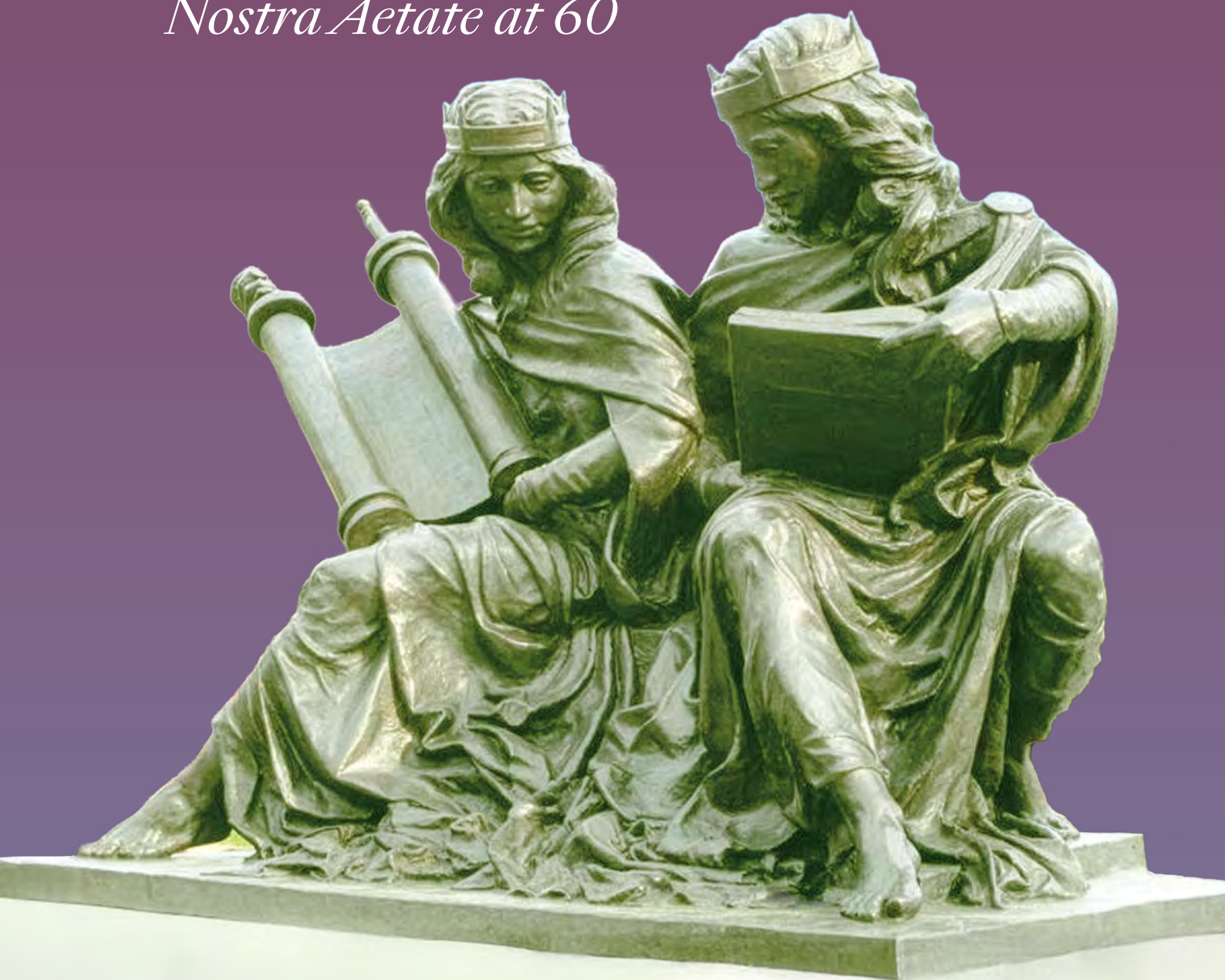




COMMON GROUND

THE COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS / WINTER 2025/2026 / 2025 IN REVIEW

Nostra Aetate at 60



PRISONERS OF HOPE

THE LEGACY OF NOSTRA
AETATE

RETURN OF THE TORAH

THE METHODIST CHURCH
RETURNS THREE SCROLLS
TO THE FEDERATION OF
SYNAGOGUES

FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS

JEWISH-CHRISTIAN
RELATIONS FROM THE STATE
OF ISRAEL TO THE ELECTION
OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

DIALOGUE IN DERBYSHIRE

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The statue on the front cover is by artist Joshua Koffman and was commissioned by St Joseph's University, USA, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Nostra Aetate in 2015

This magazine is dedicated in memory of those who lost their
lives in the terrorist attack on Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation:
Mr Adrian Daulby and Mr Melvin Cravitz
and all those injured.

We also remember those murdered on December 14th
at Bondi Beach while celebrating Chanukah:
the 15 who perished
and all who were injured and traumatised
by these tragic and senseless events.

May their memories be for a blessing.



Dear Members & Friends

This year our annual magazine, Common Ground, is themed around the 60th anniversary of the Roman Catholic document Nostra Aetate. The divisions between the Catholic Church and Jewish community, as well as interfaith relations more broadly, were deeply impacted by this formative document issued through the Second Vatican Council, in 1965. CCJ has long been committed to bridge building work and we remain so, the strides we have been able to take through groundbreaking work such as this allows us to drive this work forward. You'll read more about the far-reaching impact this has had throughout this magazine. However, it would be remiss of us not to note that despite much progress having been made, there have been several world events that have sadly forced us to take steps backwards.

The terrorist attack on Heaton Park Synagogue on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, and the attack at a Bondi Beach Chanukah celebration devastated communities. These incidents have been heartrending. The reverberating response in the Jewish community has been "we are shocked but not surprised". All people must feel safe to practice their faith publicly, this is non-negotiable.

The last two years have been incredibly trying for interfaith relations, and we have been buoyed and inspired by the outreach and endeavours of many to continue bringing people together. The messages in the immediate aftermath of the Manchester attack brought a great deal of comfort and strength and we know that the fear and anxiety being experienced by many of our Jewish friends and colleagues

is founded in experience. We will stand together in solidarity and allyship and we will support one another in trying times.

The legacy of Nostra Aetate is one which still requires effort and outreach. Its mission is not completed, and the anniversary reminds us why it was needed 60 years ago and why it is still needed.

Indeed, with the passing of Pope Francis – who held close personal interfaith relations throughout his tenure, in particular with Rabbi Avraham Skorka – the anniversary, and the election of Pope Leo XIV, there is a renewed energy around Catholic-Jewish relations. Let us take the lessons learnt and the work completed forward with us, not only for Catholic-Jewish dialogue, but more broadly. The Jewish statement Dabru Emet followed Nostra Aetate, and many more interfaith endeavours. We hope and pray that the year ahead will be a more peaceful one and that we can find more ways to build bridges and relationships across difference. We know that this work is unfinished and requires all of us to play our part. As we learn from Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers "it is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it" (Lo Aleicha Hamlacha Ligmore).

Thank you as always to all of you, our branch leaders, committee members, CCJ members, friends, staff, Trustees for joining us as we continue to work together to build bridges for a better future.

With our best wishes,

Nathan Goldy Georgina Bye

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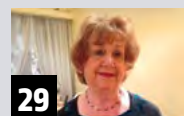


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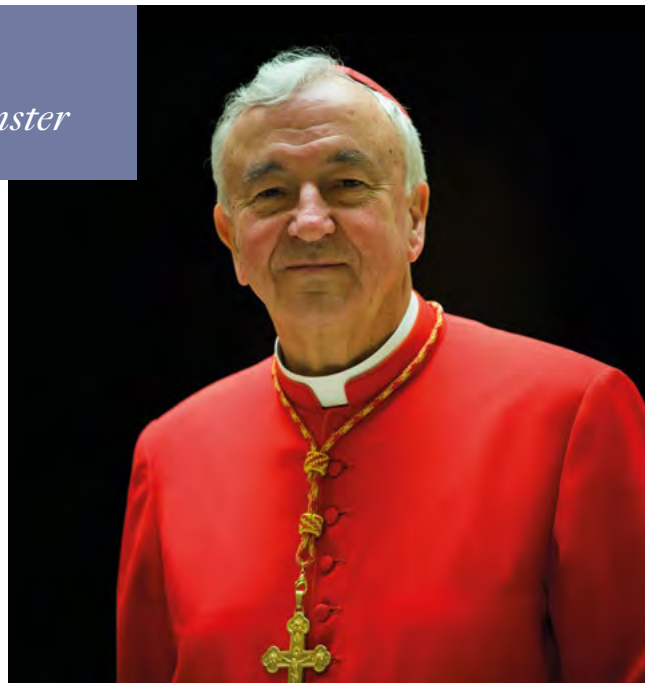
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A Journey into Hope - Celebrating 60 Years of Nostra Aetate

*Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster*

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.



60 years ago, these opening words of Nostra Aetate spoke to a Church in the process of self-examination and renewal. Today, these words speak to a Church which, in these 60 years, has worked to deepen its relationship to all religions and, indeed, to all people of goodwill.

Published at the end of the Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate outlines the Catholic Church's commitment to dialogue with all non-Christian religions, reminding the Catholic Faithful that the Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions (§2).

The roots of Nostra Aetate lie in an important ambition, to reset the Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish people. In the first instance, a Decree on the Jews was drafted under the guidance of Cardinal Bea. Although never submitted to the Second Vatican Council, the Decree expresses the Church's love for the Jewish people from whom came Jesus, Mary, His Mother, and the Apostles. This expression is also contained in Nostra Aetate itself, alongside the underscored significance of the "spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews", which can be discovered through biblical and theological studies, as well as through fraternal dialogues (§4).

In the years following Nostra Aetate, the Church's love for the Jewish people could be seen through actions of

successive Popes, not least in Pope St John Paul II's historic visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome. In his address, the Pope affectionately called the Jewish people "our dearly beloved brothers" who, in a certain way, could be called our "elder brothers".

In the Diocese of Westminster, Westminster Interfaith have worked for over 40 years to develop and deepen relationships with non-Christian religions. Today, this work includes collaboration with the vital work of CCJ, such as providing mentorship on CCJ's flagship Campus Leadership Programme.

Nostra Aetate concludes with a challenge to Christians everywhere, to condemn and challenge behaviour that is "foreign to the mind of Christ" (§5). Unfortunately, we are all too aware of the rise of anti-Semitism and religion-based hate in our communities. Our response must be clear, to stand against a hatred which seeks only to divide.

2025 marks not only the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate, but also, for the Church, a Jubilee Year. The late Pope Francis gave us the theme "Pilgrims into Hope". It is my prayer that, in marking this important anniversary, we may become pilgrims committed to dialogue. We must each be willing to journey together into hope, working to bring about a world where the "spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews" may also help us to journey into peace.

