

# CITYtheology

The magazine of the Leeds Church Institute

Spring 2016  
Issue 5

"The memory of all innocent lives lost, throughout the globe, instils in me the courage of peace, the strength to persevere, the hope for a more respectful and peaceful coexistence in 2016 and beyond."

**Qari Asim, Imam at Makkah Mosque Leeds**, reflects on the challenge of peacemaking in 2016



## Guns and Deckchairs

Author **David Rhodes** explores how greed and fear impact climate change

## Passion4Leeds: Telling the Easter story through social media

**A Moral Pathway to a Sustainable City Poetry: The Dovar's War**

# Guns & Deckchairs

**David Rhodes** explores how the toxic mix of greed and fear impacts climate change and poverty.



**The prize for the world's worst Christmas card must surely have been won by a United States congresswoman.**

The card showed her in a family group with her husband and children. What made the picture shocking was that each person on the card – children included – was holding a gun.

The weapons Americans buy to keep themselves safe are the reason so many people are at risk of violent death.

In Britain, too, the latest political buzz-word is 'security'. We must keep ourselves safe from terrorists and protect our way of life from foreign migrants, say the Government.

We prefer not to ask why people resort to violence or turn up half drowned on the shores of Europe. So far we have got away with looking the other way. Not any longer.

The realisation is beginning to dawn that actions often have unintended consequences. One reason there are so many Syrian refugees is that some years ago their harvests failed after exceptionally bad weather. The resulting political unrest triggered the civil war.

The cause of the massive crop failure was attributed to climate change.

Imagine what will happen to national borders and national security, if not just a few million but hundreds of

millions of people are displaced by global warming and plunged into absolute poverty.

Recent flooding in Leeds and other British towns and cities has also been blamed on climate change. And more may be on the way. Dredging rivers and higher flood defences will not be enough. It's a bit like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

So is anyone really going to tackle global warming?

Vested commercial interests suggest short-term gain will remain the controlling priority. Meanwhile the human race is on a collision course with its best friend: the planet.

**What is it that drives multinational corporations to rip up millions of acres of rain forest and pollute the atmosphere? The obvious answer is greed: but what, in turn, is the cause of that greed?**

Maybe what's causing it is the same thing that makes Americans buy guns. Fear.

Fear of a threat to wealth, status and power.

It's no coincidence that the words spoken most



often by Jesus were: Do not be afraid. He was probably talking to his disciples: urging them to have courage in the face of persecution. But why would they be in danger of persecution – and by whom? The only people doing persecution were the Romans.

Why would people who followed Jesus' agenda be in danger from them? Unless what they were doing and saying in some way threatened the political and economic vested interests of Rome? Which it did.

Things are not very different today. Except that time is running out for us all. Climate change is already happening.



Suddenly the words 'love your neighbour' have a radically deeper significance. In the past the Church has been good at responding to situations of local poverty and need. Food banks and hospitality to refugees in Leeds and other cities bears witness to that.

**What the Church has not been good at is challenging the causes of poverty. Sticking its head above the political parapet and daring to confront the powerful.**

That takes courage. Maybe one reason it does not engage effectively with the causes of poverty and injustice is the fear that it might be attacked for doing so. When the Faith in City report came out, years ago, it was attacked by the Government for being Marxist. It was a shot across the bows from the powerful.

So where is God in all this? Is s/he going to let the human race plunge itself into chaos?

**The struggle for justice requires a strong faith. And it is not always clear that the faith of the Church is strong when it comes to social action. Nor is it clear what sort of God it really believes in.**

That's why this year's LCI Lent course will be exploring huge questions about the nature of God – and about poverty, fear and greed.

And looking at how the Churches in Leeds and beyond can respond effectively and urgently to the greatest threat there's ever been to human survival. The climate.

*David Rhodes, a former journalist and parish priest, is author of **Finding Mr Goldman**, the newly extended **Faith in Dark Places**, **Advent Adventure**, **Lenten Adventure** and **Sparrow Story**, all published by SPCK.*

**On Thursday 25th February and 3rd, 10th & 17th March, David will be leading the Leeds Lent Course at LCI. The course will alternate between evenings of encounter, drawing on the experiences of those with firsthand knowledge of the causes of poverty, and evenings of study, where there will be opportunities to reflect on the stories and experiences shared. Issues covered will include conflict, climate change and migration.**

For more information, or to book, email [events@leedschurchinstitute.org](mailto:events@leedschurchinstitute.org) or phone 0113 391 7928.



