

Together in Christ

The electronic ecumenical update for Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney

Welcome to the bi-monthly electronic ecumenical update for Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney (NWCT). Here you will find general information on ecumenism so that together we can deepen our understanding of Church Unity. It also includes details of ecumenical activity across our county, as well as what is happening nationally through Churches Together in England (CTE) and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). For further help or support around Church Unity please contact your Denominational Ecumenical Officer or the County Ecumenical Officer (details included below).

County Ecumenical Officer Update - Dr Ian Watson



County Ecumenical Officers (CEOs) are appointed to support and encourage local ecumenism (churches working together) across a particular county, metropolitan area or large city.

I am delighted to have been appointed to the non-denominational role of County Ecumenical Officer for Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney (NWCT). I am here to listen to you and support what we are doing, or wish to do, in regard to Church Unity. My aim is to use this regular update as an educational resource and to highlight our ecumenical activities across Norfolk and Waveney so we can learn from each other and share the gifts of our different Christian traditions. The update will include regular contributions from our Church leaders, the seven Denominational Ecumenical Officers (DEOs) and those involved in ecumenical projects across our region. It will

also highlight how our Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) and local Churches Together groups are getting on. It will provide different views on ecumenism, as well as details of forthcoming events in Norfolk and Waveney. It will include links to national ecumenical activities and the many support tools available to help with our local effort to strengthen Church Unity.

In this first update I want to focus on what support we already have in place for Church Unity, and what my agreed priorities as your County Ecumenical Officer (CEO) will be as I settle into the role. The role of CEO is essentially to support, encourage, enable and communicate the progress of Church Unity. More broadly the key functions are:

- Support the Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney Leaders and their seven Denominational Ecumenical Officers (DEOs).
- Facilitate Ecumenical Dialogue - build relationships and create an atmosphere conducive to open/ respectful dialogue among diverse traditions.
- Offer Support and Guidance - listen empathetically and offer practical advice and support for local Church Together initiatives within our region.
- Coordinate Ecumenical Initiatives – help to review, develop and initiate local ecumenical projects.
- Represent Churches Working Together in Norfolk and Waveney (NWCT) at local, regional and national ecumenical meetings.

It is a part time role therefore being clear on what the priorities are is important. Of course, these will change over time but initially my focus will be on building relationships, getting up to speed and understanding what already is in place across the region, reviewing and enhancing communication around Church Unity, supporting the NWCT leadership group in achieving their mission statement, and working with others to support and progress the review of our existing LEPs and other local initiatives around Church Unity.

To contact me please
email: [nwct-
watson@outlook.com](mailto:nwct-watson@outlook.com)

Denominational Ecumenical Officers (DEOs)

Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney is an intermediate body of Churches Together in England (CTE). It involves seven Christian denominations and each one has a Denominational Ecumenical Officer (DEO). The role of a DEO is to represent and advise their own church leaders on Church Unity. They are also here to specifically support you in ecumenical activities and advise on any specific denominational consideration. DEOs meet formally in a committee convened by the County Ecumenical Officer four times a year. The current DEOs are:

Denomination	DEO	Email
Roman Catholic	Laurette Burton	laurette.burton@nwct.org.uk
Methodist	Revd David Ely	david.ely@methodist.org.uk
Baptist (Temp Cover)	Revd David Mane	david.mayne@easternbaptist.org.uk
Friends (Quaker)	Liz Hoffbauer	melizhoff@gmail.com
Salvation Army	Major Dr Paul Robinson	paul.a.robinson@salvationarmy.org.uk
Anglican	Vacant	
United Reform	Vacant	

The Leaders of Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney

Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney are made up of seven denominations. The church leaders who make up the leadership group are:

Ecumenism is an organic part of the life and work of the Church. As Christians the drive for Church Unity pervades all that we are and do. Saying that, it is not about abandoning or undermining our distinctive traditions. The emphasis is on unity not uniformity.

In **Norfolk and Waveney**, there is a strong history of coming together in prayer and worship, recognising our unity through the Spirit of Christ.

We engage in shared study and dialogue to deepen our understanding of one another, and to mutually benefit from the experience.

Collaboratively, we **Walk Together** to spread the message of Jesus Christ by demonstrating God's care, love, and justice to those who are suffering and in need across our county.

Ultimately, we foster friendships, enjoying the companionship of fellow disciples as we journey together with the Risen Lord.

