



Common Good and Holy Time

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Dear Friends,

This Lent promises to be unlike any we can remember. In our shared grief, in our separation and our longing for physical presence, this is like a time of wilderness. You may feel frustrated that your plans are thwarted. But this is a time to listen, to become open to God's grace.

Even with the arrival of the vaccine, the fallout from the pandemic is only just beginning. The effects are unevenly spread: our poorest communities are the worst affected. As families have struggled, Christian groups have been among those who have stepped up as service providers and this emergency response has been rightly praised.

However, Jesus regarded the poor not as beneficiaries of his "social action" but as brothers and sisters gathering as equals around a shared table. Just like everyone else, they want the

dignity of work and do not wish to live long term on handouts. As we look to recover from the effects of the crisis, it will be important to bear this distinction in mind.

Attempts at Common Good theology start with the premise that without poor people the body of Christ is incomplete. This includes not only the destitute but all people on low incomes, across all ethnicities. All are worthy of love and affection. A congregation with good relationships in this regard can start to build a Common Good: a shared life enriched by the interests, gifts and discipleship of people who happen to be poor. Given that many churches have fallen out of relationship with ordinary working people, this is a painful challenge.

Below you will find two such theologies: an essay setting out guiding principles for the Church Urban Fund by **+Adrian Newman**, and a study commissioned for Clapton Commons by **Peter Leith**. Churches fulfilling a Common Good theology may look different from what we might expect: what matters is whether they are fulfilling their mission. Below we share a story by **Tom Ketteringham** about a thriving church behind a shopfront in a backstreet in Grimsby.

The desire across the Christian traditions to serve struggling communities is undimmed. Yet churches are vulnerable too. The trajectory of decline has accelerated. Some things we thought were secure may not survive. A wilderness time like this can feel like a cruel test, an uprooting. But amid the wreckage, God is moving. The next chapter is unfolding - as we have explored in our letters [The Plague and the Parish](#) and [Renewing the Covenant](#). Our third letter will be published soon.

Lent is a time to go back to the Word. Time to draw on the wisdom of the Prophets, and this year, on the Gospel of John. Spending unmediated time with God and with each other strengthens the human soul. **Francis Stewart** has written a beautiful reflection on "holy time" which you'll find below, along with our **Lent Devotional**, a simple weekly rhythm to deepen your awareness of what God is doing in your life, your relationships and your neighbourhood.

Times of wilderness are hard and we may be intimidated by the dark powers of the world. The pandemic is wreaking terrible damage and accelerating pre-existing, dehumanising trends. In the wider context, global capital, big tech and media, Chinese Communist Party ambitions and divisive ideologies of both left and right are all sowing division and taking advantage. Each threatens the possibility of a new settlement for the Common Good.

And yet, those worldly powers are fragile by God's standards. The crisis has revealed the extraordinary resourcefulness, beauty and goodness of humanity, and by the grace of God, we will prevail.

Wishing you well for a holy Lent,
Together for the Common Good



Holy Time: nourishing our civic vocation during Lent

Lent calls us to re-focus. To revisit our relationships with each other and with God. This involves setting aside "holy time." By painful absence, **Francis Stewart** rediscovers the importance of embodied fellowship, and is drawn to explore Shabbat and other practices that consecrate time. He finds that these kinds of holy time can act as a resistance to the worldly powers and nourish what we might refer to as our civic vocation for the Common Good.

