION (*Lion Hudson*)
by Mark Griffiths

HOW'S THE FAMILY? Report by the Evangelical Alliance, eauk.org/snapshot

"SPRING HARVEST THOROUGHLY EQUIPS CHURCHES TO IMPACT COMMUNITIES"

Steve Gaukroger

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CHURCH ACTUALLY
GOD'S BRILLIANT IDEA

SPRING HARVEST 2012



The gateway to urban mission

by Chine Mbubaegbu

In the latest of our features looking at the work of Christian organisations tackling some of society's biggest issues, we profile the work of the Act Network – a movement equipping churches to engage in social transformation in their communities.

The Church is at its best when it's holistically meeting the needs of those in its communities. And often those who are most in need can be found in urban areas up and down the country. More often than not, there are churches at the heart of these inner cities; churches that often see the need but do not know how they can meet it – especially with their limited manpower.

That's where the ACT Network comes in. The charity is committed to ensuring effective social action ministries go to where they are most needed in the inner city. Working closely with inner-city churches right in the heart of areas with high social deprivation, ACT Network hopes to equip them to be the light in their communities.

Jessica Davies, the London director of ACT Network, says it's all about equipping the Church and changing lives. "We realised that there are some fantastic churches in the inner cities, but yet the statistics remain the same year on year when you look at social deprivation. So something wasn't working.

"We know that there are some excellent ministries, such as

Christians Against Poverty, Food Banks, XLP urban youth charity and educational charity The Lighthouse Group, tackling some specific issues of social exclusion. So we work to put what really works where it's really needed – matching these ministries up with the churches."

One of the main ways ACT Network works is through Mission Year – a scheme through which Christians are connected with inner-city churches to serve a particular area. The Mission Year participants live in shared houses where they are encouraged to build a sense of community and pool their resources within their new home, but also work alongside a particular church in community outreach.

It's similar to The Simple Way – the community home in Philadelphia founded by author and activist Shane Claiborne. Many of the Mission Year candidates reveal that it was Claiborne's teaching on 'intentional community' which first attracted them to taking part in something similar in the UK. There are now 15 London churches which have Mission Year teams serving them.

Jude Padfield of St Paul's Shadwell says Mission Year has really helped the church do what it feels it is called to do – build relationship and be Christ within the community. "It's about building friendships – friendships that are strong enough to carry the gospel. Mission Year integrates people right in the heart of the community where they can build strong, meaningful relationships with neighbours, with shopkeepers."

Speaking to *Jesus Army* magazine about Mission Year, Lord Wei – the patron of the ACT Network, said: "I'm keen to see more Christians try out this more authentic, biblical way of living. We hope that participants will feel that this is something they will want to continue in their own locality. For some, the first-hand experience of poverty and deprivation may determine their life's choice: to live in community, to go into politics, business or church leadership, and pursue an agenda of social transformation. These networks aim to attract Christians who can be an army on the ground, working with local churches to make social change happen."

Meet ACT Network

idea magazine spent a day meeting lots of amazing people who are showing their dedication to social transformation by getting involved with the ACT Network and its projects. We met church leaders, debt counsellors, Food Bank clients, women's outreach works – and just ordinary Christians who feel called to live out their lives in community with each other and with those in need around them. Check out our video in which we introduce you to some of them.

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CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD



Christian
Concern



Coalition for
Marriage

Don't *change marriage*

by Daniel Webster, parliamentary officer

The Alliance joins key Christian organisations in the Coalition for Marriage to protect the institution amid government plans to redefine its meaning.

The Alliance is pressing the government to drop controversial plans to redefine marriage. Following announcements last autumn the government are now preparing a public consultation on David Cameron's proposal to fundamentally redefine marriage by opening it up to gay and lesbian couples.

The government intends to consult on whether or how to introduce same-sex marriage (we do not yet know which), and has suggested that there is a distinction between civil marriage which they plan on changing, and religious marriage which they say they won't. The Alliance, along with virtually every other Christian group, rejects such a distinction as unrealistic, seeing the proposals as an assault on the institution of marriage.

In response, the Evangelical Alliance has joined with other key organisations to form the Coalition for Marriage. Together we will be promoting a continued vision for marriage that has consistently served society well. Marriage is between a man and a woman, and shouldn't be a political tool at the behest of a few, or be subject to the principles of consumerism. It is a distinctive and vital building block for society as a whole.

The consultation, expected in March, will propose that same-sex couples should be allowed to get married. Almost certainly there will also be proposals that churches should be able to host same-sex 'weddings'. Following the consultation it is likely that the plans will begin their passage through the various stages of parliamentary approval, a complex process that could take years. As such, the campaign will need to be a marathon rather than a sprint.



It is important to note that the proposals are not about rights or correction of injustices for same-sex couples. There are already provisions within the law for civil partnerships. The government's proposals represent the outworking of a rights-based consumer vision of society that is determined to get whatever it wants without consideration of the consequences for generations ahead: it is meddling with marriage for political reasons.

The Coalition for Marriage strongly opposes the redefinition of marriage on the basis that, while same-sex couples may choose to have a civil partnership, no one has the right to redefine marriage for the rest of us. Public opinion supports this view and we call on Christians and people everywhere to stimulate a public debate and mobilise popular opposition to prevent this unwelcome proposal becoming reality.

