

THE 2026 YOUTHSCAPE / ST MELLITUS ANNUAL LECTURE

RADICAL HOPE

Young People as
Hopeful Prophets
for Polarised Times

MONDAY 18TH MAY 2026 • 6.00-8.30PM • ST MELLITUS COLLEGE, LONDON, SW5 0LX

Young people today face a world of inequality, conflict, and division. Many feel ignored, shut out of decisions shaping their futures, and exposed daily to violence – online, at school, at home, and in their communities. This fosters disillusionment, mistrust, and anger, while fragmented social lives make bridging divides seem impossible. In this landscape, adolescence is sharply formative: teenage brains, navigating complexity and long-term consequences, can be drawn to extreme narratives that promise clear answers, identifiable enemies, and belonging—offering hope, but often at a high cost.

This challenge is not only social, economic, or political – it is deeply personal, shaped by the stories young people experience. Their disillusionment stems from real pain: unmet emotional needs, struggles with identity, and long-standing grievances. Yet many remain curious and open to the Gospel. So the key question is: who is the Christ they encounter, and what version of the Christian story draws them? Will it connect with the reality of their lives and equip them to face the future with hope rather than despair?

This lecture explores why this moment is one of real urgency for youth ministry and the wider Church, and how young people themselves can become prophetic voices of radical hope in deeply polarised times.

Following the lecture Helen will be joined by a panel of youth ministry experts for questions and discussion including [Alan Moss](#), Estates Youth Missional Lead for the Diocese of Chelmsford and [Jeronne Rudder](#), theologian, pastor, and founder of Uhambo The Journey



REVD DR HELEN PAYNTER

Director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence

Revd Dr Helen Paynter is a Baptist minister, biblical scholar, author, and teacher, best known for her work on how the Bible is interpreted in relation to violence, peace, and ethics. She is the Founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence and teaches Old Testament and biblical theology. Her work helps people read Scripture in ways that engage honestly with its challenges while recognising its power to transform lives.

IN PERSON

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