

# IDEA

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

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## From the editor

# I am His and He is mine

I love God's people. I love what we're doing around the world in the name of Jesus Christ. From gospel singers belting out Christ-centred songs, to pastors of community churches building up the flock, to the many Christian authors penning down Holy Spirit-breathed words to penetrate hearts and minds, to staff throughout the Evangelical Alliance marching forth with the gospel and helping its members to do the same. And this is a fraction of what God's children are doing by His grace.

The body of Christ is massive and extends the breadth of God's green earth. If we take some moments to think about who we are, where we are, and what we're doing, I'm sure we'll rejoice, because we'll see that the promises God made to Abraham are coming to pass: "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 26:4). Hallelujah! I'm exceedingly pleased to be God's own possession in Christ Jesus.

To be His is to belong: children of God Almighty (wow). But, as we know, a loving relationship with God was not reserved for us alone; "for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" (John 3:17). The examples mentioned above are among the ways in which we are ministering the hope of God's calling to the world, as well as each other. In these pages, you'll read about some of the specific work that we, the church, are leading and involved with to bless the UK and beyond.

Read, enjoy and be moved.

With love,

**Naomi Osinnowo**

Editor



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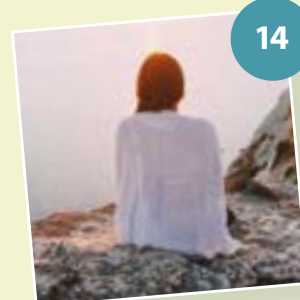
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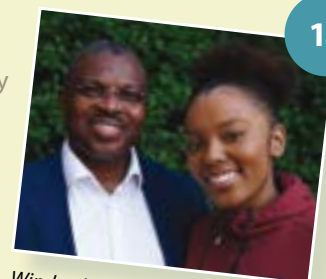
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## Evangelicals in India confront child exploitation

**An organisation within the Evangelical Fellowship of India has launched economic empowerment and transformation programmes in a bid to protect vulnerable and marginalised children and young people from endemic exploitation.**

The Evangelical Fellowship of India Children at Risk (EFIC@R), which was established to expose and stamp out the agonising conditions faced by millions of under-21s in the country, has established a self-help group and vocational centre in Khunti, a district in Jharkhand, eastern India.

The initiatives have created much-needed opportunities for young people, who are susceptible to exploitation, including girls who have dropped out of education, to embark on training. Endorsed by the government, the vocational centre offers lessons in stitching, embroidery and other crafts.

Aashima Samuel, national director of EFIC@R, talks of one 21-year-old woman who joined the self-help group and enrolled into the vocational centre: "Her life began to transform after she joined the group and started to earn money. With joy this young woman now shares that she feels extremely confident and empowered."

According to EFIC@R, India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children, with a child below 16 raped every 155th minute, a child below 10 every 13th hour, and at least one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point in time.

## Christian charities call for intervention

**Two Christian charities have in recent months called on authorities within nations where large numbers of Christians or human rights defenders are being murdered to intervene.**

Open Doors urged US President Donald Trump to address Fulani herdsmen's frequent attacks against Christian communities in Nigeria at a meeting with the country's president, Muhammadu Buhari. The plea was made after two priests and 17 worshippers were killed when armed Fulani men stormed a Catholic church during morning mass in a remote village in Benue State on Tuesday, 24 April.

Open Doors UK's head of advocacy, Zoe Smith, said, "As the leader of Nigeria and a Fulani himself, President Buhari is strategically placed to bring an end to this violence. Open Doors is joining with others around the world calling on President Trump to raise this as a matter of urgency with President Buhari."

In March, Christian Aid condemned the murders of human rights defenders in Brazil, including city councillor Marielle Franco, and called for urgent inquiries into their deaths. Karol Balfe, head of the charity's From Violence to Peace, said, "The killings of human rights defenders in Brazil are a chilling indictment of the grave threats faced by those speaking out against injustice. Urgent measures must be taken to ensure that human rights advocates in the country are protected."



### Bible College of Wales

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## Remembrance: 100 days of prayer



Churches around the country will start 100 days of prayer, peace and reconciliation on 4 August as part of Remembrance100, which has been launched to mark the centenary of the end of World War I.

To help participants be most effective during this period, which leads up to 11 November, HOPE, the organisation behind the initiative, has made available a book, *100 Days of Peace*

and *Hope*, and will run a social media campaign. These bring together prayers and suggestions for peace-making activities contributed by church leaders, Christian charities, chaplaincies, and ministries from Britain and the Commonwealth. HOPE is also publishing a commemorative booklet entitled *Silence*, for churches to give away at Remembrance services.

On Sunday, 4 August 1918 King George V and Queen Mary joined members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords for a special service at the Church of St Margaret, Westminster. The king had asked that 4 August 1918, the fourth anniversary of the declaration of war, should be observed as a National Day of Prayer. The war ended 100 days later.

For resources and more information about Remembrance100, which is supported by Christian denominations, other ministries, and military chaplaincies, visit [www.remembrance100.co.uk](http://www.remembrance100.co.uk)

## Churches survive closure

Two churches that were on the brink of shutting down have survived closure amid a trend of declining support within the region.

Rayleigh and Southend-on-Sea Evangelical Churches, which are part of the Union of Evangelical Churches group, were at risk of shutting permanently due to a gradual but constant decline in church attendance.

So eroded has support been for churches in this network over the years, that from the 1960s the number of separate congregations throughout Essex, east London and Kent dropped from 50 to 15.

Rayleigh and Southend were in danger of being the latest casualties, but the recruitment, by advertising with the Evangelical Alliance, of new ministers who are committed to reviving the churches has given them a new lease of life.

More than 40 people now attend the Southend church and Rayleigh attracts around 30.

## Elim hires new exec director



Ordination of Olivia Amartey as an Elim minister

Elim Pentecostal Church has appointed Olivia Amartey, deputy chief officer of Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, as its new executive director.

Starting in July, the ordained Elim minister who has senior leadership experience in the NHS, Anglican Church and voluntary sector, will oversee the charity's operations, administration and strategic planning. Olivia will also be responsible for strengthening Elim's mission and

ministry, and ensuring it complies with legal requirements.

Olivia says, "I'm excited to be a part of this challenging vision, supporting the national leadership team, general superintendent and local churches towards dynamic growth. Elim has a fresh approach to sharing the gospel of Christ. It knows where it is going and has a strong heart for people and the diverse communities they serve."

Elim represents nearly 5,000 churches around the UK, Ireland and overseas.

## Spreading hope

Bristol HOPE brought together 1,400 volunteers earlier this year as part of a five-day city-wide mission which was organised to spread the gospel.

The volunteers, which included 500 young people from Soul Survivor and groups from local churches, worked together in 25 communities on 170 community projects, 25 events and 15 family fun days, to make Jesus known through words and actions. More than 20 people became Christians and are being followed up by churches in Bristol.

Bristol is one of the cities involved in HOPE 2018, which brings together churches of all denominations, in villages, towns and cities, to spread the good news about Jesus. HOPE provides churches with giveaway magazines, to help Christians start a conversation.

Limbrick Wood Baptist Church, which had just 12 members in 2017, decided to use the *Christmas HOPE* magazine to go door-to-door, inviting 5,000 people from its village to their Christmas service. The church's efforts reaped an incredible response, with up to 150 people visiting for the first time. The regular congregation is now 50-80 people, and the church engages with up to 250 people each week.

HOPE is publishing an updated HOPE magazine this summer, and a *Christmas HOPE* magazine for churches and schools to distribute.

Find out more at [hopetogether.org.uk](http://hopetogether.org.uk)



# Chosen by God to belong

God loved us before the creation of the world, and He called each and every one of us, by name, to belong to Him in Christ Jesus.



Kay Morgan-Gurr, chair of Children Matter

**If we read through different passages in the Bible, we will see many examples of God showing men, women and children that they belong to Him, despite how they may be treated by members of their communities.**

Take, for example, the woman who was caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-11). The crowd wanted to stone her, but Jesus demonstrated God's love and mercy and sent her on her way, saying she should sin no more. The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), meanwhile, was shunned by her community but accepted by Jesus, who showed her how she, too, could belong.

Again, the little children, who were brought to Jesus for a blessing (Mark 10:13), and were received by Jesus, who said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them", after His disciples had rebuked them. I want to stress: this was no gentle pat on the head; this was the Creator of the world showing the children that "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these".

***We, the church, have much to do to make our churches places of belonging for everyone, regardless of age and ability.***

And, as recorded in Mark 2, four friends carried a paralysed man on a bed, in the heat, to a house so that Jesus could heal him. They made a hole in the roof and lowered him through it, to ensure he received a touch from God. Now, that's belonging in action.

These are just a few examples, but the theme runs throughout the Bible, which



exemplifies what should be happening in our homes, our churches, and wherever we have influence.