Don Horrocks, head of public affairs for the Evangelical Alliance, said: "We must be prepared for the long haul on this landmark issue. Many people are already speaking of the futility of opposition, but we are confident that with strong popular support we can win the campaign to protect marriage. Marriage is much more than a legal commitment but it is being steadily reduced and weakened by proposals such as this. If these proposals go through the consequences for society

will be huge. The Church has always been at the forefront of promoting the positive benefits of marriage between one man and one woman and together with society as a whole Christians everywhere should be ready to stand up for marriage."

We accept that life doesn't always work out the way we hope it should, but

THE CHANGES PROPOSED AMOUNT TO A MEDDLING WITH MARRIAGE FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

that doesn't mean we should not aspire to ideals, and over 80 per cent of men and women aspire to marriage. Evidence shows that children do best when they are brought up in a stable family environment by the married mother and father who conceived them. Of course, there are situations where marriages break down, where death and divorce prevent fulfilment of this ideal, but it's not something we should give up on.

We urgently need your support. For more information on how you can get involved and how you and your church can help protect and promote marriage, visit our website.

c4m.org.uk



Loretta Minghella OBE:
chief executive of Christian Aid

Putting the Christian back into Christian Aid



Christian Aid has come under criticism from evangelicals in recent years for moving away from its Christian heritage, but it seems a mini revival is going on. We put your questions to Loretta Minghella, the charity's director...

What proportion of Christian Aid's money goes to the people who need it most?

In some cases our money goes very directly to alleviate those in need today but it also helps to change things so there will be no need tomorrow. We are driven by a vision of the gospel as good news to the poor. In Isaiah 58 we're told that when we stand with the poor and the oppressed, God will say 'here I am'. God requires us not only to clothe the naked and share food with the hungry but to loose the chains of injustice. We're passionate about making every single pound work hard and it's not just about operational efficiency but about wise investment. We recently invested in a community coffee mill in Nicaragua. By supporting that project the community now has an international export business of fair-trade coffee and ploughs money into education and healthcare. The facts and figures are that long-term development projects received 49 per cent of our funding this year, 18 per cent went on emergency relief, 16 per cent on advocacy and campaigning, 16 per cent on fundraising and one per cent on administration.

Is it possible for the charity's executives to be non-Christians?

All members of the board of Christian Aid are Christians and many are senior church leaders. The director and all associate directors have to be Christians and many of the staff are Christians. It is the most enormous blessing for me to have a role in which my faith can have such a central place in my work. I know that's also a real motivation for many of my colleagues.

As public funding of faith organisations is scrutinised more by the secular lobby and church membership declines, what does the future look like for Christian NGOs? Will increased scrutiny mean a decrease in funding?

Every NGO is facing a bleak financial climate in which it's difficult to find the funds we need to take our work forward and in which we are asked ever more to demonstrate the impact we're having. As a faith-based organisation we have to be prepared to meet these standards like anyone else. We shouldn't be afraid of increased scrutiny because the feedback we receive from those we work with makes me very confident of our impact and the difference we can make as a Christian NGO and part of a worldwide network of Christian NGOs, the ACT Alliance.

How does Christian Aid feel about the recent secularisation agenda?

Sometimes it feels like we're living in an increasingly secular society and we're aware that being called Christian Aid doesn't always open doors for us. But we're also encouraged – we see other doors opening. It's a time when the government has said they 'do God'. The Department for International Development has been talking to us about how it works with faith organisations and we're pleased to contribute to that. The most important thing when you're under threat is to hold on to your integrity and be clear who you are and what you stand for. You just have to be very courageous. It's a testing time but as a Christian organisation we are up to the challenge of continuing to demonstrate the value our faith brings to the world.

What does it mean to be a Christian charity as opposed to a secular charity?

It makes a huge difference. We have particular things to offer as a Christian organisation that other organisations can't. Our faith gives us a vision of how the world could be that brings unique motivation and inspiration. For example our belief that each human being bears God's image and the biblical hope of a new earth transformed by God's love makes a difference to what we do and how we do it. Being part of the worldwide Church provides fantastic international networks which wouldn't be open to Oxfam or charities of other faiths. The Church goes beyond the end of the road, reaching into the hearts of communities. I was asked recently how I cope despite seeing such misery and it's partly because my faith keeps me going and partly because of the solidarity with other Christians who have the same hope in God and share in God's great mission. We've realised recently that in reaching out to more and more parts of UK society there's a risk we don't give enough focus to the core, church-going supporters who most share our gospel vision. As we move forward we will be focusing more on them, celebrating more not less our status as a Christian organisation.

Is Christian Aid evangelical?

Christian Aid was birthed in the 1940s out of the British Council of Churches and today we retain the support of the breadth of the Church in the UK. Not all of our supporters or the denominations they're drawn from would describe themselves as evangelical. But our work is founded on a biblical vision of who God is and what He requires of



WE ARE AND WILL REMAIN A CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION.

Loretta joined Christian Aid in April 2010. A lawyer by training, with a law degree from Cambridge University, she became the first head of enforcement law, policy and international co-operation for the Financial Services Authority. She became the first chief executive of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and was awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honours in 2010.

us and though we wouldn't describe our work as evangelism we want it to be an expression of the love of God. We're very proud to be who we are. We are and will remain a Christian organisation and cherish the opportunity to help the breadth of the Church end poverty.

What is Christian Aid's view on God and suffering?

