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“Racism is a sin – and if it is deep in our history and has infiltrated our culture, our society and even our church institutions, then it is something that will affect the whole body of Christ which means the whole body of Christ needs to be actively led in a process of repentance.”

Becky Howcroft shares her reflections and the story of those directly impacted by racism.



Faith and care for creation; the view from Tanzania

Revd Canon Dr George Otieno reflects on colonialism and creation care from his home in Dodoma, Tanzania.

In this edition:

Images from the House of Questions Exhibition hosted at the Church of the Epiphany, Gipton.

Christian and Jewish Charities in Leeds After The First World War: How Did They Respond To Disabled Ex-Servicemen?



Faith and care for creation; the view from Tanzania

Revd Canon Dr George Otieno who was awarded his PhD by the University of Leeds in 2018, sent us this reflection from his home in Dodoma, Tanzania.

Colonialism and Christian mission transformed landscapes and ecologies in places like Tanzania. The expansion of Christianity during the last two centuries has led to extensive economic and cultural transformation with a direct and hugely significant impact on creation and care of creation.

Colonialism marks not only the commencement of the stealing of people's humanity and ecological understanding, but also the separation of their identity and meaning of life from the biosphere that sustains us. It imposed adversarial theologies and politics that changed indigenous ecologies and landscapes of life in ways that are still powerful. African Christian ecology today needs to challenge this as it considers the climatic, vegetational, geographical and other natural factors and our ability and willingness to change the present economic and moral traditions of abundant life.

While some post-colonial Christians have visibly improved their ecological concerns by realigning themselves with Eco-theology, big masses of our mainline churches remain the replica of their colonial culture. The heart of this article is to examine the legacy

of colonial missions and what is being and needs to be done in response to concerns for care of creation today and in the future.

Colonialism in both political and missional forms became and remains arguably inseparable from the history of global environmental change.

It locked disparate human societies together over a wider area than any previous imperial expansion. At the same time, European consumers and manufacturers sucked in resources that were gathered, cut, hunted, fished, mined, and farmed in a great profusion of extractive systems. Natural resources were wrongly seen by colonialists as infinite, and the same misunderstanding was imposed upon the oppressed.

Colonial missions and missionaries were integral to achievement of economic intentions. A clear example here would be Dr David Livingstone, a well-known Victorian missionary to Africa who proposed the mantra of: Civilization, Commerce and Christianity

as the inseparable wings of mission. Livingstone's mantra is popularly known as the 3Cs. Addressing the Senate House in Cambridge in December 1857, Livingstone said:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa: I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it to you.

In British colonial thinking, more intensive utilization of land was often thought of as improvement, progress and civilization.

Such linking of Christianity and commerce implies that Christian spirituality directly supported overutilization of land which has such negative environmental consequences to this day.

This suggests a possible thread of connections between colonial Christian spirituality, consumer cultures and environmental degradation.

Colonialism was also inseparable from the history of global environmental change through increased city living. European cities sought raw materials of all kinds, from timber and furs to rubber and oil. Colonial cities became great conurbations thereby fundamentally changing relationships between people and nature. In Tanzania, the natural resources of minerals and energy were and are extracted by multinational companies while leaving poor communities landless within their ancestral land.

Furthermore, colonialists established plantations that transformed ecologies. Settlers introduced new methods of farming while also displacing indigenous people and their traditional methods of managing the land. Colonial missionaries went around those metropolitan cities and rural areas separating people from their indigenous ecologies of belonging through conversion. Some evangelical preachers preached against the sacred places that were long preserved by the hosting communities and in some places those sacred places are no longer existing as result.

As one writer summed it aptly: All the ecological crises that humanity now faces are grounded in the belief that we are separate: separate from each other, separate from the biosphere that sustains us, separate from the universe that has brought us forth.

The impact of colonial missionary teaching and adversarial colonialism have significantly contributed to escalating forms of disconnections and exploitation of

nature. Since nature was treated as a mindless resource, such capitalistic ideologies have created what might be referred to as the artificial culture. This has brought in its path ecological, social, and moral desecration, and it has generated a plethora of other problems, such as catastrophic economic models and political domination. A church that conforms to such catastrophic culture is destined to lose its earth-honouring identity and to compound its problems by making deficient maps and conversations for action.

