

CITYtheology

The magazine of the Leeds Church Institute

Spring 2020
Issue 21

A word with misunderstandings
While a child is exploited
Apathetic to the truth
Are we connected to the future
It's all fair game with the world
People get bought like slaves
Scapegoat asylum seekers
People want an opinion
Don't spend your time on earth without purpose
The addictive fiction of capitalism isn't worth it
My spirit is free on God, so we can freestyle verses
But citizens will judge you by the products you purchase
Now even the homeless are hidden
Can you see the contraction in the "United Kingdom"
Anonymous money's making unanimous decisions
Spending our materials to feed your raw materials
Fat cats withhold facts, win the rat race
But you know they're still a rat, not some kind of saint
It's like they lost their soul in a decimal place
Mistaking acquaintances for their sons and heirs, and grace

"To bring about the better future we hope for, we need poets, prophets and protestors to inspire us, speak truth to power and call us to action."

Dr Helen Reid,
Director of Leeds Church Institute introduces A Leeds Poetry Anthology published by LCI and Yaffle Press on the first evening of the Leeds Lit Fest 2020.



More Than Just Shelter?

Leo Joslin invites us to rediscover Christian hospitality that challenges society.

A Good Death: Revd. Tom Lusty reflects on ministry spent as a full-time hospice chaplain in the context of Covid-19

Come the Revolution: poetry by Testament

Taking in the whole picture: witnessing to God's love in schools



And the Stones Fell Open

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Yaffle Press that was
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Lit Fest 2020.**

At Leeds Church Institute we talk about seeking and finding the treasure that is in Leeds and this poetry anthology certainly counts as treasure. It speaks of hope and passion, artistry and hard work, community self belief and honesty. It seeks a better and more inclusive future for all the people of Leeds. It is a delight and it couldn't have been written anywhere else but Leeds. I am grateful to the poets for trusting us with their poems. I hope the anthology affirms them and encourages them to keep writing and sharing spoken words in Leeds and beyond.

It might be a surprise to some that a church institute is a partner in a literary festival and collates a poetry anthology for the city. Since its founding in the 1850s, however, Leeds Church Institute has had the aim of supporting education in the city, both religious and secular, and for this to include a role for the arts. That is why the anthology is so important to LCI as well as the poets.

The story of the anthology began at last year's Hook Lecture given by Canon Mark Oakley. The premise of the lecture was that, to bring about the better future we hope for, we need poets, prophets and protestors to inspire us, speak truth to power and call us to action. The action LCI planned was a poetry anthology and we are grateful to Mark for supporting us in this and for writing the preface.

Playwright and lyricist, Testament, spoke after Mark's lecture and lit up the Minster with his spoken word performance of *Come the Revolution*, which you can read in this edition of CITYtheology. On the night, Testament encouraged us all, those present and the people of Leeds more widely, to believe in ourselves as poets, that we can use language for good, and that we should submit poems to the anthology.

The call out was supported by poetry workshops led by Hannah Stone and Khadijah Ibrahim. It is wonderful that 120 poems were submitted for consideration. Editor Ian Harker read and appreciated each poem and selected 45 that would work together to express and explore the theme of protest and prophecy in Leeds. The bringing together of the anthology was a team effort and Miriam O'Keeffe, LCI Administrator, coordinated the work.



On the night of the call out for poems, Testament was nervous before he spoke. I felt a little surprised as he isn't new to performance. Of course, I shouldn't have been surprised because poetry and the spoken word matters so much to him. It matters at a deep level to poets and those who appreciate poetry alike, or else, why bother?

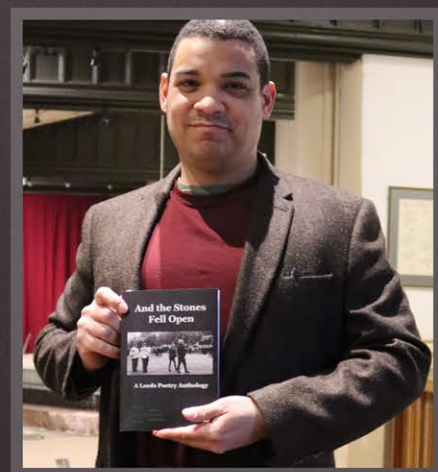
At the launch of the Leeds Lit Fest in February, Peepal Press writers shared their poetry. It was a vibrant event and one poem that stood out for me was when Malyka Booker read some stanzas from a poem about a Caribbean mother's grief at losing her son in World War One. The words drew me in and I felt shaken to the core.