- Revd Canon Julian Pursehouse (Chair in East Anglia Methodist District – who also acts as Convenor of the Leadership Group)
- Major Howard Russell (Divisional Commander of the Anglia Division of the Salvation Army)
- Ms Liz Hoffbauer (The Society of Friends - Quakers)
- Revd Lythan Nevard (Moderator for the Eastern Synod URC)
- Revd David Mayne (Regional Minister Team Leader for the Eastern Baptist Association.)
- Rt Revd Peter Collins (Roman Catholic Bishop of East Anglia)
- Rt Revd Graham Usher (Diocesan Bishop in the Church of England)



The seven Church Leaders meet formally twice a year. They last met on 27th November 2023 and were hosted by Bishop Peter in Poringland, Norwich. Among the things they discussed was the desire to update the mission statement for Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney. A Church leaders' personal covenant for Church Unity was first produced in 1991 but none of the signatories are still in office, so it is somewhat dated now! The Leaders see this as an opportunity to refresh our approach to Church Unity and recommit to the shared mission of ecumenism.

Leaders agreed to affirm and sign the new ecumenical mission statement in a service of public commitment and thanksgiving. This is to be held on the day of Christ the King (24th November 2024) in the Anglican Cathedral as part of Evensong at 3.30pm. It will be immediately followed by a reception of thanks. We are pleased that the service will include a sermon from Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, a key national and influential figure in the ecumenical movement. For all those involved and interested in local ecumenical action across Norfolk and Waveney, this will be followed up at a later date by a short workshop on implementing the ecumenical mission statement with invited speakers.

It will be great to pack out the Cathedral at this joyous ecumenical event, so please make a note in your diary and come along to pray alongside our Church Leaders as they publicly declare their commitment to Church Unity.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) in Norfolk & Waveney

One of the tasks of the County Ecumenical Officer is to work with the DEOs to support our Local Ecumenical Partnerships. LEPs are formal ecumenical agreements based on a constitution between two or more denominations. Norfolk and Waveney has over a dozen in existence that very considerably in terms of scope and activity. In future editions of the news update we will provide information from the LEPs which will highlight what they are doing and achieving.

To provide up to date details email: nwct-watson@outlook.com

A challenge at the present time is to ensure our central records are fully up to date and that we have a copy of the LEP constitution. Accordingly, if anyone is part of an existing LEP across Norfolk and Waveney please do contact us to let us know the current position and details. The following link gives more information on LEPs and is an extremely useful resource for those running one or thinking about setting one up:

<https://cte.org.uk/working-together/local/local-ecumenical-partnerships-leps/>

Local Churches Together Groups in Norfolk & Waveney

One of the great things about Norfolk and Waveney is that we have over 30 local Churches Together groups. They are more informal than LEPs. They mainly, although not exclusively, focus on pastoral and spiritual activities, which include things like joint worship, prayer, scripture study, mutual support, serving the community together, and so forth. Like LEPs they vary in terms of how active they are in the range of inter-Church initiatives undertaken. There is, nevertheless, lots of good practice across the county and the ecumenical update will also focus on these in future editions. The aim is to highlight our local efforts to help spread the good news so we can learn from each other.

To provide up to date details email: nwct-watson@outlook.com

Again, our central records of what local Churches Together groups exist, what they are doing, and who is the key contact are not as complete as we would like. So, it would be very much appreciated if you could ensure we have the most up to date information. This is important so we can support the 'rhythm' and the progress of ecumenism across Norfolk and Waveney.

Dates for your diary – Forthcoming Events in Norfolk and Waveney

18th to 25th January 2024 – A Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

“...they may be one so that the world may believe” (Jn 17.21)

At least once a year, Christians are reminded of Jesus’ prayer for his disciples that “they may be one so that the world may believe” (Jn 17.21). Hearts are touched and Christians come together to pray for their unity. Congregations and parishes all over the world exchange preachers or arrange special ecumenical celebrations and prayer services. The event at the centre of this special experience is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Traditionally the week of prayer is celebrated 18-25th January between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul. To prepare for the annual celebration, ecumenical partners in a particular region of the world are invited to produce a basic liturgical text on a biblical theme. Then an international editorial team of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Roman Catholic representatives refine this text to ensure that it can be prayed throughout the world, and to link it with the search for the visible unity of the church.

The theme for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is:

“You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27)

The materials for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN). The theme chosen is “You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27). Brothers and sisters from the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant Churches, ecumenical bodies and the CCN in Burkina Faso collaborated generously in drafting the prayers and reflections and experienced their work together as a real path of ecumenical conversion.