As the concern for the ecological redemption grows, it is increasingly important to reconsider possible avenues towards ecological restoration and morality. Every person is born to 'belonging' and is divinely ordained to participate in constructing mutually enhancing life connections and relationships. In seeking for the remedy that can transform us individually and collectively, we all need to radically embrace decolonization and participation.

Decolonialisation provides an opportunity for the indigenous to reclaim control over their moral traditions of natural resources.

Although the colonial legacies of land use, planning and morality remain powerful, a decolonization process will invite indigenous people to reclaim their place and role in the community and beyond.

Participation is primarily about relationships between peoples and their natural environments; and between people and God. It implies an integrated life and a way of thinking that inspires people to behave differently, work for the common good, and embrace ecological consciousness. Perhaps the only way out of the ecological problems of our time is to return to our roots and respect our God-given ecological values and framework.

Having participated in the spread of capitalistic civilization that bred existing ecological challenges, the Church should embrace more critical and constructive ecological education. Nothing other than a radically changed outlook is needed from the church concerning the way life is lived, and participation in the conversation around ecological ethics and practices. The church and her theologians are called to find a new voice, reformulating divine concern about nature, landscape of mission, and heritage, while at the same time challenging views about who has the right to regulate our life-giving nature. We need to contend for ecological morality being part of church and seminary curricula and to connect the church with groups in society already ahead of the church in this area.

How should we be tackling racism in Leeds Churches?

Becky Howcroft, a Leeds Citizens Community Organiser, shares her reflections and the story of those directly impacted by racism. Please note this article has references to strong themes such as the tragic death of George Floyd which some may find difficult to read.

Pauline (pseudonym used) has been a member of her church for more than 25 years. To Pauline, Mass and worship in Uganda where she is originally from is synonymous with music accompanied by drums, transporting her into a deeply spiritual place. A few years after joining her current church community, she decided to join the church folk choir which sang at the midday service. The leader was so warm and welcoming; Pauline told her about an idea she had to bring drums from Uganda to accompany the guitar and the other instruments, the choir sang along too. The leader was so excited, so Pauline arranged for her uncle to buy and send the drums. The practice sessions and services themselves are some of Pauline's favourite memories of feeling a sense of belonging at church.

Unfortunately, the leader left and the folk choir disbanded. Undeterred, Pauline joined the 10.30am choir presenting her drums and offering to play whenever possible. This time it was different. Sometimes she felt welcomed but most times she felt like she was imposing on the group. She was confused when she had less and less opportunities to contribute until moths started eating away at the drums because they were left in the cupboard so long! Ultimately Pauline decided to give them to another church community so that they did not go to waste. She was sad and felt rejected because she was denied the opportunity to contribute her gifts to worship in her church community.

Pauline's story is sadly not unique. Her experience of rejection, of not being valued for who she is and what she can bring to her church community; of being pushed to the edges. Her story is an example of how racism is an issue which, has infiltrated the church as an institution, rather than being a personal moral failing of a few individuals.

In conversation with a black church leader in Leeds, I asked him why he felt churches as a whole needed to have a conversation about racism and race (not just confine this to a people of colour and the church

leadership or set up a "BAME" group). His answer was simple – it comes down to sin.

Racism is a sin – and if it is deep in our history and has infiltrated our culture, our society and even our church institutions, then it is something that will affect the whole body of Christ which means the whole body of Christ needs to be actively led in a process of repentance.

He pointed me to Galatians chapter 3 verse 28 to describe how the church should be if we were really to be taking Scripture seriously "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

His reaction to George Floyd's death and the rising up of street protests around the world was one of weariness – whilst many white people were experiencing a personal awakening to the issue, this was something that he had been fighting for a long time and had yet to see any real change or leadership on from white churches. He felt cautious about getting involved in any antiracism initiative – as he doubted the will of white leaders and white churches to follow through with action.

Sin isn't a word that we like to use in this modern day world – but this pastor was right, racism is inherently sinful. I am not an expert on the history of racism – but if you just start scratching the surface on the issue, it becomes clear that the sin of racism is systemic and part of our institutions – which means no one escapes. From a very surface level of Scripture, we know that sin is something that God takes seriously – we were created to be God's image bearers and in the resurrection, we received a calling to become a "royal priesthood." Racism is something that mars that image, that is not befitting of someone called to be part of God's priesthood.

