# *Breaking Ground* in 1 minute

The project behind the *Breaking Ground* report emerged from the sense that the UK churches were making important strides in what the report calls ‘*social witness*’, more commonly known as ‘social action’. Indeed, this sense is backed by increasing evidence. The church’s social footprint is growing and increasingly recognised by government and wider society.

At the same time, evangelism remains a challenge in a pluralistic context saturated by an “each to his own” ethic which still subtly encourages a privatised faith. But progress has been made in this area too, most notably through the growth of Alpha and other courses and avenues for sharing faith. We can think of this as the church’s *Word witness.*

What we perceived to be missing, or at least insufficiently developed, was the church’s *cultural witness* and work for cultural renewal. *Breaking Ground* seeks to address this.

The concern for sustained cultural engagement only became more pressing in the middle of the research, when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has clearly become a critical juncture in the life of our nation – and at a time when we are all retraining our imaginations for the future, *Breaking Ground* seeks to ‘plough up’ the Church’s imagination for its work in culture, to enable greater fruitfulness to emerge.

It does this by putting forward:

(1) a set of insights from sociology and history regarding the dynamics of culture and how cultural change happens

(2) a theological framework (Christological-contextual) for thinking about the church’s role in culture

(3) and a set of practical recommendations – many of them pitched at Christian philanthropists and institutional funders, but also at leaders of church networks, denominations, Christian organisations, and local church leaders.

The report offers a set of tools – suggestions of *posture, priorities, practices,* and *projects* – to help the church, in both its “gathered” and “scattered” aspects, to engage in the work of “cultural gardening”: *caring, cultivating,* and *co-creating*, with God, towards *shalom* and the new creation in a deeper, more informed, and sustainable way.