The Politics of Grace and Place

Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it Genesis 28:16

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for the Easter season. A time when our hearts are full of hope for new life, a hope that this year is mixed with grief.

Over the last few months we shared two 'thought pieces' with you, exploring themes that we feel are central to the challenges of this new time and which speak to how churches could respond. The first was *The Plague and the Parish: An Invitation to the Churches,* and the second, *Renewing the Covenant: Churches and the Building of Local Relationships*. Now, we want to share with you a third piece: *The Politics of Grace and Place.* We began sharing this a month ago in a low key way and it received a significant response. Now we want to bring it to a wider audience.

All three letters centre on the recognition that we are entering a new era, and focus on how we can make a transformational difference within our own particular context. We have especially highlighted the importance of the places we serve, the difference between 'contract' and 'covenant' and the revitalising of the Christian witness through practical expressions of God's love. The fallout of the COVID 19 pandemic has accentuated the significance of these themes as we face the great task of civic renewal.

In our third letter, we want to share our sense that there is a political dimension to the local church's vocation. Not in a party political or campaigning sense, but rather in its call to transform civil society. Though we aim to be servants, churches are more than service providers and - though we strive to be faithful witnesses - we are called to be more than evangelists. Our belief is that God is leading us to deepen the relationship of the church with people and with place. Our suggestions are not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive, but aim instead to inspire actions arising from a gospel of grace, based on one who did not offer a manifesto for change, but was himself the Kingdom made manifest.

We offer *The Politics of Grace and Place* in fellowship and solidarity. **We invite you to read the letter and reflect on what strikes you.** Please feel free to use it within your own networks in whatever way you feel is helpful. It is our hope that what we share will deepen the church's reflection and discipleship.

Also in this edition, we are delighted to bring you two practical reflections on the changes facing the church in this new era. **Alison Milbank** writes a deeply thoughtful essay on the twin challenges of church decline and the housing crisis, and as **William Taylor** looks decline squarely in the face he unveils the vocation of the church. Also below you will find our latest recommended books and selection of links to articles.

Wishing you a blessed Holy Week and Easter season
Together for the Common Good

THE POLITICS OF GRACE AND PLACE

A letter to the local church

We are delighted to share with you the third of our letters to the churches. We warmly invite you to read it or listen to the recording, and consider what strikes you.

This letter comes out of a friendship between Together for the Common Good, the Common Good Foundation and the Journal of Missional Practice. It follows our two earlier letters. The co-authors are **Jenny Sinclair** (Together for the Common Good), **Lord Maurice Glasman** (The Common Good Foundation), **Martin Robinson, Alan Roxburgh, Sara Jane R. Walker** and **Mary Publicover** (Journal of Missional Practice), **Rt Revd Andrew Rumsey** and **Father William Taylor.**

Feel free to share the letter within your own networks. It is already being used in some churches to seed conversations about renewal. Please share your thoughts with us, c/o: Annette McBride at annette@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk.

Take me to the letter

Divine Irrigation:
the crisis of decline is unveiling the purpose of the church

The pandemic is accelerating the trend of church decline and dioceses are taking hard decisions, turning off the tap of subsidy in some places. Here, **William Taylor** shares his experience of facing the imminent reality of what this means for his own parish.

As he strives to keep his church from closing, vital questions come up about the true vocation of the church. He sees this as fundamentally eucharistic, about honouring the covenant which we inherit as the people of God in the place where we live: not only between the parish church and the civic realm, but also between the earthly and the heavenly.

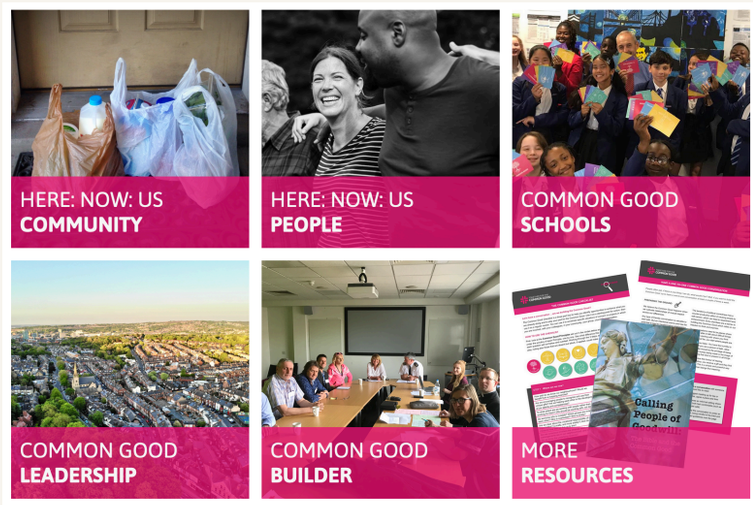
Read the full story

Home for Good: the local church and the housing crisis

We are delighted to share a new essay by **Alison Milbank** who sees the potential for a solution to two contemporary crises: housing and church decline. Writing about church, community, housing and land, she places holiness, and the agency of local communities, at the centre of her analysis. Alison is an Anglican priest and Professor of Theology at Nottingham University.