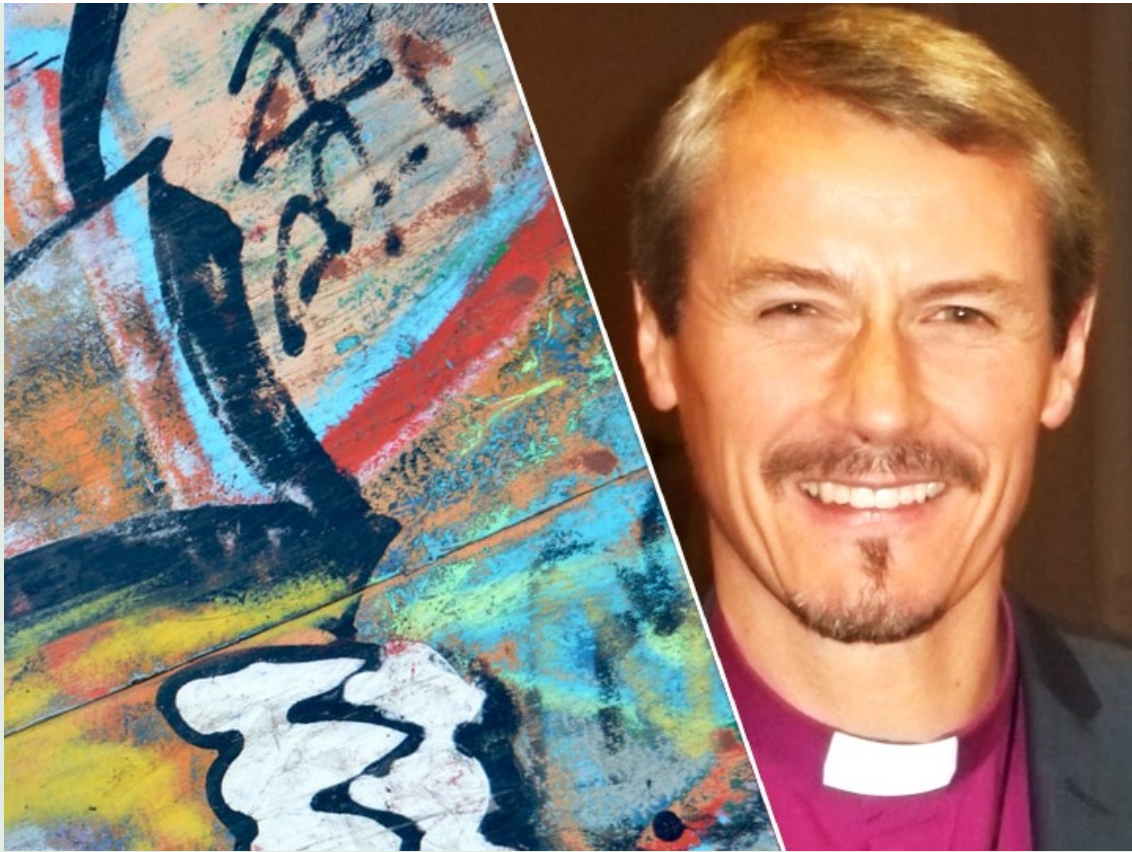
[Read the story](#)



A neighbourhood church: committed to people and place

This is the story of a church with a long term devotion to a place often described as left behind. **Grimsby Neighbourhood Church** is a growing church with a strong prayer life and vibrant discipleship. As **Tom Ketteringham** finds out, local people are involved in all its activities. Friendship, training and advice is on offer, along with meeting spaces, a charity shop, playground and community garden, and the church has several properties that are rented to people who otherwise would be homeless.

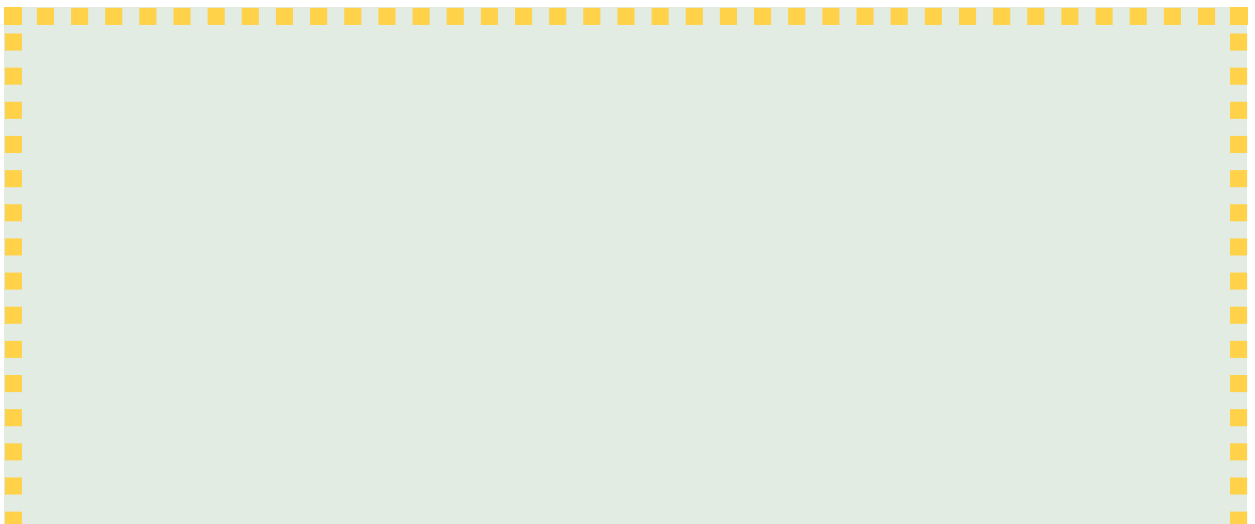
[Read the full story](#)



(Some) Theology to Save the World

Making the invisible visible, valuing the devalued, consecrating the desecrated, creating mutual space for Common Good, forging reciprocal relationships with people who are poor, building constructive alternatives - each of these are vital aspects of Christian mission. But the Church Urban Fund Bishop in Residence **+Adrian Newman** concludes that to be true to the Christian message, the church must change - only a vulnerable church can contribute to the emergence of a better post-pandemic world.