The material to be used for 18-25th January 2024 is widely available but can also be obtained through the link below. Please remember that the material is offered with the understanding that it will be adapted for use in local situations. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/resources-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2024>

Thursday 18th January 2024 – Norwich Chain of Prayer

The 2024 Chain of Prayer for Norwich will take place in the Quaker Meeting House, Upper Goat Lane, Norwich on 18th January 2024. For further information or queries please contact Laurette Burton our Roman Catholic DEO: email laurette.burton@nwct.org.uk

Monday 12th February 2024 – The Growing Good Workshop

Attendees are invited from churches of any denomination across the region who are interested in finding out more about how their church and community might benefit from the *Growing Good* research and resources. Contributors to the workshop will include Bishop Jane of Lynn, Bishop Ian of Thetford, members of the Church Urban Fund (CUF) team who have developed Growing Good, and leaders of local churches. The workshop will be held on February 12, 2024, at St Luke's Church, 61 Aylsham Rd, Norwich, NR3 2HF, starting at 1.00pm with a free buffet lunch and finishing at 4.00pm. There is no charge for attending but booking is essential.

Growing Good is a community of people and churches who are committed to growing fruitful churches and flourishing communities. To support the Growing Good movement, CUF has developed the Growing Good Toolkit. This includes a six-module course to help churches connect the dots between social action, discipleship, and growth. The toolkit combines biblical reflection and practical insight to equip churches to grow in faithfulness and fruitfulness. The toolkit is based on three years of research by **Theos** and CUF. The research looked at over 60 churches all across England, to better understand how social action, discipleship, and growth fit together on the ground. In developing the toolkit content, CUF involved church leaders, ministry training coordinators, and community workers. To find out more about Growing Good visit the website: <http://growing-good.org.uk>

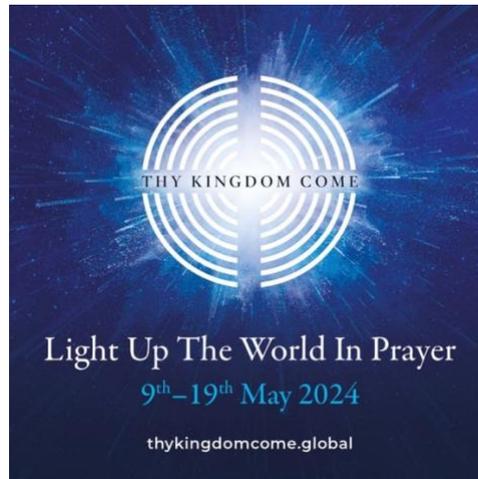
You can book (remember booking is essential) a free place for lunch and the workshop here: <https://buytickets.at/imaginenorfolktogether/1072012>

Starting 21st February 2024 – Study Talks on the Letters of St. Peter and St. John

John Myhill from the Religious Society of Friends is running a series of six ecumenical talks on the letters of St. Peter and St. John. Starting on 21st February 2024, the talks will take place from 2pm to 3pm at the Quaker Meeting House on Upper Goat Lane, Norwich. Anyone who wishes to attend one, some, or all of the sessions is very welcome. It would be great to make this a true Inter-Church event.

John is an excellent speaker and holds regular religious discussions that is open to any person. These are held fortnightly after the Quaker Meeting for Worship on Wednesdays in the same location. This is a new development and may be interesting for a wide range of Christians. For more information, please contact Liz Hoffbauer: melizhoff@gmail.com

9th to 19th May 2024 – Thy Kingdom Come Prayer Event



Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus. Since it began in May 2016, TKC has grown into a movement which unites more than a million Christians in prayer, in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different denominations and traditions. The ultimate purpose is to use prayer so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.



Again Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so also I am sending you." When He had said this, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit...." (Jn 20:21-22)

Every person, household and church are encouraged to pray during the 10 days in their own way. It is the hope & prayer, that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for the world, will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him. For our local Churches Together groups and parishes in Norfolk and Waveney there are many ways to get involved; for example, private prayer, prayer boards in public spaces, continuous prayer events, *Pray-for-5* other people to come to know Jesus, the Pentecostal Novena, and so forth. TKC provide a range of resources for churches from prayer stations and '24-7' prayer, to service templates and prayer journals for congregations. They also provide resources to help families and young people pray together including, for example, Family Prayer Adventure Map and the Kingdom Kit. You can find these resources on their website:

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global>

There is also an App that you can download onto your mobile devices. Watch out for more information on this event being publicised on the denominational websites early next year. It would be good for our local Church Together groups to find a way to get involved. Please let me know if you are inspired to do so, so we can share the good news with others.