Wow, that's a tough one. The Church has wrestled with this issue for centuries and we should all engage with these big questions. What is clear is our response should be to try and alleviate suffering. Looking at Jesus, he was with those who were suffering. If he was here today he'd be with the poor and the marginalised, and therefore so should we.

Are there communities or individuals that you wouldn't try to help?

Christian Aid firmly believes that the good news of the gospel is for every person, that they are made in the image of God and offer inherent worth. Therefore we are proud to work with, through and for people of all faiths and none. We believe that God's mission is to bring light and blessing to all nations.

How do you prioritise what causes to support?

One of our strengths is the analysis we bring to the problem of poverty, examining the structures which keep people poor and ways we can tackle them. We also work with more than 500 partner organisations around the world whose staff best know the needs of local people on the ground. We're currently working around issues of economic justice, secure livelihoods, accountable governance and community health. We're looking to put more emphasis on peace building and gender equality. Recently there has been some great work improving the resilience of communities dealing with the effects of climate change. God's creation is not ours to steal it's ours to nurture.

What is the role of prayer within the organisation?

We encourage vibrant, diverse expressions of faith as the organisation contains both non-Christians and Christians from different denominations. We have a prayer room where staff can gather for prayer at least once a week. Every meeting I have with the directorate starts with a reflection and a prayer. We encourage and are inspired

by prayer with our supporters and we provide lots of resources to facilitate prayer and reflection on our website. I am personally very nourished by the knowledge that people pray for us a lot.

Interview by Joe Ware

Is it your time?



It is reassuring to know that not only has God planned our lives and our 'works' for us, but He has also given us all we need to do them. *And, importantly, our times are in His hands* (Psalm 31:15).

If you are a nurse, could this be the time to consider a fresh opportunity? We are looking for a

Care Nurse Manager in Tunbridge Wells

for our nursing home near the Pantiles. Someone who can lead the care and nursing teams, and deputise for the manager in her absence: and a committed Christian who can empathise with residents' beliefs and take devotions from time to time.

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Neil Hudson: directs the Imagine project for churches at LICC. He also co-leads a church in Salford.

⊕ Releasing whole-life disciples

Neil Hudson, director of the Imagine project for churches at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, is bowled over by the difference leaders make when they focus on the places where most of the church spends most of their time every week...



I was in conversation with the leader of a church which had been part of LICC's Imagine project for three years. I'd been helping him take his church through a dynamic process to equip his whole church to make a difference in the world.

"Everything's changing," Paul said to me. "Before we started this process one of the most common things that people said was: 'I hate what I do out there and I'm pretty sure I'm not where God wants me to be. God wants me to be doing something missionary, not what I'm doing at Asda.'" Now they're telling me: 'This is exactly where I'm meant to be. I may not like the job right now, but it's where God wants me to be and I want to be the best I can be in this place.' That's simply because we've heightened the importance of where they are and commissioned them to be there as Jesus' disciple."

It's easy to lose sight of the simple truth that 98 per cent of the church spends 95 per cent of their time away from gathered church, on their frontline in their world. And it's here that the real work of the people of God takes place. As a church leader it thrills me when people discover they're on the frontline in God's mission to the world. It's energising when people start to believe that God wants to make a difference in their home, in their workplace, in their school or organisation. Leading a church that equips people to be fruitful on their frontline is challenging, though. After all, powerful default settings tend to keep the church neighbourhood-focused and pastor-centric. Energy and attention goes into activities that, for most Christians, take place in their leisure time, in evenings and weekends. So how do we help Christians live their whole life as if it were part of mission?

The Imagine project started over five years ago, in partnership with the Alliance, and others. Along the way, we've learnt a lot from successes and indeed from failures. We've discovered principles

and a dynamic process that can enable leaders to transform Sunday worship, small groups, teaching and social action into activities that equip the whole Church to live out the implications of the whole-life gospel wherever they find themselves.

We've seen church leaders start to change the culture of their churches as they've determined to become a whole-life disciple-making community. Sometimes the change has been dramatic, sometimes slower. We've seen leaders renegotiate their role with their church and gain acceptance that they're not only there to care for people but to equip the Church to be Jesus' followers wherever they are. And when it begins to happen, it's been hugely satisfying for leaders – and not surprisingly for their people. After all, aren't all Christians meant to be full-time workers for Jesus?

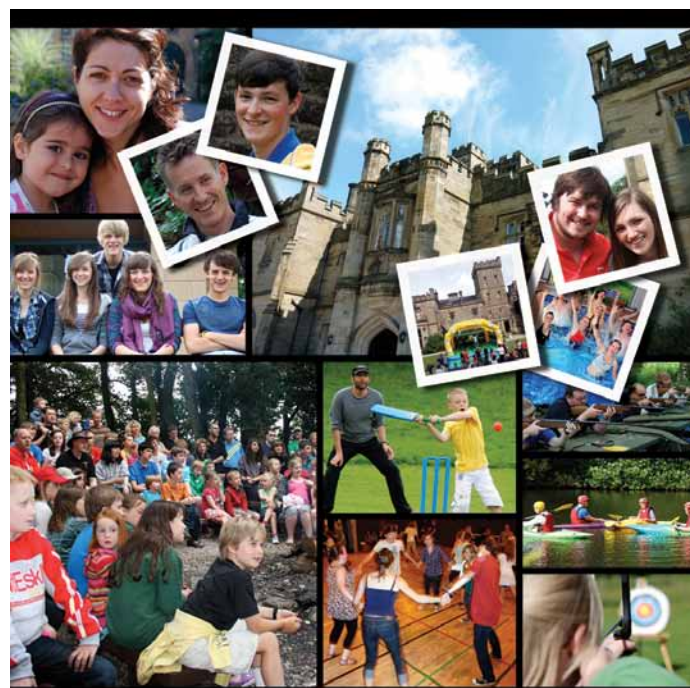
HOW TO CREATE A WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH

