

Drugs Policy and Christian Ethics

Tuesday, 3rd – Wednesday, 4th May 2022

Participant Biographies



Viv Ahmun

Viv Ahmun is the futurist and founder of Blaksox, co-Director of Aspire Education Group and founder of several businesses and civil society organisations relating to financial services, health and social well-being. Viv sat on the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) for 5 years and over the last 25 years, he has started and grown two multi-million pound companies. He is the co-founder and strategist behind the Young Black Business Awards (YBBA) which celebrates and invests in digital tech entrepreneurs, holding its second annual event on November 23rd. Together with Kafeero Foundation, he is co-organising Power the Next 2019, Africa's 4IR Summit in Kampala, Uganda on November 16th attracting attendees from 9 East African countries. Viv has recently been appointed as a specialist advisor to the Royal Bank of Scotland.



Lee Ball

Lee works for The Salvation Army as the organisational lead on addiction. He has been with the organisation for 18 years and within the field of social care for over 25 years.

His interest is specifically addiction, having lived experience and professional experience in clinical and therapeutic programmes, which support the person to address both the causes and consequences of addiction. He tends to focus on the role that addiction fills within relational dynamics, both internally with the self, the family, the community and wider society.

Lee studied Sociology and Theology at degree level in Liverpool, a Postgraduate Diploma in Addiction Studies at Kent, Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership and Management and he is currently undertaking an MSc in Addiction at Stirling University.



Martin Blakebrough

Kaleidoscope Project is a unique drug and alcohol service not least, because it has had one family running it from its origins in 1968 and was founded by Martin's father, Eric. In the late 80s, Martin's sister became the director and in 1998, Martin was given that responsibility. For the first 30 years, Kaleidoscope was the mission of the John Bunyan Baptist Church in Kingston but in 2004, it became an independent Charity based in Wales.

Kaleidoscope has always championed Harm Reduction and was one of the first agencies to set up a needle syringe exchange, introduced rapid prescribing via its own dispensary and most recently pioneered a new drug Buprenorphine. Kaleidoscope provides services across Wales and employs over 250 staff.

Martin is by profession a Baptist Minister having trained at South Wales Baptist Church. He is no longer actively engaged with the church as his focus is very much on Kaleidoscope, but he does recognise the importance of faith and action that gave birth to Kaleidoscope. He has served on the Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs for the maximum 3 terms; he has been an elected politician at Council level and has a Masters in Community Care Management. Martin is currently a Trustee of the Building Community Trust and a Visiting Fellow at South Wales University.

Martin is a keen runner but may be limping around Windsor as he has an Ultra Marathon on the Sunday before our gathering.



Courtney Brown

Courtney is a gifted mentor, events organiser, storyteller and communicator. He has vast experience in working with fathers on how to revitalize their relationships with their children and mothers. As a well-known and respected business leader, he has been widely recognized for his leadership and outstanding business acumen.

Courtney has been invited to 10 Downing St and the Houses of Commons. He's been honoured with many awards for his community work and has been featured in The Voice Newspaper, BE MOGUAL, Legacy Gala, Enfield Advertiser and the Enfield Independent Newspapers, again for his work with Father2Father within the community.

Courtney Brown is Founder of Father2Father an organisation whose mission is to increase the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible fathers and male role models

Father2Father achieve this by supporting and providing adolescent boys, fathers and their families with information, advice and guidance that will enhance their personal, social, mental and economic well-being. We engage families and listen to their needs then provide support, training and awareness.

Courtney's career has seen him working with the Youth and families and supporting organisations like Hackney Quest, Haringey Council, KICC, Cardinal Pole Secondary school, Hackney Council, A Band of Brothers (to name a few) to meet their targets around exclusions, mental health and parental engagement.



Jon Canessa

Rev'd Jon Canessa is an Anglican priest and heads up Newcastle Cathedral's Lantern Initiative, a project designed to offer hope and hospitality to its more vulnerable visitors. Jon has worked with people experiencing addiction, homelessness, mental ill-health and the criminal justice system for 25 years. Jon has a degree in Youth and Community Work & Theology (Ridley Hall) and he trained for ministry at Westcott House.