Prisoners of Hope:

The Legacy of Nostra Aetate and the Future of Jewish-Christian Relations



CCJ Chair Rt Revd Sarah Bullock and CCJ President Rabbi Josh Levy, Co-Lead for Progressive Judaism, present the Bridge Award to Cardinal Pizzaballa

In October 2025, to coincide with the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, a delegation of Jews and Christians from CCJ traveled to Rome for an anniversary commemoration at the Vatican and to present the Bridge Award to His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa. The photographs illustrating this article, taken by Simone Leonardi, are from the Bridge Award ceremony in Rome on the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

In this interview, leaders of Jewish-Christian relations *Prof Philip Cunningham* and *Rabbi Dr David Sandmel* were joined by CCJ staff *Avigail Simmonds-Rosten* and *Nathan Eddy* to discuss the legacy and future of the significant Roman Catholic statement *Nostra Aetate*.

Prof Philip Cunningham is Professor of Theology and Co-Director of the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia. Rabbi Dr David Sandmel is President of the International Council of Christians and Jews and Chair Emeritus of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, the official dialogue partner of the Vatican.

Avigail Simmonds-Rosten: Phil, we'll start with you. What was the change in your view that came about from *Nostra Aetate* within Catholic communities?

Philip Cunningham: Let me first say that *Nostra Aetate* should be understood as launching a process that is still in its beginnings and is still unfolding. It was the beginning of something, not its conclusion. Of its main points, I think the most salient ones are that Jews should not be spoken of as Christ-killers or as deicides, that there's no such thing as a blood curse, and that you can't talk about such things any longer if you're Catholic. Antisemitism, of course, is repudiated, and subsequent texts will be even more forceful,

talking about it as a sin against God and humanity. *Nostra Aetate* referred to Jews, citing Paul, as beloved of God. Which led — and I think it's strongly implicit, if not essentially explicit in *Nostra Aetate* — that Jews remain in covenant with God. And that led ultimately to denying any basis for trying to convert Jews.

The sentence that's been really relevant, for me, is the sentence that says: "This

sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect, which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies, as well as fraternal dialogues". And this is an enormous transformation from pre-Vatican II sentiments.

In terms of practical impact, one thing that's statistically demonstrable is that Catholic religion textbooks in the United States removed anti-Jewish polemic from their texts — they're just gone.

It begins a trend over the decades of making it clear that Judaism is closely related to Christianity, that we're not enemies or anything like that. Today it's not unusual to hear of Bishops and Rabbis sharing pulpits and visiting each other's houses of worship and celebrating important events together.

However, the rapprochement is still partial and incomplete. The education of clergy, of parish leaders, of congregations at large has not yet fulfilled what the Vatican said in 1985 about making catechesis about Jews and Judaism central — not marginal or peripheral, but organically integrated. But most Catholics do not know post-*Nostra Aetate* Catholic teaching, and so I think that's a weakness.

Nathan Eddy: We have a question now turning to you, David, and thank you for joining us. First, what was the Jewish community's relationship with Catholicism and Catholics prior to *Nostra Aetate*, such as you remember it or experienced it in your community? And then what was the change after *Nostra Aetate* in 1965?

David Sandmel: It's difficult to underestimate the influence of *Nostra Aetate*, even with the caveats that Phil mentioned before about unrealized potential. I think prior to *Nostra Aetate*, there was not that much communication between Jews and Catholics, certainly not on the leadership level. People living together in immigrant neighbourhoods knew each other — the neighbourhood where I live now used to have Jews, Italians, and Irish — but the traditional perspective still pertained. The teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism was found in homilies and passion plays and in hermeneutics. It was woven into Catholic life and teaching.

In 1965, with the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the immediate reaction from the Jewish community was mixed. Some were ecstatic, recognizing this as the groundbreaking document that it was. Others had reservations. One was whether the church could even be trusted, and whether or not this was simply a subterfuge for missionary activity. There was also specific criticism of the content of *Nostra Aetate*. For example, there's no reference to the State of Israel, which was certainly a major issue at that point in time, and remains one. In hindsight, we recognize now some of the political whirlwinds that were buzzing around as they were trying to get this document done, but nonetheless, that's something that was not mentioned. And while, as Phil mentioned, *Nostra Aetate* does imply that the Jewish covenant still maintains, there was no mention of things like salvation and so forth. So, some people just had concerns and reservations.

I think that today most of us from the Jewish community involved in Jewish-Christian relations look at the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and consider it to be robust and healthy — and, in many ways, probably the deepest sort of official relationship or institution-to-institution relationship that is out there, at least, on the international level. Also, subsequent documents that came out from the church developed and furthered the reach of *Nostra Aetate*. One can point to all sorts of concrete examples, but also more atmospheric examples to show what the change has been.



CCJ Vice President Henry Grunwald KC and Alison Grunwald sign the Anglican Centre guestbook

*"It's difficult to underestimate the influence of *Nostra Aetate*, even with the caveats that Phil mentioned."*

"The Catholic Church today understands that Jews and Catholics are co-covenanting companions with God."

PC: If I could jump in, I recognize the same in my childhood experience — I grew up in New York City, which certainly has a large Jewish population, and in my particular neighbourhood in Queens, it was Irish and Italian Catholic, and Jewish. In my parochial school, I didn't run into too many Jews, nor even in the neighbourhood, particularly, because we lived separate lives, you know? But nonetheless, the presence was there. The thing I think that's distinctive about the American context is that Catholics and Jews, as you know, came to the United States in the 19th century without being particularly welcomed, and so there was a natural alliance that took place despite the centuries of alienation or even hostility. The prevailing Protestant ethos was not pleased by our arrival — particularly the huge number of Irish that came over, shortly after followed by Jews from Eastern Europe. That dynamic is still unfolding, I think, in our politics.

ASR: There is a liminal whiteness that Irish and Italians share, and their initial reception was also filled with this racial ambiguity. Like, who are they in terms of white America? So I think that it's an interesting overlap [with Jewish experience].

PC: It raised questions of allegiance, as well.



British Ambassador to the Holy See, Chris Trott

ASR: Phil, what's the significance of Nostra Aetate to you personally, as a Catholic who leads dialogue with Jews?

PC: Clearly, as I think back, I'm a child of the Second Vatican Council. I was in Grades 4 through 7 while the Council was unfolding. That's not to say I was following every newscast about what was happening, but it was in the background, particularly in a Catholic school. We knew about something big going on. And Nostra Aetate has pretty much determined my professional career for the last four decades. It's obviously hugely significant for my life, personally.

Because of Nostra Aetate, I've been blessed to be able to work for many years with Jewish colleagues and friends like Rabbi Sandmel, and in particular I've been influenced by team teaching university-level courses with Jewish colleagues. And that's had a big spiritual impact on me. I'm not the same Catholic as I was before having these experiences of co-teaching. You develop a certain degree of trust and familiarity in those kinds of working conditions, and I think that's been invaluable in our present climate, which is so divisive.

The Catholic Church today understands that Jews and Catholics are co-covenanting companions with God. We are both walking in covenant with the same God, with the same Holy One. We're not covenanting with each other in a direct sense, but because we're walking with the same God, our ways of walking are resonant, and we can help one another in living out our covenantal responsibilities. I think that phrase, co-covenanting companions, demonstrably sums up Catholic teaching today. So that's the effect it's had on me.

NE: Turning to you, David, if you were to look over your own career, in what ways did Nostra Aetate have significance for you personally as a Jewish leader working to build relationships?

DS: Let me give a little family history here. My grandfather was an immigrant to this country, on my father's side, escaping the pogroms in Tsarist Russia, which were often fomented by local Christian clergy. When he got to this country he was afraid of anybody in a clerical collar. That was just his instinctual reaction. My father, growing up, he and his friends in St. Louis in public school would take a long walk home in order to avoid going past the local Catholic school, because they were afraid of being beaten up.

Now my father went on to become a noted scholar of New Testament and a pioneer of post-Shoah Jewish-Christian relations. And, you know, in the 50s and the early 60s, he was often invited to lecture at Protestant institutions, but never at a Roman Catholic one, though he did have some personal relationships. Immediately after the promulgation of Nostra Aetate, he would say, the invitations came flooding in. I think the American church was really just kind of waiting for it. And this had an effect in my home as well, because at our Shabbat dinner tables and our Passover Seders, beginning in 1965, we suddenly had a lot of people in collars and habits.



The Rt Revd Anthony Ball, Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See

So it was something that was just part of my growing up. Now, I do recall vividly, it would have been maybe 1966, or perhaps 67 at the latest, being called a 'Christ-killer' by one of my classmates. That does not typify my experience, but it's a very stark, stark memory.

I worked at the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, which is now the Institute for Islamic, Christian, Jewish Studies. And, at the time that, the Dabru Emet project [a significant Jewish statement on Christianity published in 2000] was being rolled out, and I worked very closely there with both Protestant and Catholic colleagues. I ended up holding a chair in Jewish studies at a Roman Catholic seminary. The chair was funded by both a Jew and a Catholic in the community.

"Recognising the changes that have taken place in the Catholic world is a challenge to the Jewish community as well."

I have worked very closely with the American bishops. I've visited the Vatican on many occasions, where I have been certainly welcome and treated with respect. The cooperation and collaboration with Phil is one particular example, but the cooperation with so

many Catholic scholars has typified my experience. And when I think about the trajectory from my grandfather to my father, who sort of bridged this era, to me, I think it's something that my grandfather never would have expected. And so when people refer to Nostra Aetate and the changes in the Church as a Copernican Revolution, I don't think it's all that hyperbolic.

One last comment on this: I think that Nostra Aetate, along with much of what has happened in Jewish-Christian relations since, has also challenged the

Jewish community to examine where anti-Christian or anti-Catholic prejudice might exist. We have our own problematic texts in the liturgy and elsewhere. Clearly because of the historic imbalance in power, Jews have mostly been on the receiving end of the prejudice, but we have to acknowledge that there are problems that the Jewish community has to look at, and in Israel, where Jews are the majority and Christians are a small minority, there's been a phenomenon of incidents of vandalism and violence directed at Christians and Christian institutions. Now, these, I think everyone would admit, are coming from a fringe, a minority at one end of the spectrum. But it's disturbing, and it's a problem that needs to be addressed. Recognizing the changes that have taken place in the Catholic world is a challenge to the Jewish community as well.

NE: Did Nostra Aetate, in your experience, spur any theological reflections (to use a Christian term) about the nature of Jewish-Christian dialogue, in Jewish circles, or did it not have that effect?