### A human need

For many years, I've heard people mention the importance of feeling as though they belong when they talk about the journey to faith. This makes it worth considering: when those who are searching for Jesus visit our churches, do they belong before they come to faith, or do they come to faith and then belong? I believe, like the examples mentioned show, that they ought to belong first. For, in our showing that they belong, we demonstrate that they too are chosen by God to belong.

The desire to belong is a basic human need. When we belong, we find security and unconditional acceptance. As part of my role as co-founder of the Additional Needs Alliance (ANA), which helps churches create places of belonging for children, young people and young adults with additional needs or disabilities, I asked parents: what would show you that your child with additional needs belonged in their particular faith communities? The answers, although varied, had two consistent threads: their child being asked to serve, and their child being invited to parties. In my view, being asked to serve and not being overlooked implies trust, and being invited to parties shows acceptance for who you are.

I have found that belonging, for children

in church, is more than being provided with some form of children's work. It is acceptance within a welcoming, intergenerational community. They need to belong to more than a Sunday school; they require the engagement of the whole community. Belonging in a church context blossoms best in an active, worshipping, intergenerational community, where there is dynamic discipleship – regardless of age or ability – and where all are encouraged to serve within their gifting, also regardless of age or ability.

### More to be done

I wonder if a lack of belonging is one reason for the exodus of children and youth from our churches today. If church has ceased to be that place of belonging, why indeed would you bother to go? Where there is no belonging, difference is more apparent and less accepted. This results in people walking, limping or rolling away from the church.

In my role at the ANA, I regularly receive messages and comments from parents of children who have additional needs and disabilities. The majority are from those who have been asked to leave their church due to their child's additional needs. They have been told to find somewhere more suitable to their child's needs.

Some parents never find that place of welcome, and for their child, church is just another place where they don't belong, in the same way they feel they don't belong in

*The desire to belong is a basic human need. When we belong, we find security and unconditional acceptance.*

school, or with friends. For many families in the world of additional needs and disability, there is no place of belonging where there should be one.

Meanwhile, for those with additional needs and disabilities who do stay in our churches, there is often difficulty in accessing discipleship support and training, meaning that belonging starts to be more about being in the building than being part of a nurturing community.

We, the church, have much to do to make our churches places of belonging for everyone, regardless of age and ability. Belonging in the church context can be a powerful and beautiful experience. People who have felt they have not fitted in elsewhere, now finding a place to flourish and grow is wonderful. But it shouldn't be left there; it needs to keep growing.

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# How healthy is your church or charity?

Cases of abuse across all sectors have grabbed the public's attention in recent years and the religious quarter has been no exception.

**One Christian couple has recognised the bewilderment felt by many churches and faith-based organisations as they endeavour to comply with standards on protecting their vulnerable people amid subtle changes to expectations and a mood of increased intolerance and scrutiny, and they've decided to do something about it.**

Husband and wife Paul and Sue Harrison brought together their decades of experience in the public and charity sectors, where they developed and managed services for vulnerable families and children, and leadership positions within churches, to launch Safe in Church, a programme that helps churches and faith-based organisations understand and meet the requirements of safeguarding.

The parents of four, and grandparents of seven, agreed to be interviewed by the Evangelical Alliance to discuss the current climate and how this programme, which sits under their specialist training and consultancy provider, Phasic Ltd, can help leaders avoid the pitfalls.

**Safeguarding is essentially about protecting people, both children and adults, from harm and abuse and promoting their wellbeing.**

**To allay any uncertainty, what does safeguarding actually mean?**

Safeguarding is essentially about protecting people, both children and adults, from harm and abuse and promoting their wellbeing. Although the ultimate aim of protecting the two age groups is the same, there are fundamental differences because it's the responsibility of adults to keep children safe. Therefore, children are vulnerable due to their age.

When it comes to safeguarding adults, what we talk about is an adult who is at risk of abuse or neglect. There must be a factor that makes an adult more vulnerable, such as having care and support needs caused by a learning disability, etc. Such a disability can impede an adult's ability to make an informed choice, thereby making them vulnerable.

For us as churches, safeguarding is not just about spotting and addressing indicators of abuse; it's about looking for early signs and stepping in. It's also a matter of promoting wellbeing as well as protecting from harm; this takes into account the evidence we see from outside of the church.

**Describe the current climate in which churches and organisations are having to deal with safeguarding.**

For a significant number of years there has been a move away from a very prescriptive approach to safeguarding. Nowadays, organisations are expected to achieve the desired outcomes, but the responsibility for deciding exactly how to achieve this is a decision for the leaders of the organisation. The positive side of this is that organisations can tailor their systems. The downside, however, is that it places a huge responsibility on organisations to address safeguarding effectively. Churches and faith-based organisations are essentially being told to develop effective systems. This type of 'local devolution', of course, causes complications.

**“Social media is another part of the picture. These digital platforms for the creation and sharing of information and ideas are big areas for churches.”**

Added to this are historic cases of abuse across every sector of society that are being investigated. We've seen that organisations haven't always effectively dealt with cases of abuse and allegations of abuse. As well as broader society, historic examples can be found in churches, youth camps and those working abroad on behalf of charities; Oxfam's recent troubles and the case of Richard Huckle, who was convicted of numerous counts of serious sexual assaults against children while posing as a teacher, photographer and devout Christian in Malaysia, are cases in point. These incidents have shifted a perception of churches and faith-based organisations because we sometimes haven't met the standards we proclaim.

Meanwhile, the secular and sexual rights movements have engendered a significant shift in politics and society, causing some to construe orthodox Christianity as being offensive and discriminatory. Our beliefs are based on biblical principles and, as a result, we can't move on them, although we recognise that the views of society are changing around us. This ties in with the perception in some quarters that the expression of classical Christianity is somehow 'extreme' or 'harmful'.





**Safe in Church approaches safeguarding from a biblical perspective.**

Social media is another part of the picture. These digital platforms for the creation and sharing of information and ideas are big areas for churches. But there is a risk that lines can be blurred, because interactions are taken outside of the church building, where they can be monitored and managed, and into a space with fewer boundaries. So, how do we manage social media?

These matters are potentially creating a situation that is disadvantageous to churches. There's greater perception among the public where the risks are and there is the expectation that churches should be responding. But if you don't know how to respond effectively, you can't.

**Tell us about Safe in Church and why churches in particular should find out more.**

Phasic, a member of the Evangelical Alliance, is a specialist training and consultancy company founded and run by us. Safe in Church is a programme that has been developed by Phasic. We are safeguarding

specialists who have a solid professional background, having gained a significant amount of experience working with schools, local authorities and faith-based organisations, etc. We still work in this sector, providing guidance on best practice.

As evangelical Christians, who have assumed, and still hold, leadership positions in church, we approach safeguarding as an outworking of our faith. We see safeguarding as a natural extension of our biblical principles and the gospel, as in protecting the vulnerable. We know that adhering to biblical principles will enable us to far exceed the legal requirements. Therefore, we don't separate the two, as we know that isn't an accurate way to view it.

Many churches and faith-based organisations do not have expertise in safeguarding, so we established Safe in Church to help these organisations reach and exceed the necessary competency levels, in an age of greater expectations and cultural changes.

Some Christians might see local authorities as a 'big brother' figure who cracks a whip and we have to jump. Fortunately, both of us know the challenges and complexities, and how to break down barriers so churches ►

**“As evangelical Christians, who have assumed, and still hold, leadership positions in church, we approach safeguarding as an outworking of our faith.”**

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**REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING TRAINING EVENTS**

Paul and Sue are organising safeguarding training events in 10 locations around the UK for those in leadership positions in churches and faith-based organisations. They will focus on four core areas: training for designated safeguarding officers, safeguarding for leaders, train the trainer, and safe recruitment. To find out more, contact Paul and Sue on [safeinchurch.org.uk/contact-us](http://safeinchurch.org.uk/contact-us)

can work in partnership with their local authority. There are lots of things that local authorities provide for families and we, as the church, are often just as valued as any other organisation.

Against a backdrop of legislative change many charged with safeguarding in their context often ask, how do we keep up? Due to our experience and expertise, we understand the legislation and subtle changes in guidance. Some churches read the updated guidance and understandably can't see very clearly where those subtle changes occur. We want to help churches and faith-based organisations fully understand these changes and what is required.

And then there's language. If there were, say, an issue at a church that was being investigated by a local authority, the church leader may rightly describe the congregation as a "great big family where everyone looks after each other". We know from experience that this vocabulary is likely to cause the local authority to question 'boundaries' and believe that there was a real blurring of 'personal space'. Safe in Church is all about taking hold of our specialist knowledge and helping churches and faith-based organisations.

**Why is it worthwhile to seek expert help?**

There's a lot of information out there, but it's not necessarily clear to churches what they have to do, and many churches lack confidence in dealing with safeguarding. A church can read the guidance and think it's meeting the requirements when it's not. Additionally, many churches may miss some of the subtle nuance unless they have a specialist in their ranks. Of course, many churches and faith-based organisations successfully navigate safeguarding requirements without outside support; this is often because they have members who have specialist experience and knowledge.