Jon co-founded 'It Takes A City' and the 'Cambridge Churches Homeless Project'. Jon was ordained as Bishop Stephen Conway's Officer for Homelessness, serving as Chaplain to the Street-life and Homeless Community in Cambridge. Prior to this, Jon managed a mental health charity, led a multi-disciplinary Locality Team and initiated a variety of cross-sector inclusion projects with those who face adversity and severe multiple disadvantage. Jon is passionate about how the Church engages with issues of social justice and is a strong advocate for co-created partnerships of trust with people – 'nothing about us, without us'.

Jon believes that our existing drugs policies need overhauling and that a complete rethink is urgently required. In 2019, he organised a public debate about the UK's existing drugs legislation as part of Cambridge University's Festival of Ideas. The panel featured someone with lived experience of drug addiction; former Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams; the editor of the British Medical Journal; a founding director of 'CGL' and a Research Fellow from Kings College who has published articles on the value of safe injecting rooms.

Jon facilitates Recovery Church – a weekly service for people in recovery from a range of addictions, based at Newcastle Cathedral.



Julie Clague

Julie Clague is a Catholic moral theologian who teaches Christian theology and ethics at the University of Glasgow. She serves on the board of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities <https://jliflc.com/>. In relation to drugs, Julie especially interested in harm reduction policies, Catholic moral reasoning on and pastoral approaches to needle exchange and medically safe injecting facilities, and Christian outreach to the marginalised and vulnerable.



Anne-Marie Cockburn

In 2013 Anne-Marie Cockburn's 15-year-old daughter, Martha Fernback, spent the afternoon in an Oxford park with friends when she swallowed ½ a gram of 91% pure MDMA (ecstasy) which killed her. Since then Anne-Marie has searched the world for answers and tirelessly campaigned to raise awareness and push for political change.

Anne-Marie is a founding member of the charity group Anyone's Child: Families for Safer Drug Control. In her own words: "To be a parent without a child is a strange place to exist, but on behalf of my precious daughter, I will do what I can to prevent another family from experiencing a loss like mine".



Katherine Cox

Katherine is a psychotherapist and Christian with experience in various settings working with clients who have experienced trauma. She is particularly interested in the connections between historical trauma and behaviour which is criminalised, pathologised or in other ways places individuals further on the margins of society. She has many years' experience working at SurvivorsUK with male and non-binary survivors of sexual violence. In that role, she experienced first-hand the connection between trauma and substance use. At SurvivorsUK Katherine helped to set up and then ran their Homeless Trauma Outreach Project, which provided therapeutic outreach support to people who had experienced both sexual violence and homelessness.



Peter Dobson

In his current role as Canon for Outreach and Discipleship at Newcastle Cathedral, one of Peter's areas of responsibility is to help the Cathedral to be a place of 'radical welcome' for all people. This involves developing a way of engaging with the City's communities taking vulnerability seriously, exploring what the lives of those too easily marginalised have to teach us about our own lives, the Church and society.

In previous roles, Peter has had a focus on community needs analysis, community organizing and work alongside those suffering homelessness. He comes with a conviction that, at times, even the most socially aware Christian communities still marginalize people with our assumptions. Peter feels that drugs policy is an area he, and others he works with, could be much more engaged and better informed, the issues raised having implications for a wide cross-section of the groups and communities we seek to honour and be alongside.



Alex Feis-Bryce

Prior to becoming CEO of Transform Drug Policy Foundation, Alex was the CEO of Survivors UK, a national charity supporting male survivors of sexual violence. He has almost a decade of experience leading organisations in the third sector focusing on human rights and social justice and has developed innovative services supporting marginalised people, often in a criminal justice context. He has also worked as a political advisor and was an elected Councillor in Lewisham.

He was the founding CEO of National Ugly Mugs (NUM), a multi-award winning charity which supports sex workers throughout the UK when they become victims of crime. He is a regular media commentator on sexual violence and harm reduction and has been published in academic publications and national newspapers.

He has won a number of awards for his work and activism including most recently the "Highly Commended Rising Leader" at the Charity Times Awards this year (2020).

He is also a survivor of sexual violence and regularly speaks publicly and in the media about his experiences.



