

idea

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
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in a divided world






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Welcome

Of one accord

This is the third edition of *idea* that we've dedicated to unity since I joined the charity as editor in 2018.

We revisit this theme because it's the reason the Evangelical Alliance exists—to bring together the saints, as it's through the body of Christ that the oh-so magnificent head is known.

You'll agree that the last 18 months have been testing; and at a time when our country should be united for the sake of all, in many ways divisions have deepened, reinforcing the need for a better way.

This edition's writers point to a better way. OPC director Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana's exposition on creation, incarnation and reconciliation reminds us of a biblical unity that celebrates differences (p. 2). In an interview, Amanda Jackson, director of the WEA Women's Commission, encourages us to imagine what could be accomplished if men and women partner for God's work (p. 6).



10

Chris Vaz's story from Gateway Church Abergavenny reveals how God moves lovingly through His assembled people to feed the hungry (p. 10). And our Northern Ireland team's Donna Jennings, mother of Micah, her "profoundly disabled son", sets us a challenge as we journey together in the new community of Christ (p. 14).

As our CEO Gavin Calver says: "The Lord is longing for us to be united to reflect His glory" (p. 32).

Naomi Osinnowo

Editor

P.S Check out our impact report on pages 29–32.



14

14

"Micah doesn't have the God-stamp"

What does it mean to be human? asks mum of profoundly disabled son.

21

Let's pray

Join Open Doors UK & Ireland in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

24

High-impact church in a post-pandemic world

As these examples show, we serve together to make a difference – GATHER.

28

Our unity saves souls

Gavin Calver: I've seen Christian unity draw people to Jesus, so I implore us to be one.

Highlights

02

Biblical unity, with diversity at its heart

Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana: God's vision for unity can be seen in creation, incarnation and reconciliation.

06

We can do better than a world divided on gender

Amanda Jackson on new WEA book, which is set to "shake us and stir us".

10

Pastor: "We're blessed to be a blessing"

Through our church, God has fed many. What a blessing! – Chris Vaz.



24

BIBLICAL UNITY, WITH DIVERSITY AT ITS HEART

Creation, incarnation and reconciliation – these three Christian doctrines can help us grasp God’s heart for unity in diversity, says **Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana**, director of the Evangelical Alliance’s One People Commission.

Our world is wrestling with various discourses that could easily polarise us. As conversations about age, sex and race continue, what is our understanding of unity? Why is unity fundamentally important in the current climate? And is it possible for the church to give emphasis to these important distinctions but yet unite in Christ?

I believe there are three theological ideas that can help us appreciate the kind of unity God spoke about the Bible. The first starts with creation. One crucial aspect of creation theology is what the biblical accounts of creation tell us about what it means to be human. Creation theology furnishes us with the understanding that we are all created in God's image, therefore affirming our equality, dignity, value and respect.

God created us all, meaning we all, whether male or female, South Korean or white British, young or old, originate from the same source and are therefore equal before God.

The beauty of the biblical accounts of creation is that while God created all of us, He also created our distinctiveness. God created man as well as woman; He created Nigerians as well as Canadians. This is the beauty of God's creation of humanity: while He created all of us in His image, we are not all the same.

The creation of humanity in the image of God encompasses beauty, respect and human dignity. King David put it this way: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:14).

Creation is therefore the first theological basis for expressing unity in diversity. In essence, being created by one God in His image means that we are equal. But that creation is expressed in different physical features, skin pigmentation, biology, history and geography, means God also values diversity.

God Himself expresses this unity in diversity in His very being. God is three distinctive persons in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but yet the godhead is one in essence and purpose.

The incarnation of Jesus expresses God's solidarity with humanity in our entire diversity.

The second theological framework for our unity in diversity is the incarnation, that God the Son became human like us. John describes the incarnation as "the Word becoming flesh" (John 1:14).

The incarnation of Jesus expresses God's solidarity with humanity in our entire diversity. In a way, it is God's cross-cultural language and cultural intelligence in that He identifies with all of humanity and not some part of it. The incarnation connects God with all people and therefore the diverse expressions of humanity.

The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way: “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom also He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven” (Hebrews 1:1–3).

A further step in understanding the incarnation as a theological basis for unity in diversity is that it also speaks to particularity. By this I mean, the incarnation is contextual; in Jesus becoming one of us, He identifies with the entire human race. Nevertheless, He came to us as a Jewish man born in first-century Palestine.

This is specific and speaks to the heart of how important it is to recognise the various distinguishing characteristics across our shared humanity – sex, race, social class, age – but at the same time the incarnation connects beyond the particular. We have to hold this in tension: God is particular – He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – but also through Jesus by the Spirit, God connects with us all.

Finally, reconciliation. The incarnation shows us God’s desire for union with humanity; this reconciliation is achieved through Jesus’ death on the cross. Paul puts it this way: “For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit” (Ephesians 2:14–18).

Here Paul describes how Jesus’ death on the cross has brought an end to the cultural hostility that was between Jews and gentiles. The death of Jesus on the cross is undergirded by the understanding for the need for vertical reconciliation between humanity and God. But the cross also speaks to horizontal reconciliation between divided communities. Reconciliation gives us a language of pursuing a just, integrated society where all humanity is reconciled with God and each other, resulting in a flourishing society.

The church is meant to be a window into this new human community, offering a glimpse of the life of the age to come. This is why Paul in 1 Corinthians could use the human body as a metaphor to illustrate the importance of different parts of the body—different but ultimately one people, united in Christ Jesus to function together, with every part suffering if one part suffers (12:26).

As the church seeks to live out this biblical description of unity in diversity, we incarnate the gospel for people, embodying in community the reconciliation Jesus came to achieve through His life, death, resurrection and ascension.





10 minutes with...

TITILOLA BALOGUN

One People Commission coordinator

Tell us a little about yourself.

I joined the Evangelical Alliance's One People Commission (OPC) in September 2020, during the pandemic. After several years' developing and working in grassroots and international equality and diversity projects in the Republic of Ireland, God called me to move to the UK with my family. I feel my becoming OPC coordinator was orchestrated by God for such a time as this.

For those who don't know, why does the OPC exist?

In 2010, key church leaders met for the Evangelical Alliance's annual council meeting, and it was clear that the ethnically diverse church in the UK was not represented. So, the OPC was set up in 2012 to foster greater diversity and unity within the Evangelical Alliance and support members on this journey too.

Almost 10 years on and we still celebrate diversity, promote unity and help the church speak into issues of inequality, injustice and discrimination. The 'why' is John 17:23; the Bible speaks of unity in diversity, that we are one in Christ.

Ultimately, the OPC guides and shapes this crucial aspect of the Evangelical Alliance's work so that we, together with member churches and organisations, can honour God in all we do.

Why is this work crucial in this current season?

The church in the UK is diverse, with an increasing number of black African and multicultural congregations. As the ministration of God's word in the world, it's essential that we acknowledge the ethnic diversity and individuality that exists within the church while highlighting the importance of coming together as one to build each other up in the faith, witness to those around us and tackle problems in our society.