# Together We Must Defeat Religiously Motivated Violence

**Qari Asim, Imam at Makkah Mosque Leeds,** looks back with grief, but forward with hope at the challenge of peacemaking that we carry into 2016.

**As we start the New Year, we need to reflect upon the critically important Christian-Muslim initiatives that have taken place over the last 12 months**

across the country, enabling members of both faiths to develop stronger relationships and celebrate shared values and commitments.

I am brimming with hope and full of faith for 2016 but also filled with grief and sadness for thousands of lives that have been lost in 2015 at the hands of those who claim to commit violence in the name of a faith. According to a recent report released by Institute for Economics and Peace, in 2014, 6,644 people were killed by Boko Haram, and 6,073 by ISIS.

In 2015, ISIS in the Middle East and Boko Haram in parts of Africa have continued to commit violence against Christians and other faith minorities under the banner of "Jihad". ISIS are reported to have painted the homes of Christians red, destroyed their churches, and in some cases, looted their homes and property. They have caused many others to flee their homes with nothing but their lives and the clothes on their backs. ISIS have also fought the Yazidis, when they had not waged any kind of war against Muslims. Hundreds are

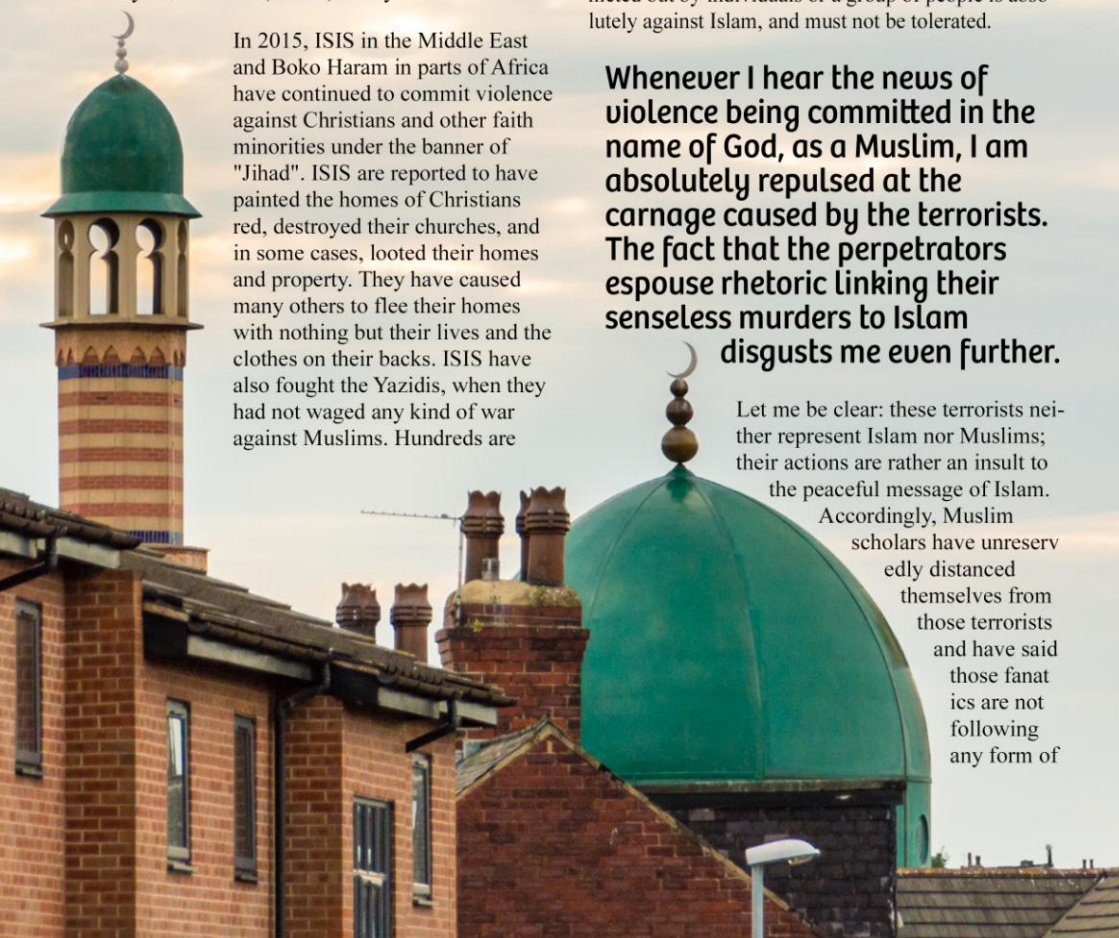
reported to have been killed and buried in mass graves, women have been captured and raped, whilst thousands have been displaced - the victims are said to have suffered these atrocities due to their faith.