Although the vast majority of us would not consider ourselves to be racist – or hold any kind of bias, it's hard to see how we could have avoided it, having grown up in a world which has been shaped by racism so much. God spoke to this type of sin amongst the Israelites by providing instructions on offerings for unintentional sins in Numbers 15 v 22 – 31. The whole community were to offer a bull as a burnt offering, a grain offering, a drink offering and a male goat as a sin offering. The priest would make atonement on behalf of the whole Israelite community.

Individuals becoming aware of, acknowledging, and confessing their sin it would seem is definitely the first step on the road when it comes to the church addressing this issue of racism.

Last year, with the death of George Floyd and the rising up of protest around the UK and the US, a good number of white people started this process, becoming aware of their own bias and privilege and confessing their racism. Some church leaders spoke from the front about the issue and in some churches, conversations began between white church leaders and the people of colour within their congregations.

However, if there is to be widespread change within the church, then a personal awakening amongst the few, and a conversation between a handful of people is not enough.

If this is an issue which infects an institution, that means it is the entire body of people within the institution that needs to be led in repentance. Repentance biblically is all about change but not just a change of desire and mind but also of purpose and action.

Racial injustice and taking action

As an organiser, I would venture that congregations as a whole need to be led into and supported to carry out actions, as a part process of repentance. I would argue that this is particularly relevant for white majority congregations, who up until now, have not considered racism to be an issue that affects them because “they don't have many people of colour within their church.” Other churches might not know where to start when it comes to those actions of repentance.

Community organising provides some tools which are useful in this process of repentance action– and I want to highlight three of these tools which churches can take on board.

Firstly, the tool of communal listening and the sharing of testimony - churches can train their people to facilitate small group conversations and one-to-one conversations right across their congregations to reflect and talk

through how they have been affected by racism and to hear each others stories. White majority churches could reach out to black majority churches and organise conversations and testimony sharing between their members to provoke deeper reflection, understanding and confession.

Secondly, the tool of taking effective action. Racism is a huge problem which needs to be distilled down into tangible, actionable issues within institutions and communities if a difference is to be made in people's everyday lives. This applies to the way racism affects churches themselves as institutions, and the way that racism affects the institutions that their people and local communities interact with everyday (such as their schools; their workplaces; public transport networks et cetera). The process of organising helps institutions to move from thinking about problems, to identifying issues – and helps them to work directly with those who hold power to bring about change on those issues.

Thirdly, the tool of leadership development – one of the pillars of community organising is developing leaders. This is done through participating through the organising process and through supporting and facilitating institutions to reorient themselves, so they pursue more of a relational model of leadership and make space and time for leadership development. The leadership of many churches in our city – in all areas of church life, is often predominantly white – so using this tool to purposefully develop leaders from different ethnic backgrounds could have a real impact on the issue of racism across the church as a whole.

Justice is an action – and racism is a justice issue. We need power to make the action that we take result in real change which effects peoples lives. We can talk about speaking truth to power – but we will only be heard if we have a seat at the table with those who hold power, and the only way we will get that seat at the table is if we stand in alliance with others.

Leeds Citizens is in the process of developing a citywide Racial Justice campaign that will incorporate listening, learning, action and leadership development; a campaign which we hope will do some justice and gain a seat at the table of power for people of colour; both within our churches and in our city. We want to encourage churches to consider participating in this alliance – to stand in solidarity with others so we can see change happen, not only in the life of our own congregations but also in the wider structures and institutions of the city of Leeds which affect the communities that we desire to serve and reach.

For more information about how to get involved in the campaign, please contact Helen Reid on director@leedschurchinstitute.org

