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NCLF Newsletter

NATIONAL CHURCH LEADERS FORUM | A BLACK CHRISTIAN VOICE

STANDING IN THE GAP



by Minister Shermara HOYTE

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God is still looking for someone to stand in the gap. Not only to lead organisations or manage structures, but to steward, protect, shepherd and to love God, His agenda and His people. Everything else must flow from that place.

Look around us, at our television screens, newspapers and social media feeds and it is clear we are living through deep polarisation, division and fragmentation. Leadership is taking place in a VUCA world: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. We are leading through geopolitical instability, economic pressures, rapid technological transformation and artificial intelligence, while migration and displacement stare us in the face. Generational change is reshaping our communities and trust in institutions is declining.

Behind that decline is a deeper disappointment. People have been let down by the very things that promised to save them.

Capitalism promised that markets would save us; scientism that technology would save us; postmodern identity that autonomy would save us; secular states that the state would save us; and leaders promised to deliver. Yet some have exploited genuine economic and social fears for gain.

The result is anxiety in the masses, and anxious, disappointed people go looking for someone to save them. They become vulnerable to self-proclaimed messiahs offering simple answers to complex problems.

If the Church does not stand in the gap, others will.

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Email us at info.nclf@gmail.com or connect with us on social media
Visit our website at https://nclf.org.uk

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Alongside this is an intensifying contest over belonging. People are increasingly sorted into categories: the political, cultural, racial, immigrant, theological and generational "other". Difference is presented not as something to navigate, but something to fear.

Meanwhile, the algorithm has become one of the most powerful 'disciplers' of our age, telling us whom to fear, what to think, whom to blame, distrust and dismiss. Falsehood travels faster than truth, making discernment a mandatory leadership competency. We will know them by their fruit, not simply their rhetoric.

We are also challenged to stand in the gap amid the rise of internationally funded political nationalist movements across the UK, Europe and beyond – some increasingly wrapping themselves in Christian language, symbols and imagery while advancing ideas at odds with the Christ they claim to represent.

This is the Christ who crossed boundaries, sat at tables with outsiders and broke down dividing walls; the Christ who commands us to love both neighbour and enemy. The Christ who Himself became a refugee, fleeing with His family from the infanticide and political violence of King Herod.

So, what is God's invitation to leaders at such a time as this? Is it all doom and gloom? Are we in the Wild West?

What if, like Esther, we have been strategically placed in divided communities to tell a different story of reconciliation, hope and a Kingdom that refuses to be defined by the divisions of this world?

If the Church does not stand in the gap, others will

Perhaps one of the greatest prophetic acts available to the Church is not winning arguments. It is loving across divides – even if that means correcting. Isaiah 54:2 says: 'Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.' What if that means lengthening our cords towards the other?

Ezekiel 47 shows us a river, flowing from the altar, ankle-deep, knee-deep, waist-deep and wherever it goes there is healing. Yet Ezekiel also sees marshes and swamps – waters that do not flow. Stagnation can come through traditionalism, the dead faith of the living, rather than tradition, the living faith of the dead. Swamps can still look like successful ministry: meetings, conferences, strategies and full calendars, while the flow of life has stopped.

Are we rivers, or have we become swamps?

Standing in the gap means investing in the next generation, so the river does not run dry when we step back. You cannot hand swamp water to those coming behind you and call it inheritance. Be a Paul to Timothy, not a Saul to David. Emerging leaders, be a Solomon, not an Absalom.

Finally, standing in the gap requires sustaining the person behind the title. Many leaders have perfected the pastoral "I'm fine", while carrying wounds inflicted by those they were called to serve.

On retreat recently, I looked at Jesus on the cross and was drawn to the wounds in His hands – the place of labour, service and ministry. The Lord said quietly to me: I was wounded by those I came to serve.

Your wounds are close to His heart. Betrayal did not stop God's purpose in Jesus; it became the pathway to resurrection.

Before you were a minister, you were a son. Before you were a leader, you were a daughter. Do not lose yourself in your assignment. Return to your first love.

So, leaders, stand in the gap for the Kingdom of God. Resist the cultural tide of ideology and the swamp.

Stay connected to the altar, so living water can heal the nations sitting in our pews and communities.

Give your wounds to Him, receive healing and do not become weary in well doing.

Stand in the gap.

Before you were a minister, you were a son... a daughter... Do not lose yourself in your assignment

A CALL TO RECOVER OUR COMMON HUMANITY

NCLF Statement on the death of Professor Jason Arday

The National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF) has published a statement [https://nclf.org.uk/] following the tragic death of Professor Jason Arday, calling for a renewed commitment to human dignity, compassion, justice and institutional accountability.

Professor Arday's remarkable academic journey inspired many – particularly within Black communities, where his achievements represented hope, possibility and the breaking down of barriers within British higher education. His death has prompted profound sadness, but also important questions about the kind of society we are creating and the environments in which individuals are expected to succeed and flourish.

In our statement, *A Call to Recover Our Common Humanity,* NCLF deliberately avoids passing judgment on the allegations surrounding Professor Arday. Instead, it invites a deeper reflection on how individuals are treated when facing public scrutiny, and whether our institutions and wider society have developed cultures in which accountability can coexist with compassion. At the heart of NCLF's message is a simple but challenging question: **Can we become a society capable of pursuing truth and accountability without destroying people in the process?**

The statement recognises that



Picture credit: Wikimedia Commons

universities and other institutions are not neutral environments. They operate within established cultures, hierarchies and systems of power that shape opportunity, recognition, belonging and advancement. While individuals must remain accountable for their actions, institutions must also be willing to examine their own responsibilities, decisions and practices.

For Black people who are occupying prominent positions, these questions carry particular significance. This is not an attempt to dismiss legitimate concerns or avoid difficult questions. Rather, it is a call for more comprehensive accountability that recognises both personal responsibility and institutional power.

