

# The Journal.

ACT

SUMMER 2021



*Association of Christian Teachers*

[www.christian-teachers.org.uk](http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk)

# Summer

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**What do you think of “The Journal”? Let us know.  
Have you an article you would like included? Let us see it.  
Are there any other items you would like covered? Let us know.**

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# Welcome

What a challenging start to the year we have had as educators! Few were anticipating that we would again be back in a prolonged lockdown. And we certainly weren't thinking we'd be juggling 'hybrid learning' again, flitting between classrooms and computer screens, delivering lessons and setting work online as well as supervising students in buildings.

Praise be to God that we now are out of this partial schools closure, hopefully for the last time, and back with our students, where we can attend better to their educational and emotional needs. This term is going to be a period of rebuilding relationships, addressing many problems created by the pandemic, and of course, getting pupils' learning back on track. We'll also be discovering more than ever what it means to rely on God and 'find grace to help us in our time of need' (*Hebrews 4:16*). And perhaps God will give us special opportunity to minister His grace to those children in our care.

In this special ACT Golden Anniversary edition of the *Journal*, we want to look back and look forward. We want to give thanks to God for His faithfulness, and for the obedience of those who first discerned His prompting to form the Association. How encouraging

it is for Christian teachers to engage in mutual support! It has been humbling to learn of the founding members' vision and we are even more determined to honour those servants of Christ through the continuance and expansion of the work of ACT.

Please check out details of our **online programme of evening seminars** for the year, for example we have 'an evening with the Christian Institute' in May, and there will be more opportunities for teaching and equipping ourselves later in the year. Our website will have further details of these events.

Finally, do consider being part of our **celebratory events**. We're excited to be able to host a social time for members in the Reform Club, in London in July, and a service of thanksgiving, in Manchester in September, being an opportunity to re-dedicate the work of ACT to God and to pray for the future of the Association.

He who promised is indeed faithful (*Hebrews 10.23*). Thanks be to God for 50 years of ACT!

**Lizzie Harewood**  
ACT Executive Officer





# HELLO FROM Nathan...

## ... and goodbye David

My name is **Nathan Mair**. It's my privilege to be the new Administrator for ACT, stepping into David William's very capable shoes. Although I have very little teaching experience (bar an unfortunate experience leading online conversation classes last summer), I have been a grateful recipient of many years of education, both at school and at university.

I am convinced that education is a vitally important area of life for Christians to be involved in, and am looking forward to playing my part in the work of ACT as it seeks to resource Christians in the sector.

A Yorkshireman by birth, I grew up in Doncaster before heading north to study French and Arabic in the beautiful cathedral city of Durham. I've spent time living in Belgium, where I worked for a church, and in the Middle East. I'm now back in Durham, studying for a Masters' degree in translation, where I continue to be involved with the student congregation of my local church.

When I'm not working, I enjoy spending time walking and hiking, cooking good food (in particular curries and Middle Eastern food) and reading.

In saying 'hello' to Nathan, we are saying goodbye to **David Williams**. At the end of 2019, we were without two key staff at short notice; an Executive Officer and an Administrator. The Board advertised for an Administrator. A few days before the interviews, David emailed to say that he had not heard anything from ACT and was wondering about his application. For some reason his application had not been seen by the interviewing panel (we needed an Administrator!). It was found, read, and immediately David was invited for interview later the same week. It was clear to the panel that David should be appointed and he agreed to become the Administrator. Both David and the panel considered this to be part of God's provision for ACT.

At our Board meeting in March of this year we were able to express our thankfulness for all that David has done and been in just over a year. David had been appointed for just six months but had stayed on to see a new person into post. Personally, I cannot praise David highly enough for his contribution to the Association, and his support of me, during what has been a challenging time. Although David has stepped down from the Administrator role, he has said that he will still continue to be a practical support for ACT. Thank you, David.

**Barbara Bell** (*Chair of ACT 2015-20*)



# IS EDUCATION ENOUGH?

## **Can we teach our way to a better humanity?**

Education has been in the forefront of many peoples' thinking over the past year, probably more so than for many years. A nation of temporary home-schoolers has realised that teachers don't merely work a few hours each day, that they deserve greater respect for their skills, as well as their previously somewhat maligned holidays.

That there has been damage to children's learning as well as their social and mental well-being during the pandemic is irrefutable. Headlines, sensationalised at times, have added to public fears about the 'devastating toll' the pandemic has taken and the problem of 'widening attainment gaps'. Prof Russell Viner, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child

Health, put it succinctly when he told MPs, 'When we close schools we close children's lives.'