On March 15 2015, fifteen people were killed and over 80 people injured in violent attacks in Lahore, Pakistan. Twin blasts rocked the Roman Catholic Church and Christ Church in Lahore while people were attending Sunday Mass. We recently learnt about a family in Bradford that had been assaulted, been threatened, intimidated and abused over a long period of time because the family had converted to Christianity. Such violence meted out by individuals or a group of people is absolutely against Islam, and must not be tolerated.

**Whenever I hear the news of violence being committed in the name of God, as a Muslim, I am absolutely repulsed at the carnage caused by the terrorists. The fact that the perpetrators espouse rhetoric linking their senseless murders to Islam disgusts me even further.**

Let me be clear: these terrorists neither represent Islam nor Muslims; their actions are rather an insult to the peaceful message of Islam.

Accordingly, Muslim scholars have unreservedly distanced themselves from those terrorists and have said those fanatics are not following any form of





Islam, despite what these fanatics may claim.

The Qur'an requires Muslims to treat their fellow citizens of other faiths or no faith with kindness and justice. Killing and injuring others is the opposite of what Islam demands. The Qur'an says: 'God does not forbid you in regard to those who did not wage war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you should treat them kindly and deal with them justly. Assuredly God loves the just.' (Qur'an, 60: 8).

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH (peace be upon him) has said: "Beware! Whoever is cruel and demanding towards non-Muslims, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgement." (hadith in Abu Dawud).

The terrorists are killing people indiscriminately - their only aim is to cause chaos, devastation and bloodshed. Such violent actions are far removed from the teachings of Islam and the practice of the Prophet of Islam PBUH. Faith minorities living in Muslim countries must enjoy safety and security unconditionally. Islam has issued severe warnings to those who infringe the rights of minorities. The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH urging Muslims to protect the rights of faith minorities should be enough for people and government in the Middle East, Nigeria, Sudan, Pakistan and others to defend the rights of minorities against the terrorists, who do not represent any faith.

The heinous crimes of the terrorists must not be allowed to destabilise the good relationships between faith groups and communities in the West. In the current religious and political climate, it is more important than ever that the solid relationships that communities have built are used to help defeat extremism and fanaticism. British Muslims recognise the significant role that some churches are playing in enhancing community relations, offering some Muslims refugees and asylum seekers safe sanctuaries - providing food and shelter - thereby living true to the commandment of Prophet Isa (Jesus) PBUH: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12).

My mosque is involved in a ground-breaking initiative with a local church that will be turned into a night shelter for destitute asylum seekers for a week. Members of the local neighbourhood will be cooking food and spending the evening together, each night

sleeping over in the church to show solidarity to the "strangers" in the city. Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare. It calls for the courage to embrace dialogue and reject violence; say "yes" to respect for agreements and "no" to acts of provocation. All of this takes courage, open-mindedness and tenacity.

**British Muslims recognise the significant role that some churches are playing in enhancing community relations, offering some Muslims refugees and asylum seekers safe sanctuaries - providing food and shelter - thereby living true to the commandment of Prophet Isa (Jesus) PBUH: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12).**

Religiously motivated violence must be fought together and with passion. The fanatics, whether at home or abroad, must be brought to justice, but that can only be done if people of multi-beliefs are united against them. Ideologies cannot be simply bombed but they need to be replaced with alternatives. In addition, we must all work harder to ensure that breeding grounds of such terrorists, as well as ideological and monetary sponsors of such extremists, are exposed and dealt with accordingly under the law. People of faith must continue to defend the faith and liberties of each other. The cycle of hate and counter-hate, violence and counter-violence needs breaking. We must act as our Brother's keeper and put into reality the principle of "love thy neighbour", preached by both Prophet Isa and Muhammad (peace be upon both of them). This is the only way that we can restrain the terrorists' destroying the peace and harmony amongst the creation of God.