A view on the Tensions between *Life and Works* and *Faith and Order* in Ecumenism

by Dr Ian Watson, County Ecumenical Officer, NWCT

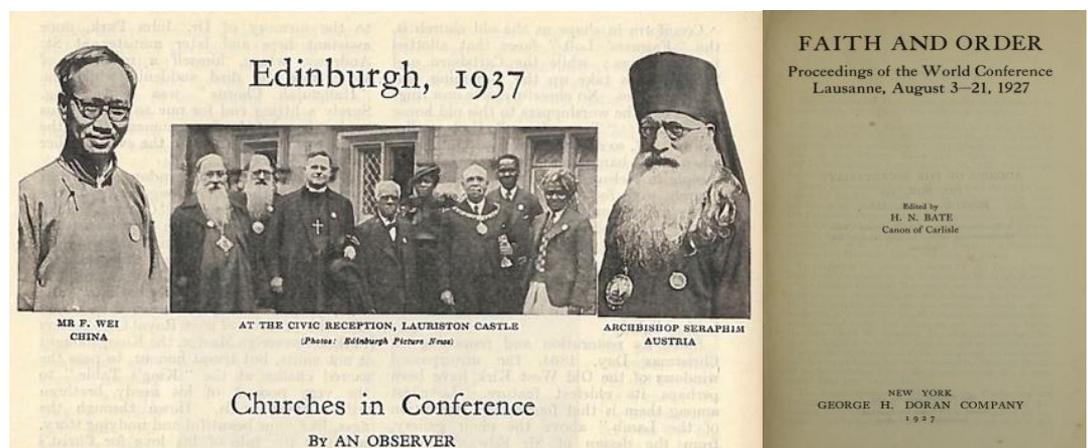
You may hear the term *Receptive Ecumenism* but what is it?

Simply put, instead of asking what other Church traditions need to learn from us, we ask what our tradition needs to learn from them – what we can receive which is of God. It can be encapsulated in the following questions, which Churches are encouraged to ask themselves:

1. *What can we learn from each other as Churches?*
2. *What gifts must we receive from others, recognising that we do not possess everything we need to be faithful, fruitful and fully ourselves?*

Receptive ecumenism is not about diluting or abandoning particular ecclesial identities, but about mutual enrichment, hospitality, listening, and gift exchange. In other words: ***Receiving Christ in the Other.***

Although there is considerable support for ecumenism across all Churches that make up Churches Together in England there is, nevertheless, a tension between what we do together in practice and the matters of doctrine between our different traditions. In ecumenical debate, this tension is sometimes expressed as between *Life and Works* and *Faith and Order*. The former involves things like praying together, working on projects together, sharing facilities, and addressing local pastoral and social concerns together. The latter involves the trickier area of doctrine where there exist important theological and sacramental differences between Churches.



Both these aspects of ecumenism are important, and while issues relating to doctrine and tradition may seem more problematic to reconcile and, in some cases, a hinderance to Church Unity, we can and still do make significant progress together. This is where the concept of *Receptive Ecumenism* is helpful because it represents a view of Church Unity that is not about diluting or abandoning particular church identities, traditions and doctrine, but about mutual enrichment, hospitality, listening, and gift exchange to receive ‘Christ in the other’. Pope Francis recognises this, that is why he speaks about and advocates the idea of *Walking Together* towards Christian Unity despite the pitfalls that we encounter on the journey. He says:

“For us as Christians, walking together is not a ploy to strengthen our own positions, but an act of obedience to the Lord and love for our world. Let us ask the Father to help us walk together all the more resolutely in the ways of the Spirit... Whenever we say, ‘Our Father’, we feel an echo within us of our being sons and daughters, but also of our being brothers and sisters. Prayer is the oxygen of ecumenism.”

What unites us is greater than what divides us; for in common, we have: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, among all and in all" (Eph 4:5-6).

At the recent Synod on Synodality in Rome the Assembly opened with a profound ecumenical gesture. This saw the presence of numerous Church leaders and representatives of different Christian communions alongside Pope Francis (see the marvellous picture below). This was a clear and credible sign of the desire to *Walk Together* in the spirit of unity of faith and exchange of gifts. This highly significant event indicates that we are in an ecumenical *kairos*; that is, a propitious time of opportunity for *Receptive Ecumenism*. Such high-profile events like this that bring Church leaders together helps reinforce the reality that what unites us is greater than what divides us; for in common, we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, among all and in all" (Eph 4:5-6).



In his visit to Norfolk in 2018, when speaking at the Catholic Cathedral, the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend Justin Welby (it was marvellous that his first stop on his visit to the Diocese of Norwich was here!), reminded us that there are three problems with divisions in the Church according to Scriptures: first, it deeply impedes our prayers; second, it hinders our experience of the grace and love of God; and third, it ruins our witness to the world.

We all know that the followers of Jesus span the globe. According to the *Centre for the Study of Global Christianity*, estimations show there are more than 200 Christian denominations in the USA, about 80 in the UK (50 are associated with CTE), and a staggering 45,000 globally! In this context, the challenge Archbishop Justin rightly lays down is how, as brothers and sisters in Christ, can we collaborate to address the pastoral challenges of our time?