Neil will be running workshops in the following locations:

25 April – Leeds; 10 May – Coventry; 22 May – London; 30 May – New Forest. Dates to be confirmed in May for Leeds and Cardiff and for further locations in autumn 2012.

Check out Neil's book, *Imagine Church*, small group DVD resource, *Life on the frontline*, and his Grove booklet, *Leading a whole-life disciple-making church*.

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NEWS



All-female charity crew smashes world records

by Claire Musters

The Row for Freedom crew on board 'The Guardian' smashed two world records, becoming the first five-woman team to row any ocean and achieving the fastest crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by an all-female team.

As part of the world's toughest rowing race, the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, the girls – Julie Immonen, Debbie Beadle, Helen Leigh, Kate Richardson and Katie Pattison-Hart – rowed the 3,000 miles across the Atlantic, starting on 7 December to raise awareness of human trafficking, and to raise £1 million for The A21 Campaign and Ecpat UK.

The challenge was the brainchild of Julia Immonen (pictured), a director's assistant at Sky Sports News, founder of Sports

Against Trafficking and who attends Alliance member church Holy Trinity Brompton. Her love for sport and passion to see an end to human trafficking were the combined inspiration for Row For Freedom.

We spoke to her onboard when they were just 80 miles away from the finishing point – Barbados.

The women endured sweltering heat, terrible sores and chafing – which resulted in them rowing naked – 30-foot waves, storms, sickness, sleep deprivation (due to the constant 24-hour pattern of rowing two hours on, two hours off), hunger, boredom, loneliness, cramp and other aches and pains and didn't even have any contact with their families to help them through it.

Even with the end in sight and the world records within their grasps, Julia's thoughts were still focused on the victims of human trafficking: "The best support you can give us is by donating to these worthy causes or by doing something yourself for freedom - be inspired to make a difference with whatever you are passionate about."

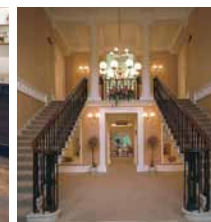


rowforfreedom.com

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DEAD CHURCH?

BY CLAIRE MUSTERS



“What unites us is greater than anything that would divide us.”

With fewer people attending Sunday services the popular press would have us believe that the Church is becoming a defunct voice in society. The latest annual British Society Attitudes survey seems to back this up. It reveals that 50 per cent of the population has no religious affiliation. And the recently published *UK Church Statistics 2005–2015* shows the number of church members has been steadily decreasing since the 1900s. It also reveals that in 2005 the percentage of the population who were active church members was 12.3 per cent, but in 2010 this had decreased to 11.2 per cent.

So is the Church dying a long, slow death? The number of events such as Newday, Soul Survivor, Spring Harvest, New Wine, Creation Fest and the BigChurchDayOut (BCDO), which gather thousands of Christians together, shows there is still a huge, vibrant community of believers.

Tim Jupp, organiser of BCDO, said: “We can so often read discouraging stories about the Church, but my experience is that it is very much alive and stepping up more than ever to take its place in communities.”

As a former member of Delirious?, Tim travelled the world helping to bring together large gatherings of the Church. The band may now have ended, but Tim believes the vision of seeing huge numbers of Christians united in celebration lives on.

Tim remembers how much of an impact going to Spring Harvest as a teenager had on him, and believes that an event such as this opens people’s eyes to how big the Church really is: “One of the things I love is creating an environment where many of the new Christians in our own local church, who often have no church background, can for the first time realise that the Church is a massive and exciting movement of people.”

Around 2,700 Christians attended the first Spring Harvest event in Prestatyn, north Wales, in 1979, and since then it has grown to one of the highlights in the Christian calendar – regularly attracting thousands of Christians from across denominations to its events.

Christian organisations have also done well to particularly attract the younger generations, with events such

as Newfrontiers’ Newday and Soul Survivor’s Momentum bringing young people together to be stirred to action in their faith.

One of the things that Tim loves about big events is the paradox involved: “They are a celebration of unity, yet also a demonstration of our diversity in the Church.

“Having travelled all over the world, I’ve seen that God’s Church comes in so many different shapes, sizes, shades and colours. It’s important that we respect that we don’t all land exactly on the same page with our doctrines and, at times, theology, and don’t allow our ‘positions’ to polarise us relationally from our brothers and sisters.

“If we can’t come together at certain times this not only conveys an image of the Church being fragmented but also enforces the idea that it is in decline. The BCDO is a chance to bring together all the different expressions, if only for a couple of days, which shows the world that the Church is very much alive in the UK today. We need to remind each other that what unites us is greater than anything that would divide us.”



