

Faith in Research 2017

#faithresearch2017

9.30am – 5.00pm

Chaired by Bishop David Walker



Time	Session		
9.30	Registration and refreshments		
10.10	Bishop David Walker: Welcome, introductions and prayer		
10.20	Dr Liz Graveling & Dr Olga Cara: Living Ministry		
11.05	Dr Bev Botting & Dr Ken Eames: Research highlights		
11.20	Dr Clive D. Field: Has the Church of England lost the English people? Some quantitative tests		
11.35	Refreshments and change over		
11.55	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p>Session 1a – Evaluating initiatives</p> <p>Chair: Dr Bev Botting</p> <p>Dr David Jennings Renewal & Reform: evaluation and dissemination of learning from Strategic Development Funding and other strands</p> <p>Kathryn Kissell Exploring the impact of Bowen Coaching on the work-related psychological health of Church of England clergy in the UK</p> <p>Luke Fogg Investing in People - Leicester Diocesan Growth Fund</p> </td> <td> <p>Session 1b – Bringing new people to church</p> <p>Chair: Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf</p> <p>Dr Hamish Leese & Dr Alan Piggot Evangelism in the Methodist Church</p> <p>Saltley Trust Christians in Practice: early findings from research on discipleship and community engagement</p> <p>Benita Hewitt The Toddler Project</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Session 1a – Evaluating initiatives</p> <p>Chair: Dr Bev Botting</p> <p>Dr David Jennings Renewal & Reform: evaluation and dissemination of learning from Strategic Development Funding and other strands</p> <p>Kathryn Kissell Exploring the impact of Bowen Coaching on the work-related psychological health of Church of England clergy in the UK</p> <p>Luke Fogg Investing in People - Leicester Diocesan Growth Fund</p>	<p>Session 1b – Bringing new people to church</p> <p>Chair: Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf</p> <p>Dr Hamish Leese & Dr Alan Piggot Evangelism in the Methodist Church</p> <p>Saltley Trust Christians in Practice: early findings from research on discipleship and community engagement</p> <p>Benita Hewitt The Toddler Project</p>
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13.10	Lunch		
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15.25	Refreshments and change over		
15.45	Bishop David Walker: The power of big (enough) data: using numerical information to understand distinct groups among Anglican churchgoers		
16.15	Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf: Talking Jesus, 11-18 year olds		
16.45	Bishop David Walker: Final remarks and prayer		

Speakers have provided us with biographies and synopses as follows:

Bishop David Walker

The power of big (enough) data: using numerical information to understand distinct groups among Anglican churchgoers.

This paper describes two pieces of research using the strength of a large data set of some 30,000 Anglican churchgoers, in order to explore distinct patterns within the experiences of particular groups. Looking first at churchgoers in their 20s, those who attend regularly are compared with infrequent churchgoers. Turning attention to ethnicity, comparison is made between those who self-identify as Black African and those calling themselves White British. In both cases conclusions for the ministry and mission of the church are identified.

Biography

David Walker has been Bishop of Manchester since 2013, having previously served in parish ministry in Sheffield Diocese and as Bishop of Dudley. Having trained as a mathematician, he is keen to exploit the potential of quantitative as well as qualitative methods for understanding the beliefs and behaviours of those who identify as Christians. He is the author of many academic papers within the field of Empirical Theology. His first book, *God's Belongers: How people engage with God today and how the church can help* was published in February 2017 by BRF and seeks to set out some of his thinking in a format accessible to the non-specialist.

Speakers

Dr Bev Botting (Chair Evaluating initiatives)

Dr Bev Botting is the Head of Research and Statistics in the Church of England Central Services and is responsible for providing statistics on all aspects of the Church of England and wider ecumenical data, and providing consultancy and commissioning research in the field of the Anglican Church and faith more widely. She is a highly experienced and enthusiastic senior research manager and statistician and has published widely on aspects of child health, record linkage and use of large national databases. She holds a PhD in Epidemiology and has previously worked for the Office for National Statistics and NatCen Social Research. When not at work, she can be found somewhere in a field or woods with groups of Girl Guides pitching tents, lighting fires (safely), and singing around a campfire.