In all this, the message can come across to young people that, if you don't perform as well in the exams (or whatever measuring stick will be used this year), then you will have less value and will struggle to do well in life. A good education is seen as the key that unlocks the door of a 'successful' life.

But is this what the Bible teaches us? How should Christian educators view the purpose – and the limits – of education?

## **Christians value education - and have done through the ages**

The Bible encourages Christians to value education not least because one of the few things we know about the childhood of Jesus is that He 'grew in

wisdom' as He grew 'in stature' (Luke 2:52). Education was surely part of that process.

Christianity has been a tremendous influence for improving education throughout the world. The first book in most languages of the world has been the Bible. Many, if not most, of the world's languages were first set to writing by Christian missionaries. A case could be made that Christianity has been the greatest force for promoting literacy worldwide in history.

Global access to all levels of education has grown dramatically over the past three centuries, helped in no small part by Christian missionary movements pioneering schools throughout the world. Education was offered, giving the gift of literacy to all kinds of people, even in the remotest places, and to those who did not yet have their own fully-written language.

We all know the good that an education can do; it aids not just an attainment of knowledge, but of skills, critical thinking, problem solving and social integration. We know that the better education one has, the better life choices there are, and that to be more employable is a key to self-reliance. But as Christian educators, are we at risk of making what is a good thing into an *ultimate* thing?

### **Education is good - but inherently limited**

I think we are at risk of a form of 'chronological snobbery', a condition which C.S. Lewis defined in *Surprised by Joy* as:

*'the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age*

*and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited.'*

Even Christians are not immune from the notion that society is on a trajectory towards ever greater knowledge, along with an increasing moral enlightenment and virtue.

When we take a closer look at the reality of our world, the notion that skills and knowledge automatically equate to developed moral character idea is thrown out of the water.

In the last century, more people had access to education than ever before, yet there still exists civil unrest and war, famine caused by greed, persecution of ethnic groups and racial inequality, wide-spread corruption, mass kidnappings, terrorist atrocities and human trafficking; indeed, sadly there are more people in slavery now than at any point in history.

And we can all think of terrible things done by well-educated people. Take the Unabomber- Ted Kaczynski- professor of mathematics and Harvard graduate. He planned sophisticated mass murders with dry cell batteries to unleash mass devastation. Or consider Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister who masterminded the media indoctrination of the German people, fuelling their hatred of Jews and other marginalised people. He had a PHD, yet his education certainly didn't produce a 'better humanity'.

Closer to home, we can see all kinds of well-educated people displaying major character flaws and dubious morality. Whether it is medics who

abuse the trust of their patients, bankers who launder illicit wealth, lawyers who ignore justice and exploit the law for those offering the biggest fees, politicians who dissemble for personal or political gain or, painfully for our profession, teachers who take advantage of pupils for sexual gratification – even the best-educated people can and do go wrong. Education alone cannot turn wicked people into good people and actually enables some people to be more cunning in their wickedness. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has Sherlock Holmes make the same point in ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’, observing ‘*Ah me! It’s a wicked world and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all.*’

The Bible teaches that no matter how much knowledge we have, no matter how much we engage our brain with challenging concepts and explore academic theories, there is no way that we can thereby successfully educate our heart. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in *The Gulag Archipelago* recognised this ‘heart issue’:

*‘If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?’*

## **How can Christian educators respond distinctively?**

Jesus did not come to help us ‘to turn

over a new leaf’ or simply to become better people but something deeper and far more profound. He came to cleanse and renew our defiled and guilty hearts, that we may, as Jesus taught, ‘*love God with all your heart... and your neighbour as yourself*’.

If, even unconsciously, we are communicating to our students that the great problem in life is a lack of education, and that having more of it will eventually solve all the problems, then we need to check ourselves. God didn’t send us a tutor or a mentor to educate us out of ignorance (although, of course, Jesus was a great teacher), He sent a Saviour, a rescuer. God doesn’t require us to become more learned or wise in order to please Him, or to rescue our fellow humanity, were that possible.

And as Christians we have to accept that we cannot bring anything of ourselves, even our education, to impress God or move him to act more kindly towards us. The only thing we can offer Him is our sin! Knowing this for ourselves means that we are more likely to share with our students a willingness to accept that we are all flawed and are unable to deal with our deep-seated defects simply through more learning. This is one way that we can truly serve the children with whom we work, by making clear that **our intellect can inform but it cannot rule our heart**. Gently pointing this out is one way of being a distinctively Christian teacher.

