

Autistic Christians Support Community

Long Covid and Autism - overlapping communities

Presenter: Prof. Grant Macaskill

Chair: Stewart Rapley

17 January 2026

AGENDA

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| 1. 11.00 – 11.05 | Welcome and Introduction |
| 2. 11.05 – 11.15 | Grant: Long Covid and Autism – overlapping communities |
| 3. 11.15 – 11.45 | Discussion (30 mins) |
| 4. 11.45 – 11.55 | Community Update |
| 5. 11.55 – 12.00 | AOB |

12.00 - 12.30	Social time
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Long Covid and Autism - overlapping communities

Prof. Grant Macaskill



VIEW VIDEO SEPARATELY

COMMUNITY NEWS

CFE Discussion Schedule - 2026

DATE	DAY/TIME	CFE-Autism DISCUSSION TOPIC	SPEAKER	CHAIR	CHAT
17 Jan	Sat/11am GMT	Long Covid and Autism - overlapping communities?	Grant	Stewart	Sue
21 Feb	Sat/11am GMT	Beating alcohol dependence?	Courtney	Sue	David
21 Mar	Sat/11am GMT	Autistic burnout and trauma?	Sue	David	Stewart
18 Apr	Sat/11am BST*	Seeing, noticing, valuing?	Stewart	Sue	David
16 May	Sat/11am BST	Wounded healers - Christ, Coventry and Me.	Franceska	Stewart	Sue
20 Jun	Sat/11am BST	Appreciating Anglo-Catholic liturgy?	Catherine	David	Stewart
18 Jul	Sat/11am BST	Humour, Faith and Autism?	Jonathan	Stewart	Sue
Aug		Summer Break – no meeting			

* The UK changes from GMT to BST on 29 March 2026

Supporting Hidden Differences

Building Church Culture for 'Belonging'

Wednesday 4 March 2026
7.30pm to 9.30pm (UK Time)
Free Webinar

A Church for Everyone webinar hosted by
St James & Emmanuel, Didsbury, Manchester, UK
In association with the Centre for Autism and Theology, Aberdeen University

To register simply click on the link

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KfitObBETVqEUwnJGw_qpA

Please note: you will need a Zoom account to access this webinar. You can [Sign up free here](#).

ABOUT THE WEBINAR

Overview: In this webinar, we continue to explore the foundations of a church that is characterised by ‘belonging’. We build on our 2024 webinar’s topic of “Made in the Image of God” (a theological perspective), by exploring the subject: Building a Church Culture for Belonging” – with particular emphasis on “hidden differences”.

Church For Everyone (CFE): CFE is an initiative from St James & Emmanuel (SJE), an Anglican church in Didsbury, south Manchester, UK. It seeks to provide a guiding vision and framework to support SJE’s values of ‘Belonging, Believing and Becoming’. Whilst CFE has a strong focus at SJE, it also engages more widely with Christians who share the same vision.

The Centre for Autism and Theology (CAT): CAT was set up by Grant Macaskill and fellow Director Léon van Ommen at Aberdeen University in 2018. It aims to provide an international hub for research into autism and theology. It recognises the interdisciplinary aspect of this research and collaborates with the third sector and various interested individuals and parties. To this end, CAT hosts interdisciplinary research into autism in Christian faith communities. It aims to encourage research of the highest standards and to engage in dialogue with various faith communities. CAT aspires to work actively together with both autistic people and faith communities.

WEBINAR FORMAT

Introduction and Welcome (Stewart Rapley)	10 min
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Influences from National Culture (Penny Pullan)	15 min
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The Cult of Normalcy (Léon van Ommen)	15 min
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Break	10 min
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Espoused and Operant Theology (Krysia Waldock)	15 min
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What are we learning in practice? (Stewart Rapley)	15 min
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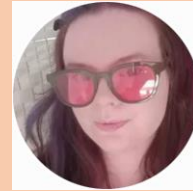
Break	10 min
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Panel Q&A	20 min
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Summary and Close (Stewart Rapley)	10 min
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Dr Penny Pullan is a consultant, speaker and facilitator focused on the leadership of change. She's a director of Making Projects Work Ltd. Penny has a diagnosis of ADHD and has undertaken research in the area of 'unseen' illnesses and disabilities in the church context. She provided leadership input to the Church of England's 'Enabling Leaders' programme for deaf, disabled and neurodivergent leaders in 2025. A lay minister for many years, she is currently in training for ordination alongside leading Durham Common Awards MA and BA modules in 'Leadership and Collaboration' and 'Leadership for the Future Church' at St Hild Theological College.



Dr Krysia Waldock is a neurodivergent and disabled scholar activist, and interdisciplinary weaver of research. Krysia's PhD (University of Kent) explored autistic people's inclusion and belonging in Churches and Mosques, combining both Religious Studies and Critical Autism Studies perspectives. Krysia is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Swansea University, EDI officer for the BSA SocRel Study group and a part of the Church of England's Neurodiversity Working Group. Krysia is also a podcast host for the Autism and Theology podcast. You can read more of Krysia's work at: linktr.ee/krysia.waldock



Dr Léon van Ommen is a researcher in the Department of Divinity and Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen. He is also a co-founder and Co-Director of the Centre for Autism and Theology at the University. Léon's research centres on neurodiversity (esp. autism) in relation to church communities. He has written extensively on the concept of normalcy – the group dynamics that shape church culture and that lead to the exclusion of those to 'do not fit'.



Stewart Rapley is a PhD candidate at CAT, where his research is looking at the autism discourse in the UK from a theological perspective. Stewart is a member at St James & Emmanuel church (SJE) in Didsbury, Manchester. He was diagnosed as autistic in 2006 at the age of 52. Since retirement, Stewart has undertaken MA research into the way in which the 'different thinking' of autistic people can affect their sense of belonging in the church context. He hosts discussion groups for autistic and ADHD Christians and co-ordinates a 'Neurodiversity group' at SJE.

DATE	EVENT	SPEAKERS	CFE CO-ORD	CFE TEAM	COMMENTS
w/c 19/01/2026 tbc	Initial Briefing	X	✓	✓	Organising practice sessions
w/c 26/01/2026 tbc	Initial Practice Session	X	✓	✓	First run through using CFE Team
w/c 09/02/2026	Speakers Checkpoint	✓	✓	X	Confirm Speakers OK
w/c 16/02/2026 tbc	Slides to SR	✓	X	X	Creation of 'Webinar Pack'
w/c 23/02/2026 tbc	Technical Run-through	X	✓	✓	Check on flow and technical management
Mon 02/03/2026 tbc	Final Rehearsal	✓	✓	X	Final Check
Weds 04/03/2026	Webinar Live	✓	✓	X	Live event!