Stephanie Denning

Faith motivated volunteering: responding to children's holiday hunger

This research looks at faith-based social action responding to food poverty. It has taken place at a Church of England inner city church in an area where deprivation is in the top 10% of the UK. Using participatory methods, as a Christian and researcher I established and ran a 'MakeLunch' Kitchen over 20 months before handing over the running to others at the church. 'MakeLunch' is a national Christian charity whose Kitchens respond to children's holiday hunger when free school meals are not available by providing a free hot meal and a time of play. This Lunch Kitchen serves

primary school aged children in the local community and importantly is open to all without any religious content. The Kitchen relies upon volunteers to run, leading the research to focus on the volunteer experience in how people of Christian faith are motivated to act in social action, and how that action is (or is not) maintained over time. This translates into an understanding of how and why people volunteer, and how people have different capacities to act. This is important to understand for any project relying upon volunteers in order to be sustainable over time.

Biography

Stephanie Denning is a final year Human Geography PhD student at the University of Bristol. Her work combines philosophy with the geography of religion and participatory geographies by running a faith-based social action project. The project has run through the national charity 'MakeLunch' to tackle holiday hunger providing the equivalent of a free school meal in the school holidays. The research focuses upon volunteers' experiences, exploring ideas around action and will through Spinoza and Saint Augustine translating to an understanding of how and why people volunteer, each with different capacities to act.

Dr Ken Eames (Chair – Poverty and community engagement)

My professional background is in mathematical epidemiology – making models of epidemic transmission to guide public health interventions. Before joining the Church of England's Research & Statistics unit, I worked for 10 years as a research fellow and lecturer at the University of Cambridge and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. I have authored over 40 peer-reviewed research papers, and 4 book chapters.

In my spare time I sing boisterously, run enthusiastically, and visit pubs competitively. I also occasionally sweep the leaves off the church roof and de-gunge the drains

Dr Clive D. Field

Has the Church of England lost the English people? Some quantitative tests.

Claims made by the authors of *That Was the Church that Was* (2016) that the Church of England has 'lost' the English people since 1986 are examined through religious statistics. Both attachment and attitudinal indicators are reviewed, the former showing the decline of the Church has been long-term, the latter that division between Church and nation is not always clear-cut.

Biography

Dr Clive D. Field OBE is Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History and Cultures at the University of Birmingham and Co-Director of British Religion in Numbers at the University of Manchester. His recent publications include *Britain's Last Religious Revival? Quantifying Belonging, Behaving, and Believing in the Long 1950s* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and *Secularization in the Long 1960s: Numerating Religion in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Luke Fogg

Investing in people - Leicester Diocesan Growth Fund

The Growth Fund has used 2 key strategies when asking churches/ fresh expressions of church to consider how they are seeing God at work amongst them through the funding they have received. Firstly, we ask to share stories of how the ministry that has taken place (be that a foodbank, a messy church, or a youth worker) is making a difference in the lives of those they engage with. This qualitative evidence does provide quantitative data (e.g. stories of conversion, baptism, service to the community) but it also serves to encourage and inspire others that the mission of God is transforming lives around them.

For larger grants, we pay for projects to use a tool called the Transformational Index

(<https://www.matryoshkaha.com/>) to explore what good looks like for them, in their context. This method seeks to give applicants control of what they measure for the good of those that will be impacted by the work. This process has been highly beneficial and does provide quantitative data specific to each individual project and the difference that they are seeking to make. During my session I will reflect on this as well as other quantitative data.

Biography

Luke has worked within Leicester Diocese for several years and has been the Support Officer for the Leicester Diocesan Growth fund since it began in 2013. Much of his role centres on supporting churches that are looking to access Growth Fund resources to help develop their missional activity and so grow their church. In particular, this can mean noticing trends within the diocese and helping parishes and fresh expressions of church learn from each other around what has seen growth across the diocese. A key part of his role is exploring the transformational difference of this investment of funding in a way that aligns with the idea of the whole family of God; that goes beyond simply counting bums on seats. In his spare time he enjoys vlogging, cricket and Frisbee.

Simon Foster (Saltley Trust)

Christians in Practice: early findings from research on discipleship and community engagement

Christians in Practice is an enquiry into how Christian learning and Christian outreach inform each other in individuals' community work. The project has been developed in partnership with CUF, Church of England Birmingham, the Diocese of Lichfield, the Arthur Rank Centre and Church of England Ministry Division.

A questionnaire survey of 32 Church of England congregations, selected by stratified random sample, is being carried out alongside interviews with four members of each of six churches. Questions in both explore what activities the individual engages with in the community; how these activities interact with their faith; and what their church does or could do to support them in such activity.