DS: I think it did in some instances. Again, I think the overwhelming reaction was relief: 'my goodness, these people have stopped saying, or are trying to stop saying all these nasty things about us, and they are supporting us when we need them'... It was something that many people would not have imagined or expected. The sort of reciprocal move, I think, was a little more difficult — again, in part just because of the historical baggage. Perhaps this is why it was 35 years after Nostra Aetate that you get something like Dabru Emet. It took the community a while to absorb and get comfortable with the idea that this was real, and that some sort of response should be forthcoming.

One of the challenges, of course, has to do with the asymmetry here; Christians encounter Jews in Judaism in their religious life, in their faith life, in their liturgy, in their lectionaries, and so forth, in a way that Jews don't [encounter Christianity]. How to deal with that, and what the implications of that are, again, I think have been part of what has been going on. I think that there are some in the Christian world who would say, well, we have said that your covenant is now enduring and has never been broken. What are you going to say about our covenant? What can you say about Jesus? And, again, what the traditional texts in the Jewish community say about Jesus are not all that helpful. But I think the change in relationships helped people in the Jewish community approach Christian texts and Christian theology in a much more open manner. Take the Jewish reclamation of Jesus [in scholarship], for example. you know, there is now almost a sort of a pride that Jesus was a Jew, right? This is a significant shift from the way that Jesus was viewed previously. And this opens up the potential for the figure of Jesus serving as a bridge between Jews and Christians.

ASR: Phil, what do you have in mind as the next steps? What are the missing pieces of Catholic-Jewish relations?

"I want to take a few minutes to zero in on the elephant in the room."

PC: First, let me, let me make a preliminary comment before getting into the question proper. One is, the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission document, God's Unfailing Word, gives a pretty detailed list of steps that can be

taken. There are differences in polity between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic community that you can see in the structure of that document, but there's excellent material there, and I want to acknowledge that. And by the way, that also is indicative of the ecumenical Christian aspect of the Christian-Jewish rapprochement. I mean, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church are very close in so many ways.

With that in mind, let me now get to your question. I think there are a number of fundamental spiritual topics. We share spiritualities, and we're able to explore them now, after the Shoah, horribly, but we can do that now, literally, for the first time in history. I don't think we sufficiently appreciate that fact sometimes; it's too easily masked by all of the conflict currently. These include, for example, how do our respective traditions address the paradox of a transcendent deity who is nonetheless involved in human history? (I think, by the way, that Trinitarian theology is one aspect of Christian grappling with that.) The theodicy question: how does a good God who creates a good creation and good creatures allow terrible evil to exist? If that's not a topic right now, I don't know what is. And our different approaches to thinking of redemption, I'll use that word instead of salvation, which is kind of a Christian word. How do we deal with that as something that is at least partially accomplished, yet also unfinished? This is true in both of our traditions, even if the scales are tipped one way or the other. These are things that we can now discuss.

Having said that, I want to take a few minutes to zero in on the elephant in the room, which is the big theological question that the circumstances of the day require Christians and Catholics in particular to grapple with. As you probably know, Adam Gregerman asked in a 2018 article, "is the biblical land promise irrevocable?" And that's a really pithy way of putting the question. And what underlies the question [for Catholics], is it's now Catholic doctrine that Jewish covenantal life with God is enduring irrevocably. So, therefore, what do you do with those clear and unambiguous Old Testament passages which are canonical for us Christians? They're not just Jewish literature, in a sense. The promises about land to Abraham and his descendants, what do they mean for Catholic faith in relation to the State of Israel today? This is the big question, theologically. I can't overstate the urgency of that question. It's self-evident.

I think that the approach that is slowly emerging within the Catholic world, is that, first of all, you must use current Catholic principles of biblical interpretation to address the question. Of course, that rules out automatically any simple transference of the social norms and customs of the biblical world to the 21st century. This naturally differentiates Catholics and Anglicans and others as well from certain self-proclaimed Christian Zionists who understand things in a less sophisticated way and simply just transfer from thousands of years ago up to the present.

So, we don't go down that road, but on the other hand, as a Pontifical Biblical Commission document stated in 1993, we also understand that "any reading of the Bible loses all validity if it is grounded in theoretical principles which are at variance with the fundamental orientations of the biblical text." Now, what does that mean? Every author of the Hebrew Bible believes that Israel is in covenant with God. You can't just overlook that. So, that has to be determinative in all the ways that Catholics apply or invoke Hebrew biblical texts in terms of the current question about the state of Israel and the land and rights. What the Bible says about this

just can't be dismissed as irrelevant to our day. On the other side of the spectrum from the Christian Zionists, you have those who say we don't have to pay any attention to those things. So, walking this sort of tightrope between these two approaches is the way that the Vatican has attempted to go.

Therefore, the answer, I think, that the Catholic community is moving in the direction of, and not exclusively, others are doing the same sort of thing, is to say that the biblical land promise is irrevocable; we have to say yes, because the Hebrew Bible is canonical for us. But it doesn't follow that such a promise can be actualized in 2025 and beyond simply by plopping culturally conditioned ancient ideas about divinely anointed monarchs and land grants on top of the multi-





Rabbi Josh Levy, Co-Lead of Progressive Judaism

religious, multinational, volatile Middle East, or onto the democracy that the State of Israel defines itself to be.

So, we have a lot of work to do ahead, and Christians are going to continue to grapple with this very pressing matter, and I think that has to be done with a respect for Jewish self-understanding about these matters, which means the dialogue has to continue.

"And then there's the contentiousness over what constitutes legitimate criticism of Israel and what crosses the line into antisemitism."

NE: David, then a last question to you. It's been a very difficult time for interfaith partners, whether that's ICCJ or other international or American interfaith partners. How optimistic are you that relationships can withstand the current climate?

DS: Just a few observations to

start. Certainly the aftermath of October 7th has strained relations. I think that some Jews felt that their Christian friends had not been as supportive or solicitous as they might have wanted. I think that this highlighted a sense that the emotional depth of some of this stuff for Jews wasn't necessarily recognized by their Christian friends — I'm talking now specifically about the attack on October 7th, the grief, and how it invoked, in many, a sense of historical trauma. I say that realizing that that's a very heavy thing to say, but I think that that was something that I experienced personally, and I think many in the community, not

necessarily everybody, but many did. And therefore, our Catholic and Christian friends didn't really know how, to put it in a different context, to comfort the mourners. And, also perhaps not recognizing that people were in a state of pain and shock, so that having dispassionate discussions about policies or even the suffering of the Palestinians was difficult.

And then there's the contentiousness over what constitutes legitimate criticism of Israel and what crosses the line into antisemitism. That's always been an issue, but I think it has become a much more important or a much more neuralgic issue now. You know, expressions of sympathy for the people of Gaza specifically, or Palestinians more generally, are deemed by some to be incompatible with support for Jews or for the State of Israel, and vice versa. All of this was exacerbated by the increase of antisemitism globally after October 7th, and the legitimate discussions about the specific policies and actions of the Israeli government. And of course, all of this is not only problematic between Jews and Christians, but it's also roiling the Jewish community internally as well. That's where we find ourselves.

But I am optimistic because I hope that this is a temporary state of affairs that, "speedily and in our day" will be resolved in some way, and that will enable people who felt pushed apart to come back together. And I also think that there are places, both institutionally and individually, where relationships have continued despite what is going on, that indeed, in some ways have become deeper and more sophisticated, because this has forced people to confront things that they may not have confronted before. I think that there is generally a recognition that the reasons that Jewish-Christian relations have progressed so far in the last 60 years is that these relations are essential not only to our self-understanding, but also to our vision of the world. I like to quote the phrase (Zech. 9:12), we're prisoners of hope. The alternative to continuing dialogue, even when it is hard, is going back to our trenches and reconstructing the walls and recovering the dismissive rhetoric. I think most people recognize that that would be a tragedy. And so, despite the challenges, we continue with this because the alternative is unacceptable.

My personal experience is that there are a lot of people out there who are willing to put this conflict and this moment in its context. Not to shove it aside, not to try to go around it, but to view it as something that we need to deal with together, and with the understanding that there are some very central, fundamental questions that it raises. And in dealing with them, in talking about them, in confronting them, we are able to move the discussion forward. Now, again, that may seem idealistic, but, again, I don't think we have a choice.

Coexistence and Conviviality: Renewing Relations in the Holy Land

Words shared by His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, on receiving the CCJ Bridge Award



CCJ Trustees, staff, stakeholders and supporters gathered at the Anglican Centre in Rome on 28 October 2025 for the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate and the Bridge Award.

Thank you to the Council of Christians and Jews for this award. Receiving it I want to represent all those in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem, who are working for peace and reconciliation, because there are many. There are still many tzaddikim, many who are righteous, who are doing all that is possible to keep the relations – which are so wounded – alive and open.

We have lived through very difficult years. In all my years in Jerusalem, more than 35, the last two years have definitely been the worst period. But I hope now we are at the beginning of a new period. It has been important to say the truth without shaming; to say things without becoming part of the struggle or fight, but to keep alive the relations, the friendship, and the bonds. We belong to each other, and I am convinced we are not there by chance, but because one God put us there in order to build his kingdom.

I feel now after these two years that the commitment should be more than ever to resume our relations and to restore what has been wounded or partially destroyed. In light of what is happening not just in the Holy Land, but all over the world, especially in Western countries, we need to be united – Christians (Catholics and all denominations) Jews, and Muslims must be united against all forms of violence, antisemitism, racism, and discrimination, because what is done against Muslims, what is done against Christians, what is done against Jews, is done against the image of God in human beings.

There is confusion between what is legitimate opinion about the policy of one government or another, and what is the attitude towards the Jewish people. This is something we must be clear about. We cannot allow in this anniversary of Nostra Aetate the destruction of what in these 60 years we have been able to build. This

"We cannot allow in this anniversary of Nostra Aetate the destruction of what in these 60 years we have been able to build. This work has been important not only for Jews, not only for Catholics, but for all religions."



work has been important not only for Jews, not only for Catholics, but for all religions; we should become an example, a model of relations that should be expanded, not only among us, but among all the different peoples.

Thank you for this award. As a pastor in these two years it has also been very difficult to keep my Catholic community united. We have Israeli Catholics and Palestinian Catholics. Sometimes it seemed to me that political positions prevailed over a relation to faith and to Jesus. It was important to remind them that we belong to each other, and we cannot become an instrument of peace and reconciliation if we are not reconciled in peace among ourselves first of all.

With this award I am committed more than ever to say to Catholics in the Holy Land, and all over the world, that we need to remain those whose heart is open to all without any distinction, and we cannot allow the



hatred and the political vision to destroy what has been built in all these years. We Christians in the Holy Land, the small remnant, we should become those who are free from all political commitments, in order to help in building all these bridges that the world has destroyed.