Sophie Lister is a researcher and writer for *The Damaris Trust*. For more articles and study guides see culturewatch.org and toolsfortalks.com

Bread and circuses

According to the Romans, 'bread and circuses' were the key to keeping a population content. As long as their immediate physical needs are met, and they are sufficiently distracted, people will turn a blind eye to almost anything. Sophie Lister writes...

It's a tactic central to the world of *The Hunger Games*, a dark dystopian trilogy whose first instalment arrives on cinema screens this March. In post-apocalyptic America, people in 13 impoverished districts struggle for survival, oppressed by a wealthy minority. To keep the peace, the governing Capitol stages a yearly tournament in which 'tributes' from each district fight to the death on live television. These tributes, selected at random, are young people aged between 12 and 18.

When her beloved little sister is chosen, 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) volunteers to go in her place. In a competition where losing means certain death, there's no room for friendship – even with fellow tribute Peeta (Josh Hutcherson), who once saved her life years ago. Swept away from her family and forced into the arena, nobody expects her to last very long. A lifetime of struggling against the odds, however, has taught Katniss a few valuable lessons. Not only will she refuse to go quietly, but she might just change the game forever.

REALITY TV

Novelist Suzanne Collins dreamed up the idea after idly channel-hopping one night. Flipping between reality television and coverage of the Iraq war, she noticed how "the lines began to blur in a very unsettling way". With the screen placed firmly between us and the real experiences of those involved, it's all too easy for war to become a kind of game – for suffering to become entertainment. What we call 'reality television' thrives on conflict and discomfort. What we call 'news' is often packaged just as much to keep us watching as to tell us any kind of truth.

In *The Hunger Games* those in power are able to manipulate the game, creating heroes and villains, manufacturing moments of peril and tension. The populace is hooked by the unfolding drama.



Jennifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen and Liam Hemsworth as Gale Hawthorne in Lionsgate UK's *The Hunger Games*

The success of the Roman 'bread and circuses' policy – and the increasing trend for cruelty in our own reality television – tells us that such a response is far from implausible.

In his well-known book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman argues that *Brave New World* was a more accurate prediction of today's society than 1984. In George Orwell's 1984, an oppressive government forcibly takes away people's rights. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the population give up their freedoms willingly for the sake of a pleasure-giving drug. Are we, too, somehow medicated into submission by the entertainment we consume? What truths might we be missing because the media offers us a simpler, more appealing world to lose ourselves in?

OPIATE

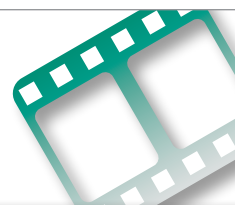
Karl Marx famously said that religion is the opiate of the masses. But in today's world, another force rules hearts and minds. The endless stream of information and images with which we're bombarded can crowd out our ability to ask the big questions. All the noise from our phones and television screens is able to disguise the fact that, in one of the freest countries in the world, we're not as free as we think we are.

The answer is not to simply switch off. We may not live in a totalitarian regime like Katniss, or Orwell and Huxley's heroes, but in some senses our problem goes deeper. We're as willing to deceive ourselves as we are to be deceived, and even without the media's influence, we'd still find ways to avert our gaze from the things that matter. *The Hunger Games* is a warning about our capacity to not just accept the unacceptable, but actively embrace it. The film takes us to a deeply corrupted world – and in doing so, opens our eyes to look more wisely at our own.

The Hunger Games is released on 23 March.



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EA “Organic worship is something authentic and fresh, not artificial and processed.”



Homemade worship

by Claire Musters

With their second album already receiving acclaim, Rend Collective Experiment continue to push boundaries to express ancient truths in new ways in line with their passion for engaging the Church in heartfelt worship. We caught up with them to find out more about the story behind their latest album, *Homemade Worship by Handmade People*, and their ‘organic’ vision.

idea: How did you come together as a band?

In 2004 we were simply a group of 20-somethings trying to figure out life, God, community and kingdom living. We had each played in worship teams together over the years but never came together in an official sense. After we graduated we started writing and recording songs together. By 2007 we had grown into a collective of musicians and artists that were simply trying to share with the world what we were learning. We see ourselves as a family more than a band.

What exactly is ‘organic’ worship?

Organic worship involves the collective of Christ coming together; school teachers, stay-at-home mums, musicians, doctors and plumbers all joining in one song to respond to the living God.

Organic worship, as it suggests, is something authentic and fresh, not artificial and processed. In Hosea we read that God desires steadfast love above sacrifice, to truly know Him above simply attending church and prayer meetings. God is looking for an authentic and living response from us.

What’s the story behind your new album?

Each album was written within a certain time frame of our lives. Some of the songs on the first album are nearly seven years old and they reflect our journey with Christ at that point. As we continue to follow after Him we experience new things both of God and life. These songs are snapshots of moments in time within that journey so it is quite natural that there are songs that feel slightly different to others. In the new album we tried to get the balance between worship songs for the Church and music that reflects the creative nature of God. Ireland is called the land of saints and scholars and that depth of history and culture massively affects our approach to writing and music. Like hymn writers of old we try to pursue lyrics that empower us to see God more clearly. The album was written and recorded in our own homes over a period of a year. We wanted it to come purely from us, and have that intimacy of producing it from our family homes. We are all handmade people – individuals, beautifully created by God’s hands – and the album is our response to this wonderful truth.

You have already been on tour with Chris Tomlin and Francis Chan. What do you hope the future holds for Rend Collective?