We approach safeguarding from the perspective of being involved in church leadership ourselves; we have been in our church for nine years and prior to that we were in a church for 22 years, where we were involved especially in children's work. We, therefore, understand the complexities. For example, we are well versed in dealing with very specific situations, such as integrating an ex-offender into church life, and working through the practical solutions for the sake of the gospel and the wider church.

**Why should churches and faith-based organisations take safeguarding seriously?**

Our biblical principles demand that we take safeguarding seriously: we are called to care for the vulnerable and weak. We're also told to obey the authorities that God has set over to us. Additionally, local authorities have a legal duty to protect the vulnerable and work with its partners, which includes those in the voluntary sector and faith-based organisations. If we fail to comply and respond appropriately, we would not only violate national guidance or legislation, but we'd also damage the reputation of the church. So, when it comes to safeguarding, let's go 'above and beyond'.

**What are the consequences of a breach?**

In a nutshell: local authority investigations and sanctions, legal prosecution and reputational damage. Talking specifically about reputation, one wrong move, if handled incorrectly, can bring a church or faith-based organisations into disrepute. That's why the way a problem is handled can be as important as what has happened. For instance, dealing with an issue internally and keeping it under wraps can compound the original offence

**“Our biblical principles demand that we take safeguarding seriously: we are called to care for the vulnerable and weak.”**

for various reasons, not least because it'll seem as though the church or faith-based organisations in question is seeking to cover something up and condone misconduct.

**Will money be a barrier for those who want to use your services?**

There is cost as Safe in Church is self-financing. We aim to make the programme as affordable as we can. It's typically more expensive for a church that is training only one or two people. For this reason, we advise that those individuals collaborate with designated safeguarding leads from other churches.

Other cost-saving options are available; for example, if a church allows us to use its building to host a session, the host's fee could be reduced or even waived. Separately, in due course, we intend to roll out a scheme whereby those who undergo training can train others, from their network of churches or elsewhere, helping churches and faith-based organisations become healthier places where the gospel can flourish.

**SWOT UP ON SAFEGUARDING ON A BUDGET**

Resources that cover the basics of safeguarding are available on Safe in Church's website, [safeinchurch.org.uk](http://safeinchurch.org.uk), enabling church members who have experience in this area, such as teachers and social workers, to obtain the information that they need at no cost.

A safeguarding webinar will be available on the membership area of the Evangelical Alliance's website ([eauk.org](http://eauk.org)) from July. Contact [info@eauk.org](mailto:info@eauk.org) for details.

# Better diagnosis for a healthier church: reviewing the debate on 'spiritual abuse'

We ought to scrutinise and tackle harmful language as well actions to ensure our churches are healthy and wrongdoing is properly dealt with.

**Abuse is more prominent as a public issue now than it's ever been. Campaigns like #MeToo and #TimesUp have highlighted abuse of women in the entertainment industry. British Cycling has confirmed that its former director Shane Sutton promoted a 'culture of fear' among riders. The Speaker of the Commons, John Berkow, has been accused of bullying members of his staff. Meanwhile, various churches continue to deal with the fallout from clergy and laity who've been found guilty of child sexual abuse in particular, but of other forms of abuse, too.**

For some, such non-sexual forms of abuse should include a category called 'Spiritual Abuse' ('SA'). For others, this categorisation is unhelpful. In February this year the Evangelical Alliance's Theology Advisory Group (TAG) published a report which took

“  
***In churches and other Christian contexts, we should treat accusations of abuse with the greatest seriousness, and church leaders who have pastoral care of their congregations should aim for the highest standards.***

the latter view. That report has spurred widespread debate. Some months on, it's worth taking stock of where we are with this debate, and how we got here.

It's important to say right away that abuse which occurs in and around the church is a grave issue and needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. Pastoral care for victims and survivors should be paramount, and appropriate action should be taken against perpetrators. But in order to do this effectively, we need to know clearly what we're talking about, and that requires accurate definition and analysis.

Alongside sexual, physical and neglect-based abuse, UK law also proscribes what it calls 'Emotional and Psychological Abuse'. This covers bullying, manipulation and humiliation, all of which can have significant effects on a person's mental health. This is the category of abuse most relevant to the cycling and political cases just mentioned, and to situations in which women have been harassed by men in Hollywood and elsewhere, even if they haven't been forced into sex.

Indeed, it's because we see strong similarities between such cases of emotional and psychological abuse that we don't typically distinguish them according to their context. Granted, different situations where abuse is alleged and prosecuted might have some bearing on the way abuse has happened, and on the specific power relationships that are exploited in the process. But abuse is abuse: we don't typically talk about 'sporting abuse', 'parliamentary abuse' or 'showbusiness abuse'.

Still, advocates of 'SA' terminology argue that there's something so particular about emotional and psychological abuse in religious contexts that it deserves its own special name. That name isn't entirely new: back in the 1990s a few Christian

books depicted the practice of 'heavy shepherding' as a form of 'SA'. But in 2013 the psychologists Lisa Oakley and Kathryn Kinmond offered a more formal definition. 'SA', they said, features generally abusive practices such as coercion, control, exploitation, enforced obedience, secrecy and censorship. But they also said that it's marked out by the fact that its perpetrators claim 'divine justification' for their actions, assert their own 'divine position', or make appeals to 'sacred texts'.

This definition has been picked up by certain Christian agencies and denominations, which have begun to include it in their safeguarding training and disciplinary procedures. So, what's the problem with 'SA' language, and why does the Evangelical Alliance think there are better ways to define and address emotional and psychological abuse in Christian settings?

Before anything else, it's crucial to stress that rejecting 'SA' as a term doesn't in any way mean denying the actual phenomena of domination and denigration it's been taken to describe. In churches and other Christian contexts, we should treat accusations of abuse with the greatest seriousness, and church leaders who have pastoral care of their congregations should aim for the highest standards.

We should go above and beyond the law in this area, vindicating the trust people place in us as representatives of Jesus. In Matthew 23 that same Jesus lambasted religious leaders who 'shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces' (v.13), and then chided those who insisted on petty legalisms while failing to show 'justice, mercy and faithfulness' (v.23). Paul, likewise, castigated religious 'empty talkers and deceivers' who 'upset whole families' and teach 'things they should not teach' (Titus 1:10-11). Such injunctions should underpin church education, pastoral care and discipline. But affirming these high





biblical standards is one thing; believing we need to equate their opposite with the term 'SA' is another.

**The problems**

The first key problem with 'SA' language is a problem of definition. Virtually all who advocate for adoption of 'SA' are focused on Christian contexts. Yet the term 'spiritual' implies a full range of religious traditions. As such, it's notoriously hard to pin down and makes any catch-all sanction problematic. Not all religions or Christian denominations have ordained or authorised leaders with a distinct 'divine position'; not all have 'sacred texts'; and some, such as Theravada Buddhism, wouldn't even claim to have a god as part of their belief system. To reiterate: we must take action against those guilty of psychological and emotional abuse in Christian contexts, and we must excel in our care for those who have suffered from it. But in our pluralist society it would be presumptuous and unworkable to assume that the specifically Christian imperatives we've outlined could be used as a template for safeguarding guidelines to cover all faiths under the heading of 'SA'.

The second major problem highlighted in the report relates to application. Some have suggested that 'SA' should become a distinct criminal offence. Again, however, this would be unworkable. It would also be discriminatory. This is because it would single out religious people for particular state punishment simply because they were religious. It would also require legal professionals, police officers and social workers of all faiths and none to make theological judgements about the

specifically 'spiritual' aspects of abuse on a case by case basis – judgments they couldn't possibly be expected to make. If they were to assume such authority over theological matters, the implications for religious liberties hard-won over centuries would be disastrous.

If a religious person inflicts emotional or psychological abuse on another as defined by the law, they should be investigated, charged and punished for doing so under the law. But they shouldn't be punished specifically as a 'spiritual' or religious person, since religious and non-religious people alike should be equal before the law. It might be that their own religious community will wish to hold them to account in addition, according to their own distinctive theological convictions. But the legal system in 21st century Britain can't be expected to make such theological judgments.

Some of those who acknowledge that 'SA' is a problematic term still argue that it's the phrase most often used to describe what we've been discussing, and that we should therefore stick with it on the basis of 'custom and practice'. This overlooks the fact that 'SA' attempts to be a diagnostic term, and that diagnoses routinely change in the light of more accurate study and research. One hundred years ago, terms such as 'the vapours', 'shellshock' and 'hysteria' were common in psychology. These days we speak in more precise and nuanced ways about clinical depression, bipolar disorder, functional neurologic disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The words we use matter because better diagnosis informs better treatment.

**Our proposal**

The Evangelical Alliance's report proposes that speaking of Emotional and Psychological Abuse in Religious Contexts, while perhaps not so catchy, provides a better diagnosis than the opaque and misleading terminology of 'SA'. Indeed, we believe it will help us detect, report and reject abusive churches and church practices more effectively.