It is not impossible. It is possible because there are people – Israelis and Palestinians, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, (not that many Christians, I must say!) – who still want to do something different, and who still believe it is possible to have a Holy Land, a different model of coexistence and conviviality among all of us.

Thank you. May the Lord bless you.

FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS:

JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS FROM THE STATE OF ISRAEL TO THE ELECTION OF POPE JOHN PAUL II, 1948-1978

KARMA BEN-JOHANAN

CCJ Trustee Ed Kessler in conversation with the Rt Revd Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy at the launch of the book at St Martin-in-the-Fields, February 2025, organised by CCJ



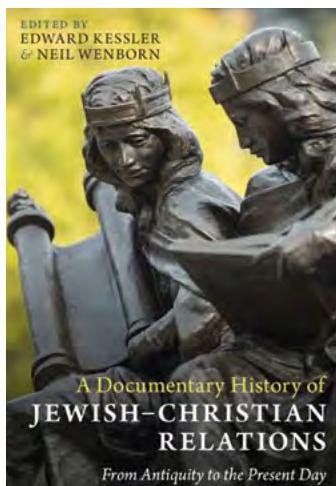
This excerpt from the new book *A Documentary History of Jewish-Christian Relations from Antiquity to the Present Day* (Eds Edward Kessler & Neil Wenborn, Cambridge University Press, 2024), introduces documents from the seismic period which included the publication of the significant statement *Nostra Aetate*, the 60th anniversary of which was celebrated this year.

The period explored in this chapter, 1948–78, is one of fundamental shifts. World War II had left Europe devastated and in a state of cultural chaos. The long history of European Jews had been abruptly and violently terminated. Around 6 million Jews were murdered. Others, who were able to escape before the so-called Final Solution, or managed to survive the effort of annihilation in Europe, found new homes mostly outside the continent, especially in Mandatory Palestine and the United States.

The Christian communities who witnessed the fate of their former neighbours in Europe were now searching for a language with which to think and speak of what had happened. A particularly difficult question was how it came about that the centuries-old Christian heritage of Europe was unable to provide sufficient moral means to prevent the bloodshed which flooded such large portions of the world, and especially the unprecedented brutality of Auschwitz. Slowly and

gradually, with the influence of many of the authors whose works are excerpted in this chapter, an even more tormenting question took centre stage—whether the Holocaust occurred not despite Christianity, but because of centuries of Christian anti-Jewish teaching (what the French Jewish historian Jules Isaac called the teaching of contempt) that prepared the ground for the Final Solution. The question of the connection between the Holocaust and the history of Jewish-Christian relations was the central, all-encompassing theme which arguably occupied (or burdened) every Jewish-Christian encounter, every intra-Jewish discussion of Christianity and every intra-Christian discussion of Jews and Judaism between 1948 and 1978, certainly in Europe and Israel, and with implications all over the world.

The excerpted documents in this chapter in *A Documentary History of Jewish-Christian Relations from Antiquity to the Present Day* render visible a chronological line of development – complicated and



not entirely linear, but a development nonetheless. With the exception of Jules Isaac, whose bold thesis called for and energised transformations which would only be dealt with in depth from the mid-1960s, the earlier texts of the period reflect, in retrospect, a liminal space between older paradigms and what would become the new framework for

Jewish-Christian relations in the following two decades.

In Christian texts of the period we find strong statements against antisemitism side by side with accusations of Jews' responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ. A salient example not included in the chapter is the Confessing Church's declaration of 1948. The authors of this declaration state that they 'realise with shame and sorrow that we have failed Israel'; yet, at the same time, they maintain that 'By crucifying the Messiah, Israel rejected its election and destiny'. Examples of such Christian ambivalence are ample in this chapter: in his conversation with the Swiss Jewish youth movement Emuna, the prominent theologian and Confessing Church leader Karl Barth renounces antisemitism, while at the same time suggesting that Jews should take pride in it, as it pronounces their election; Rabbi Richard Rubenstein describes his 1961 meeting with Heinrich Grüber, another Protestant leader of the Christian anti-Nazi resistance, as pointing to a theological justification of the Holocaust as willed by God. In France, too, even devout Catholics who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust were involved in the infamous 'Finally affair' of 1953.

This state of affairs underwent a gradual, albeit dramatic change between the early 1950s and the mid-1960s, largely energised by Jewish interlocutors who engaged in dialogue with Christians while boldly expressing their unease regarding the ambivalent perceptions of their Christian counterparts. Martin Buber blamed Paul for distorting what Buber saw as Jesus' Pharisaic-Jewish faith and provoking anti-Judaism. Abraham J. Heschel protested against the Second Vatican Council's rumination on the future conversion of Jews to Catholicism in its draft document on relations with Jews, calling Christian attention to the fact that many Jews see Christian mission not only as outright offensive, but even as a spiritual extension of physical annihilation. The incommensurability of conversion with the mainstream perception of Jewish identity is evidenced also in the 1962 trial of Brother Daniel in Israel, which was concluded shortly before the opening of Vatican II. Above all, Jules Isaac's study of the Christian theological roots of modern antisemitism in a series of publications and dialogical engagements from the late

1940s onwards obliged both Catholic and Protestant communities to cast a sober gaze on the dark side of their traditions and to account for their part in the agony of Jews. Buttressed by the wide reception of Rolf Hochhuth's relentless criticism of Christian silence during the Holocaust in his *historic 1963 play The Deputy*, these Jewish intellectuals posed an enormous challenge to the church leadership, a challenge of penitence and responsibility. It is hard to decide which aspect of these Jewish positions is more stunning—the fact that they were not afraid to express to Christian ears such harsh criticisms of Christianity or the fact that they trusted Christians to listen to those criticisms from the outset and were willing to engage in dialogue with them (a willingness which was not at all obvious, as is evident in Joseph Ber Soloveitchik's reservations about Jewish engagement in Christian-Jewish dialogue).

Yet the Christian responses were no less stunning. From high-ranking Vatican officials to independent theologians, Christian thinkers and leaders listened to the claims of their Jewish critics and used them, from around the mid-1960s, to call for an overarching revision of Christian theology. *Nostra Aetate* (1965), a statement from the highest level of the Roman Catholic Church that garnered a great deal of publicity and influenced the leadership of other churches, too, denounced antisemitism, emphasised the Jewish roots of Christianity and rejected the charge of deicide

Theological giant Karl Barth admitted his own antisemitic tendencies and failing to fight for the Jews during the Holocaust and openly embraced criticisms of his doctrine of Israel, as well as the new theological horizons offered by his student Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt. Moreover, following Isaac's lead, Christian theologians began to search for the intersections at which the Christian tradition neglected the Jewishness of its origins and became anti-Jewish: whether in Luther's reading of Paul's writings on the Law in Romans and Galatians, as Krister Stendahl argued, or the patristic *adversus Judaeos* tradition, as argued by Alice and Roy Eckardt; or even whether, as in Rosemary Radford Ruether's radical thesis, the seeds of contempt were already present in the New Testament, where anti-Judaism emerged as the 'left hand of Christology'. Everything was put to the test, including the foundations of Christian theology and its relation to history, as in Johann Baptist Metz's work, and the Christian perceptions of God himself, as in Dorothee Sölle's political theology. Criticism wasn't lacking among contemporary academics either, as exemplified in Sister Charlotte Klein's scrutiny of the transmission of anti-Jewish ideas through scholarly works of key biblical scholars and systematic theologians. Christian thinkers, in other words, were willing to doubt the very integrity of Christianity in the face of Auschwitz. Such a bold move is imaginable only in the context of the Holocaust's immediate aftermath, a context of immense instability in which the almost total dissolution of Europe allowed space for a radical and encompassing reconsideration of the entire Christian tradition.

RETURN OF THE TORAH:

THE METHODIST CHURCH RETURNS THREE SCROLLS TO THE FEDERATION OF SYNAGOGUES

In a moving event on 28 January 2025, Methodist leaders returned three scrolls to Jewish leaders from the Federation of Synagogues.

In a meeting at the Federation offices facilitated by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the scrolls were received by Federation of Synagogues CEO Avi Lazarus, Head of Burial Lawrence Littlestone, Av Beit Din Rabbi Shraga Feivel Zimmerman, and the Dayanim of the Beit Din.

Methodist leaders Reverend Steven Cooper (Connexional Ecumenical Officer), Jude Levermore (Head of Mission), and Olivia Threlkeld (Heritage and Collections Officer), attended the handover and shared their knowledge about the scrolls. Religious and Civil Affairs Officer at the Board of Deputies, Victoria Lisek, was also present.

Rabbi Zimmerman marked the occasion with a speech sharing the significance of the Torah to the Jewish people, thanking the Methodist Church for returning

the scroll and acknowledging the representatives present for sharing in friendship and mutual respect.

Due to the damage, the Torah scroll will be buried in accordance with Jewish law. The other two scrolls were also received by the Federation. Both of the scrolls are the Megillat Esther; also thought to have been used as teaching aids for the Methodists at Wesley College. Having received the scrolls, the Federation will oversee the inspection and establish the next chapter for them.



Reflecting on the experience in December 2025 for Common Ground, Revd Steven Cooper tells the story:

We found that the Methodist Church had these three Hebrew Scripture scrolls in our possession, which had been in the library collection of Wesley College Bristol before it closed in 2012. How they came to be in that collection—and what use was made of them there—is a mystery, which has eluded our best efforts to solve. But we were very conscious of the sacredness of these scrolls to the Jewish community, and really wanted to handle them and make arrangements for their future in an appropriate way. Since the closure of Wesley College, they had been carefully kept in archival conditions. But we decided that by far the most appropriate way to respect these sacred artefacts would be to return them to the Jewish community. With the help of the Board of Deputies, we established contact with the Federation of Synagogues, and we were delighted that they were able to take possession of the scrolls, and to care for them properly in accordance with Jewish tradition.

“The three scrolls—a large Sefer Torah, and what we learned were two smaller Esther scrolls—had been kept in two separate locations, and so arrangements were made to hand them over to the Federation of Synagogues on two separate dates.

“Our meetings with the Federation of Synagogues were really special occasions. My Methodist colleagues and I experienced a lovely sense of welcome at the Federation offices. It was a privilege to be in the room as our Jewish colleagues unwrapped the scrolls and carefully examined and explored them. It was a really enriching experience to behold the profound sense of interest and fascination with which the scrolls were received, and to learn about clues to their provenance—the style of the Hebrew lettering, the material on which they were written—which were immediately obvious to the Federation’s rabbinic experts, but a revelation to us. There was a deep sense of friendship—of new friends made—as we shared these moments, and a powerful recognition of our shared faith heritage. As Methodists were very conscious of the violence being experienced by the Jewish community in our present time, and the opportunity that this moment presented to bear witness to the true spirit of friendship that binds us as Christians and Jews was really valuable. It was, as I say, very moving and a profound privilege to be a part of.”