At poetry events, poets and their listeners are sharing the same essential experience. This experience is based in a feeling that the present moment really matters because the poems put into words thoughts and feelings that cannot otherwise be accessed. That is why it was important to hold a launch event for the anthology where we heard some of the poets read their poems and talk about their inspiration.

I spoke at the end of the poetry anthology launch event and chose to close with a short reading from a book by Marian Partington called *If You Sit Very Still*. There are poems in the book and some of the prose is poetic. Marian tells the story of her journey to forgiveness and breaking the spiral of violence and retribution. Her sister Lucy was missing for 21 years, and then it was discovered that she had been abducted and murdered by Fred and Rosemary West. In her journey, Marian draws on the Quaker and Buddhist traditions, and she has sought to learn to write so that she can share her story with others. While her life's work has been for her sister and to seek a better future for her children, her writing transforms the personal into a wider benefit. Her reflection on the power of words will, I believe, resonate with poets, prophets and protestors in Leeds.

"Words couldn't save your life, Lucy, but they are enlarging the place of your aspirations now. Words are close to eternity, travelling across decades, centuries, embodying and evoking fresh meanings, but also resisting the vastness of what is left when words leave. But they have to be found, to crack open that impotent place where not to speak, not to try and find words, seals out life. Words can create, can well up from, an orbit of love."

And that is why the poets, prophets and protestors of Leeds need to keep writing, keep reading and keep attending poetry events.



Come the Revolution

By Testament

**And the Stones Fell
Open. A Leeds Poetry
Anthology published
by LCI and Yaffle Press.**

Don't spend your time on earth without purpose
The addictive fiction of capitalism isn't worth it
My spirit's free on God, so we can freestyle verses
But citizens will judge you by the products you purchase

Hypodermics turning children with a shot in their arm
Light pollution fools the hooligans lost in the dark
They sing "We shall never be slaves" are you sure you aren't?
'cause a chain can be wages paying off your credit cards and overdrafts

Now even the homeless are hidden
Can you see the contraction in the "United Kingdom"?
Anonymous money's making unanimous decisions
Stealing raw materials to feed your raw materialism

Listen, let me explain the enigma
Now the only thing we demonstrate is we're ignorant
So called progress suppressed the real predicament
I look at the sky and find it's all gone digital

Fat cats withhold facts, win the rat race
But you know they're still a rat, not some kind of saint
It's like they lost their soul in a decimal place
Mistaking acquaintances for their sons and heirs, and grace is

