

A night of hope

'WE should never be guilty of being without hope. We have been entrusted with the greatest hope of all!'

That was the message from the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell, to the 40,000 gathered at London's Exel Centre on Friday to launch a season of prayer in the run up to HOPE 2014.

HOPE is a catalyst supporting churches to do more together in mission, and has the backing of the major Christian denominations and many Christian agencies.

The Bishop launched the season of prayer asking God to transform lives and communities through local mission during HOPE 2014. It is hoped thousands will join in prayer over the next 12 weeks.

The launch took place at Redeemed Christian Church of God's (RCCG) Festival of Life, a gathering which takes place twice a year.

'Imagine what it would be like if thousands of churches worked together, going out into our communities, touching lives in practical ways as carriers of the love of Christ,' said Pastor Agu Irukwu, the RCCG UK leader.

'Any initiative of that magnitude must be birthed in prayer. We want to do good works



so lives are touched, but we want our communities to experience the love of God like never before. So, for the next 12 weeks we are going to be praying into HOPE 2014. We are praying that this will be a significant part of God's plan for revival in our nation.'

Host for the evening, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, added his endorsement to HOPE 2014 and prayed: 'In the United Kingdom, let there be light; let there be revival and may the revival begin in 2014.'

The Revd Ian Bunce, our Baptist Union of Great Britain's networker for Mission and Media, is a member of the HOPE leadership team and was present on

Friday night.

'HOPE gives Baptist churches a great opportunity to engage in mission with Christians from every other community,' he said. 'It was a privilege to be part of the launch of the prayer initiative with the Redeemed Church of God on Friday night. I pray that through HOPE local churches will be empowered to do more in word and mission.'

The second part of the launch takes place on Thursday (24 October), with a reception at Lambeth Palace for UK church leaders, hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Download HOPE's mission prayer focus <http://bit.ly/1bWHayk>

New church in Sheringham

A NEW church came into being in Sheringham, as the Norfolk town's Baptists moved into their brand new building, and became known as the Lighthouse Community Church to become more accessible to the community.

Last month the congregation gathered at the old building for the final time to give thanks for all that had been achieved there as Sheringham Baptist Church, before moving into the new centre, known simply as "Lighthouse", for a time of celebration, followed by coffee and doughnuts.

'We have waited at least 18 years for this day,' said Ivor Charsley, one of the church leaders, 'During that time we have coped with cramped and dated facilities. Now God has given us this fabulous new centre.'

The need for a new building became more acute a few years ago when it emerged that the Holway Road Baptist church building required significant structural work. A re-build on that site was considered, but when the old Abbeyfield care



home became available in late 2009, it soon became clear that this was the site that God had chosen for the new church centre.

'Although it has been a long journey,' said Ivor, 'everything has fallen into place when it needed to, including the funding, which is a sure sign that God's hand has been upon this project from the beginning.'

The project has cost £1.5m in total, which has been raised by selling existing property, grants, loans, fund-raising and the generosity of church members. The official opening of the new building took place on 21

September.

'The fact that we have been able to raise £1.5m to finance this wonderful facility is quite miraculous,' explained Pastor Bryan Pickard, 'but it shows that God's hand has been in this all along - and we believe He will use us to do a great work in North Norfolk.'

'This does feel like we've now arrived... But in actual fact this is really only the start of our journey. We want to share this wonderful new facility with our community in North Norfolk, and show them the joy we have in knowing God.'

Message from Operation Agri

WHEN asked, 'What difference has Operation Agri (OA) made to your village?' the Sri Lankan grandmother replied, 'Our children don't die anymore!'

The full story appears on this year's DVD - but the transformation came from the clean water that is now piped into their homes. OA funding, in partnership with local professionals plus community

labour and enthusiasm has achieved this massive change for about the cost of modest used car in the UK.

Similar opportunities for partnership arrive at OA on a regular basis but despite the generous, prayerful giving of its supporters the opportunities are always greater than the available budget. The Trustees of OA want to thank the individuals and

churches who already support the work and invite others to consider how they might support these projects or learn more about OA.

Operation Agri supports Christian-led rural and urban development projects in three continents, attacking the basic causes of poverty.

To find out more visit <http://www.operationagri.org.uk>

Swapping sermons for stand-up

Seven Baptist ministers, a youth worker and a journalist walk into a room – and learn how to be funny.

That's what happened in Liverpool recently, when the North Western Baptist Association (NWBA) ministers and an *Echo* reporter took part in a six-week comedy course, culminating in a night of live stand-up as part of the Liverpool Comedy Festival.

Working with the Comedy Trust, the group learnt about the art of being a comedian, such as techniques on using a microphone and how to deliver the punchline. Their progress was charted in a regular column by *Echo* reporter



Ben Turner, who was also participating on the course. And despite understandable nerves, all coped admirably with the pressure of the live show at Liverpool's

Royal Court Theatre earlier this month. They are now looking at how to transfer what they have learnt to their ministerial roles.

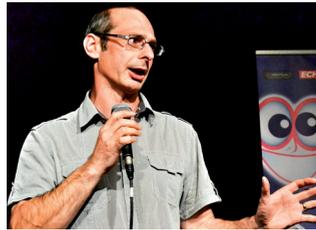
'The course went really well,' said the Revd Rick Preston, minister of The Church at the Centre in Skelmersdale (right).

'The Festival performance was a good experience, as the folk there had come to be entertained rather than be preached to, which is our usual audience.