We have had the opportunity to minister with some of our heroes of the faith and this is something we count a great privilege. Our greatest hope, however, is to grow closer to the heart of God as a band. The world needs people who primarily yield their hearts to be changed by the grace of God so that, as His reign comes in us, we will see His kingdom come here on earth.

THE LOFT SESSIONS

by Bethel
(Kingsway)

The Loft Sessions is one of the most refreshing worship albums released over the last few years. A mix of old and new from a wide collection of Bethel's songwriters, who are transforming the way we listen, reflect and worship in our homes. This album is Bethel's latest addition to their growing catalogue, which continues to shape the church worship 'scene' across the UK. *The Loft Sessions* still embodies all the passion, excitement and inspiring desire for the presence of God that can be expected from Bethel but with a very different approach. The appropriately titled album is an enchanting collection of soft melodies and atmospheric harmonies, which draw the listener right into the room with them.

Reviewed by Chris Smyth

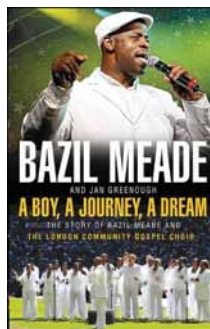


A BOY, A JOURNEY, A DREAM

by Basil Meade
& Jan Greenough
(Monarch)

If you had told Basil Meade in 1982 that one day his choir would perform at Glastonbury and record a song with Paul McCartney, he might have laughed. But 30 years on, the man from Montserrat has accomplished that and much more through the London Community Gospel Choir which he founded. This book takes us on his journey from his boyhood on the Caribbean island, to the shores of England, to his travels around the world with the choir. In it we get insights into how the choir helped change the perception of the black community in Britain, and also took gospel music from the churches into mainstream British culture, all while witnessing to the gospel of Christ.

Reviewed by Anna Moyle

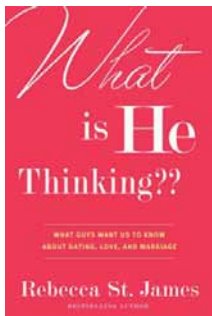


WHAT IS HE THINKING?

by Rebecca
St James
(Faith Words)

Rebecca St James delves into the minds of men on a quest to help Christian women navigate the murky waters of dating, love and marriage. We hear from a selection of single and married guys on: turn-offs, flirting, expectations, communication, boundaries, spiritual connections and more. An alternative to modern dating classic *He's Just Not That Into You*, much more realistic and wholesome than a chick flick. There is a healthy challenge to women, to trust God with their love life and become the secure, Jesus-focused and right person, as they keep a look-out for Mr right.

Reviewed by Lucy Cooper



THE ACCIDENTAL PILGRIM

by Maggi Dawn
(Hodder & Stoughton)

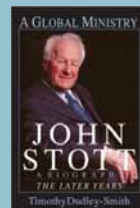
Maggi Dawn writes a charming tale of how she found herself in the footsteps of pilgrims, discovering along the way the physical and spiritual journeys those who had gone before her had taken. This is not really a book all about pilgrimages, but it begins with an extensive section reflecting on her experiences in Israel and follows this with accounts from Lindisfarne, Walsingham and Rocamadour. From these journeys we are told a little about the key historical significance of such places, but much more about the lessons Maggi Dawn took away from them. I put the book down and wanted to pick up my walking boots, but knowing too that pilgrimage is a matter of the heart as well as the feet.

Reviewed by Danny Webster



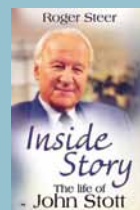
idea-list

Recommended biographies of John Stott, who died in July last year:



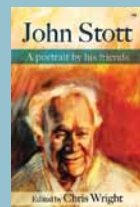
JOHN STOTT:
A GLOBAL MINISTRY
(IVP)

by Timothy Dudley-Smith



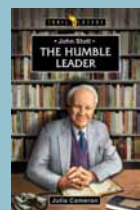
INSIDE STORY:
THE LIFE OF JOHN
STOTT (IVP)

by Roger Steer



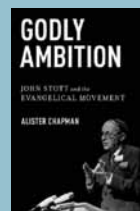
JOHN STOTT:
A PORTRAIT BY
HIS FRIENDS (IVP)

by Christopher Wright



JOHN STOTT:
THE HUMBLE LEADER
(CHRISTIAN FOCUS
TRAILBLAZER)

by Julia Cameron



GODLY AMBITION:
JOHN STOTT AND
THE EVANGELICAL
MOVEMENT (OUP)

by Alister Chapman

We are joining HOPE in encouraging churches to take part in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Big Lunch. So we asked Christian leaders who they would most like to dine with – apart from Jesus...

William Wilberforce – a fellow Yorkshire man, it is reassuring to know we would understand each other as we chatted over a meal. So many questions about his conversion, his faith and of course his long fight against slavery – how did he keep going against so much opposition, what lessons could we learn as we respond to similar challenges in the 21st century global village?

Steve Clifford,
general director,
Evangelical Alliance



I love people and some of the most fascinating people that have impacted me the most are the marginalised. Those that I'd love to take out to lunch are those whom when you see them, you make a judgement about but when you've had lunch with them you get to discover the story behind the story; their story. They have a profound effect on changing me.