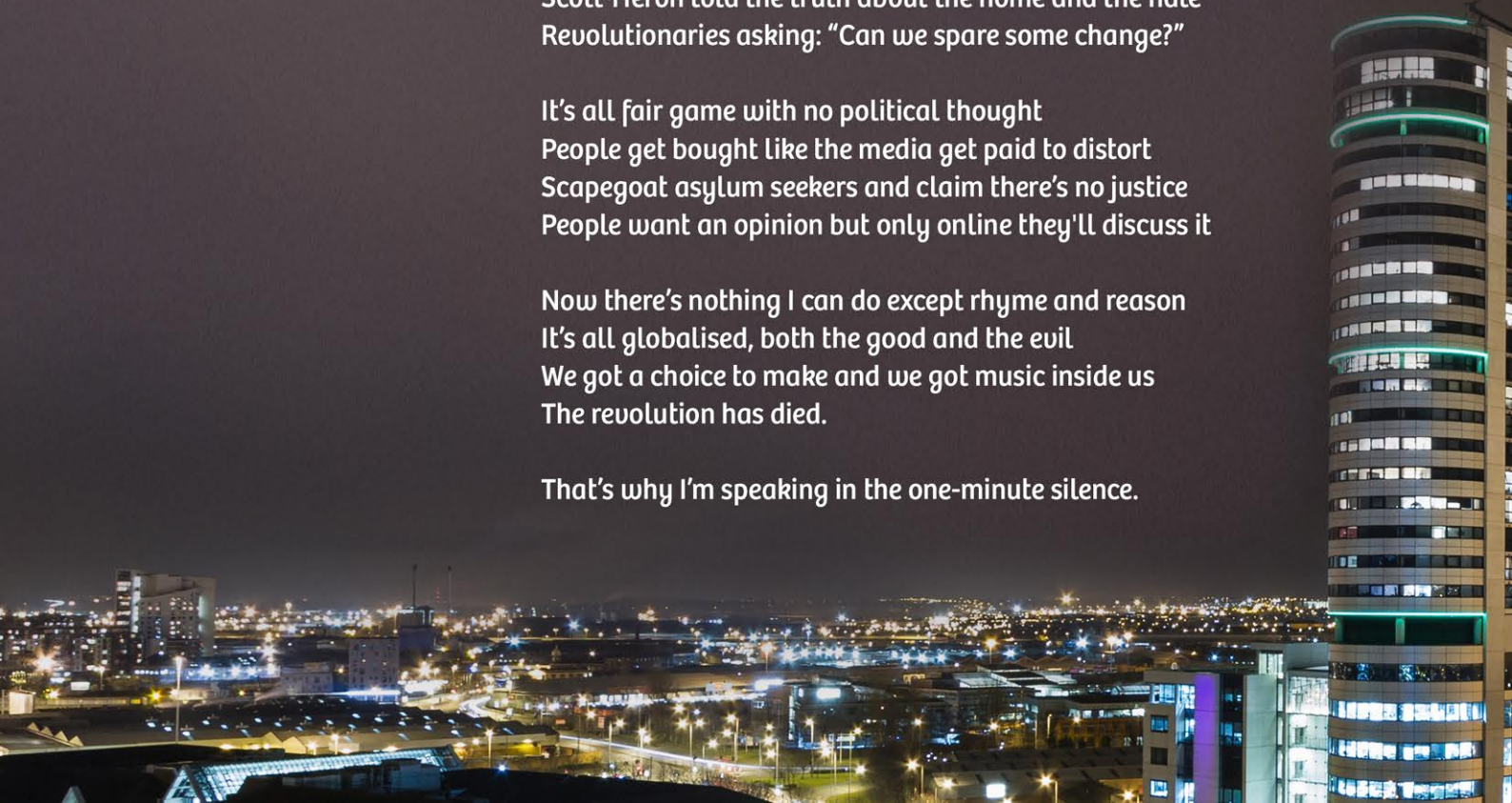
A word with misunderstood usage
While a child is exploited a world away from which live
Apathetic to the truth of what the future is
Are we connected to the truth of what the future is?

We got a third world mentality in a 'first world' state
We got time on our hands, it leaves a blood red stain
Scott-Heron told the truth about the home and the hate
Revolutionaries asking: "Can we spare some change?"


It's all fair game with no political thought
People get bought like the media get paid to distort
Scapegoat asylum seekers and claim there's no justice
People want an opinion but only online they'll discuss it

Now there's nothing I can do except rhyme and reason
It's all globalised, both the good and the evil
We got a choice to make and we got music inside us
The revolution has died.

That's why I'm speaking in the one-minute silence.



A Good Death



Revd. Tom Lusty, LCI member and Vicar at St Giles, Bramhope reflects on ministry spent as a full-time hospice chaplain in the context of Covid-19.

At a Lent lunch I was once given the remit, “Jesus: Anguished and forsaken”. Unfortunately the publicity went out as “Revd Tom Lusty, Chaplain at Wheatfields Hospice: Anguished and forsaken”. The thing about death is that it can be associated with anguish and forsakenness, something that one would rather avoid if at all possible.

Given the five years I spent inhabiting a hospice on a more or less daily basis I now know that death isn’t all that bad. It can sometimes be protracted and exhausting for all concerned. But even in such circumstances a good death is possible. With a good death there is a tangible sense of completeness, of dying with integrity.

To be honest I did not spend a great deal of time talking about death at the hospice beyond using euphemisms for it. For some of the nurses heaven was their euphemism of choice for death: “Gladys has gone to heaven now – God help them all up there”. I did speak, however, about my Christian faith when invited to do so, and the opportunities that came my way to speak about resurrection hope were considerable.

Within our tiny specialist world hospice chaplains have developed a repertoire of material that enables people to prepare spiritually for their own dying. Three resources that were and remain helpful to me are *Mud and Stars*, which gave me the theology, Tom Gordon’s *A Need for Living* which gave me the metaphors, and John O’Donohue’s *Benedictus* which gave me everything else: when there is nothing else you can do, you can always bless. That is a powerful thing to be left with – if you can bless sublimely, even better.

