

CITYtheology

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“To my kids it’s not even worth a conversation. They live in a world that embraces sexual diversity within a faith context.”

Stroma McDermott reflects on **Steve Chalke’s** Leeds’ talk about Faith, Human Sexuality and Relationships



Is identity something innate or something we can decide?

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Faith, human sexuality and relationships

In September, the Leeds Church Institute launched a series of events about faith, human sexuality and relationships. An ecumenical initiative, the series is intended to engage a wide range of people with different approaches and understandings, providing space for dialogue, at the time when Equal Marriage legislation is new in the UK. The series was launched by Steve Chalke, founder of Oasis, United Nations' GIFT special adviser on community action against human trafficking and a prominent, sometimes outspoken, Christian leader and social activist.

For more information about events in the series, visit www.LCILeeds.org



Unafraid to speak

Stroma McDermott braves a grizzly Tuesday to join a conversation the Church cannot ignore



It is testimony to the significance of sexuality and relationship as a current hot topic that well over 200 people packed into St Chad's Church on a wet, dark and grizzly Tuesday evening, having battled through rush hour traffic. Similarly, it was testament to those attending that the poor weather and transport difficulties hadn't dampened their spirit; the buzz and interest was clearly apparent. This was a group who welcomed the opportunity for good dialogue on a subject which is often in the headlines but which does not always sit comfortably on church agendas.

Indeed the whole evening was framed by a warm and helpful atmosphere, allowing the potential to listen,

question and raise issues of concern by people of different opinions. Respectful and relaxed, but not wishy washy.

Rev. Steve Chalke remains an impressive, articulate and charismatic speaker, and his passion for his faith, his beliefs and the subject of human sexuality was apparent from the off. Beginning with his recognition of the Bible as a library of books that reflect a generous and diverse set of texts, voices and experiences to be chewed through regularly, he talked through the process by which he had concluded the need for significant, monogamous and covenantal faithful life-long relationships that can be both heterosexual and same sex.

His understanding was shaped both by the Bible he loved, and the stories and experiences of the people and congregation he loved. Clearly this was a man at peace with his decision, albeit one who was reluctant to be the first to come out and say it. It took him 12 years, and his responsibility to the thousands of workers and volunteers and the Oasis Trust, to do so. It has clearly cost him.

Listening to him speak, I was struck by several things. First, his genuine and lifelong affection for Scripture; all Scripture. He wasn't cherry picking the favourite bits and ignoring the difficult texts,

something he clearly believed many Christians and churches do. It reminded me of the Psalmist and writers of wisdom literature, meditating and chewing through the Law and encouraging others to do so. Rabbinic argument is based on the conversation and dialogue between two rabbis before discerning which argument is the stronger, with both rabbis being afforded credit for the dialogue.

Somehow we have been afraid of the conversation, and our interpretation of the Law has become about obedience to the detail rather than peeling back the layers to the principles. Jesus recognised the two key principles as love your God and love your neighbour, with the Golden Rule of his teaching being, 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you' - something often forgotten in relation to the LGBTQ community. Many years ago, when expecting my second child, we suddenly found ourselves having sold our house and with nowhere to go to. Our prospective homelessness was a source of concern to family and many Christian friends, but it was a long standing gay family friend and his partner who were the only ones who offered us shelter and the kindness of good Samaritans. We could learn a lot from the generosity and inclusive hospitality offered by LGBTQ communities.

Secondly, although unsaid, Steve Chalke clearly allows his thinking to be influenced, not just by Scripture, but by tradition and experience, the three legged stool of theology beloved of Anglican theologian Richard Hooker. The stories he retold of those he led and supported had clearly been hugely influential on his journey. Yet lacking in what he said, and often lacking in the church's consideration, is our need to recognise that the gay community has been engaged with Christianity throughout the ages. We have gay clergy, we have gay Christian brothers and sisters and they already contribute to the richness of the Church and have done for many centuries. We rarely mention it, I find that sad and worrying.