Elizabeth Henry

Elizabeth Henry was the Church of England lead on race and equality issues. She was the National Adviser to the Archbishops Council Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC), directing the work of the church in improving and increasing the inclusion, representation and participation of its global majority ethnic members. Additionally, Elizabeth led the work of the Church in combatting racism in wider society

Elizabeth's personal and professional philosophy is informed by her passion for addressing inequalities and working towards achieving justice and equality for all. She has worked on tackling these issues in international, national, regional and local levels /settings.



Christopher Hill

Bishop Christopher was awarded a Lambeth Doctor of Divinity by the Archbishop of Canterbury in January 2014, and in November 2014 was created a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (KCVO) by HM the Queen.

Bishop Christopher was ordained deacon in 1969 and priest in 1970. He served in two parishes in the Diocese of Lichfield before being appointed Assistant Chaplain for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Council for Foreign Relations (this became the Ecumenical Affairs department in 1981) at Lambeth Palace in 1974. He was the Archbishop's Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs from 1982-89. He served under Archbishops Michael Ramsey, Donald Coggan and Robert Runcie.

In 1989, he was appointed Residentiary Canon and Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral, London. In 1996 was consecrated Bishop of Stafford, Area Bishop within the Diocese of Lichfield. In 2004 he became Diocesan Bishop of Guildford, retiring in 2013.

He has served as Chairman, Secretary or member of a number of Commissions, including the:

Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission I, II and now III;
Church of England Council for Christian Unity
Faith and Order Advisory Group
Clergy Discipline Commission.

He was Vice President of the Conference of European Churches 2009 – 2013 and President from 2013 – 2018.

He was Chairman of the Ecclesiastical Law Society from 2002 – 2015 and became President in 2019.

He was a member of the House of Lords from 2009 until his retirement, and was the Bishops' spokesman on European affairs.

He was Clerk of the Closet to HM the Queen from 2005 - 2014

He is co-editor of *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: the Search for Unity and The Documents in the Debate. A Retrospect on the Papal Decision on Anglican Orders 1896*. He has published numerous ecumenical and legal articles and reviews.



Des Hunter

Des is a member of Newcastle's Experts By Experience (EBE) Network where he used his lived experiences around drug addiction, homelessness, severe mental ill health and the criminal justice system. He has faced severe multiple-disadvantage because of long-term drug addiction and alcohol dependency and he used these negative and highly damaging experiences from his past, in a positive way for the future.

Des is a member of the National Experience Citizens Group (NECG) which is independently supported by Revolving Doors to challenge and shape government policy on its 10 year drug strategy. He is the voice of lived experience for Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement, Recovery) which focuses on Dual Diagnosis and Recovery Services.

Des has given talks and shared his story and experiences at regional and national level. He has addressed MPs, police commissioners, Heads of Service, including National Drug & Alcohol Treatment Services and NHS England Trust Stakeholders to help shape the overall approach and system changes that are vitally needed for our current drug legislation.

Des is the Homelessness & Health Peer Advocate for Crisis Skylight in Newcastle-upon Tyne where he supports people who are homeless as they transition from prison with physical/mental health and addiction difficulties.

He is a member of the Changing Futures England (CFE) government led programme, which aims to transform systems and services that are designed to support those who come into repeated contact with the police, criminal justice and emergency services.

He is also one of the founding members of Newcastle Cathedral's Recovery Church Service. Des sits on the UK Recovery Walk Steering Group and he has been involved in peer research studies concerned with drug and alcohol addiction, and mental health & homelessness. Through this work, Des and others have been published in The Lancet medical journal during the recent pandemic.

None of this would have been possible were it not for the 12-step recovery programme which Des says saved his life several years ago.



Howard Jacobs

Howard Jacobs qualified as a solicitor in 1977 becoming a Partner in a City law firm in 1986. Retiring from that role in 2002, Howard pursued a mixture of largely pension related professional interests and various charitable activities. He has long been fascinated by the difficulty of achieving meaningful reform to UK drug policy despite its demonstrable failure over now many years.



Ester Kincová

Ester Kincová works as a Public Affairs and Policy Manager at Transform Drug Policy Foundation. She is an expert on drug policy and the reform agenda, with a specific focus on the UK political landscape. Her main work is in parliamentary affairs, engaging with politicians at both a local and national level to educate on drug policy reform.