This commitment to better diagnosis and response means the Evangelical Alliance is continuing to work with those within and beyond its membership who are engaged in frontline safeguarding and pastoral care of abuse survivors. The support of those who've suffered abuse must be central to our response. We'll also continue to work with theologians, psychologists and lawyers on this topic, to ensure that our understanding is deepened, and that we have precise definitions of emotional and psychological abuse applicable to religious contexts, and specifically to churches, that enable us to take action.

The Evangelical Alliance's Above and Beyond event in February addressed these themes, and a specialised academic conference is being planned to explore them more fully. We do all of this to honour the Lord Jesus, our suffering Saviour, who cared for the vulnerable, who stood with the abused. We ask for your continued prayers as we take this vital work forward.

*Rev Dr David Hilborn is principal at St John's College, Nottingham, and chair of TAG.*

*Danny Webster is advocacy and media manager at the Evangelical Alliance.*



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# A small charity with a big vision

Home for Good's goal is to find a loving home for every child who needs one. Founding director Dr Krish Kandiah says this dream will become a reality if at least 7,000 foster families come forward.

**It was realising they had more capacity to love after having three birth children that prompted Krish's wife to ask: should we adopt or foster children? Krish didn't know at the time that that question would lead to monumental change, not only in their lives, but in the lives of boys and girls who had nowhere permanent they could call home.**

It's not that Krish was instantly on the same page as his wife; "I was rather hesitant and had reservations," he says. But, after meeting with friends in their 60s who became foster parents for the very first time to teenagers, and receiving confirmation from God, he was persuaded.

Home for Good was established more than five years ago after Krish, in his then role of executive director for churches in mission at the Evangelical Alliance, partnered with Care for the Family and CCPAS to launch a campaign to encourage Christians to think about adopting or fostering vulnerable children. "Out of that campaign, Home for Good was born," says Krish. "Its heritage is very similar to Tearfund's, in that it was birthed, blessed and incubated by the Evangelical Alliance, for which I am very grateful. I want the nation to see in our actions as well as our words what Christianity is all about."

In the UK, there is an urgent need for more than 7,000 foster families, and there are not enough people coming forward to adopt children who wait the longest for adoption. "When you add up the Evangelical Alliance's, Care for the Family's and CCPAS's databases, we can reach thousands of churches," emphasises Krish. "One family per member church will more than meet the need." Krish, who, with his wife, became a foster and adoptive parent 12 years ago, says the church, which has received adoption to sonship (Galatians 4:4), should consider

how it can make a difference in the lives of children in care.

Krish acknowledges that adopting or fostering "isn't for everybody" and encourages those thinking about taking on a child to talk to God and hear what He has to say on the subject. He also urges them to consider the cost: "The romanticised portrayal of adoption that we see in Hollywood movies is far from the reality," he explains. "Around 70 per cent of these children have experienced abuse, neglect or sexual violence and are living with deep-rooted trauma which manifests itself physically and emotionally. They need resilient people who want to make a difference in their lives and who will love them forever."

Krish delights in the fact that Home for Good has made a way for prospective foster carers and adoptive parents from the church to offer a loving home to children who need it. "I recently heard about a couple, church leaders, that was moved after listening to a talk I gave entitled 'A relentless revolution of love', which is about caring for orphans and vulnerable children," he says. "What followed in this couple's life were more internal promptings urging them to consider adopting. They have now taken on two little girls. Not only has this couple changed these two lives, but they've set an example in their church."

Krish encourages members of the church, for whom adoption or fostering is not their calling, to see themselves as a support network for foster or adoptive families. "We need the rest of the church to step up and help, taking on roles as aunties and uncles, and praying for and encouraging these families," he says. "We need to be the family of God we're supposed to be."



“**One family per member church will more than meet the need.**”

# Welcomed into divine community

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has provided a way for humanity to return to Himself.

“*The church, above all humanity, should know the deep joy of belonging.*”

**On 8 July 2013, 29,000 Californian prisoners launched a hunger strike, the largest jail protest the state had ever seen. Their cause? California's use of solitary confinement, which saw some inmates held for decades with almost no human contact. Psychologists deemed it tantamount to torture.**

Last October Dr Helen Stokes-Lampard, Britain's chief GP, warned fellow doctors that loneliness can harm health just as much as high blood pressure or smoking. According to the Royal College of General Practitioners, there are an estimated 1.1 million lonely Brits. They are 50 per cent more likely to die prematurely than those who have good social networks. That makes loneliness as dangerous as diabetes. Three quarters of GPs say they see between one and five lonely people a day.<sup>1</sup>

The dangers of sustained solitude should come as no surprise. The first thing God declares “not good” is Adam's isolation (Genesis 2:18). As humanity is conceived,

our Triune Creator is in conversation within the community of the Godhead: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). So, it makes absolute sense that belonging to others is a health essential for humans bearing the image of the God whose very essence is loving community.

## God is three

This is a deep stream in Trinitarian theology. As theologian Mike Reeves so compellingly puts it: “It is only when you grasp what it means for God to be a Trinity that you really sense the beauty, the overflowing kindness, the heart-grabbing loveliness of God. The irony could not be thicker: what we assume would be a dull or peculiar irrelevance turns out to be the source of all that is good in Christianity.”<sup>2</sup>

The church, above all humanity, should know the deep joy of belonging. We are the people who have been welcomed into divine community, who in Christ belong to God and to one another. If any group holds



the antidote to the loneliness epidemic, it should be the church, “the gospel made visible”<sup>3</sup>.

We of course have an enemy who loathes this truth and who longs to isolate. The Good Shepherd gathers one flock to enjoy abundant life together, but the wolf snatches and scatters. He seeks only to steal, kill and destroy; and one of his early targets is loving community. The Gerasene

demoniac had been driven by the demon into solitary places, and lived where Satan planned soon to bury him, in the tombs.

Jesus rescues then restores him to the community, to which he belongs: “Return home and tell how much God has done for you” (Luke 8: 27, 29 and 39).

### **In Christ**

The New Testament’s most common description of a Christian is soaked in the language of intimate belonging: to be a believer is to be ‘in Christ’. On that day, Jesus says, “You will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14:20). For us to be in Christ is to be where He is, and He is in the Father. The Son belongs to the Father, and we belong to the Son. To be in Christ is to be the ultimate ►

“  
***The Son belongs to the Father, and we belong to the Son.***



“  
**Three quarters  
of British GPs see  
between one and  
five lonely people  
a day.**

insider, enveloped in the secure, loving, eternal embrace of the Trinity.

Rory Shiner illustrates this beautifully: What relationship do we need with an airliner to get to our destination? The key relationship you need with the plane is not to be under it, behind it, or inspired by it. You need to be in it. Why? Because, by being in the plane, what happens to the plane will also happen to you. To be in Christ is to say that, by union with Him, whatever is true of Him is now true of us. He died, we died. He is raised, we are (and will be) raised. He is vindicated, we are vindicated. He is loved, we are loved. And so on, all because we are in Him.<sup>4</sup>

So much flows from this beautiful truth. To be that secure liberates us to love others selflessly and generously. The forgiveness and reconciliation that births our union with Christ patterns our loving unity with each other. To be in Christ together makes us part of His body: we don't just need one another, we belong to one another (Romans 12:5). And we have the ultimate help in strengthening these bonds of peace: the Spirit of unity Himself (Ephesians 4:3).

The statistics on loneliness, as mentioned above, indicate that our neighbours long to belong. Isolation kills. We can welcome them to where we live, the very epicentre of belonging, the one under whom the Father is bringing together all things in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:10). It will be the depth and sincerity of our belonging together that will point people to Him: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13: 35).

“  
**We are the people  
who have been  
welcomed into  
divine community.**

1 [www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/12/loneliness-as-bad-for-health-as-long-term-illness-says-gps-chief](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/12/loneliness-as-bad-for-health-as-long-term-illness-says-gps-chief), accessed 4/5/18

2 Reeves, Michael, *The Good God: Enjoying Father, Son and Spirit* (Carlisle: Paternoster 2012), pp vii, xvi

3 Dever, Mark, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group 2012)

4 Shiner, Rory, *One Forever, The Transforming Power of Being in Christ* (Kingsford, Matthias Media, 2012), pp.34-35

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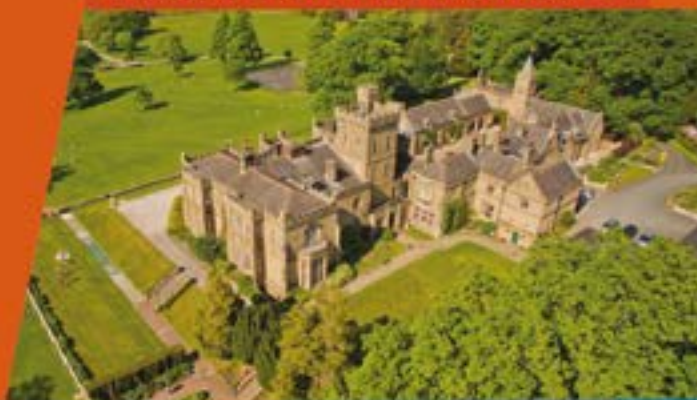
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# Caribbean communities' contribution to the UK

June 2018 marked the 70th anniversary of the arrival in Britain of Empire Windrush, carrying passengers from the Caribbean. In his interview with the Evangelical Alliance, Dr R. David Muir, senior lecturer in Public Theology and Ministerial Theology, University of Roehampton, talks immigration scandal, overcoming prejudice, the next generation, and hope for an even brighter future.