When the scrolls were transferred into the care of the Federation, its Av Beit Din Rabbi Shraga Feivel Zimmerman reflected on the profound significance of



"There was a deep sense of friendship—of new friends made—as we shared these moments, and a powerful recognition of our shared faith heritage."

the moment, stating, as reported by the Methodist Church, "The Torah is the heart and soul of the Jewish people. It is our moral guide, our connection to Hashem, and the foundation of our nation throughout millennia of exile and persecution. The return of this sefer Torah is a powerful reminder of our eternal bond with the Torah and our enduring heritage."

The scrolls were found following the closure of Wesley College Bristol, a Methodist theological teaching college in Hanbury, Bristol. It was the oldest provider of theological education for the Methodist Church of Great Britain, established in 1946 and closed in 2012.

Following the closure of Wesley College Bristol, the Methodist Heritage Committee was tasked with the removal and relocation of the institutional archive of the College and its predecessors (309 items), historic manuscripts (700 items), historic printed materials (books and journals – some of greater significance than others), and what has been described as the 'Heritage Collection' (3,952 items), plus artefacts ranging from communion plate to portraits and furniture (52 items).

Appraisals, discussions with relevant partners and heritage sites followed and a subsequent list of proposed new homes was brought for approval and rehoming began. Due to changes in personnel and the pandemic, that process is incomplete and ongoing, with the residual collection (mostly paintings, photographs and artefacts) in secure storage.

Part of the collection at Wesley College Bristol were three Torah scrolls, two small and one full-sized, but fire-damaged Torah scrolls. Wesley College Bristol accession register shows the scrolls as a nineteenth-century donation. We speculate this donation was made to the Methodist institution as a teaching object to support biblical studies as the condition of the scroll is

highly damaged – appearing waterlogged and burnt at some points in its life. Wesley College Bristol had a secure library with good quality archive conditions and the scrolls were always handled as sacred texts.

There is little information about the provenance or history of this scroll before its arrival at Wesley College Bristol, which is a great shame – the Methodist Heritage Committee consulted a scribe who advised it looks to be from the ca. 19th century or beginning of the 20th century. We have brought the scroll to the attention of colleagues specialising in Hebrew collections at the British Library (Ilana Tahan) and Manchester Jewish Museum (Alex Cropper) who advised that carbon dating would be the only way to gain any more information about the scroll & advised it should be buried in accordance with Jewish law.

Since 2012, the scroll has been in storage alongside the Methodist Missionary Society Archive which is held at SOAS University Library, London, primarily to ensure its condition can be monitored. The scroll has been in environmentally controlled storage in an archival box with archival grade paper.

CCJ'S IMPACT IN 2025

850

MEMBERS

15

ACTIVE BRANCHES
AROUND THE UK
(2 NEWLY FORMED)

250+

NETWORK OF
ALUMNI OF OUR
STUDY TOURS

124

PEOPLE ATTENDED
HMD EVENT AT
LAMBETH PALACE

100+

STUDENT LEADERS
AND ALUMNI





16,352

REACHED ON
LINKEDIN

67,501

REACHED ON
FACEBOOK

85

PEOPLE AT THE
HYBRID AGM

2,700+

PEOPLE REACHED
REGULARLY
THROUGH OUR
NEWSLETTER

54,000+

UNIQUE VISITORS
TO OUR WEBSITE
DURING THE YEAR

A Shared Memorial:

Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz

By Edmund de Waal

Author and potter Edmund de Waal CBE shared these words at CCJ's Holocaust Memorial Day event at Lambeth Palace in January, which commemorated the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. More than 120 leaders, CCJ Presidents, members and supporters joined the event, which was hosted by BBC broadcaster Emma Barnett, and featured testimony shared by Holocaust survivor Martin Stern and second-generation Sinti-Roma genocide survivor Daniela Abraham.

In the summer last year, de Waal welcomed CCJ Student Leaders to his studio for a workshop where they created ceramic candle holders that were used in the ceremony. The large vessel used during the event was created by de Waal himself.

I went to visit my father yesterday. He was 96 in February. He is Jewish. In 1939 he arrived here with his mother, father, grandfather and brother. His grandmother Emmy took her life not thinking she would be able to escape. His beloved Aunt and Uncle died in Theresienstadt. His Parisian cousins were deported. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in his twenties. Today I am thinking with you about memorial. Tribute and restitution and memorial sound like the end, sound like closure. But as Jean Amery, who survived Auschwitz wrote,



Edmund de Waal lights a memorial candle

"I do not have clarity today and I hope I never will. Clarification would amount to dispersal, settlement of the case, which can then be placed in the files of history [...] nothing is resolved, nothing is settled, no remembering has become mere memory"

I feel this is true.

History is happening. It isn't the past, it is a continuous unfolding of the moment. It unfolds in our hands. That is why objects carry so much; they belong in all the tenses, unresolved and unsettling.

What can we do?

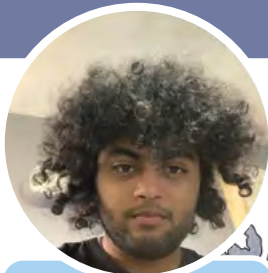
I make porcelain and I write books. I know that things will break – I think of Job on his pile of broken shards.

I don't repair, I can't repair. I mark loss, I show where damage has happened. And I think that you can light a candle. The light of a candle is a kind of prayer too. They are fragile. They flare and they pass. They are something understood.



Holocaust survivor and educator Martin Stern MBE shares testimony at the commemoration

Campus Leaders 2025-2026



Isaac Razzak
Manchester College
Politics



Anna-Maria Muellner
St Andrews
*International Relations
and Psychology*



Kayla Chesler
Sheffield University
*Speech and
Language Therapy*



Lily Lysik
Warwick University
*Economics and
Modern Languages*



Kianu Robertson
Bristol University
Politics



Maryam Ahmed
Oxford University
Persian and Turkish



Georgia Khan
University College, London
Anthropology



Isra Suleman
Imperial, London
Medicine



Daniel Brown
Nottingham University
Biochemistry



Naomi Frai
Nottingham University
Geography



Maryam Alketbi
Oxford University
*Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies*



Manchester

Sheffield

Warwick

Nottingham

Bristol

Oxford

London

St. Andrews

Reflections on Interfaith Encounters

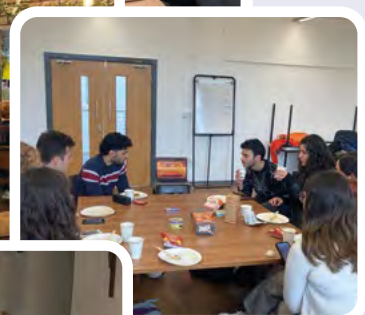
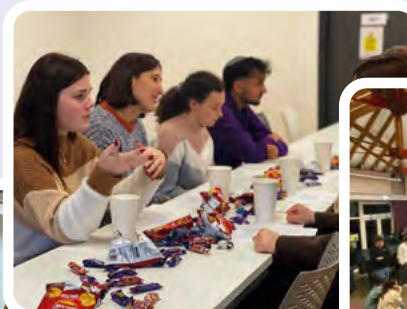
Tom Rippon, St Andrews Campus Leader 2024-25, reflects on lessons learnt from his time on the CCJ Campus Leadership Programme.

Coming into the programme, I was really a novice to interfaith work. My motivation for joining the programme was essentially curiosity – no grand ideas about world peace, nor an academic interest in comparative theology – I'm nosy and think there's nothing more interesting than seeing how people live day-to-day. The programme, however, expanded my understanding of what interfaith work looks like and has made me think more deeply about the benefits it can bring wider society. During the programme, I was privileged to meet some amazing individuals from a variety of backgrounds, all bringing a different perspective to bear on the world. All of these encounters left me with a number of thoughts on the role and the importance of interfaith in today's world.

Through the CCJ Campus Leadership programme, I've learnt that good interfaith practice is rooted in the idea that it is first and foremost a dialogue between individuals. It doesn't matter whether you occupy a position of trust and authority within your community, when you enter an interfaith space, you do so as an individual. You cannot speak for others, only for yourself and this ought to be lived as a liberating experience. You should not have to defend the actions of others; you should not have to answer for the beliefs of others; you should simply speak as yourself: there is no 'we' in interfaith, only 'I'. In turn, you have the right to expect to have your responses understood in this individual light. When interfaith work is approached in this way, the encounter is no longer one between faiths or communities, but between two individuals with different beliefs, one that operates on the level of the individual, not the group.

“CCJ are doing a great job of empowering and equipping the next generation of interfaith leaders; it's a fantastic programme, and a brilliant means of encouraging more young people into interfaith engagement.”

Dr Laura Johnson, Student Mentor



It is sometimes said that the Western world is facing a crisis of rising individualism; we talk about the atomisation of society and the dissolution of traditional community bonds caused by increased geographical and social mobility. Distances have never been smaller, but our neighbours have never seemed further away. Faith communities often constitute one of the strongest bulwarks against this solvent of modernity because they encourage the formation of a strong, delineated group identity. As supportive as these strong internal networks can be, they can also encourage monolithic perceptions of those outside the group, which is why approaching interfaith with an emphasis on the individual is such an important and beneficial step, not to mention a brave one: to enter a space as an individual, we must first leave behind the support

“Standing together is not an expression of similarity.”

network in which we have been formed. Despite – or perhaps because of – this trend towards individualism, our politics also encourages group formation and projection. Identity politics, political polarisation and an emphatic lack of nuance in public debate have created a discourse in which we talk far more easily about ‘us and them’ than about ‘you and me’. There’s safety in numbers, but there’s no connection without vulnerability.

In this context, the interfaith practice of receiving people as individuals offers a notable and, dare I say, hopeful alternative as a form of positive individualism. It enables us to acknowledge those we meet as part of wider close-knit community, but primarily as persons themselves. Rather than ask: ‘what can this person tell me about their community?’, we learn instead to ask: ‘what can this person tell me about themselves?’ We seek to gain a holistic understanding of that person in all their uniqueness, part of and yet distinct from their background. How different this is from confrontational politics, where rigidity is confused with strength and conformity with unity.