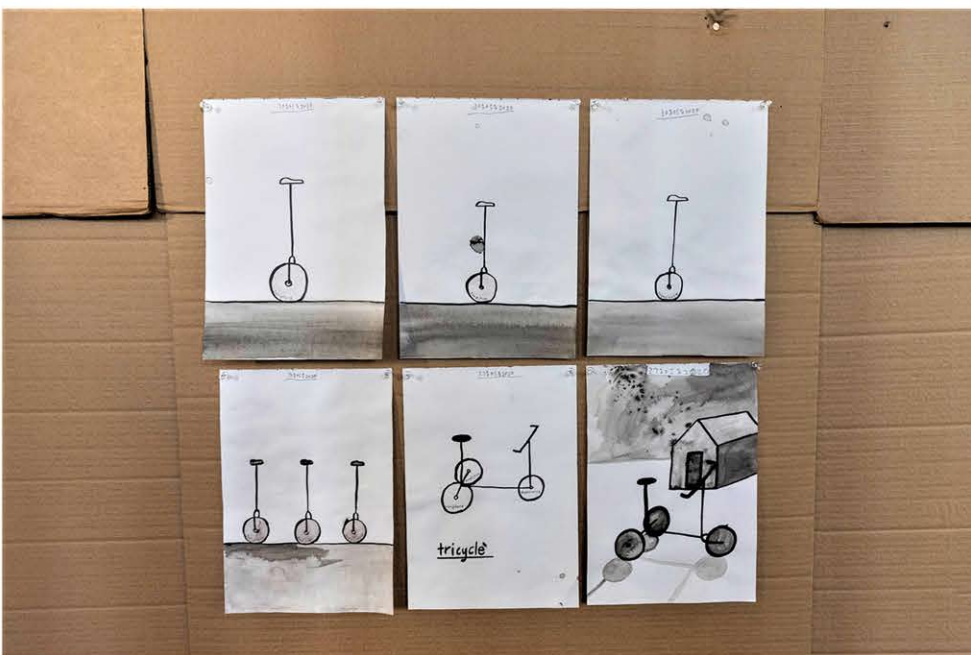
**If you were
free to ask
ANY one
question
and I mean
ANY
question,
about
faith/God/
religion/
theology,
what would
it be?**

This question was at the heart of the 2020 Bursary and above the lintel of the house within the art installation. The images here are from the House of Questions Exhibition hosted at the Church of the Epiphany, Gipton in July this year.





The 2020 Bursary supported Visual Artist, Phill Hopkins and Theologian, Dr Charlotte Naylor Davis to explore questions and questioning as an act of faith in Leeds. To view all images from the exhibition, please visit: <https://lcileeds.org/house-of-questions/>



Artist: Phill Hopkins
Photographer: Craig Shaw

To look again at Charlotte's writing, see CITYtheology Winter 2020:

<https://lcileeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/City-Theology-Winter-2020-for-web.pdf>

Christian and Jewish Charities in Leeds After The First World War: How Did They Respond To Disabled Ex-Servicemen?

Dr Beth Rowley
writes about the
role of faith in the
care of disabled
veterans after
World War One
here in Leeds.



Less than two hours before the Armistice was signed, Private George Edwin Ellison was killed by a German sniper on the 11th of November 1918. From Leeds, he was the last British soldier to fall in the First World War. Along with the other 705, 000 British men who lost their life, how and why soldiers such as Private Ellison died, has been the focus of many histories of the Great War. As a result, the two million British men who returned from military service with a disability are an often-forgotten legacy of the conflict.

Despite the unprecedented numbers of disabled men, Britain, unlike Germany, did not accept full responsibility for the healthcare of her “war heroes”.

Veterans had to rely on charitable organisations for medical and social care. This was often in place of government help because, in many cases, the amount of state pension a veteran received was not enough to sustain himself or his family. Consequently, many people – including religious leaders and veterans themselves – believed that disabled veterans deserved better from the nation that they had fought to protect.

This belief prompted the birth of a wealth of charitable organisations. In 1918, there were 6,000 charities for the war disabled in Britain. Many of these charities were faith based and more than 10% of these charities in Leeds after the war were Church of England or Jewish organisations. For two reasons, this is not surprising. Firstly, Anglicanism was the most dominant form of Christianity in Leeds at this time, followed by Roman Catholicism and non-conformist groups. Secondly, Leeds had a large Jewish population of over 25,000 in 1914, which made up 5% of the local population and 25% of all Jews who had settled outside London at the outbreak of war.

There are no known statistics on the number of Christian or Jewish disabled ex-servicemen who returned to Leeds. Yet, how religious organisations and charities in the city, such as the Jewish Blind Society, A Division (a men’s group at Leeds Parish Church), The National Sunday School Union, and The Jewish Board of Guardians mobilised to help veterans between 1918 and 1939, shows how the First World War did not ‘end faith in Britain’: a populist myth that stubbornly remains.