Dr R. David Muir

**The media has been awash with stories of long-standing Caribbean residents being entangled in an immigration crisis. What are your views?**

This national debacle and administrative tragedy has evoked feelings of distrust. It's shocking and scandalous that someone like Paulette Wilson, who came here in 1968, aged 10, had been sent to a detention centre with the threat of being deported, having paid tax and even worked as a cook in the House of Commons.

This is the unintended consequence of a government policy designed to create a 'hostile environment' for illegal immigrants.

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**Despite the journey ahead of us, I believe that racism should not be the dominant narrative.**

All government policy should have a proper impact assessment; a suitable one would have raised this issue.

But, we shouldn't allow the tragic news stories over the past weeks and months to overshadow the achievements of the Windrush generation as we commemorate the 70th anniversary, because there's a lot to celebrate. Let's not permit this to be the dominant narrative.

**What contribution has the Caribbean community made to church life in the UK?**

A former Evangelical Alliance general director wrote a book entitled *Lord, Make us One – But Not All the Same*. The title speaks vividly about the reality (and a perennial plea) of the unity and diversity of churches in the UK today. The country boasts a diverse Christian community, which includes black-led churches and organisations. Some of these churches were founded by pioneers such as Philip Mohabir and Bishop Sydney Dunn. The former felt called to England to become a missionary. He established an apostolic network of churches in Britain, as well as the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance.

**You say that some Caribbean communities had to develop their own churches due to harsh social conditions. Can you give any examples?**

The rise of Caribbean churches is also a result of the racism and rejection that Caribbean migrants experienced when they arrived in the UK. In 1948, for instance, the very same day Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury, with the first wave of immigrants from different parts of the Caribbean, 11 Labour MPs wrote to the Prime Minister to express their belief that the new arrivals were unsuited to come to the UK because they didn't have the proper education, customs, and so on.

The MPs, who wrote those things, 20 years before Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech, claimed that these individuals, a third of whom were ex-servicemen who fought in the British Army in World War II, would create discord and mayhem and spoil the tone of Britain. This implied that it's okay for 'them' to help 'us' during the war, but other than that it's not okay for 'them' to be here. That set the tone for the way in which society would treat Caribbean people subsequently.

I'm aware of actual cases of rejection. What the late Rev Dr Io Smith MBE of the New Testament Assembly (NTA) experienced is a prime example. She said the first place she visited when she arrived in the UK was a church, where she sought love, warmth and encouragement, but faced indifference and rejection. In fact, she said that she was told that there was a black church down the road where she would be welcome. Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, a senior member of Churches Together in England, says there were low levels of acceptance in the church and high levels of misunderstanding from secular society, making conditions rather tough for these individuals.

**Over the last 70 years, how have attitudes towards Caribbean migrants improved?**

Progress has been made. Social change may happen slowly, but it definitely comes about. You'll now see Caribbean Christians in many of the mainline churches, for example, which is a great thing. Talking from personal experience, my father came to the UK in the '60s and didn't have any difficulty finding a job as an engineer or buying a house. My wife's dad also had a positive experience when he arrived in Sheffield; he was treated well by the English Christians he met.

Nevertheless, in saying this, some of my father's friends who came to England when he did, struggled due to discrimination,





rejection and racism. I guess, the bottom line is, we aren't where we were, but we've still got a long way to go. Stephen Lawrence's murder in 1993 was a real watershed. But, despite the journey ahead of us, I believe that racism should not be the dominant narrative. For some people, it defines and deforms so much of their life chances and life choices. We need to continue to tackle racism and other forms of discrimination so that all individuals can flourish.

**Are second and third generation Caribbean Christians engaging in church life as their forebears did?**

We know that, anecdotally, a significant amount of young Caribbean Christians attend mainstream churches and churches

like Hillsong and New Frontiers, as opposed to majority Caribbean churches. Of my own two young daughters, one is going to a pioneer church and the other isn't keen on church in the traditional sense; she is much more concerned with doing work with young people beyond the four walls of the church and engaging in social action and community organising.

Additionally, the second and third generations may feel that the churches that their parents and grandparents went to do not meet their needs. Their education, aspirations and lifestyle are different, so churches that cater to an older generation might not provide the answers to the questions that they're asking. A lot of young people go to the likes of Hillsong and similar

“  
**God has a way of engendering revival.**

churches because they relate to the youth culture on offer, the preaching style and the spirituality portrayed.

The factors mentioned may go some way to explain forecasts of a decline in membership among Caribbean churches in the UK. Although the figures are anecdotal, Peter Brierley's church statistics for 2010-2020 indicate that by 2020 attendance levels at the New Testament ►

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Church of God, Church of Prophecy, and Ruach will not rise significantly. But, let's not be pessimistic about the future; God has a way of engendering revival.

**With the recent news stories on gun and knife crime in London, it would seem that a number of young black men in the capital are choosing a life of crime over a life in church. What are your thoughts?**

I'm always suspicious of the narrative around gang culture or violent crime, as it doesn't pay homage to what is more common. Most Caribbean children and young adults strive to do the best they can in order to make better lives for themselves. Most of these individuals aren't involved in gun and knife crime. We are talking about a minority that is alienated and disenfranchised.

The church has to step in to help these young people and young adults who feel as though they have no stake in society and have gone off the rails. We need to offer them alternatives, encouraging them to go against the grain of the negative and destructive forces and behaviour they see around them. We must offer a lot more support, social teaching and political education to young people, to enable them to make the right choices.

**What specifically do you think churches can do to help?**

Churches can reimagine how they use their resources to engage young people effectively and efficiently. I implore church leaders to look at their finances and invest more into youth and young people's work. I know churches can't do everything, and it might seem difficult, but churches are the very places where people can find hope and a steer to a meaningful life. If the church is not doing that, it is failing in a significant part of its mission.

When I was younger, I had safe spaces where I could go and play; perhaps churches can provide safe environments for youngsters to come and talk about the difficulties around peer pressure or involvement in gangs. Some churches and Christian organisations are already doing this; they are diverting young people away from crime and are prophetically addressing topics such as knife and gun crime, active citizenship, and community cohesion.

It's crucial that we acknowledge that many churches are already doing this type of work, and many meetings and consultations have been organised. But, we have the capacity to do more.



*David and one of his daughters*

**What's your hope for the next 70 years?**

Hope is what keeps us alive and what gives us energy. It's what we struggle for so that we might be able to get insight. In the absence of hope, we are left with despair and hopelessness. Jesus came to give us hope and invite us to partake in a new reality. I look back on my own pastor and former general director of the Evangelical Alliance, Joel Edwards, and how he encouraged a whole generation of young Christians to be the best they could be and to make their contribution to society. I think about people like Angela Sarkis, a former governor of the BBC, and all she has achieved. I ask myself: what has stirred them to do the things that they have done?

I believe that these individuals, and the many like them, have an unshakeable belief that God wants them to be the best that they can be in their generation, and I rejoice in that. I'm thankful to God that we, Caribbean migrants, have made significant strides across a number of institutions in

the UK. I believe in the years to come that we will continue to make a difference. From these third and fourth generation Caribbean Christians, there'll be a new leadership that will inform and influence all sections of society. It will bring a new zest, realism and pragmatism to the struggles they see. I'm hopeful for Caribbean Christians – all Christians in the UK.

*Dr R. David Muir has served as director of public policy at the Evangelical Alliance.*

***If the church is not doing that, it is failing in a significant part of its mission.***

# Transformed

Let us, the church, respond with compassion, clarity and humility to the complexities and confusion surrounding gender identity.

**Barely a day seems to go by without a transgender news story. From the bathroom wars in the US, to arguments about sporting rules based on gender, from disagreements about school uniform policies, to advice from the British Medical Association to use the phrase ‘pregnant people’ in place of expectant mothers.**

In the midst of all this, the Scottish Government has consulted on proposals to change the Gender Recognition Act, to allow people to self-identify when it comes to gender. The current law requires someone to have lived successfully for at least two years whilst presenting themselves as their chosen gender. But, a parliamentary committee at Westminster has called for significant changes, including moving to self-identification and lowering the age limit to 16 years old.

