

A group of diverse people, including a man in a grey beanie and orange shirt, a woman in a yellow sweater, and a woman in a grey sweater, are engaged in conversation outdoors. The background shows trees and foliage.

# WISDOM LAB

## The Common Good

A better conversation about following Jesus amidst deep division

### **Right and left. Traditional and progressive. Old and young. Rural and urban.**

In these turbulent times, our public square is fragmenting, as a number of different worldviews and ideologies jostle for top spot. And as secularism takes hold, Christianity doesn't have the cultural authority it once did – indeed, faith perspectives are often ignored, maligned, or misunderstood.

But this isn't just happening on a national scale. Debates and divisions manifest themselves in our workplaces, neighbourhoods, and families. In this challenging context, it's tempting to either withdraw into Christian bubbles, conform to the world around us, or simply engage along battle lines.

Yet it's in these places that Christ has called us to live as salt and light, bringing out the God-flavours and God-colours of the world.

So, how might we live distinctly, whilst partnering with those around us – however different their views may be – to pursue the common good? How might we live as a creative minority, to 'seek the peace and prosperity' of the places God has put us (Jeremiah 29:7)? How can we use our influence to join in with God's redemptive work?

Through this Wisdom Lab, we've hosted a conversation to wrestle with these questions in community. On the night, through four short TED-style talks, we listened to the world, the Word of God, and one another, considering how the Spirit might be calling us to live. Through the video and this discussion guide, you can join us to discover your role in seeing your frontlines flourish, for the good of all and to the glory of God.

## THE SPEAKERS



### **Matt Jolley**

**Research & Implementation Manager, LICC**

As part of the Culture & Discipleship team, Matt helps Christians understand and respond wisely to the culture they're in, and loves exploring the everyday reality of faith in the 21st Century. He also oversees some of our key courses, coordinates our events terms, and is the editor of LICC's weekly blogs *Connecting with Culture* and *Word for the Week*.



### **Dr Jonathan Chaplin**

**Fellow of Wesley House, Cambridge**

As a Fellow of Wesley House, Dr Chaplin contributes to the Centre for Faith in Public Life, as well as being a Senior Fellow of the Christian thinktank Cardus. He has taught political theology in the UK, Canada, and the Netherlands and was Director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics from 2006-2017 and Associate Fellow of Theos in 2021-22. His most recent books are *Faith in Democracy: Framing a Politics of Deep Diversity* (2021) and *Beyond Establishment: Resetting Church-State Relations in England* (2022).



### **Dr Jenny Leith**

**Lecturer in Christian Ethics, Westcott House, Cambridge**

Dr Leith's first monograph is shortly to be published under the title *Political Formation: Being formed by the Spirit in church and world* (SCM Press, 2023). This research grew out of several years spent working as a parliamentary researcher and in social policy. She served as Director of Studies at the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide, and has taught at the Lindisfarne College of Theology, the College of the Resurrection (Mirfield), King's College London, and Sarum College.



### **Hannah Rich**

**Senior Research at Theos, and Director, Christians on the Left**

Hannah is Senior Researcher at Theos thinktank and Director of Christians on the Left. She likes talking about religion and politics, especially together, and is passionate about helping people have better conversations about big issues. She previously worked for faith-based organisations in France and Spain and for a learning disability charity. She has an MSc in Inequalities and Social Science from LSE, and a BA in French and Spanish from Durham.

## HOW TO USE THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this guide with a group by watching the recorded video of LICC's 'Wisdom Lab: Common Good' event, and pausing when prompted to discuss and reflect.

Each Wisdom Lab follows LICC's process of cultural engagement, guiding us to be wise peacemakers, and to start better conversations in our everyday lives.

The original event took place over one evening, but take as long as you need to cover the material in this guide. You might want to dedicate one session to the *listen* and *imagine* sections, and another to *create* and *communicate*.

**Find the video online at**  
**[licc.org.uk/common-good](https://licc.org.uk/common-good)**

## LEADER'S RESOURCES

If you are leading the discussion, you might want to prepare yourself by reading these articles beforehand.

The *Common Good* articles were written by the speakers to go into more depth on the Wisdom Lab topic.