**The memory of all innocent lives lost, throughout the globe, instils in me the courage of peace, the strength to persevere, the hope for a more respectful and peaceful coexistence in 2016 and beyond.**

The Leeds Big Bookend Festival First World War writing competition winning poem (third place) by **Emma Madden**



**In 2015, LCI was a partner in the Leeds Big Bookend Festival's WWI writing competition for children.** The competition, also in partnership with *Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Beauty* and the *Royal Armouries*, had 135 entries from all over the UK. There were two categories, 7-11 year olds and 12-16 year olds. Author, Susan Burnett was the judge for the 12-16 category, awarding three prizes. This poem by Emma Madden was given third prize. To read the other winning entries, visit <http://www.bigbookend.co.uk/past-festivals/ww1-comp/>

Judge, Susan Burnett said of Emma's winning entry: Superb interpretation of the story – is it a real family? So simple but says so much. I loved it. I re-read it several times to appreciate the language used by the Dovars at different ages - at 16 the language is simpler and a 16 year old would have been impressed by the war. So sad at the end with Daisy Dovar's stanza.

# The Dovar's War

1914

The war men came today  
Shining boots in THE army  
I'll be a hero they say  
Their army, MY army

– Jerald Dovar, age 16

1915

Be a hero they said  
Get shiny boots in THE army  
I'm 19 I said  
17 in THEIR army

– Jerald Dovar, age 17

1916

Training is over  
Time for real war  
Good bye to my Lover  
Daisy Dovar

– Jerald Dovar, age 18

1917

So many killed  
So many lost  
I cannot sleep  
Only turn and toss

– Jerald Dovar, age 19

1918

In no mans land he roamed  
So much he must've seen  
If only he came home  
What a hero he'd have been

– Daisy Dovar, 20



# #Passion4Leeds

Imagine the events of Holy Week happening in Leeds, 2016. It would be all over social media, something like this perhaps...

Passion4Leeds from The Leeds Church Institute, Network Leeds and LCCT



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Mar 30  
BREAKING NEWS - Satirist and corruption whistleblower J3SUS coming to Leeds to take part in historic televised debate.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
Heading to my job centre appointment, wish me luck.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
The bus is late, the traffic's terrible on the Otley Road today, never seen it this bad before.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
This is strange, there's a crowd, and palmleaves all over the floor.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
Stupid autocorrect, not palmleaves "there's pamphlets all over the floor."



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
J3SUS followers were holding up the traffic, some sort of publicity stunt, he was riding into Leeds on this 'donkey'.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
The news say J3SUS is here for the TV debate, talking about the Just Use of Detainment and Surveillance act.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 30  
J3SUS stunt made me late for my job centre appointment.  
#Sanctioned #nofunny

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 31  
Kevin's not happy about me getting sanctioned, I'm staying in his spare room til I get sorted. He wants to know when I'm moving out.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 31  
My cupboard's almost bare, no benefits, Kevin wants me to move out, going to one stop for advice

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1  
Watching the Leeds debate.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1  
Oliver Banks, Law&OrderParty: "J3SUS stands against everything, but doesn't stand for anything"



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Mar 31

**BREAKING NEWS - J3SUS says "God's own Country should be a place of sanctuary for all nations".**



**Tom Lusty** @TomLusty1 · Apr 1

@leeds4passion Yes, of all places God's own country would be the best place for people needing sanctuary



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

@TomLusty1 Didn't J3SUS come here after leaking government secrets in his home country? If he's not careful he'll get sent back again.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

Question from the audience, why has the government spent £30 million on the Just Use of Decryption And Surveillance act...