People look to the church for help, and collectively we have a huge amount of experience,

insight and wisdom that we can pass on and use to shape culture. The last 18 months is a prime example of how we should be stepping up, together. The Government's race report, released in spring 2021, showed there's a need for a Christian vision of a just society (eauk.org/race-and-ethnic-disparities); reluctance among BAME communities to take the coronavirus vaccine showed there was a need for the church to speak with one voice to inform and dispel myths; the tragic murder of George Floyd showed there's still lots to do to tackle racial injustice – to name a few.

What will the OPC be working on in the coming weeks and months?

We appointed our first full-time director in April, Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana, and it's exciting to work alongside him. In the weeks and months ahead, we'll be developing our work on building intercultural churches. With the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) taking place in November, we're collaborating with Tearfund and Christian Aid on a climate justice event, which I'm really looking forward to! That's not it. Work on our OPC young adults network is ongoing, and so are our efforts to work with church leaders to promote racial justice.

How can people find out more and get involved?

Visit eauk.org/opc for more information about the OPC and to sign up to our email newsletter to receive the latest news and updates from us.

How might members pray for you and the work of the OPC?

Please pray for God to help Israel and I to have discerning hearts and ears to hear what He's saying for this time. Pray for God's power to impact all that we do, in the situations we face, as so many other voices say we should do it this way or that way.



**WE CAN DO BETTER
THAN A WORLD
DIVIDED
ON GENDER**

A new book from the WEA Women's Commission "steps back from the 'typical' narrative about men and women" and is set to "shake us and stir us", **Amanda Jackson** tells Naomi Osinnowo.

In a world that in Amanda Jackson's words is "sadly divided on gender", a new title from the World Evangelical Alliance Women's Commission seeks to show that healthy partnerships between men and women are possible.

I caught up with Amanda, director of the commission and co-editor, to find out more about *Co-workers and co-leaders: Women and men partnering for God's work*, which brings together Christian voices from around the world who concede that we can, and must, do better than the world.

Tell us a little bit about the book.

The title says it all really. Paul often used the word 'co-workers' to describe believers in the early church, men and women who laboured side by side with him. He was hugely appreciative of that teamwork, and the book wants to explore what healthy partnerships can look like in the church today. We look at different contexts and different traditions to present some fresh perspectives on the most important human relationships: marriage, family and working together as God's people.

Peirong Lin, the WEA's deputy secretary general for operations, and I edited the book, and we decided to use the word 'partnership' because we recognise that when we work together, there are issues and tensions along the way as we cope with different personalities and gifting, as well as gender difference. So if we see ourselves as set free from human perspectives of power, we can appreciate each other and work effectively. That has to be good news for the kingdom of God.

Why this book? Why now?

We all have our blinkers when it comes to the roles and responsibilities of men and women: we have our favourite Bible verses about whether women can teach or preach or lead churches. The debate can get toxic, unfortunately, and is inflamed by secular debates around gender and male power.

I work in all sorts of places around the world, and I hear many stories from women who simply want to fully use their gifting. Listening to each other and hearing stories of healthy co-working can be a powerful way of overcoming barriers of misunderstanding or tradition.

We wanted to write an accessible book that aims to be intelligent and meticulous in its biblical scholarship, and which also encourages us to listen

to stories from around the globe. The book comes out of the evangelical world, which prizes the written word of God highly, and we have chapters from eight theologians and missions experts from seven nations. We also have nine personal stories reflecting on women working with men in the church – some stories are painful, but they also have hope that we can participate together and equally in God's mission.

The book seems to speak to those already in ministry, pointing to the change that's needed, as well as the next generation, so they understand how men and women ought to co-lead in God's work.

That's a good summary. We hope the book is read in colleges, home groups and by mission practitioners and church leaders.

You're right to say it's particularly for the next generation – we have to show that God's plan for men and women is, and always has been, 'disruptive' to society's norms. If we are only ever reacting to social pressures, then we will be dismissed as irrelevant. But God is not irrelevant – His dream for men and women, young and old, north and south, rich and poor, has always been a powerful challenge to the world's ways.

We all have our blinkers when it comes to the roles and responsibilities of men and women.

And what about context? Many *idea* readers may see this book against a UK backdrop, but with authors from around the world, it does paint somewhat of a global picture of the challenges and opportunities within church life and mission.

The UK context is represented in the book – there are contributions from seven UK writers. But all *idea*'s readers will know that the church in the UK represents an amazing diversity of cultures, colours and languages. All the Brits who contributed to the book have cross-cultural and cross denominational experience; and the writers from Nigeria, Zambia, the Philippines, the Holy Land and the US can speak into the experiences of many churches and colleges here, which have migrant and diaspora believers.

The WEA has for some time been championing better relationships between men and women within the evangelical churches it represents.

The word 'evangelical' can be so toxic when it comes to discussion of men and women, as it can be associated with an idea of 'biblical womanhood' which is very restrictive. Talk of women having gifts as teachers or leaders is dismissed as secular feminism. So how can the WEA, which represents

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4 introductory films

Opportunities to reflect

Discussion questions

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The UK context is represented in the book – there are contributions from seven UK writers.

churches in more than 180 nations, say anything meaningful that will help unite rather than exacerbate divisions and which celebrates the equal gifting of women and men?

In 2019, the WEA and Lausanne Network both endorsed the Call to All Christians (riseinstrength.net/the-call), a statement written and adopted by more than 60 women from across all continents. It was a prophetic moment really, celebrating the contribution of women to the church and recognising that “gender inequality continues to be a barrier that diminishes the effective witness of the church to the transforming power of the gospel”.

The statement affirmed that Jesus came to bring fullness of life to all people, and that the gospel is good news for women and girls, men and boys. It spoke clearly about men and women being co-workers, equal and equally gifted. The call is showing that leadership in the church is not a competition, and if we affirm women we are certainly not side-lining men. Out of the call has come work on restoring relationships in Converge, the youth movement of the WEA.

And now the book is seeking to use unifying language to bring hope about men and women to a world that is sadly divided on gender.

What of the global context would you say is applicable to the UK? And what, if anything, might be unique to the UK?

I think the church in the UK is fortunate that we do not have the extremes of thinking that we might find in other places, thinking that is sadly labelled ‘evangelical’. We don’t see as much hate-filled vitriol about women in Christian contexts here.

I am grateful to leaders and teachers including the late Rev Dr Joel Edwards CBE, Elaine Storkey, N.T. Wright, Lucy Peppiatt and Nicky Gumbell for their measured teaching and the way they see the gospel as holistic and restorative – doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God.

I hope this book reflects that commitment to loving truth. I also hope that the language and approach of the book reaches across different traditions in the UK church – from Baptist to Pentecostal, from Keswick to New Wine.

The book is certainly comprehensive, covering biblical examples of men and women in ministry, single women in leadership and so much more. Which sections might be of particular interest to a UK audience and why?

Well, as the editor, I’d have to say it’s all brilliant! But I love the chapters that step back from the ‘typical’ narrative about men and women. Rosalee

Velloso Ewell, a theologian from São Paulo, Brazil, reminds us in her opening chapter that the gospel story is not about us but about the Holy Spirit “who calls, prepares and enables us for service in God’s kingdom”. Lots of teaching in church relies on a few popular commentaries; and tensions arise when one group thinks it has the ‘right’ answers about what faithful discipleship for men and women looks like. The chapters by Ewell, Jay Matenga, who leads Missions Interlink NZ, and Gabriel and Jeanette Salguero, co-lead pastors of the Gathering Place in Orlando, Florida, shake us and stir us.