Dying is not about so much anguish and forsakenness. A good death is a movement towards integration – from “dislocation to relocation, from disorientation to re-orientation, from disintegration to re-integration” as *Mud and Stars* puts it. Part of a wider crucifixion/resurrection dynamic where we are always on the lookout for resurrection.

The cover photo of a book by Tom Gordon entitled *New Journeys Now Begin* depicts the access path to north beach on the Island of Iona. The inscription reads “No bikes beyond this point”. For each of us there will come a point where we have to relinquish the bike to go on the next stage of the journey. Getting off the bike can be painful because we get used to cycling everywhere. The more in life we can put the bike down and enjoy the view, the better

prepared we will be for that moment in life when we will each have to “say goodbye to the bike”, as it were. This is a metaphor. A metaphor for resurrection.

As well as using metaphors a lot a group of hospice chaplains adopted a mnemonic as a helpful way into conversations about dying. The HEALER model goes like this:

H is for **Hope** – what takes people in a trajectory away from despair.

E is for **Exploring Feelings** – encouraging people to articulate their feelings.

A is for **Adjustment to Loss** – exploring how significant loss is transcended.

L is **Looking Back** – doing a life review: anything significant left unresolved?

The E and the R stand for **Existential** and **Religious** issues – some people are terrified of death for reasons that go beyond fear of the physical process of dying. I put that under ‘Existential’. Religion comes last of all. That is healthy because it says not all our needs are religious ones. We may choose to express our grounds for hope in religious terms but never exclusively so.

The HEALER mnemonic provides us with six different prompts as a helpful way into a conversation about dying. These prompts are not to be tackled exhaustively in chronological order

(imagine how awful that would be) but rather as a means of focussing on some of the ways in which the conversation might go.

Given that Easter this year coincides with the beginning of the six to eight week peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK, using prompts from this mnemonic might be helpful during that time if we wanted to reflect on our own mortality. Devoting a little space to reflect on our own dying (say ten minutes, once a week) will certainly make us more open to engage with others who may be starting out on the process of the end of life’s journey.

When someone asks “what hymns are you having for your funeral?” a closed response “goodness, I have never thought of that” may not always be adequate. A more open-ended, personal response to the question might well allow the questioner to fulfil a need to talk openly about death.

In any Christian model of spiritual preparation for dying you can’t leave out the letting go ...and the leaping. John O’Donohue describes the daily handing over of one’s life as the act of awakening and surrender. The possibility of this daily practising of such a hand over, however we may choose to do it, of our lives into the life of God may well be what makes us most Christ-like.

“Each morning we awaken to the light... each night we surrender to the dark... Awakening and surrender: they frame each day and each life; between them the journey where anything can happen.” John O’Donoghue, Anam Cara

The HEAL(ER) mnemonic was devised by Revd Linda Elliott, at one time Chaplain at Thorpe Hall Hospice in Peterborough.

Suggested Readings:

Mud and Stars: The Report of a Working Party on the impact of Hospice Experience on the Church’s Ministry of Healing

Tom Gordon, *A Need for Living: Signposts on the Journey of Life and Beyond*

John O’Donohue, *Benedictus: A Book of Blessings* and *Anam Cara*





More Than Just Shelter? Rediscovering Christian Hospitality That Challenges

By Leo Joslin, Masters Student in Theology and Assistant at
Leeds Church Institute

Thinking about hospitality today normally conjures images of Hiltons or Travelodges, hosting friends from different cities visiting for a weekend, or maybe even inviting the neighbours round for supper. Christine Pohl, in her book *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, instead seeks the Christian ethos behind hospitality. She aims to promote the recovery of a practice that once played an important part in living a Christian life and reclaim the meaning of the word from its modern, commercialised bonds.

Pohl's text was the subject of a book club I took part in at a church in northeast Leeds during the same week it was hosting the West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network's (WYDAN) night shelter. Working with WYDAN, the church and its congregation welcomed asylum seekers in need into their building every night for a week in February, cooking, eating together, offering a listening ear and somewhere to sleep.

During our meeting, we could see through a glass door into the night shelter in the adjacent hall where an example of Christian hospitality was manifesting itself in Leeds. This made it obvious how a vision of a hospitality adapted for modernity offers a fresh challenge. There was a clear challenge to us as individuals to use and embrace this practice in order to resist a society that has reduced itself into cut-off and isolated factions and is therefore unfit to answer the rising number of those in need of hospitality.