In the secularised society of the twenty-first century, collaboration is necessary to enable the voice of the Gospel to have greater force. If we are inward looking and talking only to ourselves about our differences, we diminish the opportunities to spread the Good News of Christ. This is a very real problem because as the October 2023 Synod on Synodality concluded: 'in contexts of poverty, ecumenism impels people to join forces in the service of justice, peace and the dignity of the least.

Church Unity is a resource for healing the culture of hatred, division and war that pits groups, peoples and nations against each other'. Or, as Archbishop Justin puts it:

In contexts of poverty, ecumenism impels people to join forces in the service of justice, peace and the dignity of the least. Church Unity is a resource for healing and reconciliation.



“The churches’ answer to a divided world must be an example that comes from the unity of God in Christ that he has given us. Unity is not an added extra for the church. It is an inescapable duty and obligation. When I met him recently Pope Francis said: ‘We must be more urgent in the ecumenism of action, proclaim the good news of reconciliation and love of the poor and challenge structures of sin and injustice.’”

What can we take as the key message from both the Pope and Archbishop? Well, we can say that despite ongoing differences in our traditions and doctrine we must as Christians *Walk Together*. Ecumenism is practised first and foremost in daily life; namely, in *Life and Works*. This, however, does not mean we ignore or shy away from theological and institutional dialogue and debate. *Faith and Order* is also important, but it is best approached through the patient weaving of mutual understanding in a growing atmosphere of trust and openness. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who is one of the six presidents of Churches Together in England (CTE), helps us understand how the two dimensions of ecumenism are important for *Walking Together* and how they complement each other. He uses the story of the Transfiguration to challenge all our churches to focus on Jesus; the ‘who’ we follow. He says that Jesus will lead us to the ‘what we should be doing’. He adds that:

“Without a sense of amazing expectation we end up with very narrow horizons and just thinking about the substance and fragility of things.”

Cardinal Nichols helpfully uses the Transfiguration as the call for reconciliation. Our traditions and doctrine are important (*Faith and Order* represented by the Law in Moses), but so is our vision of Christian Unity and action together (*Life and Works* represented by the faithful and mighty prophet Elijah).



Check out his wonderful video in the link below that can be found on the Churches Together in England website:

<https://cte.org.uk/forum2022-nichols/>

In a world marked by division and strife, a united Christian front can be a beacon of hope, showing the transformative power of faith, love, and reconciliation.

So, what then can we conclude from this? Well, some oppose ecumenism because they see it as in some way threatening or diluting their own traditions and ways of worship. For them there is the very real danger of different Christian traditions coming together based upon the lowest common denominator with a tepid understanding of scripture. My view, however, is that need not be the case. The essence of *Receptive Ecumenism* lies not in diluting or forsaking specific Church identities and traditions which are precious to us, but in finding mutual enrichment, practicing hospitality, actively listening, and engaging in the exchange of gifts. Fundamentally, it is about embracing the presence of Christ within one another to recognise the truth and beauty in all our traditions.

Do you agree or disagree? Please let me know what you think about the tension in ecumenism. Email me, let us get a debate going - every voice counts!
nwct-watson@outlook.com

Church Unity is not merely an abstract concept but a powerful force for good in our communities and beyond. It allows us to pool our collective resources, talents, and spiritual wisdom to address the challenges of our time. In a world marked by division and strife, a united Christian front can be a beacon of hope, showing the transformative power of faith, love, and reconciliation. Moreover, when we unite as Christians, we bear a more compelling witness to the message of Christ. Our unity amplifies our impact, making our faith more accessible and relatable to those seeking spiritual guidance and meaning in their lives. It is our collective responsibility to demonstrate that the love of Christ knows no bounds and that we are all called to live out His message of love and compassion.

Youth Involvement in Church Unity at Churches Together in England (CTE)

In October this year CTE had a meeting focusing on the important issue of encouraging the engagement of young adults in England's ecumenical movement. Attendees heard from young leaders across different Church traditions. There are three presentations that are particularly striking and demonstrate the talent and energy of young Christians committed to Church Unity. The first is from CTE Trustee and theologian Victoria Turner who asked: *Are young voices important?* The second is from Rachel Gardner who shared research on the current youth cultures to help church leaders engage with younger generations. The third is from the District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Holiness Church Revd David Whyte. David is the youngest-ever Superintendent of his denomination in England. Check them out by following this link (access to copies of their presentations can also be downloaded here): <https://cte.org.uk/enabling-group-young-ecumenists/>