**Lizzie Harewood**  
ACT Executive Officer

# A GOLDEN YEAR

As an Association, it is important for you, it's membership, to be able to be part of the thanksgiving and celebrations in this anniversary year, so that together we can acknowledge God's hand of direction and blessing over the years. Of course, the pandemic regulations have robbed us all of some of this year, but we still want to celebrate, be thankful and re-dedicate ourselves to service in education, and also to look for opportunities for teachers' development. Here are some things we may, subject to regulations, look forward to enjoying together:

**Saturday 10 July**, at the world-famous Reform Club ('*Around the World in Eighty Days*') in Pall Mall, London. From 11am - 2pm we will be holding a special social event to which all ACT members are invited, together with representatives from our partner organisations. Come to enjoy the venue (which you may have seen in one of many movies, from 'James Bond' to 'Paddington'), the light refreshments, and the fellowship of other Christians delighting to have seen God at work in education over the past 50 years. Treat yourself to a day out in London and, for part of it at least, enjoy Christian fellowship in a remarkable venue.

You will need to book in through Eventbrite (<https://tinyurl.com/>



[www.christian-teachers.org.uk](http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk)

*act50th*). The use of the venue has been given to us, but we do ask for a contribution of at least £10 *per person*, to secure the booking and to help with the cost of the light refreshments.

**Saturday 18 September**, in Manchester (venue to be confirmed) there will be a Service of *Thanksgiving and Re-dedication*, where we will spend time in prayer and thanksgiving for the work of ACT. We are delighted that **Alistair Magowan**, former Bishop of Ludlow, will bring a scriptural message to inspire us for the future.

If you have been or currently are supportive of the work of this Association, then we would invite you to be part of this important occasion, and pray for God to take us forward into the next chapter of our history.

Again, you will need to book in through Eventbrite (<https://tinyurl.com/thanksandreded>). There will be *no charge* for this event although an offering will be taken for the work of ACT.



In **November** (*date to be confirmed*), the **Rev Dr Joe Boot**, foundeign pastor of Westminster Chapel in Toronto, and founder of the **Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity**, will give a keynote one-hour address, via Zoom, to inspire and inform our members on the subject of *Being an effective Christian witness in a potentially hostile environment*. This will also be open to members of our partner organisations. Again you will need to book in through Eventbrite. There will be a nominal cost of £5 but we want no-one to be excluded for reason of cost, so email [chair@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:chair@christian-teachers.org.uk)

We hope that you will want to join with many others for this talk.

**A Jubilee Bursary:** The Board of ACT has also put in place a Jubilee Bursary to help support a young Christian teacher through the work of *TeachBeyond*, which recruits and sends Christian educators to serve in many different schools and organizations across the globe. In doing this, we hope to help expand the horizon of the next generation of Christian teachers and demonstrate this Association's intention to invest in them. Full details will be on our website [www.christian-teachers.org.uk](http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk) in due course.

Exciting times for ACT ahead – please be part of the thanksgiving, celebration and future of your Association!

Working in school, facing challenges, struggles, frustrations.  
You don't need to face things alone.

We are here and willing to stand with you in prayer.

Email us at [hello@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:hello@christian-teachers.org.uk)  
or if you would rather, just text us on:

**07483 321643**

**You can give us as much or as little information  
about your situation.**

**We will stand with you before the throne of the  
God who cares for you!**



## Three into One: ACT 50 years ago

In a decade of minor and major revolutions, 1968 saw the launch of a new Christian magazine *Spectrum*, for teachers and others involved in education. Promotional leaflets were sent to members of the Teachers Prayer Fellowship (TPF), Inter School Christian Fellowship (ISCF) and the Christian Education Fellowship (CEF), reflecting the wider strength of Christians involved in education in the late 1960s, who were women and men of prayer and vision.

*Spectrum* was in a sense a seed sown that would eventually bring ACT into being. Through local prayer and discussion groups and an annual prayer conference, supported by TPF's strong emphasis on prayer for teachers in the UK and overseas; through conferences and the involvement of many in the ISCF training and mission programmes, and the professional fellowship of CEF, Christian teachers were supported and resourced. The merging of these three would eventually lead to the foundation of ACT.

Lively and creative discussions took place before the launch of the Association. **Tom Dyer**, who had founded the Teachers Prayer Bond in 1926, worked with others including **Peter Cousins, Philip May, Betty Brockman** and **Freda Boon**, to ensure that ACT was more than a merging of three membership lists. Prayer and 'thinking Christianly' on crucial education issues of the day were to be at the heart of this new Association.