Ironically, it is much easier to change your politics than to change your faith, even though secular politics is far more confrontational than are interfaith spaces. But herein lies another lesson from interfaith for the wider world: it is possible to engage with those different to you without feeling under pressure to ‘win’ the argument. Discussions are distinct from debates and in an encounter between two worldviews, one perspective does not have to prevail over the other. Ultimately, interfaith spaces are about simply placing multiple perspectives alongside one another; as the poet Charles Péguy put it, true philosophy means standing side by side ‘before an ever greater and ever more mysterious reality’.

This moment of standing together is not an expression of similarity; it leaves ample space to acknowledge our differences, whilst declaring that our differences should not divide us further. Finding common ground is important work in interfaith practice, particularly during the early stages when relationships are only just developing, but it has its limits. An interfaith narrative which only focuses on similarities is one which requires hearty glossing over differences and a not insignificant degree of simplification. It is also incomplete: it leaves questions unanswered and divergences unacknowledged, which, in situations of historical tensions between groups, is unlikely to lead to any meaningful progress towards reconciliation. A complete theory and practice of interfaith is one which allows us to acknowledge our differences; effective interfaith gets us to the point where we feel comfortable with difference, where we feel comfortable encountering divergent points of view without feeling like our own views are under threat, where we have the confidence to step outside of our beliefs into someone else’s head to explore their perspective from the inside and to imagine a way of living different from our own and yet just as fulfilling.

It would be mistaken to say that interfaith is about conversation between religions or philosophies of life; it’s really about conversation between people. If we want to eradicate prejudice and create a more peaceful world, then we need to start by engaging one-on-one with each other. Everyone believes something; everyone has a moral compass and something that can be qualified as a faith or a philosophy of life. All you need to compare codified doctrine is a decent textbook; in order to develop meaningful relationships, you need people. Interfaith practice is about understanding the beliefs of another and in this everyone can participate.

By practising interfaith methods, participants gain skills in negotiation and active listening, they develop their ability to empathise across theological and ideological divides, thereby nurturing relationships and fostering their ability to collaborate for mutual or altruistic benefit. In politics, it seems we spend more time talking at each other, rather than with each other; there, your true interlocutor is not your opponent, but the wider audience in the chamber, the studio and the media, meaning that political conversation is fundamentally performative and therefore something





to be manipulated as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. In contrast, although individual interfaith engagement is unlikely to bring about world peace, sadly, the cumulative impact of its numerous grassroots manifestations across the world has yet to be fully appreciated.

The practices and values of the interfaith movement hold the immense potential to become valuable

models for reorientating debate in wider society. Ultimately, interfaith teaches us to listen and to engage with people on their own terms and as individuals; it teaches us to be comfortable with difference and that interested discussion does not mean concession or weakness on our part. Put simply, interfaith is for everyone, because everyone has a belief, whether religious, philosophical or political.



Keep our work of dialogue going for another 80 years.

Did you know that once loved ones are taken care of, you can include a gift to CCJ in your Will?

TO FIND OUT MORE CONTACT OUR OFFICE

0203 515 3003
cjrelations@ccj.org.uk

BRANCH NEWS

OXFORD CCJ

CCJ continued to meet monthly with a varied programme of Zoom (mostly) and in-person meetings throughout the year. Meetings continue to see about 15-30 attendees. However, our membership is 124! We bade a sad farewell to **Alex Taylor** and **Libby Hawkness-Smith**, two Christian Committee members this year. They have been greatly missed. However, we have welcomed **Dr James Patrick** who brings a huge breadth of experience in Jewish-Christian relations and biblical scholarship.



January to April each year we call our Season of Remembrance. It includes partnering with others and extends our reach in CCJ Oxford. We partnered with Keble College Oxford for the HMD Commemoration Service in their

beautiful chapel. The College Choir and Oxfordshire Jewish Choir led the service and the lighting of candles in a packed chapel. **Dr Ed Kessler** spoke of the current Jewish-Christian dynamic and its challenges. The branch has excellent relations with the Oxford Jewish Community and it was with them that we saw a full shul commemoration of Yom HaShoah. The service was coordinated by CCJ Committee member, **Dr Wendy Fidler** and included outstanding music by professional musicians from the shul, readings, and reflections by **John Dunston** and CCJ President **Rabbi Joe Dweck**. Together they brought a reverent and moving tone to the event. Members of CCJ, other faith communities and civic leaders formed the congregation.

The season of Remembrance included a talk from **Dr Rob Thompson** reflecting on his time at Washington DC Holocaust Museum and asking what can we learn from the Holocaust about contemporary Jewish-Christian relations. It provoked much challenge. That 'look at the past' was followed by a Zoom talk and discussion led by **Brian Fidler** on The Balfour Act. Brian's talks are always good and easy to listen to, well informed and certainly raise reflections and question.



Our Annual CCJ Oxford Lecture was given by **Dr Miri Freud-Kandel** of the Oxford University's School of Hebrew and Jewish Studies. Miri brought insightful and contemporary reflection on The Akedah, emphasizing the importance of the Akedah for Christians and Muslims as well as Jews, as well as a feminist perspective.

Fitted in just before the High Holy Days was a Zoom dialogue with **Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers**, Lecturer in Interfaith Studies at Leo Baeck College, and **Canon Andrew Smith**, Interfaith Relations lecturer at Queens Theological College, Birmingham. They shared with us their approaches and challenges to teaching and preparing trainee Rabbis and Christian Clergy for congregational life and interfaith encounter.



We closed our 2025 Programme with an Advent-Hanukkah social, 'Making Light', in central Oxford.

Revd Dr David Gifford, Chair, Oxford CCJ

LEEDS CCJ

The highlight of the year for the Leeds branch of CCJ was the 2025 Annual Public Lecture on 28th October 2025; the lecture was delivered by The Archbishop of York, the **Rt Hon. Stephen Cottrell**. The Lord Mayor of Leeds, **Cllr Dan Cohen**, welcomed The Archbishop and all the guests who included several distinguished Church & civic leaders. The title of the talk was "Walking together as Friends" and His Grace started by recalling his deep sadness that he and colleagues felt on the second anniversary of the 7th October 2023 murders and hostage-taking by Hamas. Referring to the subsequent hostilities, the Archbishop saw a glimmer of hope in the pursuit of peace and noted that there are various opinions and views about the political situation and that the ability to have successful dialogue requires friendship. The Archbishop said that he and his fellow bishops value their friendship with the Jewish community and honour its contribution to our country.

The Scriptural Reasoning meeting on Zoom, initially planned for March 2025 was been postponed into December 2025 as one of the participants, **Rabbi Jason Kleiman**, has moved away from Leeds but is now settled and available. A panel discussion on "Current antisemitism and the Christian response", on Zoom, will be held in January 2026. A joint Church-Synagogue choir concert is being planned for 2026 and the three school choir concert, before Covid a regular feature on the calendar, will resume in March 2026.

Tim Friedman, Co-Chair, Leeds CCJ

REGIONAL COORDINATORS FOR DERBYSHIRE CCJ

CCJ volunteers **Eve Sacker** from the newly formed Derbyshire Jewish Community and **Rev Alan Griggs** from Derby Diocese saw their first interfaith event take place on Saturday 30th August, with clergy from Derbyshire, the Diocese of Nottingham and Notts and Derby District of the Methodist Church visiting the Nottingham Liberal Synagogue.

The event offered an opportunity to take part in the Shabbat service, to learn about the sifrei Torah, and to spend time in conversation with members and **Rabbi Gili**. Seven clergy from a variety of Christian traditions took part alongside a good number of Nottingham Liberal Synagogue members including members of the Derbyshire Jewish Community.

Alan said, "At a time when interfaith relations has hit rocky ground, it is so important to reach out to the Jewish community in Derbyshire and make meaningful connections."

Eve said, "We shared meaningful time together at the service and afterwards. The Kiddush provided a wonderful opportunity for Synagogue members to share their love for our building and traditions. Our conversation with Rabbi Gili explored some of the difficulties facing bridge building and interfaith in the current climate but left us feeling hopeful of new possibilities."

More events are planned for 2026, and Alan and Eve would love to hear from anyone in Derbyshire and the surrounding areas who might be interested in being contacted as the work develops.

BIRMINGHAM CCJ



In July, Birmingham CCJ held a garden party featuring not one, but two Klezmer bands! – The KataKlezmics and Apt to Deyt. On a balmy summer's evening, we enjoyed foot-tapping music, shared food, home-made punch (non-alcoholic) and convivial

conversation, meeting old friends and getting to know new people. Guests described the occasion as 'magical' and 'enchanting'. Amid our anguish over events in the Middle East, it demonstrated our commitment to maintaining connections and valuing relationships.

Ann Conway-Jones, Chair, Birmingham CCJ

NORTHEAST ENGLAND CCJ

Sadly Northeast England CCJ was forced to close this year after years of dialogue. CCJ staff and Trustees would like to thank all involved in the branch for their work. For other news related Newcastle and the Northeast of England, see the obituary of branch treasurer **Walter Knoblauch** in this magazine, as well as news of the James Leek Award presented to Chair **Deanna Van der Velde** this year.

REMEMBERING

SOUTHGATE CCJ

Over the summer, **Rabbi Margaret Jacobi** sent to the CCJ office a scrapbook, collected by her late father Rabbi Henry Jacobi, which recording the activities of the CCJ Southgate branch from its establishment in 1962 to the late 1970s. It is a wonderful document that not only preserves the history of this local organisation, but provides also a lasting testimony of the efforts made by men and women from Christian and Jewish communities to understand each other and work together to create a more harmonious local community.

HAMPSTEAD CCJ

Hampstead CCJ explored re-establishing branch this year with some initial meetings, including one at Belsize Square Synagogue welcoming Christian guests for a Tikkun Leil Shavuot event on the night of Sunday 1st June. Belsize Square is known for its rich choral tradition, and the evening began with worship, beautifully led by Cantor Dr Paul Heller and the choir.

After a break for meeting, greeting and eating, **Revd Dr Ewan King** (Minister, Heath Street Baptist Church) and **Rabbi Gabriel Botnick** launched into the learning, sharing Christian and Jewish perspectives on the concept of revelation. Revd Ewan focused on Gregory of Nyssa and the notion of epektasis, while Rabbi Botnick shared rich insights from rabbinical tradition. A delightful evening was rounded off by lively conversation, moderated by journalist **Daniella Peled**.

EAST OF SCOTLAND CCJ

On 28th February, 75 people gathered at Edinburgh's Orthodox Synagogue to celebrate the launch of an Edinburgh branch of CCJ. There had been a branch in the past, but it is some years since this last met. The decision to set up a new branch grew out of a very valuable series of conversations between a small group of people from the Jewish and Christian communities, based on the Jewish-Christian Glossary produced by the Office of the Chief Rabbi and the Church of Scotland.