A bit of History on Church Unity – The World Council of Churches

‘At the heart of the ecumenical movement stands the keen desire of Jesus “that all may be one,” and churches around the world for over a century have answered this call through earnest and intentional efforts to overcome historic divisions and to unite in fellowship...’ **World Council of Churches**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is an ecumenical organisation founded in 1948 in Amsterdam as ‘a fellowship of Churches which accept Jesus Christ our Lord as God and Saviour’. The WCC is not a Church, nor does it issue orders or directions. It works for the unity and renewal of Christian denominations so they may work together in the spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding. It originated out of the ecumenical movement, which, after the First World War, resulted in two organisations. The *Life and Work* Movement concentrated on the practical activities of the churches, and the *Faith and Order* Movement focused on the beliefs and organisation of the churches and the problems involved in Church Unity. In 1937 the *Faith and Order* Conference at Edinburgh and the *Life and Work* Conference at Oxford accepted the plan to create one council. A conference of church leaders met in 1938 in Utrecht, Netherlands, to prepare a constitution, but the Second World War intervened, and the first assembly of the WCC could not be held until 1948. In 1961 the International Missionary Council united with the WCC.

There are 352 member churches that can be found in all regions of the world and include most of the world's Orthodox churches (Eastern and Oriental), as well as African Instituted, Anglican, Assyrian, Baptist, Evangelical, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Old-Catholic, Pentecostal, Reformed, United/Uniting and Free/Independent churches, Disciples of Christ and Friends (Quakers). The Roman Catholic Church does not have formal membership. However, for more than 50 years the member churches of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church have jointly fostered unity, theological reflection, and solidarity in service. Cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC continues to grow across all aspects of the WCC's work for a common Christian witness and service, especially following the visit of Pope Francis to the WCC in June 2018. The Joint Working Group, which was created in 1965 following Vatican II and co-sponsored by the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, is an effective tool to strengthen this cooperation.

The controlling body of the WCC is the assembly, which meets at intervals of approximately six years at various locations throughout the world. The assembly last met in Karlsruhe, Germany this year. It will next meet in 2030. The assembly appoints a central committee that in turn chooses from its membership an executive committee of 26 members and 6 co-presidents. The headquarters of the council is in Geneva. The work of the WCC is divided into three main divisions: church relations, ecumenical study and promotion, and inter-church aid and service to refugees. Under these divisions are a number of groups and commissions, such as *Faith and Order*, the commission on the *Life and Works* of the laity in the church and on the cooperation of men and women in church and society.

Did you Know?



In the logo for Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney (NWCT), which is an intermediate body of Churches Together in England (CTE), the Church is portrayed as a boat afloat on the sea of the world with the mast in the form of a cross. This early Christian symbol of the church signifies faith and unity and carries the message of the ecumenical movement. The symbol of the boat has its origins in the gospel story of the calling of the disciples by Jesus and the stilling of the storm on Lake Galilee. Below are just some of the many examples from across the ecumenical movement:



Archbishop Justin Welby Receives Prestigious Award for Ecumenism

You may already be aware that the Archbishop of Canterbury recently received an award from American Franciscans for his ecumenical work. He was given the award at the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement in rural Graymoor in New York State in September 2023. Called the Paul Wattson Christian Unity Award, Archbishop Justin is the 14th person to receive it. One of his predecessors, Archbishop Ramsey who was in office between 1962 and 1974, was also a recipient 50 years ago.



His speech is so touching and interesting that I have included it below in full. It is well worth eight minutes of your time to read!

You can watch the entire award ceremony via this Facebook link:

<https://fb.watch/oJnmk-GQKF/>

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, thank you.

Thank you from both Caroline and myself very, very warmly for your invitation to Graymoor, for your hospitality and for your generosity in making this extraordinary award. I find hearing myself described both deeply embarrassing and also quite bizarre. Halfway through the introduction today, long before Father Clayton, we got to your kind and extraordinarily well-researched speech. I began to think, "Does anyone of you know who this Archbishop is but I'd love to meet him". Reminds me of a comment that the late Queen in the days when she was at her home in Norfolk, Sandringham, she was very normal about going into the village to get something from the corner shop and nobody looked twice. But on one occasion, she was there with her bodyguard. She had one bodyguard, not exactly a 30-car convoy. And a tourist came up and said you look just like the Queen. To which he responded, how very reassuring. And the question that went on, have you ever met the Queen? To which she said, no, and pointed to her bodyguard and said, but he has. So, it's quite reassuring that this person you described is in fact beginning to sound a bit like Sir Humphrey in Yes Minister, if you know that the one who is standing before you. When I look at the names of former recipients, it is a great symphony of extraordinary Christians, and I feel that it ends with a rather weak trumpet bleat of my name.

