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COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
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1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Bulletin Readers

As this year moves into its final quarter there is a lot to report about the serious matters that have been holding our attention in the last few months and there is also a look ahead to autumn events. If you have news and information, particularly about links events over the summer, that will be of interest to bulletin readers we would be delighted to hear from you.

Leslie Nathaniel
Archbishop of Canterbury's International Ecumenical Secretary
and European Secretary Council for Christian Unity

Francis Bassett
Assistant Secretary Council for Christian Unity

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2. MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS: STATEMENTS BY ARCHBISHOP JUSTIN AND BISHOP ANGAELOS

Archbishop Justin's statement

In a statement made on Thursday 3 September on the ongoing migrant crisis facing Europe and the Middle East, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby said:

“This is a hugely complex and wicked crisis that underlines our human frailty and the fragility of our political systems. My heart is broken by the images and stories of men, women and children who have risked their lives to escape conflict, violence and persecution.

“There are no easy answers and my prayers are with those who find themselves fleeing persecution, as well as those who are struggling under immense pressure to develop an effective and equitable response. Now, perhaps more than ever in post-war Europe, we need to commit to joint action across Europe, acknowledging our common responsibility and our common humanity.

“As Christians we believe we are called to break down barriers, to welcome the stranger and love them as ourselves (Leviticus 19:34), and to seek the peace and justice of our God, in our world, today.

“With winter fast approaching and with the tragic civil war in Syria spiralling further out of control, we must all be aware that the situation could yet worsen significantly. I am encouraged by the positive role that churches, charities and international agencies are already playing, across Europe and in Syria and the surrounding areas, to meet basic humanitarian needs. These efforts may feel trivial in the face of the challenge, but if we all play our part this is a crisis that we can resolve.

“We need a holistic response to this crisis that meets immediate humanitarian need while tackling its underlying drivers. I commend the UK Government for its strong commitment to the world’s poorest people through the delivery of the aid budget. It has shown global leadership by providing £900 million since 2012 to the crisis in Syria. It has also shown moral leadership in using Royal Navy ships to save the lives of hundreds who have tried to make the dangerous crossing across the Mediterranean.

“I hold in my heart particularly those who are most vulnerable in conflict, and those who we have a special duty to protect. The Government has rightly sought to provide sanctuary to unaccompanied children, women and those who have been victims of, or are at risk of, sexual violence. I welcome this, while urging a renewed commitment to taking in the most vulnerable.

“The Church has always been a place of sanctuary for those in need, and Churches in the UK and across Europe have been meeting the need they are presented with. I reaffirm our commitment to the principle of sanctuary for those who require our help and love. The people of these islands have a long and wonderful history of offering shelter and refuge, going back centuries – whether it be Huguenot Christians, Jewish refugees, Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese boat people or many, many more.

“It has always been controversial at the time it happened, always been seen as too difficult. Yet each time we have risen to the challenge and our country has been blessed by the result.

“We cannot turn our backs on this crisis. We must respond with compassion. But we must also not be naïve in claiming to have the answers to end it. It requires a pan-European response – which means a commitment to serious-minded diplomatic and political debate, but not at the expense of practical action that meets the immediate needs of those most in need of our help.”

Bishop Angaelos’ statement

On Friday 4 September Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, made the following statement about the refugee crisis in Europe:

Having seen heartbreakingly images of the lifeless and abandoned body of young Aylan Kurdi lying alone on a beach in Turkey puts an all too gruesome optic to a matter either in the forefront or background of every mind over the past months. The images we have now become too accustomed to seeing may have desensitised some, but the horrific reality of the situation remains; thousands of people continue to risk all, even their lives, to seek the safety that we are thankfully free to live on a daily basis.

Whether it is Aylan, his family, or the countless thousands of others making the treacherous journey to flee conflict and find a better life, we must now realise that the solution to this crisis is greater than for individual Churches, religions, communities, or even states to address alone, and so a more universal, integrated and collaborative approach is needed to make the best of limited human and material resources, must be sought.