Australian theologian Marg Mowczko’s chapter on the early church is excellent, accessible scholarship, and the chapter from international arbitrator Andrew Bartlett QC (which is adapted from his book *Men and Women in Christ*) brings legal precision to looking at how culture can distort the interpretation of scripture.

Meanwhile, the stories help us to think: has our church ever treated women badly? Have we dismissed women? Have we judged men and women differently? Have we missed out on the enormous gifts that women bring to God’s work?

I love the chapters that step back from the ‘typical’ narrative about men and women.

How would you like the book to be used? I see it includes questions for reflection and ends with a list of calls to action.

The book is designed to be practical and to encourage actions that set both men and women free from misunderstanding. We don’t all have to look the same as churches, but we all have to know why we have certain rules – is it really biblical, or is it more to do with tradition? If we embrace co-working and co-leading it is actually helping men, as well as women, to play to their gifting and avoid having to conform to stereotypes.

The reflection questions help us to examine what we really think rather than just accepting half-formed ideas. And sometimes, we want to do things differently, but we are not sure where to start; the ideas in this book help us do that without sounding superior.

How can readers get their hands on a copy, through the WEA?

The excellent news is the book is available for free if you want to download it (women.worldidea.org/resources). But if you want to write notes in the margins, or hand it on to someone, or put it in your college library, then you can buy a copy through amazon.de

PASTOR: "We're blessed to be a blessing"

Our motto has always been 'blessed to be a blessing', and we're so thankful we were afforded the opportunity to be exactly that in this season, says **Chris Vaz**, pastor, Gateway Church Abergavenny.



It all started with a simple request from one of the headteachers of a local school at the very start of the pandemic. He asked if we could provide hot meals for students who were receiving free school meals and would be affected by lockdown.

Gateway Church stepped in, not knowing we'd end up running a large-scale operation that'd provide more than 12,000 cooked meals and food parcels over the year to students, vulnerable families, individuals in the community, and NHS night staff at Nevill Hall Hospital.

Armed with a small team of volunteers, a small kitchen, few resources to begin with but a heart of faith and compassion, we began a daily military like routine of sourcing, prepping, cooking, packing, labelling, and hand-delivering to each doorstep several-hundred freshly cooked and eagerly anticipated meals, even taking into account allergy and dietary requirements.

During this time more than 850 kilos of meat was used, 815 kilos of potatoes, close to a ton of vegetables, 3,900 pieces of fruit, 11,872 reusable

As the church of Jesus rises up in these times...new doors will continue to open.

containers, more than 11,000 paper carry bags, 3,700 sets of cutlery, 3,400 soft drinks, 29,997 sticky labels, 3,200 sticky notes—all this by way of God's supernatural provision and answers to prayer. God touched so many wonderful individuals and businesses in the church and the community to come forward to support this project.

There were days we had no idea where resource for the next lot of meals were going to come from, and God would supernaturally provide. One day our chef said we had run out of meat, and within two hours a kind-hearted lady brought us 25kgs of prime beef. Another morning, we ran out of vegetables, and within minutes of praying, we had a phone call saying someone was going to pass by with vegetables. These are just some of the miraculous stories of provision we experienced throughout.

Our motto has always been 'blessed to be a blessing', and we thank God that as we stepped out with childlike faith, trusting Him to provide what He had asked us to step into, He used this project to bless and touch so many hearts. The stories, the messages, the cards and the appreciation continue to pour in even till this day. Our work goes on too: we continue to meet needs in our community - demonstrating the love and power of Christ - not just by way of food and material requirements, but also with prayer, with encouragement, with listening ears and with His healing.

The harvest is ready, hearts are yearning. As the church of Jesus rises up in these times - with the message of hope that He alone gives, with answers and solutions that He alone can provide - new doors will continue to open. The kingdom of God will advance in a world that desperately needs the saviour. The 'Balm of Gilead' will minister His healing, restoring and reconciling touch to a broken and hurt generation that desperately needs to find their Father. It is an exciting new season.

Let us take heart that we are all in this together. We need each other as the body of Christ. In fact, this pandemic has brought us all closer together—one church, in several congregations, scattered all across this beautiful country. So let us run together, holding on to Him and to one another, doing everything we can in the few years we have on earth, before He comes to take us all to our forever home. God bless you abundantly.



More member stories

Go to eauk.org/news-and-views for more inspiring stories from Evangelical Alliance members about how they're blessing their communities.



How good is your church at including the growing number of blind and partially sighted people in society? asks **Matthew Horspool**, Torch Trust's sight loss friendly church advisor.





See WHAT WE CAN DO

“It’ll be strange for you when you go to heaven, won’t it?” I was having a bite to eat before a fundraising concert for my church, and the comment caught me off-guard. “Why?” I asked. “Well, you’ll be able to see!”

I admired the strength of his faith, but would I really be able to see in heaven? I spent the remainder of my dinner break pondering his assertion. It’s not something I’d ever thought about before, and I can’t say I was especially comfortable with the concept. My identity as a blind person is as strong as my identity as a Christian, and the thought of having it ripped away from me left me more than a little bereft.

I know intellectually that my blindness means that I’m broken, but aren’t we all broken in some way? The crucial difference, I suppose, is that it’s virtually impossible to hide my particular form of brokenness. I just want to be assured that God accepts me for who I am, and a lifetime of experience has demonstrated beyond doubt that He does.

Unfortunately, however, being acceptable to God does not automatically imply being acceptable to society. The church has a collective responsibility to be at the forefront of righting this injustice, no more so than in the midst of a global pandemic, when most of the secular services relied upon by many of us have, at best, been running at reduced capacity. Some blind and partially sighted people are still struggling to manage basic things such as the weekly grocery shop, let alone the technical challenges of connecting to online church.

Churches can fix this, though, not just through a good practical support network, but by doing online church that not only includes blind and partially sighted people but allows us to serve as

My identity as a blind person is as strong as my identity as a Christian.

equals with our sighted peers. This is the highest level of acceptance. Not just an obligatory welcome at the door (although that is much appreciated, of course) but a yearning to nurture our talents and abilities, however unexpected. Many of us are excellent musicians, but we can also help write the newsletter, run the A/V equipment, lead prayers, read scripture, preach, lead home groups, run youth activities—the list goes on.

How good is your church at including the growing number of blind and partially sighted people in society? I’m so passionate about this that I’m now part of Torch Trust’s Sight Loss Friendly Church initiative, helping churches to become aware of, adapt for and include people with visual impairment. There’s much more information on our website (sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk), including access to free 30-minute taster sessions to learn more.

This year, on 17 October, we will be encouraging churches across the UK to recognise and celebrate Sight Loss Sunday. Please join us in celebrating the valuable contributions that blind and partially sighted people make to church life, and help us to raise awareness of the 250 or so people a day in the UK who find out they are losing their sight.

I’m still undecided about whether I will be able to see in heaven. I’m sure God will equip me to handle such a dramatic change if that is indeed part of His plan; but for the time being, I will continue to wear my badge of blindness with pride here on Earth and look forward to being accepted as a willing servant wherever I am called.