ACT was launched in 1971 with a regular termly bulletin (now the *Journal*), local groups and conferences. Radio interviews and live discussions on air were to become part of the wider outreach of ACT. In the years following, Stapleford House (see *The Stapleford Story*) took shape as a base for study days and weekend conferences. **Charles Martin, Fred Hughes, Trevor Cooling** and others shaped up programmes of significant value to educational practitioners.

For ACT, prayer, fellowship and the practical resourcing of Christians in education has continued to be at its heart.

Congratulations ACT on reaching your 50th Year!

**David Blair**

(ACT General Secretary 1971-76)

# Local ACTion

Volunteer local contacts (there were over 60 at one point) encouraged the development of ACT, organising a variety of events throughout the UK.

**Tom Kempton** and **Isobel Vale** were founder-members of the Oxford ACT group in 1973 and have written:

‘An invitation was sent out to local churches in and around Oxford and at the inaugural meeting there were over 40 teachers. Teachers from a variety of school settings were seeking support, as much was changing in education. Meetings were organised each term, and a social in the summer. Topics varied from teaching resources, to health education and classroom discipline. The group encouraged new teachers moving into the area and members supported local teacher training colleges. Meetings appealed to a wide spectrum, from nursery to secondary schools, state and independent schools. They were hosted at the local authority teachers’ centre and the Oxford University Department of Educational Studies.’

Each local contact encouraged members in their area and to a greater or lesser extent followed the pattern of the Oxford group. An example is a training day organised by the Reading group in 2005, on Christian approaches to classroom management and challenging behaviour; it was titled *Turning Fists into High Fives*. As the number of local contacts diminished a network of a few Regional Reps was tried.

- ACT is now hoping, once again, to establish a number of local contacts, to be called *Local Network Leaders* (see elsewhere in this *Journal*).





## Can YOU help ACT and make a real difference to Christian educators in your local area?

ACT are looking to recruit **Local Network Leaders** to establish a new way of supporting our members in more defined local communities. This will be a voluntary role, though any expenses incurred will be reimbursed.

**Local Network Leader** is an exciting opportunity to get involved with the reinvigorating of ACT 'on the ground'. It's also a great chance to gain valuable experience in facilitating opportunities for support and networking.

**Key Responsibilities** will include welcoming and encouraging new members, being available for initial pastoral and prayer support, disseminating key information and resources, and facilitating local meetings (in various formats appropriate to the context).

**You need to be** a member of ACT with a good understanding of education, be genuinely interested in the pastoral needs of members and good at networking with like-minded people.

**Anticipated time commitment: 3-4 hours per month.**

Please get in touch via email for a Role Description and details of how to apply.  
[executiveofficer@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:executiveofficer@christian-teachers.org.uk)

## Government

### Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April to Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May

*'Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."'* John 18: 36

- For the Secretary of State for Education.
- For civil servants in the DfE.
- For enough money to be available to schools for what they need.
- For Christian MPs to be faithful.
- For all MPs to work for their constituents and nation, not for themselves.
- For Christian members of the House of Lords.
- For local county, borough, town and parish councillors.

## Schools

### Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May to Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May

*'After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.'* Luke 2: 46

- For all schools as they adapt to a new way of working.
- For those schools which are becoming academies.
- For schools which cater especially for difficult pupils.
- For schools with a Christian foundation, that they may be faithful.
- For schools which are struggling, for whatever reasons.
- For schools where getting and retaining good staff is difficult.
- For the schools in your area.

## Pupils/Students

### Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> May to Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June

*'Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life'.* John 4: 13-14

- For pupils/students to see Jesus in the Christians they meet.
- For Christian Unions and Bible Clubs in schools and colleges.
- For Christian pupils/students that they will not be reluctant to be known as Christians.
- For all pupils/students who are considering the claims of Jesus in their lives.
- For those who are soon to leave school/college and are unsure of the next step.
- For those who have been badly affected by the pandemic.
- For any pupils or students who are being bullied.

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## School Visitors

### Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June

*“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”* Matthew 9: 37-38

- For schools being open to visitors.
- Give thanks for all volunteers who go into schools.
- For ‘Open the Book’ teams.
- For church ministers as they go into schools in their area.
- For ‘Good News for Everyone’ (formerly Gideons UK) as they seek to distribute copies of the *New Testament and Psalms* in schools.
- For all Christian visitors who wish to enhance pupils’ experience of learning.
- For Heads to be discerning in their invitations to people from outside their school.