Third, despite the fact that we know the Bible is made up of 66 books by different authors, we still don't seem to engage with it as well as we should. Do we meditate and chew? Do we wrestle? Do we allow new voices to be heard through it? Do we check our hermeneutics and translations with the care we should? Can one word in Paul's writing hold that much force and power over others? These are questions that we need to wrestle with together, in conversations, in openness. No one is asking anyone to go beyond their own conscious beliefs,

certainly not Steve Chalke, but to be able to listen and start conversations might help us to breakthrough some of our unconscious prejudices and allow new conscious thinking to emerge. Our engagement with the Bible, and the need for ongoing theological education within the church around uncomfortable passages and issues, is crucial. The Psalmist and Prophets asked lots of questions, so did the Scribes and the Pharisees. God doesn't balk at the questions; but perhaps he is disappointed when we don't ask or acknowledge them.

Lastly, as we reflected on the evening at LCI's subsequent Cake and Conversation event, what became apparent was how things have shifted exponentially on this subject. To my kids it is not even worth a conversation. They live in a world that embraces sexual diversity within a faith context. The young, emerging church is already largely familiar and accepting of same sex relationships, confirmed perhaps by Steve Chalke's comment that promiscuity was not what God intended, but faithful, lifelong relationships were. As we chatted and shared our own stories, we recognised our own difficulty with some of the issues and their complexities. Not everyone shared Steve Chalke's view, either at the event or at our later discussion, but we were all grateful for the opportunity to share without condemnation of viewpoints.

So, this leaves a final thought. After such a good evening of thoughtful debate, how do we take these conversations out for further airing? How do we maintain the dialogue? What is our response to an event like this, is it food for thought or fuel for action?



Simon Hall asks

Who are you?

A review of Jamie Fletcher's new film, *Alphabet Club*



Who are you? No really, who are you? Identity is a slippery thing. Perhaps a lot more slippery than humans have thought for most of our existence. Is identity something innate or something we can decide? Who gets to decide? When a parent or teacher tells a child that they won't amount to much, is that really who they are? Jamie Fletcher's *Alphabet Club* is an exploration of this theme by taking a multi-perspectival view of one of the most contested identities in our culture: gay.

Working with friends, volunteers and the remarkably gifted actor and drag artist Owen Farrow/Divina de Campo, Fletcher has created a series of vignettes that are in turn amusing, jarring, confessional, enticing and transcendent. Melancholy too. Because, like most stories about a sexual identity other than straight, it is a story about alienation, about otherness, and about what it feels like to take on a word like gay and the liberation and expectation that comes with it.

If you are over 80 gay once meant jolly. If you are a bit younger than that gay carries the baggage of JohnInmanpartiesKennethWilliamsAIDSFreddieMercuryromiscuityLiberaceisolationLarryGraysonpofterponcenance. If you are under 20 gay means lamestupidjustdontdoit. Imagine being 13 and taking on that word.

Because gay comes readymade and pre-packaged. According to *Alphabet Club*, you don't get to decide what it means, you wear it. We are all involved in what it means to be gay. Simply having same-sex attraction may be (more than) enough to exclude you from all sorts of places, but it might not be enough to make you 'gay'. The film explores the rejection caused by unwished-for otherness, but also the way that a label brings a continual negotiation with one's own sense of self.

Alphabet Club handles this love-hate relationship really well, opening up with a funny dissection of gay tropes that is both affectionate and lightly mocking, offering the audience an immediate entry into a world that may be different, but also feels all-too-familiar. Is gay really about sexuality at all, or is it rather a lifestyle, a gang, an identity? In a world where the late 20th century stratification of mods and rockers, soul boys and new romantics, indie kids and hip hop fans seems to have petered out, gay identity, according to *Alphabet Club* at least, retains the excitement of a youth cult. And youth cult movies follow a predictable path: whether it be *Quadrophenia* or *Saturday Night Fever*, our protagonist is an outsider, a loser redeemed by belonging. Even if he has a dead-end job and a dysfunctional family, when he is in his world he is a prince. But soon the rules of the gang and the

imperfections of its members begin to undermine the fantasy and following one trauma after another our (anti)hero emerges into adulthood battered, bruised and wise.

This is not the narrative arc of *Alphabet Club*, if a montage of comedy, talking head prose, contemporary dance and drag opera can be said to have a narrative arc. Perhaps that is because its director, writer and principle actor are all still young men. They are still part of a 'gay scene'. But if they ever did grow out of the scene (and there are signs of a certain knowingness in the film), would they be more or less gay? More or less themselves? It's not clear whether *Alphabet Club* knows what the denouement of this tale will be, but as an attempt to allow the audience into the mind of a young man as he finds his way to an identity he can own (and perhaps one day love), the film is a resounding success.