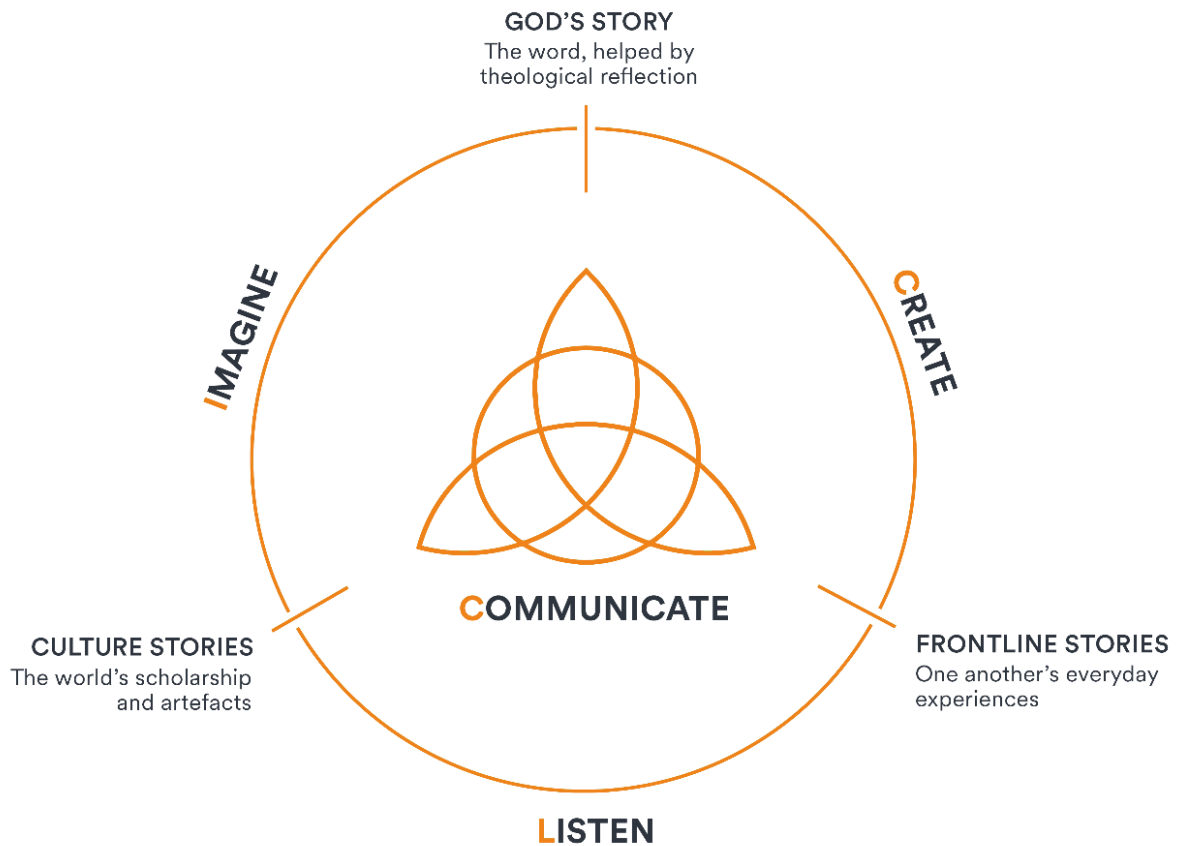
- The Common Good | [Listening](#) (1/4)
- The Common Good | [Imagining](#) (2/4)
- The Common Good | [Creating](#) (3/4)
- The Common Good | [Communicate](#) (4/4)
- [Wise peacemakers | How to love your culture by triple listening](#)

# INTRODUCING THE WISDOM LAB

## WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from the start to 00:04:58

In this section, Matt introduces the topic and lays out the framework for this discussion.



## Being a wise peacemaker

**Listen:** What's going on and why?

**Imagine:** What should be going on?

**Create:** How will we respond?

**Communicate:** How to share the good news?

## Your frontline

Anywhere you live and work, learn and play, shop and serve – especially the places where you spend time day-to-day with people who don't know Jesus.

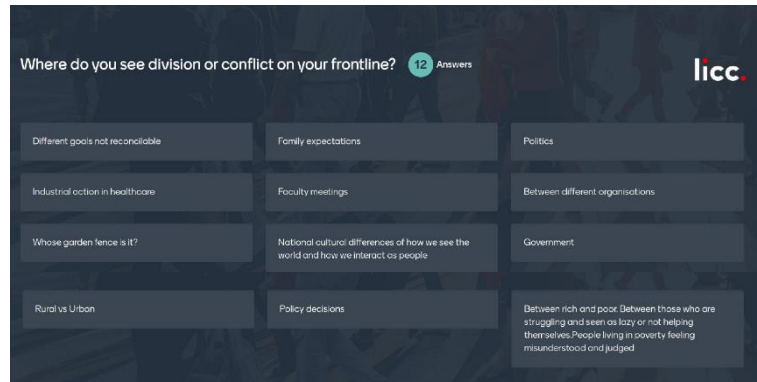
# THE TALKS

## LISTEN | with Matt Jolley

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

**Q. Where do you see division or conflict on your frontline?**

*Right: Attendee answers from the event.*



### WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:04:58 to 00:20:45.

*In this section, Matt introduces our case study, helps us listen to what's going on in our culture and think about why this might be the case*

#### Three different groups we might encounter

- Exclusionists
- Saturationists
- Pluralists

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

**Q. In what ways can you relate to Sarah's situation?**

**Do you see exclusionists, saturationists, or pluralists in your context?**

## IMAGINE | with Jonathan Chaplin

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

### WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:20:45 to 00:32:02.

*In this section, Jonathan helps us imagine what a biblical vision of the common good could look like.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTION

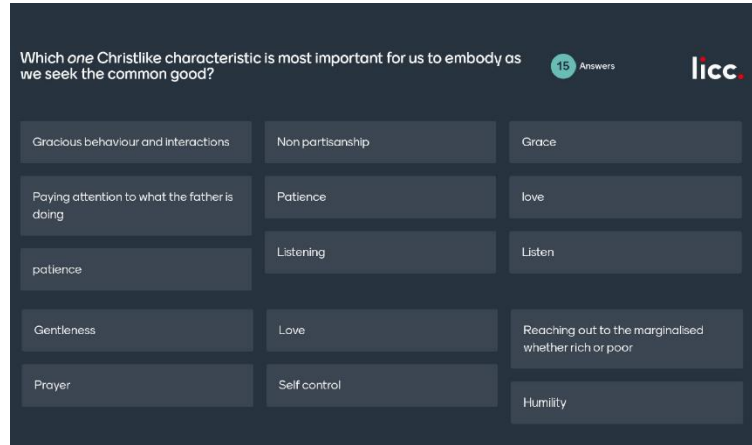
**Q. What should be going on? What would it look like for everyone and everything in this place to flourish?**

# CREATE | with Jenny Leith

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

**Q. Which one Christlike characteristic is most important for us to embody as we seek the common good?**

*Right: Attendee answers from the event.*



## WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:32:02 to 00:44:47.

*In this section, Jenny explores how we can create healing action across deep difference through humility.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

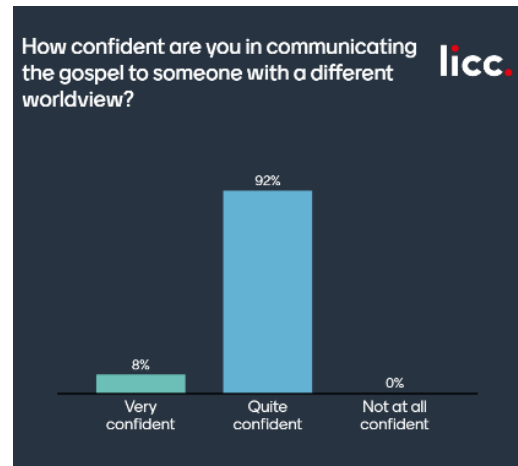
**Q. How would Jesus have you respond on *your* frontline? How might you walk humbly alongside your neighbours?**

# COMMUNICATE | with Hannah Rich

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Q. How confident are you in communicating the gospel to someone with a different worldview?**

*Right: Attendee answers from event.*



## WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:44:47 to 00:58:23.

*In this section, Hannah explores how we can communicate the gospel as good news.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

**Q. Why is the gospel truly good news for the people around you? Which of the lessons from canvassing can you apply to your frontline?**



# THE Q&A

## WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:58:23 to 01:19:50.

*In this section, our speakers answer many of the questions asked at the event.*

### **Questions answered by the panel:**

Q. How do we balance these things with the expectation that Christians will suffer for their faith?

Q. How do we navigate or position ourselves as Christians with the social justice agenda - with much of it very aligned to Shalom but it not being our 'church'?

Q. Love the thoughts re Gods redemptive grace to all people, institutions, and the planet – what would you say to a more conservative evangelical view of their focus on converts and believing the gospel?

Q. How should Christians approach the Equality & Diversity agenda or initiatives?

Q. Humility is key, but how does this work with courage to stand against forces in the public sphere that are dangerous (e.g. resurgent religious nationalism)?

Q. On questions of society's values how do we avoid sitting on the fence and when should we take a faith stance based on our values?

Q. Should we pursue single issue politics or embrace and work to influence a political party?

Q. How can we deal with fear of our efforts going badly?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Q. What question would you want to ask the panel?**

**Q. What one thing will you do in response, as a wise peacemaker in these divided times?**

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FROM THE SPEAKERS

### From Matt Jolley

- *[A Non-Anxious Presence](#)* by Mark Sayers
- *[Confident Pluralism](#)* by John Inazu

### From Jonathan Chaplin

- *[The Global Public Square: Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity](#)* by Os Guinness
- *[Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope](#)* by Justin Welby

### From Jenny Leith

- *[Towards a Politics of Communion: Catholic Social Teaching in Dark Times](#)* by Anna Rowlands
- *[Faith in the Public Square](#)* by Rowan Williams

### From Hannah Rich

- *[Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness](#)* by Luke Bretherton
- *[The Liturgy of Politics: Spiritual Formation for the Sake of our Neighbour](#)* by Kaitlyn Scheiss

## MORE FROM LICC

### OPEN BOOK: A PUBLIC FAITH

For more from LICC on the common good, check out our small group guide for reading and applying lessons from Miroslav Volf's book, *A Public Faith*.

See all of LICC's Wisdom Labs at [licc.org.uk/ourresources/wisdom-labs](https://licc.org.uk/ourresources/wisdom-labs)

Keep up with LICC's weekly commentary on culture, news, and trends.

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