Roy Crowne,
executive director,
HOPE



The mothers who raise the kids in Kampala Children's Centre. Their love and care lie at the heart of the homes where orphaned kids become a new family. This story of Christ is lived out in a community of faith, comfort, hope and destiny. The spirit of adoption at work in people who ache for a new day and live in its light.

Marijke Hoek,
Forum for Change co-ordinator,
Evangelical Alliance



I would have four guests around my lunch table. My first would be my dad who died when I was in my early teens. It would be great to spend time catching up and letting him know about my family. My second would be Martin Luther King Jr. Having spent time studying in Atlanta and travelling around the south, it would be great to ask what he thinks of America now. Thirdly, the photographer Ansell Adams. I am interested in the power of image, capturing things in a moment, and impact. Lastly, any of the original Celtic Christians to ask more about community, spirituality and mission.

Fred Drummond,
Scotland national director,
Evangelical Alliance



St Columba. As the person who brought Christianity to Britain through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, it would be great to chat with him about mission and evangelism.

Dave Landrum,
director of advocacy,
Evangelical Alliance



That's easy – Wilberforce. As well as being a legendary reformer he had a reputation for being great company. Sitting in his carriage on the way to a meeting or event, he would think about who he was going to meet and make notes about what was happening in their lives so when he later chatted to them they sensed his genuine interest.

Peter Lynas,
Northern Ireland national director,
Evangelical Alliance



For me it would be John Wesley. Could I solicit his groundbreaking insights into effective evangelism among the working classes, visitor-friendly church services, social transformation and keeping a full head of hair over a Starbucks coffee with a chicken and tomato panini? I'm not sure but I'd like to try.

Elfed Godding,
Wales national director,
Evangelical Alliance



I'd like to invite St Benedict to lunch. He looked at the scoundrels in the city, at the corruption and profligacy that was Rome and decided to go and live in a cave instead! I'd ask him to write us a 21st century Rule to reinstate holiness in Europe.

Jenny Taylor,
director of Lapido Media



IN YOUR WORDS



We love hearing from you, so have your say on any of the issues raised in *idea* or any comments about the Evangelical Alliance by emailing idea@eauk.org

INTERESTING INSIGHTS

Congratulations on an excellent new format for *idea*. I have been a member for over 30 years and this magazine is probably the best I have received.

The content is wide-ranging and I did particularly appreciate the leadership material, and the stronger emphasis on mission and evangelism without sacrificing the political/social elements of Alliance life. It was a good read and there were some interesting insights to get you thinking alongside personal features and wider issues relevant to the UK and in the wider world.

Rev John Williams, Bicester, Oxfordshire

ACCESSIBLE

I appreciate the revised format of *idea*. The whole layout seems much more coherent and appears to have more substance than before. It makes an even better read than previously and the range and style of articles seems to be broader and more accessible to the general reader who has not been immersed in the Alliance for many years. I have been a member for 25 – 30 years and this is the best edition to date. Well done. But there is one small caveat regarding the use of font colours. Please maintain a clear colour contrast between font and background. Yellow on white is about the worst it can get.

John Parry, via email

Editor's reply: In response to the several comments we got about the use of font colours, we have said goodbye to the yellow!

SPORTING ASPIRATIONS?

As I read My Hope for 2012 (Jan/Feb) I was surprised to see how many of the

quoted Christian leaders included sporting aspirations as their hopes for the coming year. I know of non-Christians who are far more obsessively 'religious' about their football teams and who worship them with more fervour and devotion than some Christians worship their Saviour, and I wonder if we are not wary enough of the potentially negative impact this so-called national 'love of sport' has in our society? When one considers the immense emotional, physical and competitive commitment that such activity may lead to, are we aware enough of that impact when we encourage such a grounding for our children? While I can imagine a youthful Jesus having fun with his friends kicking an old, blown-up wine skin about, I struggle to see how he would cope with the ethos behind many of today's sporting activities/excesses.

Martin Chilvers, via email

PROTEST AND POLITICS

Canon J John is brave to answer the question: should Christians protest? (Jan/Feb). And yes, politics will always be a bit of a minefield as he points out. However, I'm not sure about some of the principles J John suggests we should apply when deciding whether to protest or not. Should we really just protest on behalf of others, rather than ourselves? While concern for the plight of others is clearly right, we can protest against injustice we suffer too. When women campaigned for the right to vote in the UK, they eventually won. However, they did not just win for themselves, but for generations of women to come. Clearly that makes it right to rattle your own chains a bit. Secondly, should we protest only as a last resort? Apart from a general election every five years, we don't have many opportunities to change things. Writing to your MP is OK but I'm not sure how much difference it really makes. We do need the right to protest peacefully when we feel the time and issue is right. Finally, how can we really guess if our protest has a reasonable chance of being successful? I'm not sure how you could calculate those kind of odds, unless you made totally unreasonable or impossible demands. In campaigning for justice we must always hope for success.

Graeme Kemp, via email

Alliance postbag

"Just a line to say that your organisation has done fantastic work in breathing new life into so many churches. I do not normally write letters such as this but felt a deep calling to do so. I ask you to please urge all your churches and members to focus deeply on the fact that Christianity is not just about singing and praying, nor just about doing a few hours of charity work a month. It is also about daring to be a Daniel and vocally supporting those that challenge greed and division in our world."