My profoundly disabled son poses an uncomfortable question to the church and to society: what does it mean to be human? says **Donna Jennings**, church and mission coordinator, Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland.

“MICAH DOESN'T HAVE THE GOD-STAMP”

“**M**icah doesn't have the God-stamp in him,” declared Tabitha, my daughter, aged four at the time, as we exited her junior church service.

For several weeks she had been exploring a series on the image of God. Micah is Tabitha's older brother, who has a diagnosis of autism, severe learning disability, often challenging behaviours and a few other descriptors thrown in too.

“Micah can't create anything, he just destroys it, he can't figure hard things out, and he can't make friends with anyone – why can't Micah come to church with us anymore, because he doesn't have the God-stamp?”

The following day as I succumbed to the back-to-school social media photo streaming, Tabitha insisted I also post a photo of Micah with captions to mark his new school year and current career aspirations.

“Well, what will Micah be when he grows up?” I asked her, prayerfully poised to explain that Micah's future did not include a career in rocket engineering. Tabitha paused, pondered and proclaimed: “When Micah grows up, Micah will be my children's uncle. I know Micah has the God-stamp.”

Tabitha was undergoing an internal grappling as she experienced the disconnect between her relationship and bond with her beloved brother and the structures of Christian teaching and community.

Dealing with the disconnect

On the one hand, she inhabits a Christian community whose theology and practice has sadly assimilated to the utilitarian value system of the world. The imago dei, the essence of our humanity, had been so far reduced that it excluded her brother's humanity. On the other hand, Tabitha is a product of her cultural age, in which the

defining driver of understanding humanity is an individual's personal experience and emotion.

I have grappled with the same disconnect. I have scoured the systematic theology volumes, seeking to understand the humanity of my son, only to find more gaps than answers. I was offered an understanding of the imago dei that is less than full.

I can relate to Mark's gospel accounts of the mothers (chapter 10) and the father (chapter 9), who approached the community of Jesus for His blessing and wisdom, only to experience more pain and frustration. There has been exclusion and pity, prayers for removal of impairment, hope-filled heavenly pointing to when Micah will be 'normal', or as one contributor mentioned at a roundtable I hosted on disability, that virtuous photo on the church website, marking them as 'inclusive'.

Without any meaningful Christian response to real, raw, lived experiences of disability (or race, gender, mental health or sexuality) many Christians have found a commonality within the woke currents of our cultural age. These voices identify multiple areas of human experience and seek to deconstruct false and oppressive frameworks through which society has perceived humanity in a way that is liberating and progressive.

The human self, experience and emotions, rather than any external truth parameter, are perceived as the determining factors that tell us what it means to be human, with slogans like 'you do you' or 'I define me'.

I have scoured the systematic theology volumes, seeking to understand the humanity of my son, only to find more gaps than answers.

Is there a third way?

My own grappling with the disconnect between the Christian community and my disabled son has opened my eyes to the need for the church to ask and re-ask: what does it mean to be human? I struggle, however, to accept the 'woke' notion that disability is a social construct (referred to as 'so-called disability') and that my son is a 'creative learner', as several disability theologians suggested I consider.

Conservative, liberal, orthodox, progressive—these tribal camps have limited the discussions in such a way that neither position honours the full humanity of my son. Each community has failed to ask and answer the questions: what does it mean for Micah to be human, and what does this mean for our Christian faith and community?

I am keen that the church forge a third way in discussing the theology and practice around humanity for disability (and many other issues). So, how do we go forward?

1. Pause and ponder

Tabitha's real-life experience grated with the teaching she received in church. She paused. She pondered. Her prophetic insight raised real questions, that demand real answers. The church must also pause and be willing to ponder alongside the Tabithas among us. The church cannot disregard the disconnection, real-life questions and pain, but should seek to understand a fuller theology and practice around humanity.

2. Posture

Tabitha perceived Micah as a person, as her brother and in relationship, not through his capacity to create, relate or rationalise. For too long, scripture has been read, and theology formulated, to those who experience disability, detached and disconnected from real-life experiences, rather than with and alongside. We must now position ourselves to read scripture with and alongside these men, women, boys and girls, in relationship with them. We must be ready to listen – not to respond – but to listen to understand. We must be ready to admit that we don't even know what we don't know and be willing to discover.

I am keen that the church forge a third way in discussing the theology and practice around humanity for disability, and many other issues.

3. Parameters

Any exploration of humanity must fall within the biblical framework which perceives humanity as part of a cosmic order: we are creatures, inhabiting creation under the wilful power of our creator. We do not self-determine; rather, who, what, why, where and how we are as human beings are determined by whose we are. Therefore, we understand humanity and every human experience (not just disability) within the biblical framework, within the reality of both the Genesis 1 creation act as well as the Genesis 3 event.

Genesis 1

The image of God is an identity gifted and a reality woven into the DNA of every human person. Each one bears the 'God-stamp' purely by their existence. The *imago dei*, the essence of humanity, is not achieved but ascribed, not earned but endowed. Deeper theological digging has shown me that Micah can bear God's image, not despite his disability but through it.

Genesis 3

The event that disrupted the cosmic harmony shattered our humanity. None of us are who we were designed to be. Micah's disability, his needs and his challenges might be quickly detected as an impact of the fall, whereas I can conceal and cover my fragility, shame and dysfunctions. Deeper theological digging into Micah's disability has revealed to me, in new ways, my own shattered humanity.

4. People of God

The cosmic disruption has not just shattered the divine design for the individual experience of humanity, but it has also led to the division of humanity as community. Communities and societies are rife with power structures that devalue and dehumanise the disabled community.

Inclusion is the justice-driven cultural buzzword that seeks to respond to these divisions. But inclusion does not shake the remnants of a deeply engrained power dynamic in which those who are on the inside need to be persuaded to allow those on the outside to enter in.

The biblical vision for the church is much more radical than inclusion; and so it is within the church, as the church and in the fullness of church, that we raise the question of disability in this third way, and seek to understand at community level what it means to be human.

As Paul unpacks the meaning of church, he identifies the social divisions of his cultural age: ethnicity (Jew/Greek), sex (male/female) and social status (slave/free). Although these distinctive human categories remain, in the community of the church they no longer cause division. There is an equality, mutuality, unity and koinonia (Greek for fellowship). Paul declares that all are one in Christ Jesus.

It is through the incarnate person and work of King Jesus that the birthing of this new kind of people is brought about. Sharing in our union to His person, we are a re-imaged, recreated humanity. We are His body, the church. As such, we submit to Christ our head through His word, and we submit to each other. Together, in mutuality, we subject our shared human experiences to His design for humanity and human community.

It is through the incarnate person and work of King Jesus that the birthing of this new kind of people is brought about.

In this community, the social divisions and power structures of the world are transformed, broken down and replaced by a new social order in which we bear the image of our creator, not just as individuals but as a body and a family. We are His people who not only speak of the imago dei but enact it and make it known. The church community rehumanises those who society has dehumanised.

I do not expect Micah's disability to be removed. I do not expect the church to have all the elusive answers about Micah. Nobody else seems to have them. But I expect his 'God-stamp' to be recognised, to be formulated, celebrated and enacted as we journey together in the new community of Christ.

