

CTM Newsletter No. 19 Christmas 2025 and New Year 2026

Greetings from the trustees of CTM! We pray that Christmas will be a time of joy wherever you are, and that you will know God's blessing as we journey together in 2026.



The photo is of an unscripted moment in this year's Nativity Play by the Pre-School at Mill Grove, some days after the First CTM Annual Lecture in November 2025. The story had run its course, and every little child, from those playing the donkey, sheep, shepherds, innkeepers, angels, Mary and Joseph, and the Star, had done their best. The time had come for the singing of some Christmas songs together, while the audience, made up of parents, grandparents, siblings and neighbours, took eagerly awaited photos and videos...

This was when one of the children realised that baby Jesus had been left all alone in the manger. She quietly got up, picked up the baby and took him back to her place. There she held and rocked him gently while the singing and photo-shoot continued. The child in question has a complicated condition, with special needs. She also has very special gifts, including reading and empathising with how others feel.

I had listened recently to the annual lecture by Professor Frances Young, as she recounted her own journey of life and faith which for over forty years revolved in large measure around the person, gifts and needs of her son Arthur. Now, the silent and instinctive, unaffected action of this little girl resonated with me, just as the lecture had done. (If you missed the live lecture, the recording is on the CTM website.)

Labels and labelling are as problematic and double-edged as they are universal, but whatever terms we use, the coming together of "Child Theology" and "Disability Theology" has been revealing new insights into the nature of God's love and creative actions as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus, and encounters with children and adults of every description.

The Annual Lecture was a highlight of 2025 for CTM, and CT has been blessed by the contributions of Frances Young since the conversation with her began ten years, through Professor Haddon Willmer.

The lecture was the fourth online event of the year. The others are all available on the website. The subjects were: George MacDonald and his attentiveness to childhood in theology; how Child Theology might throw light on MAGA; and a personal account from Brazil of how Child Theology developed through "a child in the midst".

As a growing global network, the internet and online gatherings are a Godsend. These events are continuing, by other means, the face-to face consultations that CTM facilitated across the world between 2002 and 2016, and they are gaining momentum. The website remains a key part of the

process, and as it is reshaped, your thoughts on how it can be improved would be warmly welcomed. Alongside networking and online events, we are cataloguing and make available CT-related resources. John MacNeill has been working at this on our behalf drawing from the experience and wisdom of other libraries and institutions.

Editing of the two CT Readers is now complete, and the material is now in the hands of a designer with a view to their publication and launch in the first half of 2026. One aims to be a resource for those alongside children in churches, practical ministry and mission, the other for seminaries and theologians.

One of the most strategically significant and encouraging development in the past year has been the strengthening of the connections with the CT Africa network. In the 1,700th anniversary year of the Nicene Creed, we all do well to remember the debt that theology owes to the great continent of Africa through Augustine of Hippo. The three reports of CTM consultations in Africa will repay reading for any not familiar with them.

Sadly, there is no sign of an end to the suffering of children in Africa and across the world caused by human neglect, conflict and abuse. Child Theology is committed to being attentive to real children, rather than sentimental stereotypes. While doing all we can to help, we trust that Christ, Emmanuel, will always be with them, when we cannot, and, as Jesus promised in Matthew 18, that their angels will always behold the face of the Father on their behalf.

Looking forward to journeying with you in the year ahead,

In the name of Jesus, who continues to call and place little children in our midst,

Keith White