Especially when the larger society disregards and dishonours certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves.

One of the most striking ways of understanding a modern adaptation of hospitality is in its potential for use as a way of resisting a society that has come to view certain members in need as unworthy of support. For those of us in more privileged positions, opening up ourselves to those in need and offering hospitality can act as a powerful statement against norms of excluding people based on their social standing or perceived inferiority. When more socially recognised

people offer hospitality to those in need who are not valued by society, it is a method of making them visible in a way that affirms their belonging and equalness within a community. By extending our hospitality beyond that of close family and friends, we can better mimic the universal welcome of God, seeing all as deserving of necessary help, regardless of place within society.

As created by God, we are all equal. By offering hospitality to those that other members of society may see as unworthy or beneath them, we can enact that belief in equality and start to break down the barriers and divisions within our community. We can attempt to overcome and dismantle the social hierarchies that are so prevalent and hold a disproportionate amount of importance.

Of course, to be in a position of resistance to society, we must first separate ourselves from its understandings of power, status, and possessions. Rediscovering hospitality offers no challenge to social norms of hierarchy and exclusion if we first do not abandon them ourselves. Pohl says hosts need to be on the margins of society themselves. To avoid creating an environment of hospitality that inadvertently conforms to the structures of power that hospitality resists, the host needs to marginalise themselves. A few of the ways we can do this is by campaigning on issues of social justice, carefully considering how we speak about those who are marginalised and focussing our consumer power on necessities and fairly produced goods and services. With the host positioned on the margins, yet still connected to the larger society with the aim of reforming it, a genuine model of hospitality away from damaging social norms of exclusion and hierarchy is offered.

More than anywhere else, when we gather as church our practice of hospitality should reflect God's gracious welcome.

Of course, rediscovering the ancient practice of hospitality in a modern city like Leeds raises problems to overcome. Today, most of our lives are spent away from the home: the household can no longer operate as the hub of hospitality that it was in antiquity. There may also be significant risks in welcoming strangers into our lives, risks we may view as not worth exposing our family and friends to for the sake of hospitality. Pohl recognises these hurdles and models her view of hospitality as one rooted in a sense of community.

Churches, especially those with a strong sense of membership and togetherness, can prove the most useful of grounds for tackling the lack of hospitality we find in modernity. By inviting those excluded from the norms of society into a strong community, we are inviting them into a relationship with a more complete aspect of society, a group of hosts rather than a singular person. This community approach also allows us to better manage the difficulties of modern hospitality: with our lives so often stretched by work and other commitments, doing hospitality as a community spreads the strain it can cause, freeing individuals to contribute as much as they can, without feeling the pressure to provide beyond their means. A community also better allows us to welcome those with more significant needs like disabilities or addiction, and to create an environment of care less dependent on the abilities of individuals.

By creating communities, the stress and personal risk of hospitality is mitigated. Hospitality should be a lifelong practice, but an intense engagement with it can prove counter-productive and subject the host to burnout. Community hospitality, and the reduction of pressure placed on the individual to provide, makes hospitality more sustainable, and not only forms a more nurturing environment for the recipient, but also the host.

Hospitality has depended on recognising our commonalities rather than our differences, seeing strangers as neighbours, brothers, and sisters.

The point of this re-imaging of and appeal to a Christian hospitality that has largely become removed from the lives of many goes beyond the simple act of physical welcome. By embracing the ethos of hospitality, it can help us examine the whole of our lives differently, and we extend our perspective beyond those instances of hosting those in need. Central to such an emphasis on hospitality is Matthew 25:35, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." This goes beyond the mere physical aspect of a welcome to a stranger to be something that seeps into our everyday interactions. Hospitality should cast its influence in every sphere of our lives, and challenge us to focus on the wellbeing and needs of others in everything we do.