When Micah grows up, he will be Tabitha's children's uncle. What about in my church community – will he be your friend and your brother? Can you learn from him? Will he find a place at your table and in your life? Will you give him the dignity of time and relationship?

Our Christian communities' understanding, practice and values must undergo a radical reframing if we are to respond biblically to the questions posed by the most profoundly disabled man, woman, boy, girl and their families: what does it mean to be human?

This is the third way—the way we the church become the radically conservative, liberating orthodox, progressive and transforming people of God; the kind of people who are ready to ask and answer with, alongside and for those with a disability (and other human experiences) in word, deed and community: what does it mean to be human? What does it mean that Micah bears the 'God-stamp'?

Wait, there's more

Donna's article was originally written for the Evangelical Alliance's Being Human project, which aims to inspire and equip you to understand, articulate and participate in the biblical vision of humanity.

For more thought-provoking articles like Donna's, and to catch up with seasons one and two of the Being Human podcast, go to:

eauk.it/being-human-idea



For almost three decades we've been running a church for adults with a learning disability. These are some of the ways we promote accessibility, says **Rev Edward Kerr**, leader at Fenland Community Church, Cambridgeshire.

LESSONS FROM A CHURCH FOR ADULTS WITH A *learning disability*

We run a church for adults with a learning disability, meeting three Sundays a month and hosting small meetings in five residential homes. People with profound disabilities through to those who are more able make up our church family. Virtually none of our guests can read, and most are accompanied by a carer.

People with a learning disability trying to access church life can be fraught with problems. For those using wheelchairs, there is the obvious issue of physical access, but there are so many other less visible barriers that make church life inaccessible. These are some of the ways we have learnt to promote accessibility.

We keep it simple

Christian jargon can be hard enough for some of us to fathom, so for those with limited understanding, jargon is incomprehensible. Some years ago we were singing 'Lamb Upon the Throne', and possibly our most able person asked me, "Why is there a sheep in heaven?" I said this was a way of talking about Jesus. "Then why don't you say so?" was the reply.

We've found that language and songs, in general, must be simple, not simplistic. Short sentences, simple vocabulary – things that Christians are often unaware of – help. So, 'sin' becomes the bad things we do; 'disciples', Jesus' special friends; 'pray', talk to Jesus; 'worship', telling Jesus that you love Him.

We keep it brief

Attention spans can be very short, so bitesize services and sections in the service are most effective. Pointers such as "this is what we are going to do next" help too, as could a relevant picture.

We interact and involve

We are not doing things for or to our church family but with them, if possible. So we use Bible stories, simple songs, percussion instruments, flags, drama, movement around the building, arts and craft, and much more for shared worship. For example, our church family loves to pray, so we have a soft sunshine toy that is passed from person to person to indicate when it's their turn to pray. Even those who cannot speak are involved in this.

We do not take offence

We try not to have any expectations about behaviour, visible response, way of worship or way of prayer. Their unique responses of silence, noise, shrieking, shaking, banging, are all vital, vibrant and precious to God. We're not to be easily offended.

We practise humility

We expect to meet with God, so we meet people where they are—in their weakness—and share Jesus. But since we believe that the spiritual life in our church members is no different to the spiritual life in anyone else, we need to be humble enough to learn from them as well.

Mother Teresa said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." Not all that we do for God is high-octane. Some is quiet, hard work, and often shows no visible sign of success. We at Fenland Community Church believe that success is doing what God wants us to do, where He wants us to do it, in the way He wants us to do it. We no longer rely on visible outcomes; they are normally hidden to us. We leave all the outcomes to Jesus.

THEOLOGY & EVANGELISM: BRIDGING THE GAP



Anyone who wants to share the gospel should be concerned about the gap between theology and evangelism, says **Richard Powney**, lead theology researcher, Evangelical Alliance.

What images come to mind when you hear the word ‘theology’? A quick search in Google images generates pictures of stacks of old books and maybe a solitary student working studiously in a library.

I also wonder what you think about when you hear the word ‘evangelism’? Google images shows a different set of pictures—people talking to other people and the occasional person on a street corner waving a Bible at passersby.

Whilst both searches give us stereotypical interpretations of both theology and evangelism, I think they also highlight how theology and evangelism are not necessarily perceived to be natural bedfellows.

Theologian Bryan Stone argues that “those who think theologically rarely think about evangelism, and those who think about evangelism rarely take the discipline of theology very seriously”. Whilst Stone’s point is a sweeping generalisation, I think it has an air of truth to it; there seems to be a gap, in both directions, between evangelism and theological reflection. And yet, I wonder if your experience is like my own: conversations about faith with people who hold different beliefs to me are the ones that push me to think theologically. This is mainly due to people asking good questions which cause me to think about why I believe something, rather than simply knowing what I believe. At its heart, I think theology should be an evangelistic task and evangelism is inherently theological.

The close connection between evangelism and theology is the reason why the potential gap between the two should be a cause for concern for anyone who wants to share the gospel and see theology serve God’s mission in seeing all things reconciled to Himself. Dr Krish Kandiah, founder of Home for Good, notes how “evangelism that is theologically uninformed ends up as ideological propaganda, [and]... theology that is not evangelistically informed ends up sterile, isolationist and far removed from the missionary God of authentic Christianity”.

The health of our evangelism and theology

is connected to how much we bring both into closer conversation. Our theological reflection on evangelism can help us avoid distorting the gospel and turning evangelism into a marketing exercise. Our evangelistic reflection on theology can ensure our theology remains grounded in the service of the church rather than becoming abstract and overly theoretical.

It was a desire to see evangelism and theology brought into closer conversation that led to the Evangelical Alliance and Moorlands College partnering to host an in-person conference on the theology and practice of evangelism. The two-day conference was initially scheduled for September 2020; however, due to the coronavirus pandemic, it will now take place on 13 and 14 September 2022 at Moorlands College.

The two days will bring together academics and practitioners to theologically reflect on evangelism and evangelistically reflect on theology. We’d love you to join us and will be sharing more information later in the year about this eye-opening conference.

You don’t have to wait until September 2022 to learn more about the intrinsic relationship between theology and evangelism, however. Starting this autumn, you will be able to hear from theologians and practitioners on how the last 18 months have informed, shaped and changed our theology and practice of evangelism.

Stay in the loop

Sign up to Headlines, our weekly email newsletter, so that you don’t miss out on the free content from theologians and practitioners that’s being released this autumn:

eauk.org/headlines. While you’re doing that, why not save the date for the 2022 conference too?



let's PRAY

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

Matthew 13:45–46

Save the date

This year's International Day of Prayer (IDOP) will be celebrated on Sunday, 7 November. Make a note and sign up to receive the Evangelical Alliance's weekly Headlines email to find out how we'll be holding up suffering saints in prayer: eauk.org/headlines



From around the world,
the stories come. Despite
rejection, attack,
discrimination, violence,
even death, believers
courageously cling to you.

Oh, how this says
something wonderful
about you, King Jesus.

Our brothers and sisters
have caught something of
your magnificent glory. They
bravely stand strong and
press on, even to the point of
death, because they've seen
that you are worthy.

You are their pearl of great
price. The one they give up
all else to cherish.