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

Question from the audience (continued) ...couldn't this money have been better used for those living in poverty.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

What does J3SUS stand for? "I'm good news for the poor, prisoners, the disabled, the persecuted and those in debt"

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

Law&OrderMP: J3SUS is a criminal, he associates with known cyber terrorists, Simon a member of the hacktivist group known as the Zealots.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

J3SUS 2 Law&Order MP "He is a whitewashed tomb, all friendly smiles on the outside, but inside there's nothing but death and decay."

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

"His party tie up unbearable burdens and lay them on people's shoulders, but they won't lift a finger to remove them."

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 1

Law&Order MP says J3SUS has a 'God Complex'



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Mar 31

**BREAKING NEWS - J3SUS throws chair at MP from Law&Order Party before turning over table in TV debate.**



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Mar 31

MP Oliver Banks, Law&OrderParty, says J3SUS should never have been allowed on TV debate, demands his deportation.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 31

Looks like J3SUS is even more of a trouble maker than I thought

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Mar 31

One stop gave me food bank vouchers.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

You won't believe who's at the foodbank, J3SUS and his followers. I can't avoid him.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

They're putting on a meal for everyone who comes in, J3SUS says "everyone is welcome at his table."



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

"Do this in remembrance of me"



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

Levi used to work in a bank till he met J3SUS, now he volunteers for the food Bank

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

Pete, one of J3SUS' friends says if I ever need help I should give them a call. Maybe I misjudged them.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

Got home to find the locks changed, and my bags on the step. Kevin has kicked me out.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

Eventually Kevin answered my calls, he says I should stop living off other people's charity. Could anyone give me a sofa for the night?



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Apr 2

**BREAKING NEWS - MP's vote in favour of controversial Just Use Of Detainment And Surveillance act.**



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

Just got a call from Pete, one of J3SUS friends, offering to help me out, going to meet them at Park Square.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

In Park Square, meeting J3SUS' followers

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2

Something's not right, everyone's on edge. J3SUS is just praying on his own.







**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 2  
They're saying J3SUS is a terrorist.



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Apr 2  
BREAKING NEWS - J3SUS detained under section 2 of the Just Use Detainment And Surveillance act.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 3  
Heading to the courts with Pete, one of J3SUS' followers



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Apr 3  
THE SCRIBE POLL: 85% of scribe readers say "Deport Him"!



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 3  
Pete says J3SUS' been charged with 'terrorist offences', he's being taken for interrogation.



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Apr 3  
BREAKING NEWS - Prosecution say that J3SUS planned to destroy government buildings to wipe out public debt.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 3  
The News says that J3SUS was planning to blow up government buildings...

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 3  
Pete says they're misquoting him, using his words against him. IDK, but it doesn't sound like the J3SUS I met.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 3  
We just got a call, somethings happened to J3SUS, but people are saying different things, no-one knows what's going on.



**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Apr 3  
BREAKING NEWS - J3SUS has died during "enhanced interrogation".

**Scribe Breaking News** @ScribeBreaking · Apr 3  
BREAKING NEWS - Reports at the scene are that J3SUS died of asphyxiation



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 3  
It's all over the news, they tortured J3SUS to death

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 4  
Spent the whole night outside the courthouse, Pete's gone now, a reporter recognised him and he walked off saying "I never knew him"



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 4  
The place where J3SUS' followers were staying is empty. No sign of them anywhere

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 4  
I'm going to need to find somewhere to stay soon, I can't spend another night on the streets.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 4  
Begging for the first time. #rockbottom I don't know what else to do

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 5  
Picked up by @LdsStreetAngels, who walked me to St George's Crypt. #ashamed

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 5  
Me and another guy have been sent over to a cafe on the York Road there's someone there who can help us out.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 5  
Message from Pete, One of their friends Mary was taken to identify J3SUS' body, but morgue was empty. He says she sounds hysterical.

**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 5  
Stranger met us on the way, says his house has plenty of spare rooms.



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 5  
Eating sandwiches at cafe, courtesy of our strange new friend. #generosity



**Matt (Passion4Leeds)** @MattP4L · Apr 5  
OMG it's him! #J3SUSisAlive!



# A moral pathway to a sustainable city

**Revd George Otieno**, an Anglican priest from Tanzania and PhD student in Leeds, writes about the Genesis account in light of the current ecological crisis.