## The Curriculum

### Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June to Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

*‘For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.’* Romans 15: 4

- For those who seek to diminish Christian influence in schools.
- For the *Relationship and Sex Education* curriculum, that schools will be wise in its implementation.
- For school curriculum planners.
- For school leaders as they work out school timetables.
- For the RE Council in its deliberations about the RE Curriculum.
- For academics who look at curriculum development and advise the Government.
- For Christians to have a positive influence on what is taught in schools.

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## Give 'Golden' thanks

### Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July

*'I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.'* Psalm 9: 1-2

- For those who had the vision to set up ACT.
- For all who have served ACT as employees.
- For all who have served ACT as volunteers.
- For those who have supported ACT through their prayers and generosity.
- For all members who have been supported pastorally and prayerfully through ACT.
- For ACT gatherings and events through the years.
- For the graciousness and steadfastness of our Almighty God.

## 2021 plus

### Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July

*'The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.'* Deuteronomy 31: 8

*'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.'* Hebrews 13: 8

- For our Executive Officer, Lizzie Harewood.
- For the Board and its Chair, Tim Coles.
- That the ACT Board will continue to be alert to God's direction as it seeks to serve people in education in the coming years.
- For ACT's Administrator, Nathan Mair.
- For links with other bodies, including TISCA (The Independent Schools Christian Alliance).
- For all who are anxious about the future.
- For excitement about all that God will do in the future.

# August 2021

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## Holidays

### Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August to Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August

*'By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.'* Genesis 2: 2-3

- For all school staff that they will be refreshed.
- For all who are finding it difficult to relax.
- For safety for all children and young people.
- For all for whom school holidays are difficult.
- For any Christian holiday clubs and camps that are able to be held this year.
- For school staff who are still in school during the holidays.
- For parents who struggle with their children, for whatever reason, during holiday periods.

## Ancillary staff and teaching assistants

### Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August to Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August

*'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.'* 1 Corinthians 13: 1

- For those who have the responsibility of looking after school buildings.
- For those who provide secretarial help.
- For those who work with pupils who have particular needs.
- For those who help to feed the children and young people.
- That ancillary staff will be respected by pupils and staff.
- That schools will have the finances to provide for necessary non-teaching staff.
- For teaching assistants, giving thanks for them.



# TISCA/ACT Joint Conference 2021

## *Thank you from Kick Academies*

Thank you to 'The Independent Schools Alliance' (TISCA) and 'The Association of Christian Teachers' (ACT) for the *Values Leadership* conference which they hosted earlier this year. It was an inspiring day which unearthed personal and organisational gold in the process.

### **Personality in Leadership**

The session on leadership, *Five Voices*, outlined how different personalities can change the working culture in an organisation. We looked at the types and impact of 'pioneers', 'creatives', 'connectors', 'nurturers' and 'guardians', all important components of world-class teams. God has given us to have differing personalities, skills and gifts so that we can work together. These types of insights always speak of the need for us to be united with others, co-working and being part of the body of Christ, with Him as the head.

### **Organisational Vision, Mission and Values**

We addressed the importance of having both an organisational and a personal **Vision** (what the 'promised land' is, and the 'yearning of the heart'); a clear **Mission** (the major building blocks of the journey); and **Values** (that bring the work to life and that must have time to breathe). This is so important, enabling cohesive leadership and creating an environment in which to grow well. From recruitment through to performance management, what is required must be clear; so not only *what* staff do but crucially *how* they operate is fundamental.

We have realised that for the educational charity KiCK, that seeks 'to transform young people's lives, with God's love, through sport and support', such things really matter.

If we are to hold on to what is most important, then it is vital that we have a strong ethos as our anchor, articulated values to which we will all hold, and clearly defined standards of behaviour for our chosen area of work. We recently completed an exercise where we involved all staff and trustees in defining our heart (*ethos*), our core (*values*) and what we visibly expect to see from all our staff (*our behaviour*). Through these, KiCK aspires to see a generation of young people who will reach their God-given potential, communities which have been socially changed for the better; and a spiritual change which transforms a nation.

**Joe Lowther**  
CEO of KiCK

**KiCK**  
TRANSFORMING LIVES

A small globe on a desk with books and stationery. The globe is blue and green, showing continents. It is surrounded by a black pen, a pink highlighter, a blue pencil, and a yellow eraser. In the background, there are several books stacked on a wooden surface.

# ACT OVERSEAS

One of the objectives of ACT is ‘to pray and support Christian teachers overseas’.