Thank you for the way our
persecuted family remind us

of your inestimable worth
and wonder. May we see
you as they see you.

Empower, equip and
encourage all those paying
a high price for following
you. Give them fresh
revelation, fill them with
peace, surround them
with your presence, and
protect them from harm.
Be their great strength
for today and their bright
hope for tomorrow.

And may they be channels
of your love and power,
that those around
them - including those
who persecute them -
will come to know for
themselves the pearl of
great price.

*By Tim Bechervaise, copywriter
at Open Doors UK & Ireland*

More than a monument, this is “one of the biggest evangelistic opportunities in Britain for a generation”, **Richard Gamble** tells Naomi Osinnowo.



A MILLION TESTIMONIES WRITTEN IN STONE

With work on the one-mile access road due to begin this autumn, the Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer will soon start to take shape.

I caught up with founder Richard Gamble for the latest on the Christian monument, which, at 169ft tall, is set to be loud and proud about the goodness of God.

The Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer has been grabbing headlines for months. For those who are not in the know, what is it?

RG: It's a colossal piece of public art, a giant infinity loop made up of a million bricks. Every single one of those bricks will represent a story of answered to make hope visible to all who see this Christian monument.

A million bricks – that's a lot!

RG: It is! A million answered prayers even more so. The concept is that people will see this massive structure from six miles away. It'll be 169ft tall, two-and-a-half-times the size of the Angel of the North in Gateshead. When visitors get close up, they'll see these small bricks and will be

struck with the realisation that each brick has a story attached. It will point them to the God who answers.

Each brick will represent an answered prayer—quite a testimony that.

RG: This is one of the biggest evangelistic opportunities in Britain for a generation. People will be able log onto an app, type into it whatever circumstance they're going through, and the app will guide them and show them the bricks that relate to that storm of life and a testimony of an answered prayer. We all know that prayer is a journey: sometimes God says yes, sometimes it's wait, and other times it's no. We want to have a whole breadth of stories of the Christian experience when we pray.

Is that what you hope EWAP (are you alright with me calling in that?) will be, a monumental testament of God's goodness?

RG: I want it to be more than that. I want to preserve the Christian heritage we have in this country. I want the Eternal Wall of Answered Prayer to inspire people to pray and to proclaim to



this country that Jesus is alive and that He listens and answers. Most of all, I'd love it to be a catalyst to believers in this country to become a nation of storytellers, proclaiming the deeds that the Lord has done.

Quite a bold vision. Where did the inspiration come from?

RG: Seventeen years ago during Easter I was walking around Leicestershire on an 80-mile trek whilst carrying a cross. As I was doing that I felt God telling me this was the next thing He wanted me to do. I thought about it and prayed for 10 years; and then seven years ago I felt God say we need to start.

We ran a crowdfunding campaign to hold a global competition in partnership with the Royal Institute of British Architects and the momentum built from there. It's been a rollercoaster of emotions, but

now we are in a position where we have the land, we have planning permission and work on the access road starts this autumn.

So, preliminary work is set to start this September. When will we see this beauty gracing Coleshill?

RG: We are building the one-mile access road in the autumn of 2021. We need to raise £2.5m at the same time in our crowdfunding appeal, which will help us start the build at the beginning of 2022. It's a nine-month build but all the parts are built off site. We should be completed in 2023—that's when work really begins.

From the onset, you've had to work with others on this; a project of this size clearly requires a team, a big team. But I get the sense you need more Christians to muck in.

RG: Absolutely. That's the beauty of the project: across the church we agree that Jesus is alive and answers prayers, and we've had hundreds of people getting involved.

We need help in collecting answered prayers. We are trying to get to 200,000 by the day of opening and so far have 26,000, although we are about to add in 75,000 heritage prayers (stories through history from 600AD to 1950). That still means we need another 100,000. We will light up the monument to the level of the prayers answered so people can see as more come in.

One of the great thrills of the journey is seeing how people of different skills have come on board. My dream is that we will have a little plaque on the site saying something like: "The Eternal Wall was crowdfunded by tens of thousands, backed by hundreds of volunteers, a million people shared their stories, and it was underpinned by the God who answers."

Where can we find out more about EWAP?

RG: Check out eternalwall.org.uk for all the latest updates and information on how you can submit a prayer and get behind our crowdfunding appeal.





HIGH-IMPACT CHURCH IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

From what I've seen, to be a church that really makes a difference, we find ways to serve together, says **Steve Botham**, GATHER movement regional connector.

Acts tells us the Ekklesia enjoyed the favour of all the people and the Lord added to their numbers daily. We grow by being a blessing. Ekklesia is an assembly of people united to impact their community, town or city. Paul tells us 'the glue' is a mindset of humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love. Love comes from deep relationship, passionately wanting each other to flourish. We find ways to serve together – and this makes for high-impact church.

Let's go to Partington in Greater Manchester, an overspill village built with poor-quality housing and in the bottom one per cent of most deprived neighbourhoods. In the summer, churches put on clubs and activities, attracting many local children and birthing a vision to do more.

Churches then built the Hideaway, 7,500 square feet of community interaction. Built on top of a row of shops, it provides a high-quality play area, café and a community room. It offers advice and mentoring alongside prayer, Alpha and Bible study. The Hideaway is a collaboration of local churches, with support from the leafy suburbs, serving their community.

The pandemic took this further. Initially they were selling food and meals to people in need; but soon local people could not afford the food or to pay their electricity bills or to buy school uniforms, so the Hideaway became a food warehouse supporting other hubs. People also wanted advice, reassurance and human contact. Teams from across the churches, and outside the area, made packs of food and essentials and distributed them. There was a great humility and compassion with the body of Christ working as one.

As lockdown lifted, the Hideaway re-emerged as a lively community hub. The community sensed the presence of God and wanted more. They opened a drop-in shop where people come for advice. Christian ministries including Christians Against Poverty work alongside Help the Aged and other secular bodies, with the church providing one community support point. The church is seen as one, and local people will regularly say, "If you want help, go to the church."

Partington is seeing the gospel, prayer and social action working together effectively. Many are giving their lives to Jesus because they have met Him in the foodbank, the children's play area and in the street. The local council look to Ruth Lancey, who leads the team, and others, to help shape how they move forward from the pandemic.

Now, let's go to Erdington, a deprived area of Birmingham. Urban Devotion Birmingham (UDB) serves five neighbourhoods, working primarily with youth, children and families in local secondary and primary schools and youth activities. UDB works with a number of Anglican churches and the area dean, plus the Churches Together movement in Erdington, the local Elim churches, the Baptists and the Catholics. They also work with non-Christian groups that provide great services to young people in their community.

UDB have a programme of prayer and worship, mentoring, evangelism and providing safe spaces for children. They prayer walk in groups of two, three and four, and this breathes life on their vision and call. They treat people with dignity and give wisdom, love and support. Andy Winmill, UDB leader, says, "When we see love at work something happens."

That something is the year 13 bringing a bunch of flowers into school for her UDB mentor who gave her the reassurance and encouragement she needed. It's the parents of the year 8 with complex needs invited to participate in a UDB youth event declaring, "You're a gift from heaven." It's the parents of a girl placed under a child protection order who say, "Now I know people are praying, and prayer works," as they see a complete transformation in their daughter.