Describing practical ways forward, Alison sees the vulnerable local church refreshing its sense of purpose through faithfulness, imagination, humility, relationship and reciprocity. Fundamentally, and drawing on Catholic social teaching, she concludes that the church's commitment to using land for affordable housing will only work if it truly empowers parishes to make their own decisions for the common good.

Read the essay



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

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.

Explore T4CG's resources

A new faith-consistent investment fund

We would like to share with you that our friends at CCLA will shortly be launching a new faith-consistent investment fund, guided by the principles of Catholic social teaching. Suitable for all churches and charities, the fund is for those who want to invest responsibly to promote the common good and protect our common home.

Find out more

Signs of the times: the churches

A quick selection of articles

Graham Tomlin Why should the church care about housing?
CSAN Housing and Land: A Common Good Approach
Archbishop's Housing Commission executive summary and full report
Hansard Archbishop of Canterbury's annual debate: Housing Strategy (24 March)
Carmody Grey the importance of place and land for Christians
Philip North trust the local, address failure and learn the art of parish renewal
Andrew Mawson Empowering local people to take control over their own lives
Stanley Hauerwas Christians should be known as people that don't bullshit the world
Archbishop of Canterbury Archbishops launch new Commission on Families
John L. Allen Jr. Pope Francis in Iraq - most emblematic papal trip of all time
Arnie Graf how trust between faith leaders saved an organisation
Luke Miller The churches in London during "Covidzeit"
Francis Stewart People and power through the lens of Catholic social thought
Mike Gonzalez churches in danger of being hijacked by the woke left
David Williamson Covid pandemic brings British churches back to life
Boris Johnson thanks Christians for bringing the teachings of Jesus to life
Rowan Williams, Irene Lancaster A dialogue between a Christian and a Jew on Lent
Eden Project urban missionaries to urban communities

See also our selection of articles on Fratelli Tutti here

Signs of the times: what's going on

Our latest selection of articles

Imogen Sinclair launch of The New Social Covenant Unit

Talk/Together national survey on public attitudes changing as covid crisis unfolds
A Better Way Time for a Change (a rallying call to join the Better Way network)
John Harris our individualistic, secular society lacks the narratives to guide us
Commission on Civil Society call for evidence - deadline 10 May 2021

Mia Jankowicz How the UK's vaccines chief delivered success
David Blunkett and Charles Walker left and right question lockdown policies
Tobias Phibbs Life after lockdown: restoring vitality to our flat and mediated lives
Jonathan Sumption civil disobedience has begun
Shany Mor How Israel won the vaccine wars
Norman Doidge viral enhancement research gone awry: possible cause of covid
Hans Kundnani EU technocrats' bungled Covid response
Patrick Kidd Bells toll for 126,000 lives lost to Covid-19

The Levant UK business leaders condemn 'sad and bad' axing of industrial strategy
Mary-Ann Russon Uber drivers are workers not self-employed, Supreme Court rules
Rapper Loki Class, not identity should drive politics
Jonathan Rutherford Rebalancing power means rebalancing wealth
Michael Lind Family policy for the working class majority
Nick Buckley The tragedy of the left
Daniel Dombey/Javier Espinoza Spain to grant gig delivery workers employee rights
Léon Krier From Unemployed to Self-Employed: the Craftsman in an industrial age

Kieran Turner Latest on the Scottish Hate Crime bill passing into law
David Davis Scottish government: a deficit of power and accountability
Alex Massie A bad week to pass law that ignores women
Catholic Union The kirk and the court: why Scottish church closures were unlawful

Stephen R. Soukup What is woke capital?
Mary Harrington Woke cultural imperialism: how language can become violent
B. Duncan Moench Progressivism: the dream of utopia administered by technocrats
Benedict Rogers Why China is terrified of Christianity
Aris Roussinos Anarchy is coming: liberal world order failed to usher in global peace
Andrew Doyle The case of Batley Grammar and Charlie Hebdo
Justin Webb The death of American dignity
Robert Tombs The populist spirit of the Paris Commune
Lee Smith Biden abandons peace between Israel and Arab states for deal with Iran
Anna Geifman radical nihilism seduces believers into forms of extremism

See also our selection of articles on racial justice here

Recommended books

Our latest selection:

Edward Hadas Counsels of Imperfection: Thinking through Catholic Social Teaching

Jon Cruddas The Dignity of Work

Adrian Pabst The Postliberal Moment: Manifesto for a Post-Pandemic Politics

Arnie Graf Lessons Learned: Stories from a Lifetime of Organizing

Giles Fraser Chosen: Lost and Found between Christianity and Judaism

Ed Silvoso Ekklesia: rediscovering God's instrument for global transformation

Andrew Mawson The Social Entrepreneur: Making Communities Work

Stephen R. Soukup The Dictatorship of Woke Capital: How Political Correctness Captured Big Business

You may also be interested in

- More recommended books in previous newsletter editions
- Leading Thinkers collection of articles
- Common Good thinking and Catholic social thought

Feedback

If you 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.

TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Share Tweet 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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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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