The slipperiness of identity is imaged through the medium of contemporary dance. Here we have a form of communication which has set rules and forms, but is nonetheless open to interpretation by the audience. Certain repeated moves are almost mime-like in their literalism, while others remain densely symbolic. When movements first made by a single dancer are then repeated in a later scene by a group, we are left to wonder at the motivation of the collective: do we imitate as an act of solidarity and sympathy, or are we merely copying so we can belong? The ambiguity of the movement perfectly reflects the ambiguity of the subject matter.

Here is another label: Christian. The director grew up as a Roman Catholic and walked away from his faith as a teenager when it became clear that his identity as gay was incompatible with his identity as a



Filmmaker, Jamie Fletcher
www.jamiefletcher.co.uk

Christian. There are echoes of this struggle in the film, but the Church is not singled out for particular opprobrium. Clearly in the 1990s the voice of the Church was just one of many that brought shame and humiliation into a young man's life. Today Jamie is happy to own the label Christian, and while this film doesn't address his own journey back to faith, it provokes many questions nonetheless.

Every community creates rules, boundaries, artefacts and rituals. *Alphabet Club* explores how these play out in the context of a young man coming out and making his way in the world. It's almost as if Fletcher is at a stage of his own maturing that he is seeking his own identity in tension with all of the labels attached to him, including his gay identity. One can only imagine that he feels the same way about being called a Christian.

Perhaps, rather than tightly bounded sets, Fletcher is advocating seeing identity as a series of overlapping clouds, which sometimes interact in creatively new ways. As a pastor and theologian one is left wondering where God's word resides, the biblical idea that God sometimes gives us a new name (Matt 16:18), or changes our circumstances so dramatically that the names people call us are transformed (Isa 62:4). *Alphabet Club* is suspicious of all names, but I remain hopeful that somewhere out there is Jamie Fletcher's true name, spoken over him by God.



Can fiction change reality?

Author & theatre producer
Daniel Ingram-Brown
believes it can



Have you ever asked, 'What if?'

What if we lived in a totalitarian state run by Big Brother? What if we lived in a world where the fight for power and occupation of thrones was all that mattered? What if we could carry out an experiment to split the dark side of our character from the respectable part?

Stories are in the business of asking such questions.

In asking, 'What if?' they not only mirror reality, they challenge and inspire us to think about alternatives, and this process of imagining alternatives actually changes reality.

Perhaps that seems like a bold statement – that stories change reality? But our identity, and therefore the way we act, is shaped and motivated by the stories we believe. And the way we act changes the world.

The vote for Scottish independence was a good example of this. The imagery of family used by the 'No' campaign was laden with story. The tale they told was of marriage partners considering divorce. Did this narrative help to secure the outcome of the referendum? It certainly appealed to people's emotions, and from the number of times it was recited, the 'No' campaigners obviously believed it would change people's votes. But you could tell the story differently, re-casting the nations in different roles. What if Scotland was the young adult, ready to leave the family home, seeking independence and the chance to develop their own identity? If that had been the dominant story, would the outcome have been different? Would it have swayed people's actions? I think it would.

The stories we believe shape our behaviour, and the way we behave shapes the world.

Our personal and community identities are shaped by, and sewn together with, stories. Story affects us on every level – from the personal to the national and international.

Sometimes these stories can be tight-fitting and restrictive. Sometimes a lack of story can leave us feeling lost and threadbare.

At the moment, I'm working with a group of recovering addicts. We're creating a performance called 'Drink with a Chimp'. A lot of their recovery programme is about understanding the stories they've lived with – stories about themselves and others – that have locked them into certain patterns of behaviour. A big part of the programme is about undoing those

stories and replacing them with new, more hopeful narratives.

It seems to me that one of the ways we can work through both community and personal upheaval is to understand the stories that shape us. Without a good understanding of how this process works and without the tools to critique story or even recognise it's at play at all, we are going to struggle to work through the conflicts that arise.

But unfortunately, we live in a society that very easily rejects the significance of story. While simultaneously spending vast quantities of money on films and books, we say, 'It's just a story.' often believing that only good solid facts are important. We say this as if the world is clearly divided into two parts – fact and fiction, reality and imagination. But to see the world in terms of a strict duality is generally a mistake. The world is more interconnected than that. That's why ideas written about as science fiction often find themselves being taken up by science itself. Our imaginations are stimulated, our minds expanded, and this leads us to change the world. The two work together.