The love of God is seen in our workplaces and communities through our interactions with others. That love gives people a hunger to know more. As we learn to love each other and work together across our churches, we also learn to love our communities. Post-coronavirus many churches are saying our purpose is to impact, bless and change our communities – as we focus outwards God does remarkable things.

Serve together

Partington and Erdington show what's possible when we serve together. Rev Roger Sutton, GATHER director, and I have learnt loads from these unity movements, and we've been sharing lessons and best practice within our national network. Make your way online to find out more about our mission and how to get involved: movementforrecovery.com

Toddler groups: KEEPING THE CHRISTIAN EDGE

As your church welcomes families back to its toddler groups, here are some ways you can ensure they're distinctly Christian, says **Rachael Heffer**, head of mission, Evangelical Alliance.

The Talking Toddler research launched in May 2020 by the Evangelical Alliance and Hope Together found that 74 per cent of all families with children under five have connected with at least one toddler group, Messy Church or other family provision from the church.

The research also discovered that 55 per cent of adults surveyed said that by taking their kids to these groups, their own faith journey had been challenged. There is no doubt that toddler groups are a vital bridge between churches and their local communities.

And yet, as lockdown hit, many of these church-run toddler groups had to pause. Churches did a tremendous job of staying in touch with local families, investing in projects like children's resources, activity packs and food parcels. It's been amazing to see creative ideas springing up, but we also can't underestimate how difficult it's been to stay connected with families.

The good news is that after a long hiatus, toddler groups are beginning to start up again. Leaders across the UK are reassessing what this might look like practically, but there's a sense of joy about the prospect of gathering together

with our little people again.

As toddlers are reunited with glee, there's also a great opportunity for parents and carers to reconnect; and as the church, we can't miss the chance to be at the heart of these moments. It's been a challenging season for so many families, and toddler groups could be just the right place to support families as they process the last 18 months and emerge into the new normal.

While many aspects of church life look different, toddler groups are still well known and respected in local communities, so we don't want to miss the missional opportunities they bring. The aim is always to be warm, welcoming and loving towards our communities, while also providing an open space where toddlers and their carers can explore the Christian faith. This can be a lifeline to those who don't know where else to turn for support; and a kind word or an offer of prayer goes a long way after the 18 months we've all had.

If your church is looking to create this distinctly Jesus-focused atmosphere as you welcome families back to your toddler group, then here are five top tips from Anna Martin, creator of the Bible Buds resource:





Get stuck in!

Find out more about running a distinctly Christian toddler group by heading to the Talking Toddlers page on our website:

eauk.org/great-commission/talking-toddlers. There you can also access the research report, the Bible Buds resource and the latest on upcoming webinars.



Show love

1

Jesus welcomed and served those around Him, and genuine loving interest goes a long way today too. Showing God's unconditional love to all who come to your group will make your group an attractive place to return to, so take time to listen, care and befriend, both in the session and during the rest of the week.

Be natural

2

Jesus didn't just stand in a pulpit preaching; He hung out with people in their natural environment, and then miracles happened and conversations about God naturally occurred (often while eating). We can include God in all areas of a toddler group - playtime, snacks, singing, crafts - not just during the 'God slot'. When we're natural about God, He will naturally be a part of all we do.

Share stories

3

Jesus loved telling stories, and we can be part of His story today. Any Bible story (not just the famous ones) can be made interactive, then expanded upon in follow-up activities. Chats over a cup of tea also create openings to share your story of God in your life, showing the personal way Jesus meets with each of us today. Discovering both God's great story and your personal story could be a defining moment in someone else's journey.

Be prayerful

4

Jesus spent time talking to His Father, and spending time praying individually and with your team helps to keep us spiritually grounded throughout each session. Ask God for divine appointments and meaningful conversations. Also, regularly talk to your church family about this amazing opportunity to share Jesus with non-Christian families, and ask them to prayerfully support you.

Include the whole family

5

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me", which is at the heart of our toddler groups, but we also want parents, grandparents and carers to feel included. Your toddler group is an invaluable way to reach your community, and what you share about Jesus will plant seeds in adults and toddlers alike for years to come.



OUR UNITY SAVES SOULS

By **Gavin Calver**, CEO of the Evangelical Alliance

Over the years I've been involved in numerous youth missions and have had the privilege of seeing many young people give their life to Jesus.

There was one mission that was particularly special. We began the week by looking at John 17 with the team. We read the prayer of Jesus right before He was arrested: "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one" (17:11).

I wonder what you would pray right before your death. It'd probably be the most important prayer you'd ever pray. This moment is no different; Jesus prays a heart-felt prayer that God's children would be one. He pours His whole soul into this prayer as He longs for His disciples to be united.

Jesus then prays for all believers: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may

be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity" (17:20–23a).

The Lord is longing for us to be united to reflect His glory, to show His love to the world. We are called to reflect the unity in the godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – so "that the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (17:23b). Jesus prays for real unity that would lead to hearts, minds, actions and desires that instinctively align and work together. He's praying that God would do it, not us. You can't force unity.

We prayed together as we began the mission, asking that the Lord would help us. We committed to speak well of each other, to affirm one another, to cheer each other on, to seek to be one in heart and mind, to be encouraging, and to show compassion to one another and every person we met. It was incredible to be in such a loving environment where the Holy Spirit was clearly empowering us to serve together in unity.

By the end of the week all the young people we'd journeyed with had heard

the gospel and many had surrendered their life to Jesus. It was fascinating that several said in their feedback that our unity helped draw them to Christ. Unity and mission certainly go together.

I've always longed to see revival in the UK. It'd take a mighty move of God but also a heart that says, "I'm choosing to love no matter what; Lord, will you fill me with your Holy Spirit and help me?" Imagine if we did this together—our love might supernaturally spill out onto the streets in a way that transformed society both socially and spiritually.

The challenge of Jesus' prayer is inescapable. He envisages and petitions His Father for a unity among His followers that's visible to the world so that those outside the church are drawn towards it. Jesus' cry in John 17 is deeply evangelistic; the whole world doesn't yet know God, but those of us who do need to share Him with the world, and we need to do it together. Oh Lord, for the sake of the world, please make us one.

Evangelical Alliance annual report 2020–21 highlights

A word from our CEO

It's been a year like no other. Less than six months into my role leading the Evangelical Alliance, I couldn't have imagined that a pandemic would sweep across the UK, changing so much in every way. With church buildings closed and people in such great need, the church found itself needing to reimagine its witness.

It's been amazing to see how many of our members have adapted and seized this opportunity to make Jesus known, however challenging the landscape.

We have sought to support the church through our Changing Church reports and suite of resources, regular contact with members, UK day of prayer, first-ever leadership conference and much more.

In the last year, as the church strived to remain spiritually active in lockdown and share the gospel, we created innovative resources to facilitate mission and

showcased unparalleled stories of community impact from churches across the country.

The church has stepped up this year, serving communities in a staggering number of selfless acts of kindness, and we've made political representatives aware by highlighting this outstanding service.

We've spoken up as a brave and kind voice into the corridors of power. Our Being Human project has grown, inspiring all Christians to engage in our culture.