The Church of Egypt is no stranger to the issue of asylum as it was Egypt that accepted and embraced the infant Christ and His family as refugees when they fled targeted and intentional persecution. It is indeed telling that while the world has apparently progressed over millennia since then, the problems and challenges remain the same.

As a Church with its roots in the Middle East we are very aware of the struggles faced by people in the region, Christians and others. It is essential that the plight of these refugees is not belittled or ignored, as they face very real challenges in their homelands, living with a daily threat to their livelihood and even existence.

At a time of increasing economic pressure in Europe and a greater fear of importing radical elements seeking to destabilise our communities, it is understandable that

caution must be exercised. Having said that however, that caution should not mean a blanket rejection of the vast majority of those coming who are genuinely seeking safety for themselves and their families. What is concerning is abrasive rhetoric in the media and public sphere, leading to the constant dehumanisation of people who are undoubtedly victims of this conflict, to the extent that many now see them simply as an impending risk to their communities, putting aside their basic rights and needs. What we must realise is that many of these people, indigenous to their homelands, are not fleeing out of choice or preference but out of sheer necessity.

This is undoubtedly an extremely complex issue that involves geo-politics, global economics, European economies and borders, state and regional security, as well as an increasingly volatile Middle East, but as I have mentioned previously, we must not be prescriptive to people living in crisis on whether or not they should stay and fight in their war-torn countries, or flee for their lives. Whatever their choices may be, we must advocate to either safeguard their continued presence or provide an alternative if they cease to see a viable continuity in their homelands.

It is encouraging, that over the past few days there has been a greater intention and appetite for a pragmatic and compassionate response to this increasing refugee crisis in seeking practical solutions whatever they may be.

The Scriptures are timeless in their direction, and when the Lord God instructs His people to care for the widow, orphan, traveller and stranger (Deuteronomy 10:18) that was not meant exclusively for His immediate audience alone, but to the whole of humanity over time.

These challenging events remind us of the brokenness of our humanity, but as Christians we also recognise the ability of God to heal that brokenness. For that reason, we pray confidently for solutions in the homelands of those fleeing, the countries that may extend whatever hospitality they can, and above all, safety for many who make these dangerous journeys out of sheer desperation.”

More information can be found at www.CopticMediaUK.com

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3. MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS: EUROPEAN CHURCHES LETTER TO JUSTICE MINISTERS

In a letter sent on Thursday 10 September CEC, CCME, the EU – CORD Network, Act Alliance EU and Eurodiaconia called on EU Justice Ministers to commit a number of actions to help refugees and migrants in difficulty and danger including the following:

- Consolidate and maintain concerted efforts to save the lives of refugees and migrants in jeopardy within and beyond EU borders and to increase the capacities for, preferably civilian, search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean.
- Put in place and finance legal and practical responses that respect the rights and dignity of refugees, migrants and persons seeking protection and improve their

reception conditions - at least in line with EU minimum standards¹ - and to ensure and ease the access to asylum procedures.

- To increase resources to source countries to support organizations who are responding to the needs of refugees and internally displaced people in the international humanitarian and development context.
- Considerably increase the places for the resettlement of refugees from different crisis regions to European states. EU Member States need to come up with credible figures proving their commitment to share the responsibility to protect, and the European Commission could - in addition to funding - offer expertise and policy coordination to encourage pledging of substantially higher numbers.
- To put in place policies which enable safe and legal pathways into Europe including issuing of humanitarian visas, lifting of visa requirements for persons fleeing from conflict zones (e.g. Syria, Iraq), easier and more generous family reunification for persons in need of or granted international protection, and humanitarian admission
- To support efforts of countries in the Middle East and other conflict regions as well as UNHCR to adequately support refugees.
- To advance plans for an accessible and known system of legal migration in countries of origin, thereby providing viable and humane alternatives to smuggling.
- Ensure sharing of responsibility for refugee reception between EU Member States, and relocation and reception of refugees from Greece, Hungary and Italy to other EU Member States going beyond the pledges reached in July 2015. With the rising figures particularly for Greece, speedy relocation of higher numbers will be necessary to reduce the lengthy and risky journeys across Europe.
- Consider the needs and aspirations of refugees: particularly vulnerable persons and children. Family unity must always be respected, therefore tracing of relatives and family reunification should be pursued as a matter of priority and bureaucratic hurdles abolished. Wishes and reasons of refugees to want to go to specific countries and places should wherever possible be considered.