Take the first recipient of this award, Archbishop Michael Ramsay, a wonderful theologian and a remarkable ecumenist. You will know that in 1966, Archbishop Ramsay met the Pope. It was an extraordinary and historic occasion, the first meeting official meeting between the Pope and Archbishop of Canterbury since the bloodied

years of the Reformation, the 130 years of war that destroyed so much of Europe. And they set up a dialogue between the two churches, of course, which became archaic. As they were leaving Saint Paul's in Rome, the Pope drew Archbishop Ramsay aside, he gave him a ring, the same ring he had worn when he was Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. And Michael Ramsey was rightly brought to tears by this gesture of recognition and reconciliation. And so, it has gone from there because the dialogues that have become some of them much longer ago than that, even the Malines Conversations in the 1920s, have developed and spread it, which means that there is a huge network of dialogues across the world. The initiative that the Pope started then has spread in 2016 when I saw the Pope. He gave me a pastoral staff. Two of the Cardinals who were present were in tears because the Pope, particularly this Pope, is supreme in the skills of symbolism. And in doing what he cannot say, great skill. And they realised fully the point of giving someone a pastoral staff.

And in 2019, after a couple of years work by people at the Vatican and two of my colleagues with immense courage, I will say, of working in South Sudan and by a series of events that were very close to, well, weren't miraculous. Pope Francis hosted a retreat for the warring leaders of South Sudan, the political leaders. And they were accompanied by the religious leaders. I wore that ring then. As I did when we went to Juba in February of this year.

'... at the end of the retreat, Pope Francis got up and walked across to the political leaders, knelt at their feet, kissed their feet and begged them to make peace.'

But then at that point in 2019, at the end of the retreat, Pope Francis got up and walked across to the political leaders, knelt at their feet, kissed their feet and begged them to make peace. It wasn't only a remarkable gesture that in an extraordinary way brought back to mind the image of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples knowing that they would abandon him and betray him. But it was a reminder of how far the churches have come in such a short time in following Christ's prayer in John's gospel, as we heard read earlier, to be one. Because, you know, didn't get the headlines. Go do that in the 1950s, it would have been the headlines for days. Do that in 2019, everyone thought, well, yes, moving, yes, okay, good, fine. And what's next? And that may be disappointing in one sense, but in another, it's very encouraging because it's not news anymore. The church leaders get on with each other. It's routine.

And as I join you here, as you yourselves join Episcopal and Catholic traditions in your history, I'm reminded again of the living embodiment of what it means to witness to the prayer that we should be one as Jesus's one with the Father. In that final prayer of Christ and in the farewell discourses in the chapters before 14, 15 and 16, we find actually, that disunity only has three disadvantages. And we didn't really worry about it. The three disadvantages; our first, that it hinders our prayers. God says that when we're one at prayer, our prayers are heard in the courts of heaven. Secondly, it diminishes profoundly our assurance of God's love. God says in the scriptures, in those discourses that when we're united, we will know His love for us. Thirdly, it trips up, slows down and stops our mission and evangelism. For God says in John 17:21 that the world will know that Jesus came from the Father when they see that we're one. So, provided you're happy to abandon prayer, the assurance of God's love and mission and evangelism, there is no problem with disunity at all. But of course, if you care about any of those, it is a significant difficulty.

I would have been very surprised at myself being described as an ecumenist, probably, until quite recently. Until quite recently I have never thought of myself in the same bracket as those who've sat around the tables at the dialogues or being the workers at the coalface of national and international works such as the World Council of Churches. But reconciliation has always been a passion. Even before the ministry at

'The work of reconciliation must begin with God's people saying because we are one, we will not be divided.'

Coventry Cathedral, you will remember Coventry Cathedral, how powerful it is. Bombed into ruins in 1940 the old cathedral is still standing in ruins at right angles to the new one, whose liturgically west wall is glass, so the two are joined together and cry out the story of cross and resurrection. Its twin city is Dresden where the Great Church of Our Lady was only rebuilt recently. Lutherans, reformed and Catholics, would have been amongst the aircrew over Coventry. Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists performed, and Baptists would have been in the aircrew bombing Dresden. How we allow the world's divisions to divide us! How in war, nationalism overtakes peace and the making of peace for the people, the one people of Christ! How we learn to hate and condemn! How we learn to reject and exclude! The work of reconciliation must begin with God's people saying because we are one, we will not be divided. For that reason, we must keep our links with the Russian Orthodox.

We are one in Christ. We may say that certain Orthodox are doing badly, but we cannot say they are not our sisters and brothers. And we must also look to ourselves and our intra-church as well as inter-church reconciliation and ecumenism.