'It would be good to see how we can now use these new skills to talk about the gospel. I would love to see if we can tell Bible stories in this way, creating a funny routine, but with a real 'message' punch line – I have a feeling that this is what Jesus did with many of his parables.'

Tom Grant, the Eden Project worker at Emmanuel Baptist Church (left), added, 'On the night it was terrifying, but everyone did a really good job. It was completely out of our comfort zone, and all the ministers got something out of it.'

The partnership between the NWBA and the Liverpool based Comedy Trust came about after Regional Minister the Revd Phil Jump's daughter Laura attended a course run by the Trust as part



of her drama training. Phil then discovered that minister Allan Finnegan had also participated in the course, supported by Northern Baptist Learning Community. Allan was clear the training had significantly improved his speaking and preaching skills.

Phil said, 'We live in an age that many describe as one in which preaching has had its day. Yet at the same time we have seen a significant rise in the popularity of stand-up comedy – just one person standing on a stage, speaking to an audience, sometimes for some hours. It is this reality that prompted the partnership.'

He added, 'We are very clear that this is not about trying to turn every minister in NWBA into a comedian, but part of our commitment to do everything we can to be effective communicators of our God-given message.'

New exhibition at the Angus

WHAT role did Baptists play in the abolition movement?

An ambitious exhibition of previously unseen original texts, manuscripts and artefacts which document the history of the slave trade will open in the Angus Library and Archive at Regent's Park College, Oxford next week.

The exhibition, *Slavery: The Historical and Modern Perspectives*, sheds more light on the role Baptists played in the abolition movement.

It includes intriguing items such as pictures of the Jamaica Mission of Revd William Knibb (1803 - 1845); abolitionist poetry; slave ship images; and items relating to the slave rebellion of 1832. Visitors will also be encouraged to contemplate modern issues of slavery and human rights.

It launches on Thursday, 31 October, and two free talks will be run in conjunction. The first is also on 31 October (5.30pm), when Rod Leith, of Anti-Slavery International will speak on "Modern Slavery".

College librarian the Revd Emma Walsh said, 'This exhibition raises the profile of the role Baptists took in the abolition of slavery. Many of the artefacts have never been seen before.

'In doing so it's highlighting Baptist involvement in world history and social justice.'

Both the exhibition and the talks are free. To book tickets, visit <http://bookitbee.com/e/z4wgs>

JOBS

Jobs posted on www.baptist.org.uk

Business Manager, Spurgeon's College

Volunteers Coordinator, Programmes Manager, General Administrator, Projects and General Administrator, Finance Assistant, Orders and fulfilment Assistant - various opportunities at Girls' Brigade Ministries

County Ecumenical, Development Officer for Buckinghamshire

For more details visit: www.baptist.org.uk/jobs

DEATHS

WRAGG, the Revd Walter Hargreaves. Died peacefully in the early hours of 22 October just a few months short of his 100th birthday. After training at Rawdon College, there were pastorates in Girtlington, Bradford (1941-44); Rowley and Blackhill (1944-51); Hucknall (1951-64); North Finchley (1964-72) and Harlington (1972-81). He was also the Free Church Chaplain at Heathrow Airport. Lived independently until January this year. Funeral takes place on Wednesday 30 October at Slough Crematorium, at 14.30. No flowers please, but any donations in his name to his care home, which is owned and run, privately, by the Gold Hill Baptist Church in Chalfont St. Peter: Rock House, Austenwood Lane, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 9DF

ROWSELL, Alice sadly passed away on 11 October. Alice was the wife of the Revd Richard Rowsell who started his ministry setting up the Baptist Church at Didcot where they stayed from 1939 - 1946. There were also pastorates at Carey, Kettering (1946-1953); Harris Street, Peterborough (1953-1959); Slade Green, Kent (1959 - 64) until the move to Haddenham, their longest pastorate from 1964 until 1976. They took semi-retirement in 1976 when they moved to a part time role based in Croyde. Since Richard's death in 1984 Alice retained her links with the Baptist church through the Retired Minister's Association and regular outings with the ministers and their wives. Her funeral will be held on 25 October at Ivybridge Methodist Church and will be conducted by the Revd Derek Keenan.

SIMS Mrs PM on 26 September after a short illness. The funeral took place at Gilroes Cemetery in Leicester on 8 October, followed by a service at Christchurch, Clarendon Park Road, Leicester. She was 96.

BAPTISMS

Eastleigh Baptist Church, Hampshire: Desree Jackson 1
Greenfield Baptist Church, Llanelli: Wynne Moodie 1
Herne Bay Baptist Church, Kent: Suzy Brealy 1
Tyndale Baptist Church, Reading: Emmanuel Mwanza. Doris Mwangod and Rye Harding 3
Underwood Baptist Church, South Wales: Lisa Walden 1
Upminster Baptist Church, Greater London: Lilian Brophy, Patricia Bird, Michelle Bird, John Clay, Lisa Hallett, Margo Lindsay 6

Send notifications of baptisms, ministerial changes, deaths and testimonies to phobson@baptist.org.uk

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Recent stories and comment pieces on *The Baptist Times* website

> Suddenly the Baptist Union has become Baptists Together - reflections on a Baptist

re-branding from Andy Goodliff
<http://bit.ly/1aHfXNE>

> Branding, ambition and reality - what does it really mean to be Baptists Together, asks Michael Shaw?

<http://bit.ly/H3Jjym>

> How Derby's churches are responding to a council cut in provision of beds for those who

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<http://bit.ly/18O0qyA>

> Do we want to build multicultural churches for politically correct reasons?
<http://bit.ly/1hbN4Qc>

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