Perhaps my title, “A moral pathway to a sustainable city” may seem an odd one, but I am concerned to invite you to join me in thinking about what such an odd title may mean as opposed to what we already know about pathway to sustainability. To do that, my reflection consists of two basic claims and one suggestion. I have claimed that (1) we are currently in a state of disorder, and (2) one of the problems has been misinterpretation of our “ordered” place in creation as described in the book of Genesis. In order to reclaim that vital sense of the divine order, I suggest, instead, that we need to revise our understanding, we need to love nature and her generous produce as well as work and act morally.

Reading Genesis 1-3 from an ecological perspective may be irritating, but it can lead us to see the ultimate power of God above everything and a foundation for ecological spirituality. In it, we are shown the divine act of origination accomplished without any pre-existent matter and qualified by nothing external to God’s freedom. From this divine act, we have been placed in an ordered reality or put the other way round, we see the systematic principle of sustainability.

When the order of creation is viewed from the present day, at a time of ecological predicament, we clearly need to find a way of discovering God’s given pathway to moral consciousness and ecological sustainability. Ecological pathway is discovered not created and as city-based Christians we are called to discern and discover sustainable lifestyle. For that, I suppose, is the unsurpassed model of being and remaining sustainable city. With all we are, we must remind ourselves that God’s creation is reliant and finite. Moreover, that creation stands in continuing relationship with God. Therefore, our overall duty is to make our ecology of mind, heart and body compliant to divine ecology revealed to the whole world through God’s gracious act of creation and incarnation (link Genesis 1 and John 3:16).

In the beginning, God created everything from nothing. Creation is independent of our presence here be it in cities or wilderness and our ability to perceive it (Job 38:25-27, 39:13-18). Within the six days of creation, God formed the world and the earth (day 1), the sky and the environment (day 2), dry land and all plant life (day 3), the stars and heavenly bodies including the sun and moon (day 4), birds and water creatures (day 5), and all the animals and humans (day 6). Although the place of “Humanity” has been over-emphasized throughout Christian history, a reading of Genesis reminds us that, humanity was formed last in the order of creation. But this order of creation was not without divine purpose, which I believe was to be given an obligation to safeguard the integrity of her elder sister—“Earth” and all therein. This is also true for the Psalms, for instance Psalms 104.

Many contemporary theologians are uncomfortable with the classical biblical doctrines of creation in the light of the en-

vironmental crisis. For instance, Alister McGrath argues that abuse of the natural order can be seen to be rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition according to which the human creature is granted the role of subduing the earth. The mandate to subdue the earth is interpreted as giving a license for exploitative practice towards the rest of creation. Such interpretation of the text may have paved a way to modern mechanical understandings of the world and of dishonoring nature as mindless object without wellbeing. From such incorrect hermeneutics grew the violent attitude against non-human creatures regarding them as non-spiritual and therefore having no ends beyond serving human desire. Such notions and misconceptions regarding nature are dangerous to environmental conservation and development.

Because of such classical understandings of the biblical doctrine of creation and the consequence of natural devastation, a renewed biblical and moral pathway to ecological sustainability is needed. One of them, I suggest, should be, rediscovering God through the natural world. Genesis 1:12, gives an account of the plants falling into two categories, small plants and trees. In 1:24 land animals fall into three categories livestock (domesticable), creeping things (small creepy-crawlies such as mice, lizards and spiders), and the beasts of the earth (larger wild animals). The earth is crowded and we can imagine how the earth brought forth vegetation, and animals appeared in their respective environments. It is true beyond reasonable doubt that, we who live in the city are the most beneficiaries of these ecological decorations. What would it look like if we were, for instance, in a city without, great walls, good infrastructure, shopping malls or supermarkets with our favorite variety of foods? No doubt that would be chaotic and disastrous! But putting the question the other way round, have you have thought about how will it look to successive generations if they come to live in a city without similar choices? God has all this understanding in mind when he ordered Adam and Eve to safeguard the integrity and sustainability of the creation for an equal benefit among the generations of humanity. This striking ecological truth, calls both individuals and the city church in general to reinvigorate their ecological spirituality.