The full text of the letter can be read at:

http://www.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/cec/pix/EU_Refugee_and_Asylum_Response_FINAL.pdf

4. MIGRATION AID BUDAPEST

The Revd Frank Hegedűs, Chaplain at St Margaret's Anglican Church Budapest has received enquiries from around the world about the refugee crisis in Hungary's capital and largest city. Interested people may wish to find out about the excellent work being carried out by Migration Aid Budapest.

Information about the charity and opportunities for making donations can be found at the links below:

<https://www.facebook.com/migrationaidhungary>
<http://www.migrationaid.net/english/>

5. NEWS FROM CEC

❖ OPEN LETTER TO CHURCHES IN GREECE

On 3 July the Presidents, Vice-Presidents and General Secretary of CEC wrote to the President of the Synod of the Greek Evangelical Church and the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. They said:

“We write to you with profound concern over the European Union’s future. The EU was founded on the idea of sharing, cooperation and solidarity. From its own founding, the Conference of European Churches has also supported a vision for the continent guided by these values. Recent developments and the current discussion about the future of Greece inside or outside of the Eurozone and its future relation to the EU make clear that what is at stake in these days is not only the future of one country, but future of the European project as such.

On behalf of CEC, we express solidarity with your people in this difficult moment and offer support to the CEC member churches in Greece. The diminishing of living standards, in particular for those who are poor or who are living on their pensions below the poverty line as well as those who are on the margins of society, is unacceptable in the Union based on sharing and solidarity. Equally unacceptable is the lack of vision offered to young people coupled with unemployment. The dignity of persons, created according to Christian faith in the image of God, is in all circumstances to be protected.

On behalf of CEC we call on political leaders of the Union to strengthen even more their efforts, without regard of the outcomes of the referendum on Sunday, for keeping Greece in the European Union and to find mechanisms for addressing the substance of current difficulties; in particular the mechanisms for debt relief, currently the major burden for unfolding the future of Greece. We urge leaders of the Union together with leaders in Greece to find a common ground for the future of Greece inside the Eurozone and inside the Union.”

The letter was posted on the CEC website at:

<http://www.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=1815>

❖ **CEC COMMEMORATES 600th ANNIVERSARY OF JAN HUS' MARTYRDOM**

In two days of performances, public speeches, and ecumenical prayer, CEC joined in commemorating the 600th anniversary of the death of Jan Hus. Events took place at the Karolus University and other venues in Prague, the city where Hus lived and preached, on 5 and 6 July 2015.

The Czech reformer was instrumental in Hussite uprisings that led to historic church reforms, including the translation of scripture into popular language. Hus was eventually arrested, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake on 6 July 1415.

Participants heard the CEC General Secretary speak on the importance of Hus's contributions to the church, both then and now: "In a dark period of history, Hus called his followers to intellectual and religious freedom, and emancipation from oppression... "We still see the importance of his legacy in the struggle for freedom of religion and belief today."

Commemorations in Prague were a project of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, two CEC Member Churches. For more information on these events, and on the life and legacy of Jan Hus, visit www.hus-fest.eu and/or <http://janhus600.cz/english/information>

For more information see

<http://www.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=1816>

❖ **ROMA EVICTIONS ACROSS EUROPE OVER SUMMER 2015**

From Finland to France and Italy, from Bulgaria, through Hungary and Serbia to Albania the summer months of 2015 have witnessed an unprecedented upsurge of evictions from Roma settlements. The European Roma and Travellers Forum report on their website of an eviction involving 80 families in Courneuve, France; demolition of Roma houses in Garmen, Bulgaria; eviction of 130 Roma from the neighbourhood of Grmec in Belgrade; eviction of 80 families in Selita, Albania and evictions of Roma in Quaracchi and Cosenza in Italy.