Potential reform of gender recognition law has been met with strong criticism from feminists, who see the proposal as an attempt to do away with all references

to the biological female sex. Writer and academic Germaine Greer, for instance, argues that biological women are “losing out everywhere”. She adds, “I’m sick and tired of this. We keep arguing that women have won everything they need to win. They haven’t even won the right to exist.”<sup>1</sup>

## More than a debate

There is a great deal of cultural confusion around transgender, and information and opinions are constantly changing. But, transgender is not simply an issue to be debated; it raises fundamental identity questions for people who, like all of us, need to be loved.

Gender dysphoria is a relatively rare medical condition, where a person experiences significant discomfort or distress due to a mismatch between their gender and sex. (There are approximately 15,000 gender identity patients in the UK.) However, there is a much wider transgender movement, where one does not need to experience dysphoria or have any intention of permanently transitioning to call oneself trans. The movement is heavily influenced by established theories and ideologies about sexuality and gender.

Problems in the church can arise when people try to respond pastorally to ideological arguments, or respond theologically, and in the abstract, to a person standing in front of them who needs a pastoral response. In preparing two new resources to help the church respond to transgender, the Evangelical Alliance heard from groups that stressed their hope that the church would be a place of welcome, even if it did not know how to respond to all the questions being asked of it. A participant of a transgender support group commented, “If you have met one transgender person, you have met one transgender person; no two experiences are the same.”

“**Transgender is not simply an issue to be debated; it raises fundamental identity questions for people who, like all of us, need to be loved.**”



## Our response

Christians have too often been on the back foot and slow to respond to the social changes concerning gender and gender dysphoria. It is hoped these resources, which will be available on our website ([eauk.org](http://eauk.org)) over the summer, will help individuals and gathered communities to understand, love and relate to transgender people and the wider movement. Like our Lord’s, our love is to know no boundaries, even if we don’t agree with someone else’s beliefs or stance.

The church is to respond with compassion. The church should be, and often is, a place of welcome for everyone, and in particular those who feel marginalised. Let’s listen to the stories of those wrestling with gender dysphoria to understand them. The condition itself is often painful and distressing, and those who experience





it have disproportionately high levels of mental health problems. However, this does not negate the church's role in discipling someone who struggles with gender dysphoria on what can be a long and difficult journey in reconciling their experience with their body.

The second issue for the church is clarity in this difficult area. There are complexities and confusion around transgender, and the church is encouraged to recognise its own limitations while remaining faithful to the biblical text. The Bible may have limited references that touch directly on trans identity, but it has much to say about what it is to be human, about sex and gender, about the body, and about life in a fallen world.

Redemption, through life in Jesus Christ, brings hope for our hearts, mind and bodies, all of which have been affected by

the fall. Let us, therefore, also be careful in responding pastorally to individuals, whilst recognising the more troubling elements of the underlying movement.

Finally, the church should, with humility, give voice to some of the concerns it has. The church, like many others, is concerned at the rush to invasive and non-reversible medication and procedures, particularly in children. The church also sympathises with the concerns being raised by many women's groups about the safety of women, for example, in women's refuges, but more fundamentally, that their very identity is being challenged.

There is always a danger of being misheard and so we are to build good relationships and ensure we speak with the right tone. We believe this resource will help enable more compassionate encounters.

1 [www.thetimes.co.uk/article/no-sex-please-this-is-the-census-sswntgs5z](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/no-sex-please-this-is-the-census-sswntgs5z)

***The church should be, and often is, a place of welcome for everyone, and in particular those who feel marginalised.***

# Languages of Love

Linguæ Christi is among the Christian organisations around the UK that are making Jesus known in people's heart language. Naomi Osinnowo catches up with the general director, Rev John Robinson, to find out what the charity is up to and the difference it's making.

**I'm no clairvoyant, of course, but I reckon chances are, the vast majority of people reading this article are fluent in English, and it's their first language. I'll also hazard a guess that a good percentage of readers haven't heard of Zeëuws. Zee-what? Zeëuws is a Germanic minority language of the Netherlands, spoken by 220,000 people on the planet. I hadn't heard of it either, until I read a good chunk of Linguæ Christi's 76-page *Vision and Introductory Paper*.**

Zeëuws is one of the many European indigenous minority languages that feature in those pages. Although probably unfamiliar to many of us, for the individuals, families and communities who speak these languages, they are their native tongues, or, as John Robinson puts it, their heart languages, with which God readily communicates with them. Giving an example of a Christian ceremony where the linguistically diverse congregation was asked to sing the final verse of a popular gospel song in their mother tongues, John says, "God speaks with everyone in their heart languages, whatever it may be, making it



*Revd John Robinson, general director, Linguæ Christi*

important enough for me to speak to them in their heart language."

## One race, many tongues

It's this very truth about our supernatural God that is the philosophical backbone of Linguæ Christi's missional work. "We believe firmly that everyone in the world has the right to receive and experience the gospel in his or her heart language," asserts US-born John, who settled in rural Wales after being

sent there as a missionary. So, after spending two decades in the country, during which he learnt the language and became a British citizen, John set up Linguæ Christi in 2016 to share the good news about Jesus Christ with speakers of more than 150 European minority languages. Among them are, perhaps, the more familiar, and definitely more local, Manx Gaelic, which is spoken by 2,000 people, according to Linguæ Christi statistics, and Welsh Cymraeg, which is spoken by 700,000 worldwide.

To preach the gospel to non-believers from these specific language groups, which are based in greater Europe, in their heart languages, the Wales-based organisation has devised a tactic that encompasses three core areas of work: missions, networks and advocacy. "We seek to embrace this calling in active mission service, as in boots on the ground engaging with these people groups; by serving as a network, and thereby helping to bring together a variety of individuals, organisations, and churches; and through advocacy," says John. He explains that advocacy – being the champion of these language groups through language-





specific church planting and other avenues – is a crucial part of Linguæ Christi's efforts, because it's all too easy for these communities to be overlooked due to dominant national languages.

"If we missionaries were in, say, Africa, we wouldn't be having a conversation about speakers of minority languages being overlooked and whether we should speak with these people in their heart languages instead of, say, French, Portuguese or English, a colonial language. We would learn their language in order to relate to them, and people in modern mission wouldn't dispute this," stresses John. "But some people forget that Europeans have been colonising their neighbours for centuries, which has given rise to 'trade' languages and minority languages. Add to this the rise of the nation state, and the focus has been taken off speakers of these minority languages. The work is so obscure, but there are huge numbers of people who speak these tongues; unfortunately, they have been forgotten by the modern missionary movement."

### Melting pot heaven

John quotes verse nine from chapter seven of the book of Revelation – "after this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" – and in view of this reality to come, says it starts now, on earth. John urges us, therefore, to acknowledge this type of ministry, because it's addressing an issue that is deep both personally and sociologically. "Language is important to these people; it's part of their identity and their community," he says. "Sharing the gospel with them in their heart language helps communicate that we are one in Christ without having to be uniform in culture and language. This is the type of belonging that will change the world."

But John admits that to make a success of this project is no easy feat, not least because, as he says, the work is obscure and 'trade' languages are prominent. However, over the 24 months since he founded Linguæ Christi, and in the years leading up to the

***We believe firmly that everyone in the world has the right to receive and experience the gospel in his or her heart language.***

venture, he's come across many individuals and organisations that are active in this field and, like him, want to make the gospel and church life more accessible by reaching people in their heart language. John says that if among our readers there is anyone who can add value to this ministry through, for instance, research or connections, he's keen to hear from you. Although, first and foremost, "we need prayer," he says. "Please pray for us and look up these things and think about them."



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# In the heart of the inner city

Leaders from two inner-city churches in England reveal how they are getting to the heart of their cosmopolitan communities.



Anthony Delaney, church leader, Ivy Church, Manchester

**Ivy Church in Manchester has been around for 125 years, but in the past decade since Anthony Delaney became church leader it has started to expand and reflect the diverse community it serves more and more.**

Ivy Cottage, as it was formerly known, was a “well-known church, with a focus on prayer and unity”, says the former police officer. “However, it was also fairly white and middle-class, and wasn’t seeing much growth.”

Anthony’s vision of what a church should be clearly resonated with the existing members’ ambition to be missional and mirror the people of Manchester. When Anthony was invited to lead Ivy Church, he presented to the church two approaches to ministry: Ivy could either be a ‘cruise ship’ or launch

**“We don’t have a ‘one size fits all’ approach, because we’re not just reaching one kind of person in one kind of way.”**

**Anthony**

‘lifeboats’. Reflecting on that conversation, Anthony remembers saying, “If I come to lead this church, we will launch lifeboats; if you don’t want that, please don’t employ me.”

They chose lifeboats, and the church’s congregation has grown to overflowing and become more diverse since that decision was made. “We’ve gained hundreds more people over the years and we are now in four more buildings, as well as the original one,” says the Church of England ordained minister. “Additionally, I think we have become a much more diverse church – more representative of the city.”