The launch event began with an opportunity to attend the Shabbat Evening Service, conducted by **Rabbi David Rose**, which was greatly appreciated by all the guests. This was followed by an excellent Shabbat Dinner prepared by members of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. There was a spirit of real friendship throughout the evening, with a constant buzz of conversation, and many people commented on the deep warmth of welcome and hospitality from Rabbi Rose and all the Congregation.

There is wide commitment from both the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, and from the different Christian churches, to build on this extremely positive foundation, and the branch looks forward with confidence to developing a programme moving forward.

WEST OF SCOTLAND CCJ



Glasgow: A city of Jewish heritage! Glasgow has officially joined a group of European cities which have actively participated in initiatives to celebrate and promote Jewish history and culture. Glasgow participation centers around the 850th birthday celebration, which including a number of events at Garnethill Synagogue in conjunction with the West of

Scotland CCJ. Events were held from September through year-end, coinciding with Interfaith Week. Glasgow was chosen by the Combat Antisemitism Movement And the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage.

The Garnethill and Glasgow proposal was selected because it stood out for its commitment to highlighting Jewish heritage as a vibrant and meaningful part of local cultural life. **Susan Siegel**, chairman of Garnethill Synagogue as well as West of Scotland CCJ, said "this is such a great honour for our city the Jewish community in Scotland and Garnethill Synagogue".

There were a number of events between September and November commemorating the role that Glasgow citizens have played in the development and appreciation of Jewish culture. Possible activities include an exhibition showing Jewish history culture tributes to notable Jewish figures concerts featuring Jewish music and food festival celebrating Jewish cuisine as well as educational workshops and Jewish tradition. Churches have offered their sites as venues for the activities, including a presentation about the regeneration of City Centre as well as a discussion about Jane Haining.

Support has been pledged by the Glasgow Jewish Community Trust, The Netherlee and Clarkston Trust, The Lord Provost's Office, CCJ West of Scotland, Giffnock and Newton Mearns Synagogue, Glasgow Reform Synagogue, The Office of the Chief Rabbi, and individual donors.

Rabbi-Clergy Conference 2025



On the 14th May, CCJ held our annual Rabbi-Clergy Conference. This year, we chose to focus on the profound impact that the war in Gaza and Israel have had on interfaith dialogue and relationships. We invited two committed peace activists from the charity Standing Together – a grassroots movement organizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel for peace, equality, and social justice – to speak to our select group of Jewish and Christian faith leaders.



Those faith leaders represented a wide range of communities; from Orthodox, Masorti, and Progressive Jewish leaders, to Quaker, Anglican, Roman Catholic, URC and other Christian groups. Faith leaders came from all corners of the UK, Scotland, Wales and England.

CCJ has both the unique ability and the shared responsibility to contribute to a healthier climate of conversation on this crucial issue and takes this commitment to fostering constructive and challenging dialogue very seriously. CCJ has long been a proponent of its unique 'listening and learning' pedagogy when approaching discussions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This methodology

focuses on enabling us to hear other voices and deepening our understanding of those with whom we may profoundly disagree. Our goal is to educate on 'the how' of having difficult conversations. These skills are essential for faith leaders.

This year's annual conference served to strengthen this ethos and methodology, enabling many to process the renewed and new strains upon their community's cohesion, connections within congregations and connections across faith. We received very encouraging feedback and continue to propel these relationships and conversations to keep channels open and co-education ongoing.

AGM & JAMES LEEK AWARD

A Manchester AGM, and Newcastle Educator Deanna Van der Velde honoured

We were delighted to welcome over 80 attendees in total, for our Annual General Meeting, held in November in Manchester.

We also said farewell and expressed our deep appreciation and gratitude to Lord Michael Farmer who has stepped down from the CCJ Trustee board after many years of service. His wisdom and support has been invaluable to both the staff and Trustees at CCJ and we will no doubt continue to stay in touch.

The annual James Leek prize was awarded to Deanna Van der Velde, we are grateful to Hilary Leek and her family for their ongoing support of CCJ for this award in memory of late CCJ Trustee and Branch Chair James Leek. Read more about Deana and her work in Newcastle and beyond below.

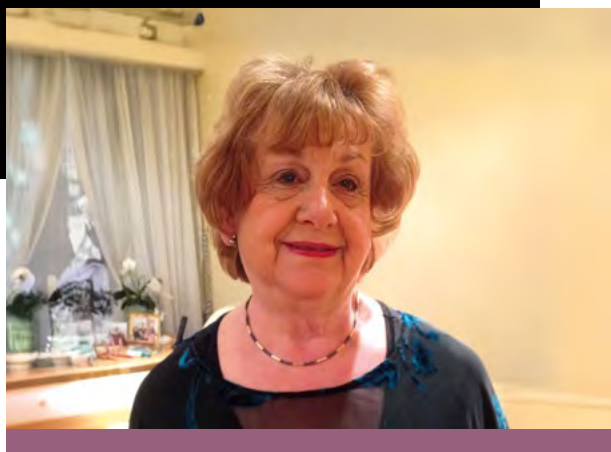
Following the business meeting we were privileged to hear from Susie Gordon and Marc Levy, senior leaders in the Leeds and Manchester Jewish communities respectively. This panel was facilitated by Beth Williams, CCJ Campus Manager and we hear powerful reflections on their leadership and the challenges they have faced, not only following the terrorist attack at Heaton Park synagogue but over the past two years.

Volunteers at Manchester Cathedral gave us a tour following lunch and we are incredibly grateful to Canon Steve Williams for all his support with the logistics of the AGM and for sharing about the history of Barbara Aubrey's and others' roles in establishing Manchester CCJ during the war – around the same time the national charity was established.

We were inspired by our speakers, and it was incredibly meaningful to stand in solidarity with the Jewish community in Manchester, knowing that the entire community is impacted and feeling the trauma of October's events.

CCJ was also honoured to recognise educator and community leader Deanna Van der Velde and present her with the 2025 James Leek Award. The award is given to a deserving member of CCJ who has shown special leadership.

Deanna has many years of experience in interfaith dialogue in Newcastle and the region. She has been Director of Newcastle Council of Faiths and Chair of



Newcastle SACRE, and was a longtime Chair of the Northeast England CCJ Branch, which sadly closed last year. She is an outreach volunteer for her synagogue, the United Hebrew Congregation of Newcastle, and has been very involved with Holocaust Education in region. She is also Vice President of St Oswald's Hospice Council and supports work to involve faith communities as staff, volunteers and patients.

Revd Canon Gavin Wort, Lead Chaplain at Durham University, said of Deanna's recognition: 'Deanna has hosted countless school visits to the Orthodox Shul in Newcastle as well as groups of Christians training for ministry in the Dioceses of Newcastle and Durham. She's a very worthy recipient for her longstanding work in Jewish education and Christian-Jewish engagement.'

James Leek was a CCJ Trustee and Branch leader who passed away in April 2021. The prize was set up by Hilary Leek and the Leek family in James' memory. Previous winners award include Dr Ann Conway-Jones, of Birmingham CCJ; David Arnold MBE, of Manchester CCJ; Sr Isabel Smyth, of West of Scotland CCJ.



CHUTZPAH! A MEMOIR OF FAITH, SEXUALITY AND DARING TO STAY

YEHUDIS FLETCHER

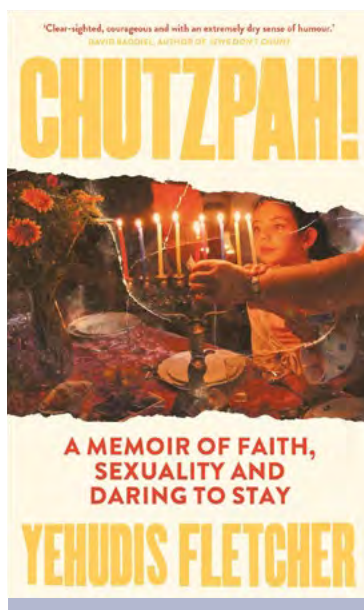
DOUBLEDAY

288 PP

ISBN 978-0857529954

Looking up the meaning of the key word in the title, I found 'extreme self-confidence or audacity', and 'a touch of impudence.' These definitions were repeated multiple times. I love it; it describes the beauty of this book perfectly.

This is a tale of a young girl, growing up in a fairly orthodox religious family. While she is clearly Jewish, I would contend this story could be true of so many growing up in such circumstances, whatever their faith identity. This is not to say there is anything wrong with being 'orthodox' and 'religious' – it suits many well, and there is no judgement in this. But not everyone fits in. And when you are



growing up within such a family, there is a desire to please those who love us, those whom we love, and to fit in.

Only for some, in order to be truly ourselves, and dare I say, truly faithful to the God we are brought up to love

and worship, we must be courageous enough to discover who it is we truly are. That journey can bring rejection from those we desperately want to gain approval. It demands the courage to question our own and our community's assumptions. We may find some are right and good, and others, well, less so.

This book is a story of a woman who has taken just such a journey, to find herself, to find her faith, and to find the people who truly love her, as she is, for who she is. It has been a true joy to read this book, describing not just a journey of discovering her sexuality, but of who she truly is before God and herself, a God who loves her just as she is.

■ Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills is a priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church and editor of #HerFaithMatters.

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WAITING ON THE LORD: REFLECTIONS FOR A PRIESTLY LIFE

SIMON CUFF

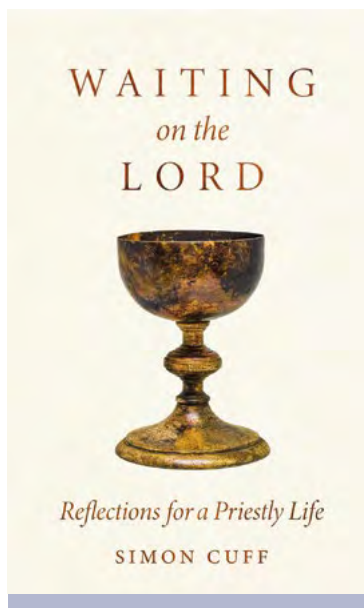
CANTERBURY PRESS

96 PP

ISBN 978-1786226563

If you were thinking of becoming a minister of religion, what would you want to know in advance? At this point, much depends on whether you intend to be a rabbi or a priest. If it is the former, it is a relatively simple combination of what the training involves, what the job entails and if you have the qualities needed to make a success of it. Essential among the latter are a love of Judaism and the ability to relate to other people.

For those entering Christian ministry, however, there is a much higher dimension to consider: it is not so much what you want but what God wants. Have you been "called" and has God told you in some way that it is



your destiny to serve His purpose by ministering to those whom He has created? This begs the question of how do you know that the "call" really is the voice of God and not your own personal preference or a sense of self-importance? Some of the ways to

find the answer are provided by Simon Cuff, who has been a priest in the Church of England for the past ten years and was previously a lecturer in theology.