For a while, a friend of mine ran a project called Peace School. Its aim was to encourage people to think through how they might become peacemakers in whatever area of life they were in – to move from seeing peacemaking as the territory of campaigners and activists and to ask, for example, what a peaceful school might look like, or a peaceful cafe. A few months ago, I was thinking about this and it provoked an idea. It would be great, I thought, to have a Story School – a place where story could be explored in both understanding and experience. A place where we could talk about why story is important and learn about it from an academic perspective, but also where we could experience stories by hearing, reading and having a go at creating them.

As a result, this year, I am running a series of sessions for the Leeds Church Institute in partnership with the Leeds Big Bookend Festival. The series is called Stories from the Forests of Leeds. Over the year, we will talk about stories, asking why they're important, how they make meaning, why there seem to be similar plots that develop across the world, and how context affects the tales that emerge. We will read books together and discuss them. And we will also create a series of stories, drawing an alternative map of Leeds, seeing the city as a forest with treasure to be found. At the heart of the project is the question, 'What if? What if we could re-imagine Leeds? And what if the stories we told could change the city's reality?'

Hook Lecture 2014

Sara Maitland: Bread and Roses

Stroma McDermott reflects on Maitland's challenge to connect justice with beauty

This year's Hook Lecture at Leeds Minster was a delightful mix of insight, humour and challenge.

Sara Maitland may be a woman who lives a solitary and silent life but her passion and feistiness remain. When she does speak, words and theological reflection spurt forth in a wild, exuberant and unapologetic stream.

From early protest folk songs to Thomas Aquinas, from Four Weddings and a Funeral to wind turbines, her thinking provided a rich range of contextual metaphors on the nature of bread and roses, beauty and joy, focusing on humanity's need to deeply embrace both, arguing you could not have justice without joy.

Her theme was derived from placard slogans during the textile strikes in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912, eventually named 'the bread and roses strikes' by socialist union organizer Rose Schneiderman. Schneiderman credited the success of the strikes to women's involvement within the Union movement, helping to create the efficient and successful organisation of multi-ethnic groups of strikers. The women argued there was;

"no harder contest than the contest for bread...but workers must have bread and roses."

Maitland took up this idea of the need for roses, that sense of something beyond the everyday physical that humans need at the deepest level. Combining this with Aquinas' 'God is Beauty', she created a simple equation that if God is beauty and God is just, then beauty can inspire us to justice.

The problem she addressed is that the idea of the beauty of God seems lost within contemporary theology and life. Instead we have distorted views of beauty, with the underlying implication that we have distorted views of God. We no longer see and experience what is around us with the fullness of our senses, especially that which is beautiful and points beyond.

As part of LCI's monthly Wild Retreats we are observing the changing City landscape and story. A lot of what Sara Maitland suggested resonated with our discussions and observance. Encountering the natural world around us is one of those points of



treasure or beauty that allows us mystical revelation of God, but so often our lives are timetabled to provide limited access and reception of what is all around us.

Sallie MacFague, the feminist eco-theologian argues the natural beauty of God's revealed world should act as a catalyst for our theology of flourishing,

“the fate of the oppressed and the fate of the earth are inextricably interrelated... the necessary relationship of justice and ecological issues” (Sallie MacFague, Abundant Life).

Maitland's view that beauty should inspire us to justice falls into a similar vein, despite her guarded views on wind turbines, she clearly allows the natural world around her to speak of justice. The loss of beauty can predicate the loss of justice.

Yet she spent a considerable time unpacking the idea that society sees beauty as a “snare and delusion”, which distracts from the task of justice. Beauty is ephemeral and trivial, necessarily avoiding real truths and often held in opposition to them, encouraging pleasure and worldly frivolity. Beauty, she argues is paradoxical, a divine characteristic which enables our connection to the divine, whilst also being a disruptive and potentially dangerous indulgence, through which we could abandon our social activation and prefer our own social pleasure. Beauty fuels our selfishness, taking away our need to look to the other and ensure justice for all.

Yet beauty can be the inspiration for some of the greatest acts of love and humility. Christ's crucifixion is an image both cruel and beautiful, horrifying yet promoting and inspiring justice. Beauty has the psychological potential to relocate us into a larger, dynamic framework. Beauty can open us to awe, to a sense of unconscious profound fear and wonder, but again Maitland noted that our sense of fear and awe is also decreasing as we diminish our experience and expectation of the divine. Fear and awe are unfashionable, not beautiful, even though the prophet speaks of ‘fear as the crown of gifts that the spirit will give’ (Isaiah 11).