The work emerged from our findings in *What Helps Disciples Grow*, which identified that many Christians felt they'd grown spiritually through trying to put their faith into practice in daily life. It attempts to explore this further in a way that is practically useful to churches in their work to shape discipleship and reach out in loving service to local communities.

Biography

Simon Foster is researcher at St Peter's Saltley Trust. He has previously worked on *What Helps Disciples Grow*, a survey of Christian growth in 33 West Midlands congregations. Prior to that he spent 20 years in health and social care, in areas of complex system care such as mental health, family carers and dementia. His main area of interest is how people are formed in and by faithful communities.

The Saltley Trust is a charity committed to supporting and developing innovative work in three main spheres:

- Christian learning, discipleship and theological education
- The churches' work in, and contribution to, the FE and lifelong learning sectors
- Religious education in schools

Working across the wider West Midlands region, the Trust offers support, partnership and funding to people and

Dr Liz Graveling and Dr Olga Cara

Living Ministry

Living Ministry is an exciting new research programme from the Church of England, which seeks to gain new insight into how ordained ministers can flourish in their ministry. Taking a longitudinal, mixed-methods approach, the research will track ministers from four cohorts, returning at regular intervals to find out what and how they are doing. This paper introduces the project and some of the conceptual and methodological challenges inherent within it, and presents preliminary findings from the first wave of data collection.

Biography – Dr Liz Graveling

Dr Liz Graveling is a researcher in the Church of England's Ministry Division, where she conducts and advises on research into a range of ministry-related areas. She directs the Living Ministry research programme, which aims to follow cohorts of clergy through ministry to find out what helps them to flourish. Her research background includes work on religion and development from a social-anthropological perspective, and she regularly trains researchers around the country in the use of NVivo for qualitative data analysis.

Biography – Dr Olga Cara

Dr Olga Cara is a Senior Research Officer at the University College London Institute of Education where she has been since 2005. She is a sociologist with a wide range of experience in the field of social and educational research both national and international. Her expertise lies in mixed methods research that combines complex statistical designs, such as RCTs, longitudinal data and/or multilevel modelling with qualitative data. Her main broad area of research is in education as a tool for social and economic integration. She researches lifelong learning, family learning, intergenerational skills transfer as well as migration, bilingualism and ethnicity in educational context.

Benita Hewitt

The Toddler Project

'The church in England is really missing those in their 20s and 30s and toddler groups are one of the best ways to reach them' – Curate, Toddler Research

The aim of this research for the Church of England was to explore a range of Toddler Groups and consider practical ways in which such groups might become more confident in their Christian distinctiveness. 23 toddler groups were visited where qualitative research was conducted with leaders and users. Surveys were also conducted with toddler group leaders and with Diocesan Advisors.

The research highlights the missional opportunities of Toddler Groups, including their role in transforming churches, lives and communities. It gives inspiring examples of how faith journeys of those using toddler groups are being nurtured.

The research explores Christian distinctiveness, including expectations of toddler group users, how groups are showing distinctiveness, the risks of not being distinctive, what happens when groups change to become more distinctive and the challenges involved in this. The relationships between churches and toddler groups are discussed, giving practical examples of how to improve engagement and work together to build the church.

Biography

Benita started her career in 1980 as a Research Executive for one of the world's largest market research agencies. Following that she became Research Manager for Weetabix and then Granada. In 1987 Benita established a research consultancy, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. Clients have included British Airways, Argos, Barclays, Confused.com, Woburn Abbey and Safari Park, Marine Stewardship Council and various government offices.

In 2007 Benita became Director of Christian Research, returning to full-time consultancy in 2011. She specialises in Christian research working for clients such as Church of England, Care for the Family, Scripture Union International and Church Urban Fund.

Benita is experienced in a wide range of qualitative and quantitative techniques, both online and offline. She has worked in a wide variety of contexts: the homeless to the very affluent, from babies to the elderly, both domestic and international, from large multi-national organisations to small charities.

Dr David Jennings

Renewal & Reform: Evaluation and dissemination of learning from Strategic Development Funding and other strands

A key component of Renewal & Reform is the need to evaluate and learn from activity dioceses are undertaking to develop their mission and growth. Although learning will come from several sources, this presentation considers how we can learn from the evaluation of the new streams of funding, in particular the £24m per annum of Strategic

Development Funding, where it is an integral component of both the individual awards as well as the overall programme.