Church of England and synagogue attendance figures fluctuated after 1918, but any decrease is not representative of a decline in faith or a loss of religious significance in society. The care provided by the Church, synagogue and religious charities was

significant to the veterans and their families who received this aid, whether it be prayers, clothing, food, help finding employment, or medical equipment, such as prosthetic limbs. Also, many who identified as Christian, or Jewish did not attend a church or a synagogue after the war and are not included in the official figures – disability or caring for a disabled relative rather than any loss of faith - helps to explain this absence after the war.

Jewish and Christian Charity for Ex-Servicemen in Leeds

Faith was both a help and a hinderance for disabled veterans seeking care. In Leeds, many organisations which helped disabled veterans did not admit Jews as members. A prominent example was the international Christian charity, Toc H. Two Anglican chaplains created Toc H on the Western Front in 1917. Neville Talbot and Phillip Clayton did not want the ‘happy friendly spirit and brotherhood of the trenches’ to be forgotten in times of peace, and they opened a ‘Toc H’ house in London for ex-servicemen in 1919, where specific prayers were said on behalf of disabled veterans. By the early 1920s, there were at least five branches in Leeds, with the largest groups in Harehills and Roundhay. Roundhay is also the birthplace of the Leeds Wounded Warriors Welfare Committee which formed in 1916 to provide entertainment and support to injured veterans. This charity helped over 20,000 servicemen from across the Allied Forces. Toc H supported the Wounded Warriors Welfare Committee, and in Roundhay Park in 2021, the Toc H Garden is a memorial to their work with veterans.

From 1919, Jewish membership was a source of contention for Toc H. This included when Jewish charities, such as The Jewish Blind Society, wrote asking why those they helped could not join Toc H, even though the Jewish Blind Society believed that, in doing so, the health and wellbeing of these individuals, including disabled ex-servicemen, would improve. In response, Toc H reminded The Blind Society that Toc H was a ‘Christianising society,’ and that while Toc H would co-operate with Jewish men in meetings, Toc H believed Jewish men needed to ‘become more loyal to their chosen faith’. Toc H denied some disabled veterans help because of their faith rather than their disability.

However, the Herzl Moser (a Jewish hospital) in Leeds only admitted Jewish men who suffered from certain conditions. In the 1920s and 1930s cases of ‘epilepsy, insanity, idiocy, permanently blind,

Tuberculosis and infectious disease' were ineligible for help. This is significant as many veterans - because of the nature of trench warfare - suffered with these very conditions, particularly shellshock. Herzl Moser denied disabled veterans help because of their disability and their faith (they would not admit Christian men). These two examples show the complex relationship between religion and care for the disabled in Leeds, and how difficult it could be for veterans to access charitable aid. In comparison to other Northern cities, Leeds was unusual because it had three hospitals created especially and exclusively for the treatment of disabled veterans: Beckett's Park hospital which moved to Chapel Allerton in the 1920s, a convalescent hospital at Temple Newsham House and a hospital at St Edmund's Church in Roundhay led by volunteer nurses. After April 1919, the latter became an Anglican Sunday School. All three hospitals treated veterans from any faith or background.

The Jewish-Christian Charitable Relationship and its Religious Significance

To help combat difficulties over religious memberships and charity support (as in Toc H), Jews in Leeds founded various Jewish charities and invited Anglican priests to support these organisations. For example, Jewish ex-servicemen who fought in the First World War formed the Major Clive Behrens Branch of the British Legion in the 1930s, and after the Second World War, the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women became active. In another example, sixteen Anglican Chaplains served on the Jewish Ministers Visitation Committee which helped hospital patients. They carried out regular visits to hospital and prison patients and ensured that medical staff did not send patients to hospitals where Kosher food was not on the menu.

The strengthening of Christian-Jewish relations was particularly important for Jewish charities in Leeds following an anti-Jewish riot in 1917.