Drawing upon Christian teaching, we are reminded that **human dignity is not earned through achievement, status or perfection**. Every person bears the image of God and deserves to be treated with respect – including during moments of controversy, scrutiny or failure.

Our statement challenges the growing culture of public humiliation, where complex human lives can become reduced to headlines, allegations and social media commentary.

It calls for environments where people can be challenged without being dehumanised; investigated without premature condemnation; and supported when facing overwhelming public pressure.

Ultimately, Professor Arday's death invites us to consider not only what happened to him, but what happened *around* him, and what we are learning about ourselves and the systems we have created.

Human flourishing requires more than access and opportunity. It requires communities and institutions capable of holding truth, justice, mercy, responsibility and compassion together.

As Black Christian leaders, NCLF remains committed to contributing a thoughtful, prophetic and compassionate voice to national conversations, advocating for a society where justice and mercy are not competing values but essential expressions of our common humanity.

We continue to hold Professor Arday's family and loved ones in our prayers.

SERVE: THE POWER OF POURING OUT

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE 2026

by MRS SONIA GRANDISON

A Weekend of Worship, Service and Transformation

From the low hum of anticipation on Saturday 3 October, to the resounding praise and thanksgiving on the Sunday, the **Women's Empowerment Conference (WEC) 2026** ended on a joyful high. Women came together from across the UK, Jamaica and the USA to explore a simple but powerful call: 'Serve: The Power of Pouring Out.'

Convened by National Women's Discipleship Ministries Director **Mrs Sonia Grandison** and her Board, the two-day gathering challenged an idea that can quietly diminish the meaning of Christian service: that serving is somehow the same as being subservient or less than. Instead, WEC 2026 pointed women back to service as a quality inherent in the Godhead, and as a pathway to personal leadership, maturity and faithful Kingdom living.

Stories of Service

That message came vividly to life during Saturday afternoon's panel discussion. **Deborah Akinlawon QPM**, the first female Executive Director of the Christian Police Association; **Shana Barnett-McCallum**, who received a Samaritan's Purse shoebox at the age of 11 and now serves as a Samaritan's Purse International Field Representative for the Caribbean, Pacific and Islands; and **Natalie Walters**, who served in Costa Rica and Bolivia and is now Head of Justice, Peace and Integrity at the Diocese of Southwark, shared stories that testified to lives poured out in service.



Poured Into, Ready to Pour Out

Each morning began with prayer, before praise and worship ushered delegates into God's presence. The conference choir captured the theme beautifully through '*Pour It Out*', moving many to tears.

The keynote speakers brought rich biblical perspectives to the theme. **Revd Mareesha Morris** reflected on Mary's response: "Be it unto me as You have said," alongside the story of her cousin Elizabeth, highlighting the strength of an intergenerational approach. **Dr Arlene Hall** of the USA directed attention to Hannah, reminding delegates that although Hannah was barren, she was certainly not empty. **Jody-Kay Bradley** focused on the Holy Spirit as the Source of the infilling from which our pouring out must flow.

Celebrating Women Who Serve

WEC 2026 also created space to



honour women whose faithful service continues to make a difference. Individual women from 40 churches were recognised through the Mothers of Zion Awards, while **Charlton Tabernacle** received the Women's Discipleship Ministries Director's Choice Award for its continuing work to empower and grow women for Kingdom service.

Alongside worship and teaching, delegates had opportunities to learn with sponsor **Samaritan's Purse** and browse a range of jewellery, self-published books and clothing. These moments added to the warmth, fellowship and variety of the conference experience.

WEC 2026 was two days of pouring out, being poured into and preparing to pour out again. Women returned home encouraged, challenged and renewed, carrying with them the call to serve from a place of spiritual fullness. As the conference drew to a close, one playful question remained: Why must all good things come to an end?

Missed it? Keep your ears open for the next one! Until the next WEC... walk good.

Adapted from the WEC 2026 conference reflection

PASSING THE BATON

Reflecting on Generational Legacy



by Paul Johnson

As we celebrate Black History Month, we honour legacy not merely by looking back, but by actively building up those who follow.

Solomon reminds us that 'a good name is better than precious ointment' (Ecclesiastes 7:1). At the end of a lifetime, financial portfolios and accumulated titles fade. Life tributes celebrate personal impact – the steady counsel, character and faith passed down.

Whether it was **Nelson Mandela**, equipping rising leaders during decades on Robben Island, or **Denzel Washington**, operating by his 'Learn, Earn, Return' blueprint to humbly sponsor *Black Panther*'s **Chadwick Boseman**, enduring leaders understand a fundamental truth: your legacy is not the platform you build, but the leaders you equip to receive the baton.

Your legacy is not the platform you build, but the leaders you equip to receive the baton

When Scripture declares: 'One generation shall praise thy works to another' (Psalm 145:4), it calls for an active, intentional transfer of wisdom.

By establishing mentoring pipelines that **pair the seasoned experience of elders with the creativity and digital fluency of emerging talent**, we create a compounding legacy. Through redemptive mentoring, we **turn youthful potential into purposeful calling** – ensuring our spiritual heritage persists across generations.

What Will *Your* Legacy Be?

Will your labour fade with time, or will it resound for generations to come?

Will your labour fade with time, or will it resound for generations to come?

Redemptive mentoring is a divine blueprint designed to secure an unbroken chain of faith, wisdom and purpose. To deploy proven intergenerational frameworks, succession blueprints, and Kingdom strategies, delve into *The Digital Ark: Home of Redemptive Mentoring in Wisdom*.

Establish your enduring legacy today with Churchgoers.app.



What's On

Details of all these events may be subject to change, so please check Eventbrite and the relevant websites for information