[Read more](#)





RESOURCE: Lent Devotions

Lent this year will be unlike any we have experienced before. Until we can gather freely again, is this a time to hold prayerfully our restless longing to be together?

We invite you to use our new weekly rhythm of Devotions to hold this period of fasting as holy time. This will accompany you on a journey of holiness, deepening your awareness of what God is doing in your life, your relationships and your neighbourhood.

[Download your Lent Devotions here](#)



The Theology of Clapton Commons for the Common Good

If a congregation is to discern their authentic vocation in the place where they live, before striding out with any kind of strategy, there needs to be deep engagement with Scripture. Clapton Commons, a unique "open network of neighbours" including two churches, commissioned **Peter Leith**, a young theologian to spend a year listening to their communities and to write a theology guiding their direction.

[Read the Clapton Commons theology in full](#)



Churches are more than service providers

Faith leaders and academics gathered in January at a government briefing to discuss the role of faith communities during the pandemic. Our Director, **Jenny Sinclair** commented that the partnership between government and faith groups comes with a cost. Warning that mission drift was inevitable, she urged faith groups and faith-based charities to hold on to their sense of ethos, adding that "when we become service providers there is a risk of seeking to justify our existence as a useful handmaid of the state...we're more than this, we have a sacred civic role, churches have been in relationship with communities for hundreds of years."

[Watch the interview on video](#)



Common Change: neighbours pooling resources

In extraordinary times, ordinary people in small groups are pooling resources and knowledge to support their neighbours financially. **Matt Wilson** writes about the work of Common Change UK in its role supporting people to become good civic neighbours.

[Read the story](#)



HERE: NOW: US
COMMUNITY



HERE: NOW: US
PEOPLE



COMMON GOOD
SCHOOLS



COMMON GOOD
LEADERSHIP



COMMON GOOD
BUILDER



MORE
RESOURCES

T4CG helps you build the Common Good - right where you are

If you are asking any of the following questions, our resources may be for you:

How are we building the Common Good where we are? Could our mission do with an overhaul? Have we properly discerned our vocation? Have we measured what we do against the Common Good principles? Is our spirituality integrated with our jobs, our gifts, our volunteering? Is our social action rooted in a sound theology? Are we avoiding mission drift? Is the contribution we are making faithful to God's call for this particular place, right here and now?

Our resources help you build local relationships and strengthen social trust. We can help you do this as an individual, as a congregation, parish, diocese or organisation, prayer group, community, school or youth group. Our material is designed for Christians of all traditions, while some is in non religious language, suitable for all.

[Explore T4CG's resources](#)



Signs of the times: February 2021

How is the Covid era affecting the politics of our time?

The pandemic is wreaking terrible damage, accelerating pre-existing, dehumanising trends. Explore our latest selection of articles and podcasts assembled to help you navigate some of the seismic changes going on. In this edition we focus on a handful of areas: the UK context, the ongoing American crisis, divisive ideologies, Big Tech, media censorship. Our selection is not meant to be definitive.

[Click to go to Signs of the Times](#)



Signs of the times: the churches

As the pandemic wears on, what is happening in the churches?

THE CHURCHES ARE CHANGING

Marcel LeJeune God may be shaking up the RC church to do something new

Andrew Rumsey the current and future condition of the beleaguered English Church

Jesus Shaped People resource to help discern what God is Saying to the Churches

Joel Edwards Being Missionary Disciples

Emma Thompson What will be left of the C of E parish system after the pandemic?

Giles Fraser Why is the C of E so woke?