**Ije Nwaneri** is our current Overseas Secretary and the Overseas Committee members are **Sarah-Jane Bentley, Peter Gregory and David Midwinter.**

Former Overseas Secretaries include **Ruth Mercer, Barbara Kitchin, Alison Wilson, Phil Mellen, Andrew Palfreyman, and Jamie Jamieson.**

In her Overseas Report for the 1990 AGM, Barbara Kitchin observed,

*‘I have heard it said that the church without a vision will die and I feel that perhaps my role is to widen the vision of ACT to include areas of concern and involvement in other parts of the world’.*

Barbara added,

*‘This aim is not without difficulties given the changes and work load of teachers in the UK’.*

Looking through the archives, it would seem that this was a starting point for ACT really ‘acting’ beyond the UK.

Since then, a total approaching £100,000 has been given for overseas work. Countries in which groups have so far benefitted from ACT grants include: Argentina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ghana, India, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, and Uganda.

The money has invariably come directly from members and has largely been used for the establishment and support of Christian teachers’ support groups. At one time, ACT also provided speakers for overseas conferences, and regular financial support for John Shortt, in his role as Travelling Secretary for EurECA (the European Educators Christian Association). A grant has also been given to SVN (the Senior Volunteer Network). Current criteria for grants for Christian teachers’ groups overseas can be found on the ACT website.

*‘Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.’*  
Colossians 3:17

# Fifty Years of ACT – In Six Ps

This is a brief history of ACT, compiled from conversations with people and by searching the archives. Far from complete and, quite possibly with some mistakes, it is offered here as a witness to God’s faithful provision and enabling.

## PEOPLE

In 1971, **David Blair**, seconded by *Scripture Union*, was the first General Secretary of ACT and was given the challenge of bringing ACT into being.

**Richard Wilkins**, who took over from David in 1976, had an amazing twenty-five years with ACT. He was highly regarded, inside and outside of the Association, and his tenure helped enable ACT to be all it was and, by God’s grace, continues to be.

**Rupert Kaye** succeeded Richard, with the title of Chief Executive Officer, followed by the the appointment of **Robert Hall** and **Clive Ireson** together, until Robert retired. In 2020 **Lizzie Harewood** became the Executive Officer. The title of the people leading the day-to-day work of ACT has changed over the years but to each of them ACT owes a

huge amount as they brought their particular skills to the role and served God through their work with the Association.

Special mention must be made of **Carol Horne** who was with ACT as an administrator more than twenty two years. Richard, writing in an edition of *ACT Now*, observed that ‘Carol’s long service has been truly priceless’. Other employees of ACT have included a Field Officer, an RE Worship Development Officer and a Teachers Pastoral Support Adviser.

Alongside the employees there have been countless volunteers. For example, over one hundred people have served as trustees on the Board; there have been eight Chairs, six Treasurers and six Overseas Secretaries. All have given of their time willingly in the service of their Saviour.



Rupert Kaye



Robert Hall



Clive Ireson



Carol Horne



*The Board 2010*

One prominent member of the Board from the beginning was **Charles Martin**. Charles, as well as being Chair for a number of years and having a stint as Treasurer, had the vision for Stapleford House, once a vital part of ACT's work.



*The Board at work*

## PLACES

ACT initially worked out of the Scripture Union offices in London. Then, after a period in Richard Wilkins' home, the office was moved to St Albans, firstly operating out of the basement of the Crusaders youth work headquarters. After a basement, the office moved to the top storey of another building in St Albans, which was entered by a fire escape! The next move, in 2010, was to Northampton. The first of the offices in Northampton was on the top floor of a large house. The move from St Albans to Northampton was quite a challenge! Finally, in a move that anticipated by a couple of months a change accelerated by the pandemic,



*St Albans Office*

from January 2020 the Board decided it was no longer necessary to have an office, other than a Registered Office, and staff would work from home.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Over the years there have been many publications keeping members up to date with education news. *Spectrum* was a pioneering presence, becoming the *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* in 1997. *Digest* provided book reviews and *ACT Now* became a termly magazine from 1983. This was replaced in 2010 with regular newsletters and the current *Journal* superseded the newsletters in 2015.

Robert Hall established *ACTuality* in 2009 and after he retired, Clive Ireson ensured it continued. At its

peak it had nearly 2,000 subscribers, offering a weekly update for members and friends, and drawing attention to important developments in education. The last *ACTuality* went out in early 2020, being replaced since with a regular email update, the *Examiner*.

As well as regular mailings, ACT has also produced booklets and leaflets. In 2016, the Institute of Education at University College, London, received a tranche of documents from the NUT. In a 2018 post on the Institute's Library website, an archivist shared 'some of the gems that we've discovered so far.' The first 'gem' they shared? *Hallowe'en in School*, written by Richard Wilkins, and published by

ACT in 1994 (the first version of which had been published in 1982).