The award winning film, American Beauty, included themes of love and the aesthetic of beauty. It contrasts, as Maitland does, between the superficial, possessive and sugary Eros love, and the dispossessive and selfless, flowing Agape love and

beauty. In one of the iconic scenes Ricky has an epiphany, as he sees a plain white plastic bag float past;

“That's the day I realized that there was this entire life behind things, and this incredibly benevolent force that wanted me to know there was no reason to be afraid, ever... Sometimes there's so much beauty in the world, I feel like I can't take it, and my heart is just going to cave in.” (Ricky Fitts, American Beauty)

We might balk that such an image could provide divine revelation yet Bonhoeffer suggested:

“God can use all things for the fulfillment of divine purposes, however absurd the details.”(D.Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison)

Beauty is often most evident in the small, everyday details of our lives. Like Maitland, I still get excited at finding conkers.



Sarah Millar, commenting in Saeculum Journal, argues that by advocating transcendent beauty and satirizing superficial beauty (as both American Beauty and Maitland do) we create counter-cultural thinking, allowing beauty to have a liberational aesthetic. Dostoyevsky too considered beauty as salvific and Leibniz argued for an aesthetic totality theodicy, where God can bring the good out of evil, something that the Q and A session after the lecture touched upon. Beauty as theological material is not new, but potentially needs rediscovering.

Yet as I have reflected on her talk, I am questioning whether my experience of beauty contributes to a desire for justice. As Christmas approaches, I am conscious of the many adverts and appeals for NGOs working in West Africa, with the Ebola crisis and the re-emergence of the now 30-year-old Band Aid single. The ‘bread’ is obvious; shocking images, science graphics and detailed statistics tug at the heartstrings, encouraging us to heed the crisis and do the right thing. But where are the ‘roses’? Is it the ugliness, rather than the beauty, that inspires or influences us? In addressing immediate physical needs (bread), do we consider what the roses might be, or look like, to those dying or caring for those with the disease.

Latin American liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez said,

“When one is concerned about one’s own stomach, it’s materialism, but when one is

concerned about other people’s stomachs it’s spirituality.”

Is our spirituality generous and far reaching enough to consider the roses in justice?

At our LCI Thursday ‘Conversation’, one member brought in a copy of Metro containing an article about ‘Ikeart’. Ikea have introduced a new range, re-interpreting famous grand-masters with contemporary photographic tableaux. Somehow the composition lacked the beauty and awe of the original and the pictures lost a lot in translation. The bread was there but the rose had gone. Taking up Sara Maitland’s concerns, once beauty fades and dies, what are we left with and who can find it for us? This year’s Hook Lecture quite rightly left us with more questions than answers.

To listen to Sara Maitland’s Hook Lecture, or read the transcript, visit www.LCILeeds.org/sara-maitlands-hook-lecture-audio/

“Let your ears eat grass.”

Pippa Woodhams chews the cud on LCI’s **Wild City Retreats**, which explore the natural world in Leeds

“Let your ears eat grass.” I heard this Jamaican expression the other day, during a passing conversation, and it got me thinking. In all the exuberance and noise of this vibrant West Indian culture, these words also express something of the need for downtime, silence, and doing nothing, once in in while.

This same sentiment motivates us on “Wild City Retreats”. We all need down time, chewing the cud, releasing stresses and congestions of the mind. Listening to the seasons helps, using every sense we can muster. At Meanwood Farm, we were surrounded on all sides by the city, but at times we almost failed to realise it. I am wondering if it is not almost too verdant a venue to be challenging us with the interface between “City” and “Retreat”. We intend to be a group who will persistently look for, and be fed by, the “wild”, (however we may choose to define that) even in the midst of the city.

Our ears betray our city location in this wooded valley. Standing still in a small patch of autumnal garden, our viewpoint showed nothing but a skyline of trees, fields, grazing animals and a trickling stream. However, focussing on our hearing, perhaps drowning



out the grass, there was the constant rumble of traffic noise, shouting, and the clatter of vans disgorging refuse at Meanwood Tip. Heavy lorries kept the Leeds economy going, and the screech of emergency vehicles serviced the needs of our huge urban population. In this place, our “ears could eat grass”, but were also taking in the complex networks of our surrounding city.