True hospitality should not be seen as an interruption to our lives. It challenges us to embrace the emotion behind hospitality universally and integrate it into everyday interactions. Ultimately, the focus of

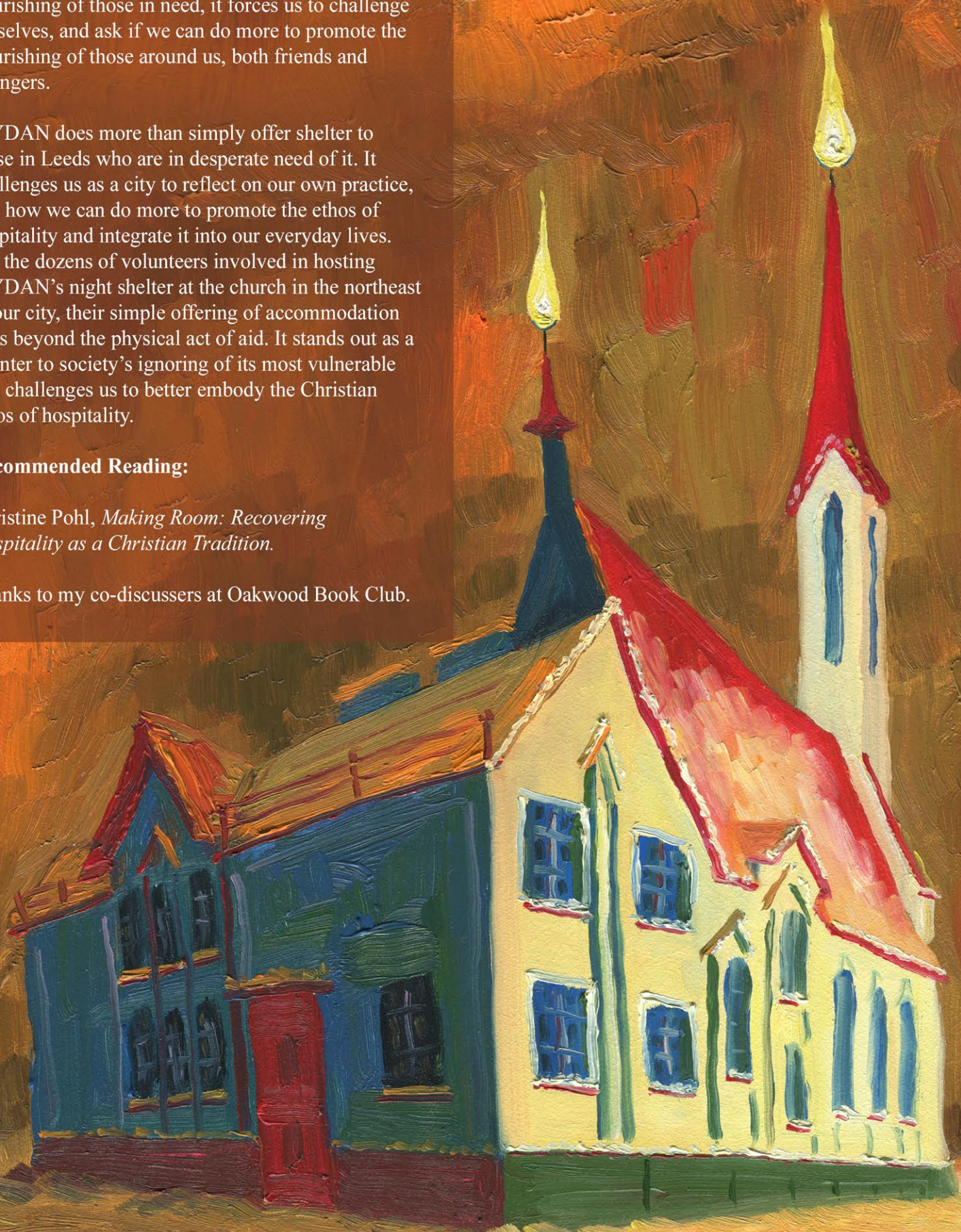
hospitality is not primarily the opening of a building for shelter or the providing of food to the hungry. These are important aspects of it, but the overarching aim is to promote human flourishing. By hospitality challenging us to accept its mission of promoting the flourishing of those in need, it forces us to challenge ourselves, and ask if we can do more to promote the flourishing of those around us, both friends and strangers.

WYDAN does more than simply offer shelter to those in Leeds who are in desperate need of it. It challenges us as a city to reflect on our own practice, and how we can do more to promote the ethos of hospitality and integrate it into our everyday lives. For the dozens of volunteers involved in hosting WYDAN's night shelter at the church in the northeast of our city, their simple offering of accommodation goes beyond the physical act of aid. It stands out as a counter to society's ignoring of its most vulnerable and challenges us to better embody the Christian ethos of hospitality.

Recommended Reading:

Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*.

Thanks to my co-discussers at Oakwood Book Club.