The terms create and make are used many times in Genesis 1-3. Biblical scholars note that the verb “to create” (*bara*) appears in Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3-4. The verb “to make” (*asa*), all with God as subject appears in Genesis 1:7, 16, 25, 26, 31; 2:4, (and in 2:2, 3 as to do). They often denote the same activity as we can see further the way that Genesis 1:26 (“to make”) is probably paraphrased in Genesis 1:27 (“create”). Generally speaking, to create is to make and to make is to create as well. However, Collins, argues that the term create is used in the passage to stress that the product is some kind of fresh start, hence came out of nothing. Even the sea creatures (1:21) were new in the sense that they are first of what creation account calls “living creatures” and human-



kind (1:27) is a fresh start because we are created after God's image which is unique.

To follow from this, if to make is to work for, not to create from nothing, how, as we follow God's example, can we make a city sustainable? It is surely not simply the work to produce material affluence, technological availability to enhance everyone's consuming existence but effective moral accountability, adopting sustainable lifestyle that honour God and innocent wildlife while embracing unconditional relationship with the Creator of all things including yourself. This goes back to the understanding of the sustainability of life in creation in the Genesis account.

The book of Genesis provides a constructive ecosystem framework for how the world begins and has progressed over the past eras as well as the primary obligations entrusted to humanity for ecological sustainability. It signposts the moral path and roles that human beings had to carry on both in city and afield. The six days of creation in this passage are symbolic calling upon all humanity of every walk to continuous moral accountability to and evaluation of our work and deeds in the light of ecological integrity, ecological sustainability, and above all in submitting our wellbeing to God's Son Jesus Christ through whom everything was created and in whom every creature is sustained. I submit that all our initiatives, innovations and professions are intrinsically connected with nature, thus looking after nature is everyone's responsibility.

## Face to Face with Arthur's Call

**Stroma McDermott** reflects on Revd Prof Frances Young's Hook Lecture at Leeds Minster.

This year's Hook lecture at Leeds Minster by Professor Frances Young provided a moving but theologically rich glimpse of Young's journey of faith in the face of her eldest son's severe learning difficulty. Young reflected on the deeper truths she had learnt about the Christian faith and especially on her on-going exploration of both her own and Arthur's vocations, reflected in her latest book 'Arthur's Call'.

Young's journey with Arthur from 'buggy to wheelchair' deals honestly with the emotional, physical and spiritual reality that she, her family and Arthur faced; from the questions of why and her sense of bereavement, to the recognition things won't be normal, through to acceptance and then onto rejoicing at the wonder and gift of Arthur's life. It is certainly worth listening to again through the LCI website. In particular I was struck by what she describes as a 'momentary but breakthrough moment' where after wrestling with how she could continue to believe in a good creator God when children are being born who will have 'limited' development the flash of a thought came to her "but it doesn't make any difference to me whether you believe in my reality or not". Young described this as 'God is God and God just is' and reflects what both Scripture and the Catholic traditions note, that we do not discover God, he comes and finds us, confronts us even, and we are brought face to face with his reality; the mystery and complexity of prevenient grace.

Strangely, I found myself being drawn into such an encounter. Throughout the evening Young illustrated her talk with photos, primarily of Arthur and her, and nearly always of their faces; and it was the face of Arthur that called to me. The idea of encountering God through the Face has a long history within the Judeo-Christian tradition. From the Spirit of God brooding over the face of the Deep to the place where Jacob

wrestled with God being called Penuel, 'Face of God' (Genesis 32:22-32), to the Psalmist seeking God's face as blessing;

**"May God be gracious to us and bless us,  
and make his face to shine upon us"  
(Ps.67:1).**

Perhaps the fullest expression of all comes in the Incarnation of Christ, as humanity could literally look God in the face and the use of icons has for millennia continued to allow many to come before the face of Jesus in a way that is both mysterious and holy. Yet the tradition of the face has also understood that the face of man has its own sacramental quality, a re-working of the Augustinian formulation suggests the face "is an outward and visible sign of an inner spiritual grace." Emmanuel Levinas, the great philosopher, suggested transcendence breaks into our lives when we take responsibility for our fellow human beings,

**"responsibility as a response to the  
imperative of gratuitous love which comes  
to me in the face of another."**

In her book, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz*, Professor Melissa Raphael countered a prevailing view of God's absence in such a place by arguing that in the day to day accounts and memoirs of women encamped there the face and presence of God was revealed as women slowly turned their faces to one another and allowed the dignity of humanity to be retained in their recognition and acts of kindness to one another. Nicholas of Cusa wrote of the mystery of such encounter "in all faces is seen the face of faces, veiled and in a riddle". As I watched the slideshow backdrop God's presence was reflected as Arthur's face mirrored God's love to us. Arthur as icon, sign and riddle.