## PARTNERSHIP

ACT emerged as a partner of Scripture Union and UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) and there have been various joint ventures over the years. A Christian Headteachers Conference was a regular event organised by ACT, Stapleford and TISCA (The Independent Schools Christian Alliance). Other examples of partnership have included a Christian careers conference, *Faith in Work*, organised with CWF (the Christian Workplace Forum) and UCCF in 2005.

ACT has also been part of the Churches Together in England team which plans Education Sunday each year. In March 2021 ACT worked with TISCA on a conference aimed at

those teachers considering school leadership, *Purposeful and Soulful Leadership*. Currently, there are links with Transform Work UK, Pray for Schools, UCCF amongst others and ACT has representation on the Christian Coalition for Education and the Religious Education Council.

## PARTICIPATION

Residential conferences for ACT members used to be a regular feature of the ACT programme; members from different parts of the country shared fellowship and were challenged and encouraged in equal measure. There were also ACT Days, *Every Teachers Matter* roadshows and much more. Stapleford House ran many courses which were greatly valued by the membership. Local contacts and area representatives also offered events for members and potential members in their area.



Act Day 2010

## PRAYER

This has always been and will continue to be the foundation on which ACT is established. Prayer underpins all that ACT does. One of our older members, who had joined ACT in its early days told me how much she had appreciated the support of ACT when she first started teaching, and went on to say how she ‘prayed for ACT every day’ – which is both humbling and challenging.

In 1996 there were a number of events to mark 25 years of ACT. The final event had the title, *With hope in our hearts*. The *Prayer Diary* and the later *Text Prayer*, the styles of which have changed over the years, are a testimony to that hope. A prayer offered for Wednesday 14 November 2012 was this:

*‘We may not be comfortable in our present circumstances, but we can be comfortable in who God is. Thank you, Lord that we are loved, redeemed and safe in you, whatever our immediate circumstances.’*

Thank you, God, for this reminder that our Saviour Jesus Christ is all that we need to have hope, whatever we are doing, wherever we are, and whatever is going on around us. With fifty years behind us, we are thankful for all that God has done and are excited by all that God is doing and will do with ACT, and we continue ‘with hope in our hearts’.

**Barbara Bell**, a long-term member  
(*Chair of ACT 2015-20*)

## Did you know? In 1971

- Ted Heath was Prime Minister and Margaret Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education.
- You could leave school at age 15 (it went up to 16 the following year).
- It was decided to end free school milk, except for the youngest children.
- ‘Education in a multi-racial Britain’ was debated in Parliament for the first time.
- At the beginning of the year, 12 pennies (12d) was equal to a shilling (1s) and 20 shillings (240 pennies) equalled one pound. After 1,200 years of use, our quaint currency finally went decimal on 15 February 1971.
- Intel launched the first computer microprocessor and Philips released the first video recorder for home use.
- There were no mobile phones (1973), internet (1983), or SMS texting (1984).
- There was no National Curriculum (1989), SATs (1991-5) or OFSTed (1992).

# THE STAPLEFORD STORY

The late 1970s, an extraordinary man named **Charles Martin**, the then Chair of the ACT, had a dream for creating a conference and retreat centre for Christian teachers. By 1980 he had arranged the purchase of a disused Methodist chapel, added an accommodation block and opened a centre. It was called Stapleford House because it was in Stapleford, a not-so-leafy suburb of Nottingham close to the sixth-form college where Charles was principal. ACT found itself the proud owner of a centre. In 2000 Stapleford House became *The Stapleford Centre*, an independent charity while continuing its close connections with ACT.

The first Director was **Fred Hughes**, who pioneered the running of residential weekend courses on a

wide-range of topics. **Trevor and Margaret Cooling** followed him in 1985 and then **John Shortt** took the helm in 1991. He was followed by **Alison Farnell** and **David Pepper** working as a partnership, then **Ben Jones** and finally **David Morton**, who in 2011 had the unwelcome task of closing the Centre when it had become unsustainable.

The early work was focused on short courses with the aim of equipping Christian teachers to be faithful servants of Christ in their professional role. There was also a strong academic focus, with regular conferences on education theory. Out of these came several influential doctorates. Stapleford became a hub for innovative Christian thinking in education.





In 1987 the Centre started offering university-validated courses at Diploma and Masters degree level for Christians in RE. There were over a hundred graduates from these courses.

The Stapleford vision was to be a Christian influence in education through taking opportunities to make a positive, distinctive contribution that benefitted all children, whatever their own family background. It encouraged Christian teachers to take a missional approach, serving God in the educational context to which they had been called.