This is still a developing area for the Church of England. The presentation will include:

- the grant application process;
- some of the metrics and processes being used – lead measures, lag measures, and proxies for things that are hard to measure;
- the importance of ensuring we can use the outputs of evaluation;
- the need to think about audiences and what that means for evaluation and dissemination;
- encouraging practitioner-to-practitioner learning as well as disseminating centrally;
- moving towards a culture of learning – how to ensure people ‘own’ their measures, and act on them for review/improvement;
- ensuring that qualitative measures aren’t just for the “things you cannot measure” – what does ‘quality’ look like in the Church’s context.

Biography

After completing a PhD in plant biology, David spent 18 years in the Civil Service in a range of policy and delivery roles, before 5 years working in consultancy (mainly in the not-for profit sector). He joined the Strategy & Development Unit in the NCIs in 2011 to help deliver both strategy consultancy to dioceses and manage the Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas funding stream. His role has expanded to manage the new streams of funding for dioceses under Renewal & Reform, particularly the expanded Strategic Development Funding.

Rev Dr Elizabeth Jordan

Licensed Lay Ministry

This research arose from a request to participate in the examination of lay ministry which has been part of the ‘Reform and Renewal’ agenda of the Archbishops’ Council. I have carried out focus groups with Readers/Licensed Lay Ministers in five dioceses, facilitating a conversation about their understanding of the significance of being lay and of being licensed. The outcome has contributed to a renewed appreciation of the distinctiveness of a vocation to lay ministry, with some interesting reflections on how ordained ministry is perceived.

Biography

After a short career as a Tax Inspector, Elizabeth Jordan was ordained in 1987 as a deacon in the Church of England and was priested in 1992. Since then she has worked in three dioceses in England in parish and training roles. She is now responsible for lay ministry and training in the diocese of Chelmsford. In 2016 she completed a doctorate which has examined the expectations that ordained and lay leaders have of each other, and their differing perspectives on the nature of the congregation. She is now researching how congregations experience Interim Ministry and writing about what ‘ordinary’ Christians can teach those with academic qualifications.

Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf

Talking Jesus: 11 – 18yr olds.

What do we know about Young People outside of the church? Are they thinking like the rest of the population when it comes to faith and Jesus? We have researched the same questions as talking Jesus with 11 - 18 year olds, come and hear how they compare, what trends appear. At the same time we've done a larger mapping project to understand the demographics of the practising church, we will publish this at the Faith in Research conference.

Biography

Rachel is the National Adviser for Mission and Evangelism for the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England. Since a young age she has always been passionate that others meet and experience Jesus. In her role she leads on evangelism projects, does research, consultancy and leads the Mission Network. This network includes Diocesan Missioners and many others with a calling for mission and evangelism in the Church. She has a PhD in church history and has worked amongst prostitutes and drug addicts in Amsterdam's red light district. Rachel is married to Darren, a church planter at Christ Church Spitalfields in the East End of London. She is also part of Matryoshka Haus a pioneering Mission community connected to CMS (Church Mission Society).

Kathryn Kissell

Enhancing Ministry & Encouraging Clergy Well-Being: Exploring the impact of Bowen Group Systems Coaching on the Work-Related Psychological Health of Church of England Clergy

Research indicates that relations with others, whether inside or outside the Church community are fundamental to the psychological health of clergy. Facing unrealistic congregational expectations, dealing with conflict and managing the diversity of the pastoral role act as significant sources of ministerial pressure. Alongside this, support from colleagues, congregation, friends and family have been shown to sustain clergy and promote their well-being.

Murray Bowen's systems theory offers a framework for thinking about congregational relationships as reflective of all human relationships and as such, Bowen coaching offers an empowering response to the relational, and often potentially emotional, demands of ministry.

The research was a two-part project where Part 1 assessed clergy work-related psychological health through a cross-sectional survey of 300 CofE clergy and Part 2 employed a longitudinal control group design to explore the impact of a Bowen group coaching course on clergy working in three CofE dioceses. The quantitative survey comprised measures determining both positive and negative psychological health, spirituality, stress risk factors, relational resources and Bowen's Differentiation of Self measure.

Biography

Kathryn originally studied Experimental Psychology at University College, Oxford before undertaking an advanced diploma in Theological Studies at Trinity College, Bristol. Since then, her career has been divided between these two areas, employed in a variety of mental health services, including the NHS and also working within the church, spending six years working full time alongside her ordained husband. Currently drawing to the end of her professional doctorate in Counselling Psychology at Roehampton University, Kathryn took this opportunity to combine her

integrative, relational therapeutic training with her concern for Clergy mental health, researching the impact of resources to encourage clergy well-being and enhance ministerial practice.