He also issues warnings as to what lies ahead. One of the most striking – and which may apply to rabbis too – is that once ordained you will become a stranger to those amongst whom you previously lived, having a different status than before, separate and with a special commission. Another danger is the temptation to be so used to deference that you inadvertently become arrogant.

The book is a must-read for Christian ordinands and a fascinating window for anyone else. As for trainee rabbis, divine promptings are not expected to be cited on application forms.

- **Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain is Convenor the Rabbinic Court of Great Britain for the Movement for Reform Judaism**

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CHRISTIANS AND JEWS**

AGM

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**ALL MEMBERS AND
FRIENDS WELCOME**



His Holiness Pope Francis (1936 - 2025)

Pope Francis, the 266th Pope and leader of 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide, died on 21 April this year after serving for just over 12 years. His papacy was marked by liberal approaches to social issues, environmental advocacy, and a particular commitment to migrants, refugees, and greater LGBT inclusion.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires in 1936, Francis was the first non-European Pope in 1,200 years. He continued his predecessors' work in strengthening Catholic-Jewish relations, building on decades of interfaith progress.

His closest friend from Argentina was Rabbi Avraham Skorka, with whom he shared a deep spiritual bond. "Ours is a spiritual journey. Like him I don't much like the protocol, and like him I too go for the essentials," Francis once reflected. The two co-authored *On Heaven and Earth*, based on their televised dialogues.

Francis demonstrated his commitment to Jewish relations through meaningful actions. In 2014, he visited Israel and the Palestinian territories, paying respects at Yad Vashem, Theodor Herzl's grave, and the Western Wall. Two years later, he made historic visits to Rome's Great Synagogue and Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he wrote in the guestbook: "Lord, have mercy on your people! Lord, forgive us such cruelty!"

The Pope took concrete steps to address historical tensions. He restricted use of the Latin Mass recited on Good Friday, which had called for Jewish conversion and referenced Jewish "blindness" until 2008. In 2015, the Vatican declared it would "neither conduct nor support any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews."

I was privileged to meet Pope Francis on a CCJ trip in 2015 during the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* in Rome. His magnetism and charisma were immediately apparent to everyone present. At that landmark gathering, Francis emphasized the transformation in Christian-Jewish relations: "From enemies and strangers, we have become friends and brothers." He declared: "Yes to the rediscovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity; no to any form of anti-Semitism and condemnation of any resulting injustice, discrimination and persecution."

Francis repeatedly condemned antisemitism, describing it as a "sin against God" last year. He sought common ground on environmental issues, family values, technology, and anti-slavery efforts. Notably, in 2018, he praised the value of Shabbat, saying "what the Jews followed, and still observe, was to consider the Sabbath as holy."

However, the recent Gaza conflict created tensions. While Francis's criticism of Israel's government was motivated by humanitarian concerns for Gaza's population, many in the Jewish community perceived him as overly aligned with the Palestinian cause.

Despite this late controversy, Francis's papacy will be remembered for continuing to advance Catholic-Jewish understanding and friendship, and offering a progressive and down-to-earth face to the world.

■ **Zaki Cooper is a Vice-President of the Council of Christians and Jews.**

Rabbi Alan Plancey MBE (1941-2025)



Rabbi Plancey devoted his life to bridging the gaps between religions, cultures, and faiths. He believed deeply in meeting people where they were, learning from everyone regardless of background or belief, and building understanding through genuine human connection.

He never shied away from challenging conversations. Instead, he approached them with warmth, respect, and an unwavering belief in the power of face-to-face dialogue. He taught that true respect begins with listening, and that meaningful change is built through openness and mutual understanding. Though profoundly grounded in his faith, Rabbi Plancey was remarkably down to earth, approachable, and compassionate in all that he did.

His life was marked by extraordinary commitment and purpose. He dedicated himself tirelessly to strengthening Christian-Jewish relations and bringing diverse communities together. His work touched many leaders and institutions across British public life. As Chaplain of Luton Airport, he supported staff and travellers alike and was instrumental in introducing a multifaith prayer room. He engaged with members of the Royal Family, Members of Parliament, and countless figures in public service, including those at Downing Street.

Rabbi Plancey's interfaith mission was recognised far beyond his local community. He received the Freedom of the City of London in 1988, was a guest at the Royal Wedding in 2011, and was awarded an MBE by the Royal Family in 2023. He met many world leaders, including the Pope, the late Queen, and our current King. He also served as a police chaplain for 35 years and was made an honorary alderman of the county. He was twice appointed Mayor of Hertsmere, in 2019 and 2020, and in later years sat on children's services, education, standards, and licensing committees.

Despite his wide reach and public recognition, Rabbi Plancey remained humble and deeply approachable. He spoke with grace and warmth, often bringing humour into his conversations, and always seemed to know exactly what to say.

A man of many talents, he chaired the United Synagogue's Rabbinical Council, representing Chief Rabbis from Lord Jakobovits to Lord Sacks at official functions. He was welcomed everywhere—from a Muslim Ramadan breakfast to the King's first garden party—and when meeting the late Queen, he conveyed his rabbinic blessing, which she received with gracious thanks.

Above all, Rabbi Plancey will be remembered for his belief that faith should unite rather than divide. Through his actions, leadership, and courage, he demonstrated that genuine interfaith relationships are built through presence, persistence, and compassion. His legacy lives on in the bridges he built, the conversations he sparked, and the brave dialogue he led.

■ Meir Plancey

Walter Knoblauch (1936-2025)



Businessman Walter Knoblauch was a long-serving and dedicated member of the Northeast England CCJ branch, working closely with the CCJ national team. As a child, Walter escaped from Munich for Newcastle with his parents after war broke out in 1939; Walter's uncle even came face to face

with Hitler on a Munich doorstep in 1937, as Walter told Newcastle's Chronicle newspaper in 2014. Walter's grandmother Rosa and Aunt Paula perished in Nazi camps alongside other family members. May Walter's memory be for a blessing.

Ronnie Appleton (1927- 2025)



Ronnie was President Emeritus of the Belfast Jewish Community and Vice-President for the Council of Christians and Jews Northern Ireland. He was key to bringing Holocaust Remembrance to Northern Ireland and was Northern Ireland's Senior Crown Prosecutor during The Troubles.

Ronnie is survived by his wife Shoshana, Chair and Co-founder of CCJ Northern Ireland, and their five children.

TRANSITIONS TO CCJ'S PRESIDENTS AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES



CCJ would like to take this opportunity to thank CCJ Trustees and Presidents for all their support and service. In particular, we are grateful to Lord Michael Farmer, following his departure from the CCJ Trustee board in the summer. We are grateful for his wisdom, insight and spiritual strength; we feel blessed to have benefited from these throughout his tenure as Christian Vice Chair. 'Thank you as well to Fr Patrick Moriarity, who stepped down as Hon Secretary in Jan 2025. We are grateful for the experience and practical help that Patrick brought to the Board — he is still missed a year later.'

This magazine marks a number of transitions as CCJ Presidents move on from their roles. We are deeply grateful for the thoughtfulness, time and support CCJ Presidents lend to our work in a variety of ways.

We would like to thank and wish Rabbi Joseph Dweck b'hatzlacha, the best of luck, in his transition and move to Israel with his family. We look forward to welcoming him back to the UK in the future.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Revd Fiona Smith for all her energy and commitment in supporting CCJ. Please join us in sending thanks and blessings.

Finally, CCJ would also like to thank Cardinal Archbishop Vincent Nichols for his long service, 2009–2025, as President.

"CCJ would like to thank their Presidents and Trustees for all their support and service."

Alongside saying several bittersweet farewells, we are delighted to welcome as Presidents Revd Dr Tessa Henry– Robinson, Moderator of the Free Churches Group, and Rabbi Amir Ellituv as the new Spiritual lead of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation.

We are also delighted to welcome as CCJ President Archbishop of Canterbury Sarah Mullally, and the Most Revd Richard Moth, Archbishop of Westminster. We look forward to working with all of our new Presidents and continuing a close and special relationship with our existing Presidents.

We would also like to congratulate and celebrate the official launch of Progressive Judaism after a process led by Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Rabbi Josh Levy.

MEET THE STAFF



GEORGINA BYE

Co-Director

Georgina is Co-Director at CCJ. She is a passionate community builder and connector, always interested

in what connects us and how our differences can be celebrated. Following a career in the Jewish community and humanitarian aid sector she joined CCJ bringing her values based approach to bridge-building between communities. She lives in North West London with her family and outside of work, enjoys swimming, baking and spending time in the local woodlands with her family, especially the swings with her son.



REVD DR NATHAN EDDY

Co-Director

Nathan is a minister in the United Reformed Church and CCJ Co-Director (half-time). He also works as Chaplain to Mansfield College, Oxford

University, where he leads interfaith dialogue and chapel worship, and tutors in Hebrew Bible. He is keen to get ordinary Christians and Jews talking, and to help Christians learn about Jewish life in the UK today. Nathan, his wife Clare, and their daughters (one at university) live in London with chickens, a dog, and a cat.



LAZZARO PIETRAGNOLI

Operations Manager

Lazzaro joined CCJ in 2022 from Church Urban Fund, where he was

Communications and Public Relations Manager for four years.

Lazzaro has previous experience working in journalism and in local and national government. In his free time, when not busy with his two teenage children, he loves cycling, walking, and volunteering for a local community library.



JAY SERRAO

Financial Controller

Jay is the Financial Controller at CCJ. He is a CMA qualified accountant and has more than 18 years of experience working in market research, shipping, marketing and the charities sector. Outside of work, Jay records and produces music.



BETH BROWN

Campus Leadership Manager

Beth has worked in interfaith spaces and community development previously with Near

Neighbours. She set up Developing Dignity in 2020 which is all about inspiring period positivity, delivering workshops to primary schools on period products and period poverty. Beth is also undertaking counselling training and volunteers as a listener supporting people in crisis. In her free time, she loves playing board games and being creative through arts and crafts.



BETH WILLIAMS

Campus Leadership Manager

Beth comes from a theological background with an MRes in Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies. Alongside CCJ she is the Christian chaplain for Manchester Metropolitan University. Outside of work you can find her in independent coffee shops or running away with the circus in an aerial hoop.

CCJ EXISTS:

To promote religious and cultural understanding between Christian and Jewish communities within the United Kingdom.

To advance the elimination of religious and racial prejudice, hatred and discrimination with particular reference to antisemitism.

To promote religious and racial harmony within the United Kingdom on the basis of the ethical and social teachings common to Judaism and Christianity.

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