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Theology and Action Research Network News – April 2026

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoyed a restful and meaningful Easter celebration, wherever this newsletter is reaching you. This month's edition is packed with events and information to bend your mind, engage in conversation, participate in training and apply for a funding opportunity.

Beginning with **upcoming events**, please take note of the TARN Training Days from 3 to 4 June, the TARN Seminar on 11 June, and the Launch of the Congregational Studies Symposium Special Issue in July. We also wish to draw your attention to our next symposium, which is scheduled for September 2027.

The William Leech Research Fund has announced a **new round of applications**. More details are outlined below, following the events section.

The newsletter closes with our heartfelt congratulations to Paul Bradbury for successfully defending his thesis, and offers links and news about recent publications of the TARN team. Please send us news items such as doctoral thesis and publication about theological action research, and do share your ideas for future TARN seminars, by writing to: tarnetwork1@gmail.com.

Enjoy the updates and we hope to see you at a TARN event very soon,

Stefanie on behalf of the TARN-team

TARN Training Days: 3 and 4 June 2026

From 8.45 to 12 noon (GMT) on both days.

To participate in our next training, you can [sign up here](#).

The training is designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills to embark on your own theological action research project. The training is run by **Dr Helen Cameron**, Director of Research at Regent's Park College, Oxford and **Dr James Butler**, Pioneer Training Leader at the Church Mission Society, Oxford and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Roehampton, London. It will be interactive and conversational. To find out more about our training sessions, please follow [this link](#).

This is what other people say about our TAR trainings:

"Three key insights: "Be prayerfully attentive to the data. The formal voice can include other disciplines. TAR is about discernment through conversation."

"The exercises in groups and general session were informative. I really loved the polyphonic and dialogical nature of the methodology. Stimulating and inspiring."

"I have definitely learned about the power of conversational method through this training especially group conversations we had."

TARN Seminar

11 June 11.00am-12.30pm BST.

The Four Voices of Theology in Teaching with **Prof Hans Schaeffer** and **Dr**

Alistair McKitterick.

This TARN seminar, in partnership with the Practical Theology Seminars at the University of Roehampton, explores the ways the four voices of theology from theological action research are being used in the teaching of theology beyond practical theology methodology. Drawing on experience from their own teaching Hans Schaeffer and Alistair McKitterick will join others from the TARN team to explore how the four voices are being used in different ways within theological education helping students to make sense of their Christian practice, and to develop as theological reflectors. The seminar takes place online.

To sign up for this free event, please [use this link](#) to book yourself a ticket.

Launch of the Congregational Studies Symposium Special Issue

Helen Cameron, Stefanie Conradt and Julian Gotobed invite you to the online launch of the special issue of the journal Practical Theology on Congregational Studies. By publishing the papers of a 2025 Symposium it offers a resource for teachers and researchers of ministry and mission.

**The launch will take place online, on Wednesday 1st July 2026
from 4:00 - 5:00 pm (GMT).**

You can book your tickets via Ticket Source:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/centre-baptist-studies/congregational-studies-practical-theology-special-issue-launch-event/2026-07-01/16:00/t-aaazqdn>

Save the Date: Colloquium 2027

**St John's College, Durham
9 - 10 September 2027**

Following the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference of the [E&E Network](#), this event will be held at the same venue: St John's College, Durham, making it easier for those wishing to attend both events.

The Colloquium is run by the TARN Team: **Dr James Butler**, pioneer Training Leader at the ChurCh Mission Society, Oxford and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Roehampton; **Dr Helen Cameron**, Director of Research, Regent's Park College, Oxford; **Dr Stefanie Conradt**, Research Officer of the Susanna Wesley Foundation; and **Prof Clare Watkins**, director of TARN and Lead Researcher of Conversations, Culture and Communion, Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University.

Funding available - call for applications open

The William Leech Research Fund funds high quality research in the area of Christian social ethics and practical theology in the North East of England. Grants are made for research that:

- Engages with the people and churches of the region, and arises from the questions and issues that they are encountering.
- Advances understanding of these questions/issues and responses to them, particularly through developing engaged theological reflection on practice.
- Seeks to create wider social impact.

Different size applications are possible, including one year postdoctoral fellowships and smaller research projects. The Fund is open to considering different methodologies including Theological Action Research. Full details can be found on the Fund's website at <https://leechresearchfund.org/apply/>. The Fund encourages potential applicants to get in touch with the **Director, Dr Andrew Orton**, in advance of making any application, by emailing director@leechresearchfund.org.

The deadline for applications is noon on 22nd May 2026.

Congratulations!!

Congratulations to Paul Bradbury successfully defending his thesis *Becoming a becoming church: a conversation between dynamic ecclesiology and the practice of pioneers in the Church of England*, at the University of Roehampton, supervised by Prof Clare Watkins and Dr James Butler.

Secure a copy of recent publications by the TARN team

Edgy Faith and Edgy Learning Report

We are delighted to announce the report of the Edgy Learning Project. Working with 7 sites which are in some ways "edgy" this theological action research project explored faith and how it grows, develops and is passed on in places experienced as "edgy". Some were "edgy" in relation to church, like chaplaincy and pioneering ministry; others were "edgy" socio-economically, facing challenges of unemployment and cost-of-living; and others were "edgy" in other ways concerning race, ethnicity, and working with prison leavers. What we found were the joys and challenges of faith in those places of edginess. We reflected together on a wide range of issues that arose from the work within the sites: the challenges of faith being passed on; the ways in which faith is discerned in these different contexts; the effect of pressures from funders and sponsoring denominations on work at the edges; the importance of agency and being known for people living at the edges; the glimpses of what edgy spirituality looks like; the things more mainstream churches can learn from such edgy experiences; and questions of how such work might – and might not – be replicated in other places. The research was carried out by Clare Watkins and James Butler working at the University of Roehampton, and Ian Jones from the St Peter's Saltley Trust. The research was funded by the the St Peter's Saltley Trust and the Susanna Wesley Foundation. The report can be read here: [Edgy Faith and Learning - project report - The Susanna Wesley Foundation](#).

Holy Communion Online Report

The report from the theological action research project looking at the practice of Holy Communion Online in the Methodist Church is also due to be released.

Contributing to the work of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee making their recommendations to the Methodist Conference, this research looked at 5 different groups currently engaging in Holy Communion Online in the Methodist Church. It was carried out by Ashley Cocksworth and James Butler at the University of Roehampton and funded by the Susanna Wesley Foundation. The research seeks to contribute to the conversation around the celebration of Holy Communion online by drawing on the theology developing within the actual practice. We found that not only did people experience it as meaningful communion, but for many it was experienced as an intensification of that experience. The report explores the ways in which the lived practice of Holy Communion online contributes to the theological discussion. Read the report here: [Online Communion - The Susanna Wesley Foundation](#).

Christian Faith and Christian Learning

There are still some copies of the book available to buy at a significantly [reduced rate here!](#)

Theological Action Research Field Guide

To secure a hard copy, please visit the website of the [Susanna Wesley Foundation](#). You will be guided through your order step by step. Once you have placed your order, you have the opportunity to offer a voluntary donation via PayPal. We recommend £15 as a voluntary donation for one hard copy, which includes shipping to the UK and the EU.

You can [download a digital copy here](#). It is important to us to offer the PDF download free of charge, as well. If you wish to support the work of the Theology and Action Research Network with a donation, you can adjust the price in the ticket section.



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