## If it were me

Perhaps Anthony’s personal walk with God opened his eyes to the value of a ‘lifeboat ministry’. The father of three, who wasn’t a Christian when he joined the police service, admits that the 10 years he spent working in a tough inner-city part of Manchester, followed by the riot squad and then in a drugs and vice unit, left him cynical and on a path of self-destruction. God intervened and offered him a lifeboat, and that’s why he wants to do the same. “I always try to remember what I was like when I was searching for truth,” says Anthony. “If someone is in the position I was, I want us to be ready to receive and help that person find their way back to God.”

## Changing perceptions

But, how can a church receive someone who’s convinced that church isn’t for them? Anthony believes that changing people’s perception of church is one of the fundamental steps to bringing them closer to God. Thinking about his own journey, he says, “My wife invited me to a vibrant church that had good music that I could relate to and a compelling message that challenged me. I had previously written off church but began to think: maybe I was wrong. God then got me thinking: maybe you are wrong about Me too.”

Anthony stresses that Christians are responsible for changing people’s minds about church, to stop them thinking, ‘it’s not for me; it’s for certain types of people’. He says, it’s God’s role, then, through the

**“Yes, we want the gospel to change people, but we have to change too.”**

**Anthony**

power of His Holy Spirit, to change people’s minds about Him. This desire to dispel myths about church and encourage people to see church as it is – a body of rescued people who all need Jesus and want to make His love known to everyone – influences how Ivy Church interacts and connects with individuals and families in and around the heart of Manchester.

“We don’t have a ‘one size fits all’ approach, because we’re not just reaching one kind of person in one kind of way,” says Anthony. Ivy has held church services in pubs, warehouses, cinemas, at MediaCityUK in Salford, and many other venues. The church has grown to become a network that regularly hires some of the biggest and best venues in the city and puts on outstanding events for the whole community to enjoy. Over the Easter period, for example, the church held a themed event at Manchester Academy, which comprised a circus area, band, choir, dancers and much more.

As a result, people in Manchester are afforded opportunities to engage in spaces that are more familiar to them. A by-product of this is church growth, as Ivy Church attracts people from all walks of life. Commenting on the large-scale events, Anthony says, “None of it is cheap, but it’s money well spent, because they encourage people to evaluate their preconceived ideas about church. This will often create openings for God to step in and challenge them about their views of Him.”

## Meeting people where they are

“Jesus didn’t act the same with each person He was trying to reach, so why should we?” asks Anthony. He adds, “Ivy Church shares





*Ivy Church's Easter event*

the unchanging gospel in a way different types of people can receive it. I value and uphold traditional beliefs and practices, but I also think church leaders must be willing to adopt new ways of doing things to reach out to people. Yes, we want the gospel to change people, but we have to change too."

Anthony's position on meeting people where they are, and encouraging Ivy Church to flourish organically, as it goes through the doors that God opens, was evidenced after the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017. Tensions in the city were rife following the suicide attack which killed 23 people and injured more than 500.

As most churches would do after such an atrocity, Ivy Church opened its doors to members of the public for prayer. But, Anthony discloses, "People weren't looking to the church for answers". Anthony felt God prompting him to go to Didsbury Mosque, which had been previously attended by the suicide bomber, and reach out to demonstrate God's love.

Anthony says, "Two weeks later, on a Sunday, a delegation from the mosque brought a big cake with 'We love Ivy Church' inscribed on it, and stayed for the entire service. The Imam said, 'You came to us in our time of need, and we'll never forget that.'"



*Jackie Blanchflower, church leader, Latymer Community Church, London*

**Doors wide open**

In many ways, Latymer Community Church in Ladbrooke Grove, London resembles Ivy Church. It has a long history that stretches back more than a century. It's based in a central area of a major city, which is home to people from all walks of life. It wants to reflect the diverse population it serves, in its congregation right the way through to leadership. It witnessed, close-up, one of the devastating tragedies that sucker-punched the UK in 2017 – the Grenfell Tower fire. And,

like Ivy, Latymer longs to see its community, including the many individuals and families who might not find their way into the more traditional church context, transformed by the love of God. But, it has a different method of reaching people.

"Latymer Community Church is run more like a community centre than a church," says church leader Jackie Blanchflower. "It's by operating the church in this way that we enable people to start developing relationships with Christians." Jackie, who has led the church since 2003, explains that the doors of Latymer are open to an array of groups in the area, including Brazilian, and Congolese-speaking fellowships, an Ethiopian women's community movement, and a group with a shared interest in crafts. This, she says, creates routes into the church for people who live in the area.

"The way we run Latymer tends to attract people who are looking for relationships," says Jackie. "Many are lonely, rather isolated or may feel marginalised due to mental health issues or language barriers." These individuals, points out Jackie, may struggle to find their way into mainstream churches, but they do discover a secure place in Latymer. "The church is almost like a refuge," she elaborates. "The people who come to us



“  
**The people who come to us start nesting and this creates an opening for them to taste and see something of the kingdom of God.**  
**Jackie**

start nesting and this creates an opening for them to taste and see something of the kingdom of God.”

**Baby steps**

Latymer’s approach, which Jackie admits is a series of baby steps, makes church more accessible by bridging the gap between church life and people who may not consider popping in to their local church, or who may have preconceived ideas about Christian worshipping communities. “Providing an environment where people can meet breaks down barriers,” she says. “And people connect with us by coming into the building – a great number of people come through our doors – and we’re able to offer prayer and spiritual connection for people.”

Just over a year after the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, which left 71 people dead, 70 people injured, and hundreds homeless, Jackie stresses the importance

of eliminating divides and providing refuge. “We are very aware of the needs around us, and they do seem very large, but by God’s grace and power, as the church in this place at this time, our vision has to be to see healing and redemption in our community,” she says. “Hospitality is a huge gift, and opening our doors to provide comfort and refuge and, for those who are open to it, prayer, makes people of all walks of life feel valued and have a sense of belonging.”

Whether by going out into the city, or by inviting folk in, both Anthony and Jackie relate to the people in their communities through activities and initiatives that they can understand, appreciate and accept. In doing so, they close the chasm between the church and those who are yet to come to know Jesus. As the two leaders make clear, this provides openings for God to step in and help them find their way back home, where they belong.

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# Making church more accessible

**The body of Christ is made up of people with a wide variety of abilities and needs. Consider how your church can accommodate every member of your congregation.**

**Making church a time and place that's easy to access – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually – often takes a conscious effort and a willingness to be flexible and creative. God puts no limits on us, and we want church to be a time and place that reflects this.**

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking about how you can make sure your church is a place of belonging for all.

## **Bible translations**

We mostly access God's word through just that – words. For some this can be an alienating experience. Reading isn't always that easy for every member of the congregation. Some will have lower reading levels, some will have poor eyesight, and some will struggle with comprehension. Think about ways to help. Is the Bible translation you're using helpful to your church family? Do they like the language? Do they understand it? Do you need to get in some braille or large print versions, or versions that are designed to help dyslexic readers?

## **Optional instructions**

There are many people in our churches who have physical conditions or aren't as robust as others. It's quite easy to overlook how our everyday directions, such as "stand for the next song", may exclude them from parts of a church service. Try to ask your church family to "stand if you're able" or even, "stand if you'd like to". Jesus made it clear that you didn't have to be standing in front of Him to receive from Him; consider the man who was blessed by Jesus after he was lowered from the roof by his friends. Let's make sure our church families know that Jesus has something to offer all of us, whether we're standing, sitting, or even lying down.

## **Disabled access**

Do you have disabled access, and that includes to the stage? Wheelchair access is relatively common now, but are we good at extending that to our 'up front' spaces? If we don't enable those in wheelchairs to be visible at the front, are we indirectly saying that Christians who are not as physically able cannot contribute to church leadership? Start making plans now to make your whole space accessible to the entire church family. Don't wait until someone with leadership skills, and who also happens to be in a wheelchair, comes to your church and wants to get involved.

## **Atmosphere**

Our churches can sometimes be loud places; take, for example, praise and worship, with a complete band, and corporate prayer. People who have autism tend to experience sensory overload, so services full of sound and people can be overwhelming. Are you able to explore creating bespoke services for those who can't manage the usual way of doing 'church'? Maybe your church family could take part in regular services that strip back a lot of what you would normally do and keep it simple? Trying to get the whole church family on board with something like this can help to make sure that the range of needs within your congregation is met without splitting up your church family into types, abilities or taste.

Explore some of these challenges in more depth at Churches for All ([churchesforall.org.uk](http://churchesforall.org.uk)) and Livability ([livability.org.uk](http://livability.org.uk)).



# Bitesize book reviews

## HEAR MY HEART

Dr Billy Graham

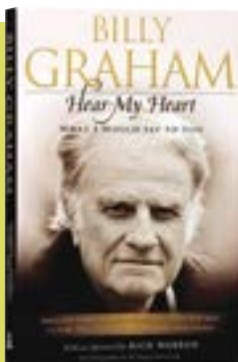
*Authentic*

**Authentic is to be congratulated for publishing this book within weeks of the death of Dr Billy Graham in February.**

*Hear My Heart* is a collection of articles by Billy Graham interspersed with tributes by church leaders including Jim Packer, John Stott and Rick Warren. Billy's contributions cover conversion, evangelism, the Bible, and the current state of evangelicalism.