This stemmed from the wide-spread belief that Jewish men and women in the city were not helping the war effort, despite at least 160 Jewish men from Leeds dying in the war. In the riot, Jewish shops were looted, property was damaged, and people were injured. There are also many articles in the Yorkshire Evening Post written by Jewish women in defence of Jewish men accused of further wounding disabled veterans in Leeds. Jewish charities believed that with the support of the Anglican Church (the largest denomination in Leeds) and clergymen, the public and press would see Jewish organisations and veterans in a more favourable

way. Helping the war wounded was a way for Jewish organisations to show that Jews were invested in helping the war effort and those affected by the war. For all the Anglican and Jewish charities examined in Leeds, it is significant that fewer Christian charities invited Jews to sit on charity boards or become involved with charity work than Jewish charities who asked for Christian involvement.

In Leeds then, inter-faith charitable networks did not only help those in need, including disabled ex-servicemen, but they had a wider religious significance to the community.

For Anglican charities, helping the war disabled was also a way for Christians to realise the Church's aim of becoming a more socially progressive organisation. After 1918, the Church wanted people to see Christianity as 'a way of salvation for communities as well as for individuals', and because of the sheer number of disabled ex-servicemen who returned, disabled veterans were a 'new' community to help and/or to save. This is reflected by the fact that many Anglican charities across Leeds which were not formed to exclusively help veterans, such as Eyre's Park (Armley) or The Joseph Swain Charity (Farnley), supplied emotional, educational and/or financial support for disabled veterans.

Although Christian education as a form of rehabilitation is an understudied topic in comparison to emotional and financial support, an analysis of the National Sunday School Union charity which held its annual meetings in Leeds, revealed that many disabled veterans became Sunday School teachers which helped them reintegrate back into the community. The Church also paid for theological college courses to help veterans gain employment. Along with advertising in the parish magazines for employment opportunities and supporting veteran's families through donations, this was one of the ways the Church in Leeds tried to mitigate the impact of the depression and rising unemployment among ex-servicemen in the 1920s.

Conclusion

The First World War came to an end on the 11 November 1918. But for many servicemen, this was not the end of their war. There was no armistice on the war against the misfortune of mind, body, disease, and deformity.

They returned to Britain with life-changing injuries, and they had to fight against pain, prejudice, disease, and inadequate government support. Charities which offered food, money, clothes, accommodation, companionship, help with finding employment, and medical supplies were a lifeline for thousands of ex-servicemen. Many of these charities were faith based, and in Leeds, with its strong Anglican and Jewish population, various Christian and Jewish organisations were created, such as the Major Clive Behrens Branch of the British Legion, and others adapted their focus, such as The National Sunday School Union, to support disabled ex-servicemen who lived in the city.

Although Anglican-Jewish relations in the city were not straightforward, Jews and Christians often worked

together on charitable causes. Of course, as Toc H highlights, this was not always the case, showing how faith could be a help and a hinderance for disabled veterans seeking care. For this reason, a study of charitable care for disabled veterans is also a study of the social construction and mobilisation of religion in post-war Britain.

Leeds was a picture of religious vitality after the war and how religious organisations in the city responded to the needs of disabled veterans between 1918 and 1939 contradicts the popular idea that the Great War 'ended faith' in Britain.

For more information, please see the Parish, First World War, and Jewish Charity records held at the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds. The Toc H archive is held at the Cadbury Library, The University of Birmingham and it includes documents relating to the activities of the charity across Yorkshire. For more information on the history of Judaism in Leeds, please see 'Leeds Jewry. Its History and Social Structure', by Ernest Krausz. I would like to thank Dr Helen Reid, Director of LCI, Tim Friedman, Chair of CCJ, and local historians, Nigel Grizzard and Carole Davies for their support with this research.



Hook Lecture 2021 – What Do We Want To Sustain?

Thinking about faith and climate change

In our fast-evolving environment of climate awareness, change and influence, the Hook Lecture 2021 will help us think deeply about our priorities and actions. On Wednesday 17th November at 7:30, Dr Carmody Grey will speak about faith and sustainability, challenging our assumptions and developing our understanding.

We have the honour of welcoming Dr Grey to present this informative and insightful lecture in a hybrid event from Leeds Minster which will also be streamed live online.

Carmody is an Assistant Professor at Durham University in the Department of Theology and Religion. She also supports and works with a range of charities and NGOs in environment, development, and education.



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Email:
events@leedschurchinstitute.org
Phone: 0113 245 4700
Address: 43 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EY
Charity no. 220966


Contact

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