Over the last 50 or 60 years, we've seen a steep rise in fundamentalism across the world in every major faith. Why? I think the causes are more than anything else sociological. When things are changing so fast that people have little time to adjust and to control their ears, it is tempting to, and forgive me for using an out-of-date image from the Westerns from Hollywood, it's tempting to form the wagons into a circle. Circle the wagons, keep the bad folk out and everyone inside is alright. The trouble is, once you've circled them once, you suddenly realise you've got bad people inside as well as out, so you have to circle them again. And that circle happens again, and that circle happens again and you arrive at the point where you're left alone with a very, very small wagon around you. We are dividing more and more.

'... Christ has reached down to us and lifted us up, those that challenge to rise above these divisions, to challenge them to love despite them.'

I weep at the sorrow of Orthodoxy divided by war of Orthodox Christians killing Orthodox Christians on the battlefield as Protestants and Catholics did in World War II. None of us can say we are without sin. And that challenge to be those who are rise only because Christ has reached down to us and lifted us up, those that challenge to rise above these divisions, to challenge them to love despite them. That challenge is set afresh by what your community represents, with its inescapable connection to the ministry of Paul Wattson and the institution of that great ecumenical blessing, the week of prayer for Christian unity.

'... at the heart of the lived gospel are not structures, but relationships.'

For at the heart of the lived gospel are not structures, but relationships. We get it wrong so often, don't we? We try and build structures that will encourage relationships. What we actually need to know is that the relationship we have with one another is to love one another and to wash one another's feet and to build structures that make that easy.

We need to renew relationships. And I see that happening amongst church leaders and at the grassroots. So, now we have to take courage in both hands to sacrifice those things that make us different and to be willing to grow together at a time of existential challenges that the extraordinary Secretary General of the United Nations, Guterres, this last Monday at the beginning of the General Assembly of the UN described as the extra 10 existential challenges that show a world off its hinges, facing a great fracture and imply that we are heading towards that fracture, bringing a new and yet more dreadful conflict than those of 1939-45 and 14-18.

So, I honour your work and your example. And can only say once again, deeply moved that in my thanks for this award, you have demonstrated how the spirit of unity, the one spirit who baptises us all fills your hearts. And to encourage that once again, we pray, struggle, sacrifice and turn aside from our differences while maintaining our respect for human dignity and our love for the God who gives us that dignity so that the church may be able to say to the world, cease your fighting and killing. It is possible as we share even after hundreds of years, to find that we can love one another even amidst disagreement. Thank you.”

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Note: The Franciscan Friars of the Atonement are worth checking out. They are a Christian community in the state of New York called to witness and proclaim the Gospel of Christ in the Franciscan Atonement Tradition believing that Christians can and will be one. They encourage and promote dialogue and understanding among all faiths. See their website below:

<https://www.atonementfriars.org>

Finally – A Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Resource for Responding to the Tragic Conflict in Israel and Gaza

Recently, the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Inter Faith Theological Advisory Group considered and reflected upon the tragic violence in Israel and Gaza. This involved receiving a number of papers from different perspectives. They have produced a short resource that supports discussion and further reflection for Christians on the conflict from an ecumenical and inter faith perspective. It is available on the CTBI website by following this link: <https://ctbi.org.uk/prayers-and-statements-on-violence-in-israel-and-gaza/>

A Prayer for Israel and Palestine

O God of all
Of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, and Ishmael:
Our hearts are broken in pieces at the suffering and murder of your people.
Our voices cry for peace and for justice.
Comfort those who grieve,
Console and heal the injured,
Be close to those in fear,
Restrain with your mighty hand those who perpetrate violence.
Send us your wisdom in all that we say and do,
That our voice may always seek justice, peace and security for all.
Amen.

Revd Peter Colwell, *Deputy General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*

Useful Links on Church Unity

Churches Together in England	https://cte.org.uk/
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland	https://ctbi.org.uk/
Conference of European Churches	https://ceceurope.org/
World Council of Churches	https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/
Society of Ecumenical Studies	https://ecumenicalstudies.org/a-tent-of-learning/
Unity News Across East of England	Link to East of England News
Hope Together	https://www.hopetogether.org.uk

Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney

Quakers Norfolk & Waveney	https://www.norfolkandwaveneyquakers.org/
Methodist East Anglia District	https://eangliamethodist.org.uk/
United Reform Church Eastern Synod	https://urceastern.org.uk/
Eastern Baptist Association	https://www.easternbaptist.org.uk/
Salvation Army Eastern District	https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/eoe/
Catholic Diocese of East Anglia	https://www.rcdea.org.uk/
Church of England Norwich Diocese	https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/

The Norfolk Christian Website

Network Norfolk	https://www.networknorwich.co.uk/
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