For more details see:

<http://www.ertf.org/index.php/8-news/250-evictions-unlimited>

❖ **CHRISTIANS UNITE IN PRAYERS FOR THE HEALING OF CREATION**

The Conference of European Churches encouraged all Christians to join in a day of prayer for creation and its healing. On Tuesday 1 September, Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic and other Christians around the world offered

thanksgiving for the gifts of creation and pray for its protection and renewal.

Commemoration of this day dates to 1989 with an invitation from the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople to all Christians to pray for the protection of the environment. Observation of this day has since grown to a global ecumenical observation. This year, Pope Francis announced a World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation to coincide with this significant date.

This day is important for CEC's ecological and ecumenical concerns. "The desire for climate justice is uniting Christians across Europe, especially as we prepare for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in December," remarked CEC General Secretary Rev. Dr Guy Liagre. "A day of prayer reminds us that our work must be spiritual as well as practical."

The Conference of European Churches has a longstanding commitment to climate justice, including through the European Christian Environmental Network and participation in European Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace events leading to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris.

A European Contribution to the Pilgrimage for Climate Justice, will take place from 12 to 14 October 2015 at the Evangelical Academy Villigst in Schwerte, Germany. The consultation will highlight the issue of climate justice and be linked to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. It is an opportunity for the churches of Europe to raise their voices and reaffirm that climate justice is a necessary expression of the churches' concern for the protection of God's creation.

Details of the programme can be seen at:

https://cecpilgrimage.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/a-european-contribution-to-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace_programme_draft_030915.pdf

❖ CEC AND COMECE MEETING

The presidents of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) met in Munich on Friday 18 September to discuss issues of deep concern to the churches of Europe as ongoing crises continue to dominate the news and preoccupy politicians and citizens.

Bishop Christopher Hill (CEC) and Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising (COMECE) reflected on the good track record of both organisations in being the voice of Christian concern in dialogue with the EU institutions. They noted CEC and COMECE's efforts in profiling the churches as constructive partners in the ongoing realisation of the European project.

The presidents discussed the current refugee and asylum crisis, and its widespread humanitarian impact. They restated the churches solidarity with those attempting to reach safety in Europe. "The plight of all those suffering in the Middle East, including the region's embattled Christians remains at the forefront of both our prayers and our

ongoing advocacy with the European Institutions," Bishop Christopher said following the meeting. "Those who enter Europe, must not be afraid to drown or suffocate. And they must get a fair asylum process. These are minimum standards which must apply throughout Europe," added Cardinal Marx.

Also on the agenda was a discussion of joint CEC-COMECE understanding of the economic crisis in Europe, and how to respond to collateral social damage including youth unemployment and the ecological crisis in Europe and beyond.

CEC and COMECE work closely together in their dialogue with the EU institutions. Bishop Hill and Cardinal Marx discussed their hopes for desirable parameters for future institutional dialogue, and welcomed the ongoing, practical cooperation between the CEC and COMECE Secretariats in Brussels.

The CEC press release will shortly appear on its website www.ceceurope.com

6. CHURCH RE-OPENING IN NORTHERN CYPRUS WELCOMED AS RECONCILIATION GESTURE

The opening of the Church of Panagia Galakdodrofousas in Palekythro, in the Turkish northern part of Cyprus, after 41 years, is seen as a crucial reconciliation gesture. The World Council of Churches has hailed the opening of the church in the Turkish sector of the divided island where Islam has dominated for four decades as "an important sign of peace and reconciliation." The church opened its doors to worshippers on Sunday 16 August, the Office of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden said in a statement.