There is a chapter on Billy's friendship with Johnny Cash and a tribute by a Catholic priest. The latter applauds Billy's attempts at building bridges to Christians outside the evangelical fold.

Billy may no longer be with us but his influence should continue for years to come.



## GOD IS STRANGER

Krish Kandiah

*Hodder and Stoughton*

**The author takes a fresh look at the stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jacob, Ruth, and Ezekiel, before reflecting on the death and resurrection of Jesus.**

Krish explains that there are times when God seems to be absent as well as times when God turns up in unexpected places. Examples include Abraham's encounter with the angelic visitors and Jacob's tussle with the angel.

Drawing on the parables of Jesus, Krish emphasises our duty to care for the stranger, the alien, and the refugee. Jesus identified with sinners and social outcasts, and His example shows that seemingly unlikely people can belong to the family of God.

This book makes challenging reading for anyone concerned to live out the radical demands of the gospel.



## INTERRUPTING SILENCE

Walter Brueggemann

*Hodder and Stoughton*

***Interrupting Silence* is a series of reflections on biblical stories that highlights occasions when God's people were called upon to speak against injustice and oppression.**

The author begins with the exodus before considering the prophets and Psalms. He then reflects on stories about Jesus from the gospels. Of particular interest is the chapter on the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7), with its suggestion that Jesus originally saw His mission as restricted to Israel before recognising that gentiles too could belong to the people of God.

Another chapter looks at Paul's apparent restrictions on the role of women in the church. The author highlights other aspects of Paul's teaching that suggest women can belong to the Christian community as full members with all that implies.



## WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT FAITH

Peter Stanford

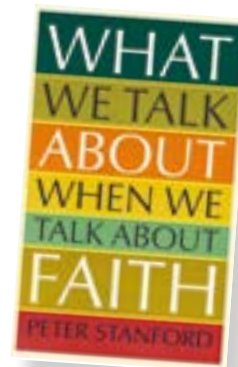
*Hodder and Stoughton*

**This is a collection of interviews on faith. Some of those questioned are church leaders, while others are active in the secular sphere.**

The individuals interviewed include George Carey, Desmond Tutu and Cherie Blair. Some are not entirely orthodox and there are interviews with the 'gay' bishop Gene Robinson and the rebel ex-nun Karen Armstrong.

Most interviewees belong to the Anglican or Catholic churches, but there are interviews with others who have a genuine faith but are reluctant to belong to an organised religion. Novelist Wendy Perriam, for example, is a lapsed Catholic who still finds comfort in Catholic liturgy and ritual.

It is encouraging that a large number of public figures are willing to speak openly about their faith.



## STRANDS OF DESTINY

Peter Horrobin

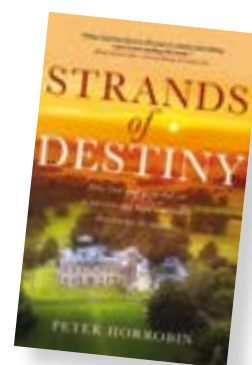
*Sovereign World*

**This is the autobiography of Peter Horrobin, the founder of the healing and counselling ministry of Ellel Ministries.**

Peter experienced a call to repair broken lives when attempting to restore a vintage car. Eventually, God provided the means to launch Ellel Ministries in Britain and overseas.

There are stories of remarkable healings, though some readers may be uncomfortable when the author writes about generational curses, exorcisms and unusual spiritual experiences.

Others may dissent from the Christian Zionist viewpoint reflected in the chapter on Ellel's work in Israel. Many, however, will give thanks for a ministry that has transformed the lives of numerous people worldwide.





# Created for relationship

There was a joke doing the rounds on social media a few weeks ago. “Why does no one talk about the miracle of Jesus having 12 close friends in his 30s?”

**We live in a fast-paced, rapidly changing, hyperconnected world, yet loneliness is becoming a national epidemic. I visited a church last week where the practice was to share grace by hugging every person gathered there that day. As I was greeted by dozens of smiling, gracious people, I wondered, for how many people in the room was this their only source of human contact that week?**

We have all been created for relationship. The desire to belong and the need to be accepted and welcomed are innate in all of us. But, as well as needing to feel like we belong, we each have the power to build community and make others feel like an accepted part of something bigger than themselves.

Jesus modelled offering such acceptance to others in His ministry. He accepted Zacchaeus, the social pariah by inviting Himself round for dinner (Luke 19). He accepted Mary’s lavish act of worship, by honouring her and her actions in the presence of the rich and powerful (Luke 7). He accepted a criminal alongside whom He was executed, by welcoming him into heaven as he hung from a cross (Luke 23).

How can we be people who welcome and accept others?

- Share a meal with someone. Sit at a table in your home, in theirs, or somewhere else, and break bread and get to know them. There is



something deeply profound about eating food with others; it helps us to foster relationships that are based on the things that unite us. Food can be a power precursor to the sense of belonging.

- Think about how can you invite someone into your life. Can they help you walk the dog? Might they be able to join you when you collect your children from school? Will they sit with you on the couch as you fold laundry? Offering someone a sense of belonging

doesn't mean you have to find more time to dedicate to them; it can simply mean opening up and sharing with someone the things you already spend your time doing.

- Celebrate the unique in others. Consider how people demonstrate the image of God, and find ways to encourage, affirm and pray for the beautiful you can see in them. Be an encourager who speaks over other people's lives with words seasoned with grace, and watch them blossom.

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# Opportunity amid uncertainty

Let us be ever bold in spreading the gospel, seizing opportunities, in these uncertain times.



**I don't know about you, but for me the early months of 2018 have revealed a UK society living with extraordinary uncertainty and increasing fragmentation. The ongoing Brexit debate has exposed significant differences between young and old, metropolitan centres (particularly London) and the rest of the country, Scotland and Northern Ireland and Wales, and large sections of England.**

Last year's general election was supposed to deliver a strong, stable government,

“  
**Let's also recognise as we respond to the opportunities and challenges of making Jesus known, wonderfully, God has promised that we are not on our own.**

but instead it resulted in a hung parliament and the Government dependent on an agreement with the DUP (Democratic Unionist Party). The impact of austerity rolls on, effecting particularly the most vulnerable, and terrorism continues to be a threat hanging over us. The inequalities of wealth distribution between the generations (baby boomers and the under 40s) could be a catalyst for social unrest for years to come.

With such uncertainty, as a Christian community it is crucial we discover together what our response should be. I am convinced these are years of amazing opportunity for the church. Times of uncertainty provide an environment ripe for conversations around the big issues of life, and indeed, times of far greater openness to the gospel.

At a recent evangelical council meeting, as we discussed the spiritual temperature of the UK, there was a shared sense of a 'new season', of people coming to Christ from all kinds of backgrounds, and in a variety of ways. (If you've not as yet accessed the Great Commission website, [greatcommission.co.uk](http://greatcommission.co.uk), do take some time to check it out. It carries amazing short videos of people sharing their faith stories, often those of new converts.)

Interestingly, alongside the opportunities, we are also aware of growing opposition. We live in a country which has been profoundly

influenced by the Christian faith, shaping every aspect of our society. Yet increasingly, the Christian faith is being marginalised as a powerful, non-religious, secular worldview dominates so much of our public space. It's in the very air that we breathe and it pervades our institutions and our sources of entertainment.

I recently had the opportunity to address the all-party parliamentary group on religious education. As part of the discussion that followed, I raised with Mark Friend, a senior executive of the BBC, why the BBC seemed unable to portray Christians as anything other than 'weird' in their drama series, or when reflecting on the abortion debate taking place in Northern Ireland, found itself unable to refer to the Both Lives Matter campaign (which we with our friends at Care have instigated) as 'pro-life' rather than 'anti-abortion', as the BBC invariably refers to it. For me, this is just the tip of an iceberg which reflects a worldview that is determined to undermine the Christian faith.

So, what's our response? Well, we must not miss the opportunities. This is not a time to retreat into our safe Christian spaces. I am asking God to give me greater boldness in sharing my faith in Jesus. The early church's prayer, when faced with opposition, was simple. Acts 4:29-30: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Let's also recognise as we respond to the opportunities and challenges of making Jesus known, wonderfully, God has promised that we are not on our own. Isn't it a great relief that it's not entirely up to us? God did not leave us destitute; He has sent His Holy Spirit to us, inspiring our prayers, giving us wisdom, revealing to us the right things to do and say in whichever situations we might find ourselves in.

So, in these uncertain times, let's not be fearful of the opposition, but let's find fresh faith to respond with boldness to the opportunities.





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*We... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory... (2 Cor. 3:18)*

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