Rod Dreher A Christianity of clericalism and passivity is no match for what's coming

Hattie Williams Financial crisis threatens C of E's strategic plans

Marcus Walker Misguided priorities of church authorities

Stephen Cottrell and Justin Welby A defence of the C of E

Caroline Wheeler Church to cut paid clergy as one fifth wanders off

Peter Boghossian, Eric Metaxas, Rabbi Wolpe Spirituality During Crisis

ACTING FOR GOOD IN SOCIETY

CCLA [New investment fund aligned with Catholic Social Teaching](#)
Church Action on Poverty [report on Your Local Pantry and community resilience](#)
Churches in Peterborough [set to unite to tackle homelessness](#)
Church of England [Coming Home report: Archbishop's Commission on Housing](#)
Highworth Churches Together [All set to open a Job Club](#)
Theos/Free Churches Group [Church and Social Cohesion - new report](#)
Ian Byrne [Mission to end food poverty that's starting in Liverpool](#)

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Revd Dr Joe Boot [Christian Liberty vs Lockdownism](#)
Anthony Horan [Church leaders in Scotland unite to challenge Hate Crime Bill](#)
Jubilee Centre [Relational lending \(credit unions\) as a way out of Covid debt](#)
John Coffey [Statues: Christian memory can play a role in forging a critical patriotism](#)
Timothy O'Malley [Fratelli Tutti is a diagnosis of a neopaganism ripping us apart](#)
Cornel West and Robert George [The Politics of the Gospel](#)
Orthodox Christian Network [For the Life of the World: Orthodox Social Ethos](#)
Susannah Heschel [2 Friends, 2 Prophets: Abraham Heschel and Martin Luther King](#)
Ian Paul [Social media tends to undermine sense of self and virtue](#)
Kevin Vallier [Trust in a Polarized Age](#)
See also our collection of articles on Fratelli Tutti [here](#)

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Jonathan Beswick [Why I'm keeping my church open in lockdown](#)
Religion Media Centre [Faith groups' 'sacred civic role' in the pandemic \(video\)](#)
Sebastian Milbank [Work of faith communities during Covid-19 praised](#)
BBC [Burnley's Pastor Mick - from dangerous drug dealer to lifesaver](#)
Love Your Neighbour [gets government funding for Covid crisis food provision](#)
C of E [Estate church gives food vouchers to every primary school child](#)



Recommended books

Our latest selection:

Abraham Joshua Heschel [The Sabbath](#)

Andy Ngo [Unmasked: Inside Antifa's Radical Plan to Destroy Democracy](#)

Rod Dreher [Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents](#)

Jennie Bristow and Emma Gilland [Corona Generation: Coming Of Age In A Crisis](#)

Remi Adekoya [Biracial Britain: A Different Way of Looking at Race](#)

Joel Kotkin [The Coming of Neo-Feudalism: A Warning to the Global Middle Class](#)

James Rebanks [English Pastoral: An Inheritance \(author of The Shepherd's Life\)](#)

Joshua Mitchell [American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions](#)

Roger Scruton [Fools, Frauds and Firebrands: Thinkers of the New Left](#)

Daniela Augustine [The Spirit and the Common Good: Shared Flourishing in the Image of God](#)

Shelby Steele [White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era](#)

You may also be interested in

- [Leading Thinkers](#) collection of articles
- [Common Good thinking](#) and Catholic social thought

Readership Survey

Warm thanks to everyone who completed our readership survey. If you missed it and would like to give us your feedback on the T4CG Newsletter, please email us at info@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk

What is the Common Good?

The Common Good is the **shared life** of a society in which everyone can flourish - as we act together in different ways that all contribute towards that goal, enabled by social conditions that mean every single person can participate.

We create these conditions and pursue that goal by working together across our differences, each of us taking responsibility, according to our calling and ability.

[Find out more and explore our free resources](#)



Supporting T4CG

We are truly independent. We receive no funding from the major denominations, so everything you give us really counts.

Click [here](#) to donate. Thank you.



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Forward

About us

Together for the Common Good is a charity working to strengthen the bonds of social trust. Our work calls people to fulfil their vocational responsibility by putting Common Good principles into practice and by working with others of different opinions and backgrounds in shared purpose.

T4CG works with people across the churches and beyond.

We create resources, broker relationships and convene conversations.

We are non partisan, independent, ecumenical and proud of our different Christian traditions.

Our People

Team: Jenny Sinclair (Founder Director), Alison Gelder (Director of Operations, p/t)

Louise Lambert (Team Support Worker, p/t), Chris Knowles (Here: Now: Us People project leader, p/t)

Board of Trustees: Richard Holman (Chair), Holly Terry (Company Secretary), Sophie Stanes, Geoff Knott, Edward Hadas

Our sincere thanks

Our sincere thanks for help-in-kind and support from our partners and associates who contribute pro bono to different strands of our work. [Download](#) the latest T4CG annual report to find out more. We are most grateful to our regular donors for their faithful generosity, to the Sisters of Mercy for the use of free office space, and to CCLA for sponsoring our smart new website.

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GOOD INVESTMENT

If this message has been forwarded to you, and you would like to add your own email address to the list, you can [subscribe to our newsletter here](#). [Read our previous newsletters here](#).

Together for the Common Good is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1172113).

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