That disability is a prophetic sign and riddle for society is something Young encourages us to note as we re-read and re-imagine the gospels. In the story of Lazarus (John 11), Lazarus lives with his sisters but Scripture notes it is Martha and Mary's house, an unusual anomaly since the usual economic rights would belong to the brother. Young posed a question, could Lazarus be someone with a learning disability? It would certainly create extra special resonance about his relationship with Jesus but would it change the miracle? Young believes it would especially since it would suggest Jesus values Lazarus enough to bring him back into his existing bodily form. Many have argued when God chose to incarnate Himself in the person of Jesus his attitude towards disabled people was quite revolutionary in His day, and if we're honest, in our day too. Joni Eareckson Tada, herself a quadriplegic, once observed:

**"Our Saviour chose to flash His credentials as Messiah through ministry to disabled people.... A disability magnifies God's grace.... We in our wheelchairs get to prove how great and how trustworthy God is."**

Amos Yong who has written quite challengingly on the theology of disability argues people with intellectual disability are often seen to represent the foolishness of the world but what hinders them as embodying the wisdom of God? Yet the reality is that society's relationship with disability remains complex. In their recent survey, Scope found that 67% of people felt uncomfortable talking to disabled people and recent scientific developments have led to the introduction of a new blood screening test for Down's Syndrome and many campaigners warn of the risk of 'extinction' of children with Down's, that they will become 'faceless' on the Earth.

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York there is a painting called The Adoration of the Christ Child, by a 16th C Flemish artist. What stands out in this Nativity scene are two figures around the crib, an angel and a shepherd who appear to have Down's Syndrome, the implication being that the artist sees those with Down's as both beautiful and witness. Young also introduced us to an iconography she had commissioned about Lazarus. Within the icon there is an implicit circle into which the figures are framed, reminding us we are all held within God. Lazarus is depicted as a man with learning disabilities, small and in swaddling bands and in a wheelchair, which is based on Elijah's chariot; as a prophetic figure. Young identifies with the women in the picture who are weeping since she was grieving at losing Arthur to residential care, but she reminded us there was hope. Whilst the women in the picture weep they cannot see what Jesus is doing behind their backs, nor could Young who released Arthur into the lives of his carers and into the extension of his call.

Perhaps our call in this age is to take the vocation of all Arthurs seriously. I like the words of John Swinton,

**"Inclusion is simply not enough. To include people in society is just to have them there. There is a big difference between inclusion and belonging. To belong, you have to be missed. People need to long for you, to want you to be there. When you're not there, they should go looking for you."**

Let us go looking, and let us see face to face our differently abled brothers and sisters in all their prophetic glory; that is the gospel.



**The Leeds Church Institute is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers life long learning through events, publications & social media.**



[www.facebook.com/LCILeeds](http://www.facebook.com/LCILeeds)



[www.twitter.com/LCILeeds](http://www.twitter.com/LCILeeds)

Email: [events@leedschurchinstitute.org](mailto:events@leedschurchinstitute.org)

Phone: 0113 391 7928

Address: 20 New Market Street, Leeds, LS1 6DG

**For more articles, and information about events, visit [www.LCILeeds.org](http://www.LCILeeds.org)**

Images:

Shutterstock.com images: Leeds Bridge - Alistair Wallace, Front cover - Arthur Linnik, Piggy Bank on Deckchair - Andrey Popov, Gun - Merkushev Vasilii, WW1 illustration - KUCO, Poppies background - MarkMirror  
Passion4Leeds Pictures - Lawrence Cockrill & Network Leeds, Leeds Floods - Jon Dorsett, Makkah Mosque - Raj Passy