When not ensconced in her study writing up her thesis or seeing clients the remainder of Kathryn's time is swept up with two primary school aged children. At some point she will remember she used to have other interests.

The Revd Ermal Kirby

The Daffodil, the Rose and the Hibiscus: Exploring Diversity in Ministry across Cultures

The Christian Church in Britain has become increasingly diverse culturally, particularly in urban areas such as London. In the Methodist Church, this diversity is reflected in the Church's ordained ministry: alongside the many international ministers who come to serve the British Connexion, the Church also shows increasing diversity in the cultural backgrounds of candidates for ordained ministry.

This increased diversity gives rise to a number of questions: What is the relationship between cultural identity and experiences of ministry? How are relationships within Circuit (i.e., local area) Ministry, and the way in which this ministry is received, influenced by cultural identities and attitudes to diversity?

This research project aims to:

- *Identify* how factors such as cultural background and attitudes to diversity influence relationships in circuits and the way in which ministry is received;
- *Apply* the findings to the policies and practices of the Methodist Church; and invite reflection from ecumenical partner Churches.

Biography

Ermal Kirby is a Methodist Minister, who currently combines two part-time roles: Research Officer with the Susanna Wesley Foundation at Roehampton University; and Superintendent Minister of the Barking, Dagenham and Ilford Circuit, having pastoral responsibility for the town centre churches in Ilford and Barking.

Born in Antigua, Ermal came to England at the age of eight. His theological education and ministerial formation were at Oxford University and the Caribbean Wesleyan College, Barbados. He has worked in community development in Inner City areas of Birmingham; as a Circuit Minister in urban and suburban contexts; as the Co-ordinating Secretary for Public Affairs with the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland; and as Tutor in Ethics at the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education.

In 1998 Ermal was appointed Chair of the London North East Methodist District, and with the re-organisation of Methodist District boundaries in 2006 became the Lead Chair of the newly formed London District. In 2011 Ermal left his post in London to serve the Methodist Church of Southern Africa for four years as a minister in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. Ermal is married to Jenni, a coloured South African and ordained minister; together they are committed to the struggle for justice, and the celebration of the enrichment that diversity brings.

Hamish Leese and Alan Piggot

Evangelism in the Methodist Church

The Methodist Strategic Research Team will report on a recently completed research project which sought to identify those areas within the church that are experiencing fruitful evangelism and to understand the factors that are causing it to bear fruit. The Methodist Church's 'Our Calling' defines evangelism as 'making more followers of Jesus Christ', so the research is both quantitative and qualitative, identifying both numerical and spiritual growth.

As well as discussing factors that nurture and encourage evangelism in a Methodist context, we will also share something of what we've learned in relation to the way the numerical data we collect capture the making of new followers of Jesus Christ. This will include a review of the classic Methodist 'membership' statistic as a proxy for purposeful invitation into lifelong discipleship, and some numerical analysis of stocks and flows into Methodist pre-, para- and post-membership categories in relation to making and sustaining followers of Jesus Christ.

Biography – Dr Hamish Leese

Dr Hamish Leese is a Research Officer within the Methodist Church's Strategic Research Team. His expertise lies in qualitative and empirical research and he has worked on research projects looking at evangelism, church growth, discipleship and equality, diversity and inclusion. His doctoral studies were in the creation and expression of identity in international political institutions and he retains a strong interest in both politics and identity.

Biography – Dr Alan Piggot

Dr Alan Piggot is Statistics and Mapping Officer in the Methodist Church of Great Britain and a licensed Anglican priest in the Diocese of London. He was adviser to the Bishop of Stepney on social and demographic change in inner East London and co-author with Bob Jackson of *Another Capital Idea: Church Growth in the Diocese of London 2003 – 2010*. His chapter on Growth and Decline in London Methodism is due for publication later this year in A.P. Cooper and D. Goodhew (eds.) *No Secular City: London's Church 1980 to the Present* (OUP).

