



THE
**CONTEXTUAL
THEOLOGY**
CENTRE

THE BUXTON LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Buxton Leadership Programme (BLP) aims to develop a new generation of Christian leaders who can bring the experiences of inner-city communities into dialogue with Westminster. The programme will help these leaders to develop:

- A vision for a **renewal** of politics based on relationships, community and the common good.
- A **realistic** understanding of how politics and power currently operate and how this affects ordinary people and their communities.
- A **relational** network of leaders who are committed to transforming their communities and society.

The year-long programme involves a unique combination of a Parliamentary placement alongside an opportunity to practice church-based community organising in a diverse and economically deprived area. This allows us to develop leaders who understand Parliament and yet are not trapped by the 'Westminster bubble.' Instead they have deep roots in a community and understand the potential for transformation to happen through civil society and local initiatives.

The Buxton Leadership Programme is one element of the Contextual Theology Centre's Urban Leadership School which also includes the SingSpire music programme, the Jellicoe summer internship and the International Summer School.

The programme

The Buxton Leadership Programme combines three key elements – a Parliamentary placement, a church-based community organising placement and training/development sessions.

The Parliamentary placement is for approximately 2 days per week (this will vary according to the nature of the placement and the needs of the Westminster host). The Westminster host employs the Buxton participant as a member of staff and is responsible for paying (at least London Living Wage) and supervising them. Whilst in Westminster participants may perform a number of different roles as decided by their host, with the intention of making a positive contribution whilst gaining a greater understanding of how Parliament works. Participants will at no time be asked to lobby on behalf of CTC or any other organisation.



The community organising placement is for approximately 3 days per week, and is paid for and supervised by CTC. Participants are expected to develop deep roots in their host church and the community, and to work towards positive and practical change on an issue of importance to local people.

The training and development part of the programme includes high-quality theological and leadership input from a range of thinkers and practitioners (this year including leading theologian Dr Anna Rowlands and Elizabeth Oldfield, Director of Theos) as well as opportunities for reflection and spiritual mentoring with the CTC Chaplain.

All Buxton participants go through a rigorous application process, including a trial period of intensive community organising work with a local church (this will usually be the summer Jellicoe internship). This ensures that all participants are intellectually sharp, passionate about politics and public life and able to relate well to a range of people in different contexts.

What will you get out of being a Buxton Leader?

The Buxton Leadership Programme is a unique opportunity to explore a career in public life. No other graduate-level job gives such valuable exposure to life in Westminster alongside an opportunity to hone relational and campaigning skills in a grass-roots context. The training and development also allow participants the chance to reflect on their experiences with input from leading thinkers in the world of faith and politics.

This Year's Participants



Sarah comes from Manor Park in east London and has just finished working as a Vice-President at Oxford University Student Union. She is working for Stephen Timms MP in Westminster doing casework, managing his diary and assisting with speech-writing and engagement with faith groups. She is also working with St Andrew by the Wardrobe in the City of London exploring how the Church might engage better with low-paid and late-night workers in the parish.



Selina grew up in inner-city Birmingham as a member of a local Pentecostal Church. She studied International Relations, Politics and Culture at Birmingham University, before studying Theology, Ecclesiology and Christian leadership. Selina is working for Baroness Berridge and the All Party Group on International Freedom of Religion. She is also based with St John's, Angell Town in Lambeth leading a community organising campaign on debt and exploitative lending.



Caitlin has recently completed a Masters in International Development at SOAS, and before that studied Geography at St Peter's College, Oxford. She is working for Andrew Selous MP, researching human trafficking, family and sustainability. She is also working with St Peter's Church in Bethnal Green developing their CitySafe campaign which aims to create safe havens for local young people who may be under threat of violence.



Why Buxton?

The programme takes inspiration from the life and work of Thomas Fowell Buxton. Buxton lived in the East End of London (near to CTC's home in Limehouse) in the early 19th century, where he helped to run the Truman Brewery on Brick Lane and set up a school for the brewery's workers which still bears his name. He was inspired to enter politics by witnessing the horrific conditions in Newgate prison where his cousin Elizabeth Fry was working (one of Buxton's visits is depicted on the current five pound note). As an MP he took over the leadership of the Abolition movement from William Wilberforce, spearheading the campaign which led to the banning of the institution of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 and the emancipation of over 800,000 people.



As a profoundly influential Christian in public life, and a man who spanned the worlds of east London and Westminster, Buxton provides a great role model for the kind of innovative and effective engagement that the programme seeks to promote. On entering politics he wrote:

“Surely it is in the power of all to do something in the service of their Master; and surely I among the rest, if I were now to begin to endeavour, to the best of my capacity, to serve Him, might be the means of good to some of my fellow-creatures.”

This is the spirit that the Buxton Leadership Programme seeks to nurture and promote.

Next Steps/Questions

If you are interested in being a Buxton Leadership Programme participant, or if you have questions about the programme, please use the contact details below.

CONTACT

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