Imam Fuat Tosun brought greetings of peace from the mufti of Cyprus and welcomed Christian worshippers in Greek at a Sunday service on Aug 16.

"God will help both Christians and Muslims to work together to achieve peace in Cyprus and we should continue our joint efforts in this regard," the Muslim cleric said.

The Church of Panagia (Virgin Mary), built in 1896, had been closed for worship since the conflict and partitioning of Cyprus in 1974.

Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis reiterated the appreciation of Archbishop Chrysostomos II of the Church of Cyprus to the mufti for his personal attention and intervention in favour of Sunday worship. He said: "The religious leaders of Cyprus are committed to continue to dialogue and work together for religious freedom, human rights and peace, with the support of the Embassy of Sweden. We are grateful to the Office of the Religious Track for their role in today's worship and their constant facilitation of the religious leader's dialogue for peace."

<http://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/church-opening-on-turkish-side-of-divided-cyprus-seen-aiding-reconciliation-32818>

7. REIMAGINING EUROPE: CHURCH LEADERS LAUNCH BLOG

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland have launched a blog discussing the need to find new ways of disagreeing well on Europe. The blog, *Reimagining Europe*, features contributions from church leaders, politicians, and scholars. Participants may subscribe to posts by email and also follow the conversation on [Twitter \(@ReimaginingE\)](#).

Reimagining Europe's blog has two complementary streams of reflection and deliberation. First, an in focus conversation on current themes involving experts from a range of theological and political backgrounds from around the UK and Europe. Second, a more popular *Postcard from ...* series involving shorter one-off contributions and reflections from around Europe.

Reimagining Europe's working premise is that many of the issues that shape Britain's relationship with the EU require a wide-ranging debate of comparable depth, seriousness and intensity to that which took place in Scotland prior to the independence referendum of September 2014. That process was far from perfect, but it nevertheless did include a vibrant debate in homes, businesses, churches and public spaces about a range of social, political, identity, constitutional and economic questions.

Reimagining Europe has no editorial line beyond a commitment to communicating Christian reflection and commentary in ways that enhance public understanding on an issue that many find both confusing and divisive. It is not the place of this blog to tell people how to vote in any referendum.

Reimagining Europe's only editorial requirement is that whatever the chosen topic, its contributors must be able to write articulately and persuasively from a Christian ethical perspective and to keep in mind that the blog exists to help others to think through the presenting issues ahead of any referendum. To that end, it draws upon

The role of the Church of England and Church of Scotland in hosting this blog is to act as the curator of the views found on *Reimagining Europe*. It follows that the views and opinions expressed by the contributors to *Reimagining Europe* do not reflect the position of either the Church of England or the Church of Scotland.

<https://reimaginingeurope.wordpress.com/>

8. WYNDHAM PLACE CHARLEMAGNE TRUST: CORBISHLEY LECTURE MONDAY 19 OCTOBER

This year's Corbishley Lecture will be given on Monday 19 October by Lord John Alderdice on the subject "Faith, Belief and Fundamentalism". The venue will be in the Westminster area in the basement Conference Hall of Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3RB (not far from Europe House in Smith Square).

Lord Alderdice is Director of the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, was Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly 1998–2004, leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland 1987–1998 and since 1996 has sat in the House of Lords as a Liberal Democrat; he has been awarded several honours such as the John F Kennedy Profiles in Courage Award in 1998, the W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award in 1998, the Silver Medal of Congress of Peru in 1999 and 2004, the Medal of Honour College of Medicine of Peru in 1999 and the Freedom of the City of Baltimore in 1991. He is an elder in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In 2001 he was made an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and has also been awarded an honorary doctorate in law from Robert Gordon University.

For more details email WPCT Chair Keith Best at keithbest@hotmail.com.

The Trust is currently looking for an administrator (a few hours every week for a modest remuneration). Interested people are invited to contact Keith Best at email quoted above.