Taking in the whole picture: witnessing to God's love in schools

Ben Lawrence, Team Leader of Leeds Faith in Schools reflects on the essential elements of being a School-based Youth Worker.

Reflection 1: Pressures in Life

I feel that schools are one of the hardest places for young people to exist. There's a lot of pressure through exams, but also through their peers and social media. If we can go into the place where they spend a lot of their time, be there and be a Christian presence, and bring that Gospel message of hope to them, then I think that's really important.



Reflection 2: Personal Faith

In my personal walk of faith the past couple of years, I've massively realised the importance of focussing on building my commitment to my relationship with God.

I've always known it was important to have that focussed and personal relationship, but when you put yourself on the line supporting young people and hearing some really tough stories, it's so important that you have that firm foundation. I have a group of friends from church that I meet up with where we can talk and have accountability, but it's that daily walk of prayer and Bible reading that means I am investing in my relationship with God.



Reflection 3: A Strong Team

Leeds Faith in Schools is blessed with a really great team spirit, so every Monday we have a team meeting where we will pray, read the Bible and worship together.

We have a time of encouragement where each team member says something in the last week that has encouraged them. Quite often, you're off in schools by yourself, and to be able to come back and have that is so important. When you're in a mentoring session with a young person who's going through some horrific stuff, you can feel in a dark place yourself. If you can come back and hear a story of someone who has gone through something similar with a mentee and come out the other side, it gives you encouragement.

Reflection 4: Why Should Young People Care?

John 10:10 is key for all our lives, not just young people's lives, but the idea that "[t]he thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy but I came to give you life, and life to the full" speaks directly to the situation of young people. Quite often young people look at Christianity and see it as rules and regulations, but what God is actually saying is, 'I want to give you a full life'. We work with some of the poorest kids in Leeds and some of the richest. While social and economic challenges have a powerful effect on young people's lives, all do have in common certain problems and stuff that causes them hurt. They all feel lacking. For me, I see hope in Jesus and that's what I want young people to see. I want them to see that God is offering them life and life to the full. Because there's so much brokenness in young people, and I see so much hurt and pain, I have this huge desire to tell them that hope, to tell them that love that God has for them.

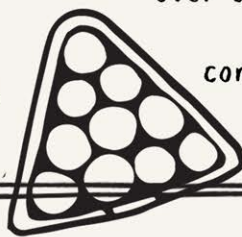
Reflection 6: Schools and Society



The R.E. curriculum is becoming a distant memory in some schools, or they have a curriculum but it's not a specialist subject. The Church as a whole, Christians as a whole, need to be conscious of this. Leeds Faith in Schools has a great opportunity to bring the message of Christianity into schools, but that's something we want to work on with others so it's not just us doing it. We see partnership working at its best where we work with churches or a church leader comes in with us to do assemblies or lunch groups. As Christianity is pushed out, we have a responsibility as Christians to make sure it is not completely eradicated from schools entirely. The more this country becomes secular, the more opportunities there are for Christians to get out there and make a positive impact in society.

Reflection 5: Finding Fun

I lead a lunchtime group and an afterschool group which is just about building relationships and showing young people that there's people that care about them in their lives. I'll never get bored of getting to play pool or table tennis with people. I joke about it but it is really important, because sometimes over that table tennis game you get the best conversations with young people.



Reflection 7: Diverse Environment

The schools we work in are massively multicultural: young people and their families in Leeds have links with many different countries and religions. This means LFIS must make sure that what we're delivering is not going to cause issues for those young people. I think we do quite a good job of getting that balance: we still think it's really important to tell them about Jesus, but at the same time, be respectful of the importance of teachers' and parents' perspectives. Balance is key.

Leeds Church Institute is following the latest advice from the Government to practise 'social distancing' to slow down the spread of the Covid-19 virus. We are committed to engagement in city life and to learning for the benefit of all in these circumstances. As there are restrictions on public gatherings, we are exploring the use of online tools, including more audio and video content and live streaming to ensure we continue our programme of events for life-long learning. We have all moved to home working and are still available on email.

"These challenging times offer us opportunities to explore working in different ways. Christian teaching reminds us that life is precious and fragile, and that we need each other. For the foreseeable future, our aim is to make as much educational content as possible available in simple-to-use formats that encourage engagement and build connections. If anyone isn't confident with the use of technology this requires, we will find ways to support you to access this content."

Institute Director, Dr Helen Reid.



Leeds
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