The work brought together those working in different types of settings, including community and church schools, and independent schools with a Christian foundation. Partnerships were built with a wide range of organisations such as the European Educators Christian Association (EurECA). Teachers were encouraged to see themselves as serving the common good alongside those of other religious beliefs.

In the 1990s Stapleford started grant-funded projects, focussed on developing a distinctive Christian

contribution to teaching and learning. This included the *Stapleford Project*, which was about improving the teaching of Christianity in RE; the *Charis Project*, for a cross-curriculum approach to spiritual development; the *Crossref-it* website for A-level English, and *Transforming Lives* with a focus on the Christian vocation of teaching. Thousands of copies of books, videos and other resources were distributed and an enduring legacy established.

The influential *Concept Cracking* approach to teaching Christianity that was developed at Stapleford was incorporated into one of the Government's model RE syllabuses in 1993, which was the precursor of the currently influential *Understanding Christianity* resource. The innovative *Charis Project* led to the *What If Learning* approach that is now used across the world.

Many were saddened when Stapleford's pioneering work came to an end but the enduring fruit of its ministry gives much cause to thank God!

**Fred Hughes, Trevor and Margaret Cooling, John Shortt, Alison Farnell, David Morton**



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**email: [admin@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:admin@christian-teachers.org.uk)**



## AN EVENING WITH THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

an overview of the legal issues that concern Christians in Education

**WEDNESDAY 12TH MAY  
7.30PM**

<https://tinyurl.com/evening-with-ci>

**ACT**

Association of Christian Teachers



THE CHRISTIAN  
INSTITUTE

# Chair's letter



Dear friends,

I hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of Journal, a reflection of God's goodness to us as an organisation over 50 years. It is our delight to serve you wherever you may be involved in the world of education. We long to pray for you, resource you, and inspire you to keep going as a shining light to the Lord Jesus in front of colleagues and students alike.

In the 'Sermon on the Mount' Jesus tells us that we are to 'let our light shine before others, that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in Heaven (Matt 5:16). This is not always easy. Folks can pick up on a tiny mistake or character flaw and rubbish our faith as a result. Others may suggest that you do not have to be a Christian to do good deeds; and they're right of course! However, the truth is that in a society that is increasingly disparaging of faith, increasingly accommodating of secular and godless behaviour, yet also increasingly lonely and hopeless, the world needs Christians to let 'their little light shine.'

You are not in education alone as a Christian.... hundreds of us belong to ACT and many others exist also. You are not alone as a Christian in the world - almost one third of the world's population identify as Christian. So keep going, for we are for you, but more importantly, so is God!

Keep letting your light shine, it will not be snuffed out (see John 1:5). Please join with us this year as we celebrate God's goodness in July and September and let's keep the Association of Christian Teachers' light shining.... together!

**Rev. Tim Coles MTh.**

Chair of the ACT Board

## **Postscript to the Journal**

A number of our members regularly receive the Journal by email. However the Board decided that, for this special edition, celebrating fifty years of ACT, we would like each member to receive a hard copy which they can hold onto as a keepsake, if they so wish. You will receive the next Journal in your usual way. Thank you for reading this special edition.

# The Association of Christian Teachers GDPR Policy

The following notice setting out our policy will appear on our website and be given to each new supporter.

1. All personal data you have given to us (eg name and contact details) will be kept securely.
2. We shall take appropriate technical and other measures to prevent unlawful processing or accidental loss, or destruction of, or damage to personal data.
3. If any personal data is lost or our systems are hacked we will inform the Information Commissioner's Office and the individuals concerned without delay.
4. We try to keep personal data up-to-date and rely on you to let us know of any changes.
5. The only people who have access to your data are the Staff, Directors and Regional Representatives of the Association of Christian Teachers.
6. We do not pass your data on to any other person or organisation, unless you ask us to, except when legally required to, eg informing HMRC of Gift Aid donations to claim the tax back.
7. The data we have about you is used to send you information related to the work of the Association of Christian Teachers and your support of it.
8. You have the right to see the personal data that we keep about you (eg your name, contact details, your donations and gifts, whether you want to receive ACT The Journal and any other specific requests you have made).
9. You can opt out of our mailing list at any time by contacting us at our registered office address.

*NB if you make a Gift Aid donation, we legally must keep your details for 7 more years, even if you have asked to come off our mailing list. We will then keep your details for that length of time but will not send you mail.*

Our other policies affecting your relationship with ACT are available to see on the website at [www.christian-teachers.org.uk](http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk)

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