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idea is published bimonthly and sent free of charge to members of the Evangelical Alliance. Formed in 1846, the Alliance's mission is to unite evangelicals to present Christ credibly as good news for spiritual and social transformation. There are around two million evangelical Christians in the UK, according to a 2007 Tearfund survey.

idea is published in accordance with the Alliance's Basis of Faith, although it is impossible in every article to articulate each detail and nuance of belief held by Alliance members. Articles in *idea* may therefore express views on which there is a divergence of opinion or understanding among evangelicals.

Letters and story ideas from members are welcome, and will be considered by the editorial board, which reserves the right to edit letters and stories for length and style. We regret that we are unable to engage in personal correspondence. Unsolicited material will only be returned if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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Gaining confidence *in the gospel*

Twice a year around 100 senior evangelical leaders gather as the Council of the Evangelical Alliance to influence our work and grapple with some of the big issues the Church and the nation are facing. I'm deeply grateful for these busy people – heads of denominations, CEOs of organisations, senior church leaders, MPs, key influencers in business – who sacrifice their time and energy to be with us.

Last September's Council could go down in history as one of the most significant of our time. The subject was 'Confidence in the Gospel'. The contributors included Nicky Gumbel, Rico Tice, Tim Keller, Laurence Singlehurst, Les Isaac, and Chris Duffet of the Baptist Union, Ade Omooba of Christian Victory Group, and Andy Croft and Mike Pilavachi (Soul Survivor). As I sat listening to the amazing contributions, I thought back to that little Lancashire chapel where, at 17, I heard the Easter story again knowing deep down that it was true and that nothing could stay the same. I thank God for the power of the gospel to change lives. Over the years I have seen its impact yet remain frustrated that there are still millions across the UK who have never heard the good news.

At Council we reflected on how 20th century evangelicalism, in reaction to what was termed the 'social gospel', rejected social engagement, reducing the gospel to an evangelistic campaign – the gospel service, street preaching, or the distribution of tracts. I thank God for the wisdom, bravery and spiritual insight of leaders such as John Stott and Billy Graham who nailed their colours to the mast and declared that a gospel which is true to the life and ministry of Jesus could not simply be about words, it had to involve action. Initiatives such as Message 2000, Soul in the City, and Hope08 have seen churches come out of their buildings demonstrating and proclaiming the love of God to their communities.

So why a Council on 'Confidence in the Gospel' particularly when we recognise the



impact of initiatives such as Alpha (so far 17 million people have attended a course), Christianity Explored, Hope, More than Gold, or other courses or initiatives which have served the Church over the years? Perhaps the answer can be found in the faith survey which we conducted in 2010. Of the 17,000 surveyed, nine out of 10 evangelicals believed all Christians should be involved in sharing their faith but when it came to it just six out of 10 managed it once a month (this contrasts with an average evangelical Christian volunteering over two hours per week in their communities). At the beginning of the 21st century, some of us are struggling with the words of the gospel, struggling to find the right vocabulary, metaphors or stories which communicate with a secular society which has little or no background of biblical understanding and no history of Sunday school or church.

I hope the impact of the Council will be seen over the next months and years within our work, including a recognition of the need for fresh, creative and experimental evangelism which reaches people where they are rather than perhaps where we would like them to be. We recognised the need to learn from each other, to tell

the stories of what is happening around the country so that best practice can be reproduced and so we can be encouraged as we hear of people coming to faith and of lives being changed. We also recognised the need to explain the gospel in its full biblical context, steering away from a consumer gospel, recognising the call to make disciples, not simply converts.

We will work with our member organisations and churches to explore how we can together raise the bar in the confident Holy Spirit-inspired communication of the wonderful good news of the gospel across the UK. We'll commission research on bright spots across the country, and bring together thinkers and practitioners, helping shape our theology and sociological understanding. We'll study trailblazing churches to explore creative and experimental evangelism in practice. So watch out for the stories and articles here in idea, on our website and in our email communications.

eauk.org/confidence
insideoutcourse.org



TIM KELLER,
NICKY GUMBEL AND
MORE ON CONFIDENCE
IN THE GOSPEL

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£25 allows Langham Partnership to keep growing more Christian scholars from outside the West.

Abel Ngarsoulede (CHAD)

- As a boy he watched his pastor being buried alive for his commitment to Christ
- As a church leader he worked with the government and rebels to bring peace to his nation
- As a Christian leader he is studying at Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, Central African Republic, in order to serve his people even more effectively back home in Chad

Go to our Video Gallery

You Tube



Watch an interview with Abel Ngarsoulede (CHAD) as he tells his story

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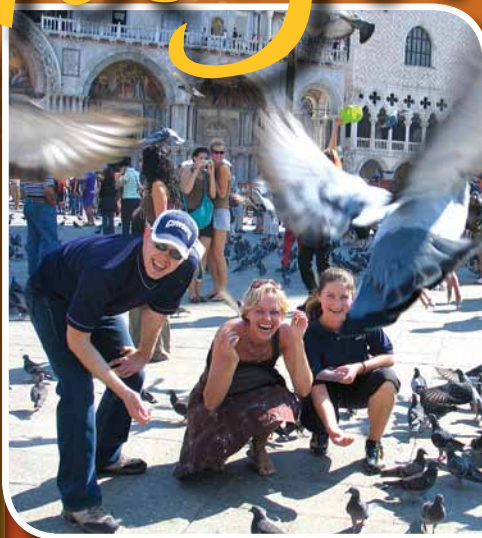


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