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9. ECUMENICAL POP UP MONASTERY

Following a much appreciated event at the Swiss Church in 2014 (as reported in Bulletin 83 in January) a European Ecumenical Pop Up Monastery takes place in August (Saturday 8 to Friday 21), at Mariensee, near Hannover, Germany, for women who share a common desire for peace and reconciliation. It is a retreat aimed at women from all over Europe seeking time out from their busy lives and will provide the opportunity to meet women from all generations and cultural backgrounds – firm believers and spiritual seekers, as well as women from other religions.

The name “Pop Up Monastery” comes from a term used to describe an event of business that takes place only for a limited time in one place before moving somewhere else. It is an initiative of the young women’s group of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW).

Activities will include silence and prayer; pilgrimage; herb garden; art and embroidery workshops; singing and workshops; singing and music; cooking; listening and discussion.

The Pop Up Monastery has received funding to enable Austrian film maker Patricia Merchant to accompany the project and document the faith and hopes of women. The 45 minute documentary film will be completed in November 2015.

For more information see the Pop Up Monastery website at:

<http://popupmonastery.com/>>

10. TAIZÉ COMMUNITY SYMPOSIUM AT SARUM COLLEGE: 30 AND 31 OCTOBER

Marking the 75th Anniversary of the Taizé Community that falls this year and also the centenary anniversary of its founder Brother Roger Sarum College is hosting an academic symposium on Friday 30 and Saturday 31 October to explore and review its significance. The symposium will consist of papers given in full plenary sessions and shorter papers offered as optional seminars. As an alternative to keynote speakers the symposium aims to create the opportunity to assemble a wide variety of contributors whose work and study relate to the unique phenomenon of the Taizé Community.

Booking enquiries are to be directed to Alison Ogden at aogden@sarum.ac.uk

11. EUROPEAN LINKS OFFICERS AND FAITH IN EUROPE MEET THURSDAY 9 JULY

On a day when an all out tube strike made for some zig zag travelling for a number of attendees the Network of European Links Officers and Faith in Europe met separately at Friends House Euston coming together in the afternoon to hear Archbishop Rowan Williams making connections between history and the present day in his address titled “Thinking Creatively About Europe” and engage in question and answer dialogue with those present.

At the Links Officers meeting in the morning there were reports on twinning programmes and the recent Kirchentag. The Revd Andy March from Coventry gave a presentation about his personal involvement with the Coventry/ Dresden programme including a TV interview given at a moment’s notice.

12. ...AND FINALLY: THE EXETER POUND LAUNCHED ON CATHEDRAL GREEN

September has seen the launch of a new community currency in Devon. From Tuesday 1st September the Exeter Pound has been tradable in about one hundred independent businesses in and around the city. Exeter is thus joining Bristol, Totnes and a few other places in England to introduce a local money system that has no value outside its own community, but which will be worth much within it.

As from now, Exonians are able to spend their own notes (one, five, ten and twenty Exeter Pound denominations, plus a 15 EP special for the Rugby World Cup) in registered shops, cafes, pubs, leisure venues, restaurants and elsewhere. Exeter Cathedral will accept the new money in its shop and cafeteria, as well as for admission charges. Churches are likely to find the paper notes in their collection plates.

The scheme has been described as a kind of loyalty voucher that helps currency stay in the community, building trust between businesses and customers, and strengthening the city's local economy. There is a longer term aim of encouraging more local commercial activity, with potential to prevent poverty and reduce environmental damage. Further social, economic and ecological advantages are envisaged when Exeter Pound goes digital in 2016.

At the launch event on the Cathedral Green on 1 September speakers included Molly Scott Cato MEP and Olympic runner Jo Pavey. The first Exeter Pound was spent by Cathedral Precentor Revd Canon Victoria Thurtell in purchasing a loaf of bread from the Lord Mayor, Councillor Olwen Foggin.

Further details can be found on the website of the European Christian Environmental Network at:

<http://www.ecen.org>

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Visit the CCU website at:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/ccu.aspx>

and visit the Latest News page

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