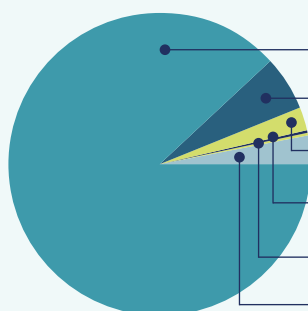
It's incredible to see what the Lord has done. Looking forward, we are keen to help with the social and spiritual rebuilding of the UK post-pandemic and to work alongside all our members in making Jesus known.

Thank you for your support and prayers,

Gavin Calver
CEO

INCOME £2,673,547

up from £2,640,451 last year

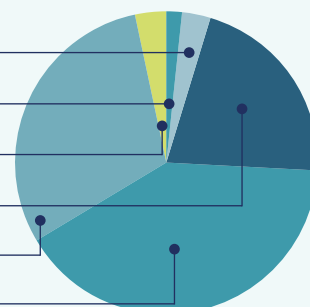


Donations	88.3%
Legacies	5.7%
Trading activities	2.6%
Investment income	0.1%
Income from charitable activities	0.2%
Other income	3.0%

EXPENDITURE £2,132,308

down from £2,615,919 last year

Income generation	3.1%
Fundraising and publicity	1.7%
Property and IT projects	3.2%
Advocacy initiatives	21.2%
Communications and membership	30.3%
Unity and mission initiatives	40.5%



IN A YEAR OF BAD NEWS,

together we shared the gospel

Story bearer sessions

To equip and inspire Christians to share their faith with their friends online during the pandemic, we launched a weekly interactive Facebook Live event where evangelists and leaders shared wisdom, experience and advice.



Remember When

The Great Commission team saw the importance of peer evangelism during the pandemic. They developed a sermon series and small group resource that doesn't assume prior experience but encourages people to reflect on their journey of faith and use those stories to witness among friends and family.

Young adults

We're committed to helping the local church reach young adults. In the past, they were dubbed the 'missing generation' in our churches, but during the pandemic, large numbers of young adults prayed regularly or joined church services online. We produced *Is the 'missing generation' still missing?* a report with blogs and videos to help the church reflect on the changes and opportunities brought about by coronavirus in this ministry area.



This resource helps to change people's perspectives of evangelism from being something evangelists do to something they can do.

– Marcus Mak, Christ Church Felixstowe



IN A YEAR OF CONTENTION,

together we've raised our voices

Public policy

We engaged with policy development on marriage laws and hate crime, plus government consultations, parliamentary enquiries and policy development on a wide range of issues, including responding to consultations on gambling laws and at-home abortion.

"Thought-provoking. Very relevant and topical; love the way current issues in our society are linked to biblical truth."
– iTunes review

Being Human

Alongside the research phase of the wider three-year Being Human project, which seeks to help everyday Christians understand, articulate and participate in the biblical vision of what it means to be human, we also released season two of the Being Human podcast.



IN A YEAR OF CHALLENGES, together we prayed

UK day of prayer

In response to our members' request, we called a UK-wide day of prayer in as the second wave of infections gripped the UK and beyond, working together with networks, denominations and churches to bring people together to pray.

Lament

A spoken word video: a cry of grief for that which had been lost during the pandemic, which also expresses the hope found in the Christian faith, made freely available for churches to use.

18,000+
TOTAL VIEWS



IN A YEAR OF ADVERSITY, together we've been a blessing

Stories of Hope Scotland

We launched a report revealing that the church in Scotland delivered more than 200,000 acts of support to more than 55,000 people. There were stories of local community partnerships and powerful testimonies. This report was picked up by the media, presented to the Government and ended in a debate and commendation in the Scottish Parliament, highlighting the amazing impact of the church.

“

I was very pleased to hold a members' debate on the @EAScotland report, Stories of Hope, which shows the huge impact churches have had in delivering support and responding to the needs of their communities during lockdown.

– MSP Jeremy Balfour on Twitter

”

Changing church: report and resource suite

As circumstances changed rapidly, the UK church needed support and representation. We undertook research to inform a suite of resources to meet the church's needs. We represented evangelical churches to government and pressed for sensible measures that permit church activity in a safe and responsible manner and avoid unnecessary restrictions.

Evangelical Alliance Leadership Conference (EALC)

We hosted our first-ever leadership conference: an evening full of interviews, worship, prayer and talks, with contributions from evangelical Christian leaders from across the UK and beyond.

“Well done @EAUKnews #EALC.

A whole household edified and blessed this evening. Thank you.”

– Will Briggs, vicar at the Vine Sheffield, on Twitter

5,000+
VIEWS

1,000+
DOWNLOADS
OF 10 TOP TIPS
FOR REOPENING
CHURCH
RESOURCE

We want to say thank you!

Throughout the Evangelical Alliance’s history, those associated with it have been led and fuelled by the Spirit. For some, this has meant taking a front-line position and becoming an employee or ambassador, for others it has been a foundational role providing financial and prayer support. This has been, and continues to be, a perfect partnership formed on the blending of hearts and minds, with Jesus at the centre.

Time and time again we see partnerships like ours in scripture—one of my favourites being 1 Chronicles chapter 29. In this chapter King David explains to those assembled his God-given vision that Solomon is to build a house, as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant. He asks them to partner in this endeavour as Solomon cannot do it alone—the work is great and for God’s glory. David explains that he has “prepared with all his might” and lists the copious amounts of precious materials he has personally given then asks,

“Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?”

This is a big question, a challenging question, but one filled with importance and honour. Although David is asking for people to sacrificially give from their personal reserves, to willingly reduce their wealth, he is also providing an opportunity for them to partner with God, to be part of something bigger than themselves, to leave a legacy.

He is fully aware that he isn’t asking for himself but on behalf of and prompted by God. Because the work was great, he required great resources. David knew all things come from God, and whatever they gave to God was His own to begin with.

Those gathered understood this, gave willingly and rejoiced in being able to give. I would have loved to have been there, especially as David began to bless the Lord:

“Blessed are you, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that



is in heaven and in earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honour come from you, and you reign over all. In your hand is power and might; in your hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all.”

This is a snapshot of a longer story, but I wanted to share this with you as your financial gifts, time and prayers have been an appreciated and tangible way to advance God’s kingdom. Just like those David gathered, you have not just made a difference but have been the difference.

Giving is not just a way to support the Evangelical Alliance; giving makes you part of this beautiful ministry. Together we do great work at the Evangelical Alliance: we bring together people, churches and organisations in the name of Jesus; we transform lives with the power of the gospel; we speak on the issues that matter; we serve the church and each other so that we can minister in word and deed to society at large.

Great work needs great financial resources, and we want to thank you for repeatedly answering King David’s timeless challenge to be willing to consecrate yours, as together we make Jesus known.

Every blessing,

Rev Wendy Pawsey

Head of giving

Motivating mission

Starting to share your faith is a little like learning how to run regularly. The 'Couch to 5k' training programme has helped thousands of people get moving, and we think it's a great analogy for sharing faith as well. That's why we've created Motivating Mission, a resource for church leaders to help their churches find their motivation, build their confidence and get out there.

Download your free copy

eauk.org/motivating-mission



**You can make a
difference where
you are.**

Connect with your
public representatives.



Here's how:
eauk.it/connect