Dr Tim Ling

Assistant Ministers, time and vocation

The Calling Far and Wide (CFW) project is a collection of studies aiming to examine the activities and experiences of clergy engaged in ministry within Higher Education chaplaincy, pioneering and Assistant ministry. This research is part of the Experiences of Ministry Project that we've been running in collaboration with King's College London since 2011 and builds on existing research that made a comparative study of incumbents in 2013. The CFW project is formed of a mix of qualitative and quantitative studies that has been conducted via a series of interviews, surveys and diaries. The theme of the research that links the studies is the examination of 'ministry on the edge', either in terms of role or in terms of activity. This presentation will report on what we have learnt about 'Assistant Ministers'.

Biography

Dr Tim Ling is the Church of England's Head of Ministry Development and oversees the Ministry Division's research work to enhance our evidence base as to what enables ministers to flourish in ministry. He launched the first Clergy Experiences of Ministry Survey at Faith in Research in 2011 and continues to be actively involved in the project. He is also responsible for the development, implementation and review of national policy relating to continuing ministerial development. He is an Honorary Senior Research Associate at UCL's Institute of Education where he pursues a particular interest in professional formation. His previous experience includes work as a police officer, company director, university lecturer and as a diocesan ministry development officer.

Naomi Maynard and Revd Dr David Primrose

Funeral Poverty: conducting action research with clergy

The cost of a funeral in England is rising, with many people leaving little or no financial provision for their death. This has resulted in some families turning to high cost loans to meet these costs, leaving them vulnerable to funeral poverty – poverty triggered or accentuated by paying for a funeral. Conducting on average just under a third of funerals within England, The Church of England has a unique opportunity to engage with families in this time of financial vulnerability. But is funeral poverty the Church's business? What role can and should clergy play in alleviating funeral poverty? Is the funeral visit a theologically and pastorally appropriate space to discuss funeral finances with families? Do clergy have the confidence and financial awareness to become funeral poverty 'champions'? Are there spaces beyond the funeral visit where the Church can and should address funeral poverty? Working in partnership with two independent researchers, Naomi Maynard and Jane Perry, these questions were explored through an action research project with clergy in Walsall for whom an information pack was developed, including details of a credit union funeral loan. Offering insight into the findings of this project, this presentation also reflects on the benefits and challenges of conducting research *with* clergy.

Biography - Naomi Maynard

I am an independent researcher, currently based in Liverpool, with an interest in research into the alleviation of poverty. Previous projects have included research into funeral poverty, foodbanks, credit unions, children's rights and rural ministry for clients such as The Church of England, Church Action on Poverty, Church Urban Fund, The Children's Parliament, Oxfam and Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre. Alongside this, I am currently completing a PhD at the University of Durham funded by the Economic and Social Research Council examining the long term impacts of young people's involvement with participatory organisations.

Biography – Revd Dr David Primrose

I am Lichfield Diocese's Director of Transforming Communities, with funeral poverty bringing together work themes of debt and death. My M Phil into psychology of addiction began whilst I was serving with chaotic heroin addicts in Karachi. My doctorate started whilst I was a vicar in the Diocese of Gloucester, exploring how church members in

good standing manage discrepancies between their ideals and behaviour. I am linked with studies on how social responsibility impacts the mission of the church, dementia-friendly churches, and the interplay between discipleship and social action.

[Dr Andrew Orton](#)

Connecting for Change in Christian Responses to Tackling Debt (and Related Research)

In a context where issues relating to finance and debt have a huge impact in local communities, this presentation will explore how Christian responses to these issues are engaging in different ways with others to respond through forms of social action. It draws on a research project that aimed to enable churches and other Christian groups in the North East of England and in London to discuss money issues in their local community. These discussions included reflecting on how the Christian faith may affect attitudes to money, and actions that Christians might take individually or collectively to respond to the identified money issues in their community based on these reflections. The presentation will consider the range of different responses being taken by Christians, how these are linking with others, and the potential of research to contribute to reflection and action in forms of social action such as this. This will include how innovative forms of participatory research can generate original reflection on the impact of faith in this work whilst becoming involved in the dynamics of change for those involved, and the opportunities, issues and challenges this presents for researchers in this field.

Biography

Dr Andrew Orton is Senior Lecturer in the School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University, where he researches faith-related social action in policy and practice, and is a member of the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action. His current research projects include the above work on Christian responses to debt, work on growth and fresh expressions of church in Methodism, and work with the Council of Europe on faith in intercultural cities. He has a professional background working with a wide range of organisations in voluntary, public and faith-based sectors in a range of roles, including as a practitioner, manager, volunteer, trustee, consultant and researcher.