Before we can really tune into the natural world outside ourselves, it helps to be genuinely in touch with our bodies, and the senses are the way to start! There are many more than just the five senses. Those such as intuition or balance will be required to truly experience and learn from the non-human

world around us. Many spiritual traditions use the breath as metaphor and practice, to centre ourselves, become aware of our surroundings and connections between our bodily breath, the breath of the Holy Spirit, and the everyday wind of the earth. Bodily breath can be exhilarating and rejuvenating, mostly taken for granted, or agonisingly painful and all too conscious. As focussing on our breath can focus our mind and heart, so attending to the sound and feel of the wind, in its many moods, can increase our awareness of the flow of air in and beyond our bodies in connection with the physical world.

As we get into December, wild winds will increase, and suffering in our city will increase for many, who are homeless, unwell, or not acclimatised to our weather. We come to the time of many cultural festivals and the approach of Advent. Let's enjoy the outdoors when we can, and don't forget to give yourself the chance to "let your ears eat grass".



For more information about Wild City Retreats, visit <http://www.icileeds.org/wild-city-retreats/>

Where is the hope in failure?

Four Seasons in Harehills is a reflective retreat in the city. A participant reflects on their experience of taking to the streets and leaving their 'props' behind.

It is a truism that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. If you are talking about the parts of a bicycle, for example, then yes, it is clearly true. But what about in human lives, can something incomplete or broken be greater than something whole?

As David Rhodes comments in *Faith in Dark Places*, think about Fountains Abbey. It is a ruin, but perhaps it has a more powerful effect on visitors today than if it were complete. Its emptiness and brokenness is significant, it awakens people's minds to the infinite. Thousands of people come and find its beauty haunting and inspiring.

This understanding of a 'sacrament of failure' can be seen in the work of hospices where hope is a beacon to those within and those who visit. Can it also work in the inner city of Leeds where people live difficult lives facing poverty? Here are some reflections from a prayer walk round Harehills.

The evening before the prayer walk, I watched a disturbing yet challenging report by Jon Snow (Channel 4 journalist) on the situation in Gaza.

Images of the desperate plight of these precious Palestinian children consumed my thoughts as I set out. On entering Potternewton Park, I was simply struck by seeing from a distance the diversity of children playing in the "play park" area – from many nations, cultures and languages. Turning to David Rhodes' insights into the "sacrament of failure" I was struck by how many of these children had been 'failed' by life – whether by their community, government or even family – fleeing their homelands with a parent or carer from situations that are just alien to my closeted life experience.

Further along, I sat down on a bench on Shepherd's Lane. Still trying to make some clumsy sense of it all, my eyes fell upon two older people both ambling along with walking sticks – in different directions – and unsurprisingly for Harehills from different cultures. What came to mind was their simple perseverance to keep going, moving forward, of course, somewhat slower than normal. Yet they were carrying their wound, signified by their walking stick.

What is the walking stick of the girl who's unwittingly had to settle in a strange and unfamiliar territory like Harehills? Can she find healing, wholeness and happiness here in the midst of chaotic memories and sometimes lifestyles too? Dear God, I hope so. Whatever her journey forward, she carries her walking stick, her 'wound', her 'failure' (mostly caused / inflicted by others) for life. What and how will she choose to allow this walking stick to shape her character and influence her life decisions?

I used that word 'hope' – packed with meaning, brimming with expectation. I walked around Bankside Primary School. Bankside is, to coin a phrase, a beacon of hope for her, the precious girl

with her walking stick. With an exceptional staff team serving 700 primary school children, encouraging at every turn that they do their "Bankside Best" and yes she, even she hobbling with her walking stick, has a voice, to be "loud and proud", and despite her past to "make problems smaller" today.

I'm still pondering Rhodes' phrase the "sacrament of failure", but if my own limited experience of tragedy facing children in Mozambique, then within that phrase for me God provides 'hope' in so many different ways – and 'today' it was a reminder that the girl with the walking stick is blessed to be a part of a community of hope.



LCI: Learning for a faithful city

Leeds Church Institute is a place where people meet and learn together. We explore meaning, culture and city life. We talk about God and living out our faith in Leeds.

LCI draws together a diverse range of people: different ages, denominations, faiths, backgrounds, men and women. We have a wide view of the city that takes in the hard difficult places, not just the comfortable or successful ones.

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