Rachel Lampard

Rachel Lampard has worked for many years to enable churches to engage with issues of social justice, particularly through the Methodist Church and the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team. She is currently on secondment to the Walking With Micah project, helping Methodists to explore what it means to be part of a justice-seeking Church today. She served as Vice-President of the Methodist Conference in Britain between 2016-17. Rachel has also spent over a decade working for the Gambling Commission, seeking to regulate the industry to prevent gambling harm.



James McCartney

James is the founder and executive director of T.H.O.M.A.S. (Those on the Margins of a Society). He is a Roman Catholic priest who has contributed to the development of indigenous drug and alcohol recovery communities in Lancashire and Greater Manchester. For almost 30 years, he has worked with disenfranchised individuals, developing transformational cultures that can tackle re-offending and substance misuse. His academic credentials are in human resource development, management, and applied psychology. He is currently working on a PhD looking at perceptions, impacting decision making, and social behaviour of adult men engaged in residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation with histories of former school exclusions and early engagement with substance misuse and the prison system.



Martin Murray

Martin has been a nurse for over 20 years. He started training as a nurse when he was a Franciscan friar in Canterbury. Most of his nursing career has involved looking after the health of marginalised people including people who inject drugs and homeless people. He was the community nurse for homeless people in Inverclyde for 11 years immediately before taking up his current post at UWS.

Martin is currently researching his Doctorate in Practical Theology at the University of Glasgow. His thesis is on the ethics of medically supervised injecting facilities for people who inject drugs.



James Nicholls

Dr James Nicholls is Senior Lecturer in Public Health at the University of Stirling and a Director at the harm reduction charity Cranstoun.



Catherine Pepinster

Catherine is a journalist, author and broadcaster. She has also worked as a freelance research consultant for St George's House, Windsor, and as the UK Development Officer for the Anglican Centre in Rome. She is currently a visiting lecturer in journalism at City, University of London.

For 13 years she was the editor of The Tablet, the Catholic weekly and prior to joining The Tablet she worked for The Independent and Independent on Sunday.

She was educated at Manchester University, City University, London, and Heythrop College, University of London, where she studied for her MA in philosophy and religion. She is a regular commentator on religion for national newspapers, TV and radio, including Thought for the Day, on Radio Four's Today programme. She is a trustee of Kaleidoscope, a charity working in the field of social exclusion, of Bible Society and the National Churches Trust. Catherine is the author of The Keys and The Kingdom – the British and the Papacy from John Paul II to Francis; Martyrdom – why martyrs still matter and the forthcoming Defenders of the Faith – the British Monarchy, Religion and the Next Coronation.



Steve Rolles

Steve Rolles is a writer and policy analyst at drug reform organization, Transform. He was lead author on After the War on Drugs: Blueprint for Regulation. He is a regular contributor to the public debate on drug policy and law in the media. He is a regular contributor to the public debate on drug policy and law in print and broadcast media, and has been a speaker at various events, conferences and inquiries held by, among others, the UK government, the UN, and many other high-level international bodies.



Ben Ryan

Ben Ryan is the Home Affairs Adviser for the Church of England's MPA Division. He leads on policy and projects concerning criminal justice, migration, drugs, alcohol and gambling. He was previously Head of Research at the religion and society think tank Theos and holds degrees in European Politics from the LSE and in Theology from the University of Cambridge.



Jane Slater

Jane Slater is Deputy Chief Executive and Campaign Manager for Anyone's Child: Families For Safer Drug Control. Jane leads the ground-breaking 'Anyone's Child: Families for Safer Drug Control' campaign, which has become one of the most visible family campaigns on drug issues in the UK and globally. Jane has considerable experience establishing activist networks, developing effective media strategy, and organising multi-partner events. She works closely with national and international colleagues and engineered a highly successful international testimony campaign in advance of the UNGASS 2016.

Before joining Transform in 2007, Jane worked for various charities and public sector bodies, including Gemini.org and the British Red Cross. She holds a degree in Geography from the University of Manchester and MSc in International Development at Bath University. Her masters focused on international development and drug policy reform.