

Report from Council

STRATEGIC priorities for our Union, the commissioning of a new leadership team, the future of Assembly, and issues surrounding same-sex relationships were features of the first, new style Baptist Union Council.

Council is designed to provide spiritual and strategic oversight for our Union, and since it last met has undergone significant change with a much smaller and revised membership and substantially reduced business content.

The gathering on Friday and Saturday gave much more time for reflection, prayer and discussion, with delegates sat around tables in a café church-style.

‘This is a place for discernment, and we have got to learn what it means to do that,’ said the Revd Lynn Green, leading Council for the first as General Secretary of our Baptist Union of Great Britain. ‘We are here to seek God’s guidance for our Union.’

Much of Friday was designed to highlight strategic priorities. Before arriving Council members had been asked to reflect prayerfully on what they perceive is ‘springing up and bringing hope, what things are in the full bloom of summer, and which of those aspects are fading into autumn and which things are in the bareness of winter.’

They discussed these at their tables, before placing notes at specific places around the room which represented the four seasons.

A number of themes emerged, and these were reflected in further discussions on Saturday morning. The themes were:



Equipping leaders; Engaging with communities; Interdependence; Pruning/death; Rest; Taking Risks/pioneering.

These areas will inform the work of the Baptist Steering Group, the leadership team responsible for implementing the strategy of our Union. Currently this is the responsibility of the Transitional Steering Group until the BSG begins operating in January. On Saturday afternoon the BSG, and an accompanying group to provide spiritual support, was commissioned and prayed for.

Elsewhere a presentation was given on issues surrounding same sex relationships.

The Revd Stephen Keyworth, team leader of the Faith and Society team, reported on all who have responded following the conversation at Assembly. Broadly

these fell into three categories: those who hold a traditional line; those who want to hold a traditional line but are struggling for words to be true to their pastoral concerns; and those who are prepared to accept. More than 90 per cent of churches want to be known as a place of welcome and safety for gay people.

It is hoped there will be a discussion at a future Council about ministerial guidelines, but there is no desire for Baptists to change the way they understand marriage. Detailed guidelines will be available for churches worried about the Marriage Act, when final details are known.

There was also a discussion on the Baptist Assembly, and the need to reconsider its format in light of a combination of factors, such as falling numbers, differing expectations and staffing issues given the reduced size of teams now in Didcot.

A proposal was made that while Assembly is reconsidered in terms of its purpose and format, one-day Assemblies be held in 2015, 2016, 2017. Mr Keyworth, who gave the presentation, stated the hope and vision for the one-day format to be more inter-generational. A review will be undertaken after 2016 which can feed into the Assembly discussion.

Fitting farewell for airport chaplain

A BAPTIST minister has retired in style after 18 years of dedicated service as senior chaplain of London Luton Airport.

To mark the occasion the Revd Michael Banfield, an aviation enthusiast and honorary chaplain to the Tiger Moth club, was treated to a fly-by in a 1941 Tiger Moth aircraft, courtesy of his friends and colleagues. He also had a ride in the cockpit on a scheduled flight to and from Inverness.

Michael joined the airport in 1995, his arrival coinciding with a period of rapid airline growth at London Luton. Leading a team of volunteers, which today is eleven-strong and includes both Muslim and Jewish associate chaplains, he has played a pivotal role in supporting the growing numbers of staff and passengers.

Among Michael’s many achievements have been the development and dedication of the present Airport Chapel in 2000 and the opening of a Multi-Faith Airside Prayer Room, only the second of its kind in the UK, when opened in January 2010.

Throughout his time at the airport, he has been proactive



in championing airport chaplaincy both nationally and internationally and has held the positions of Vice President of the International Association in Civil Aviation for Chaplains (IACAC) and President of the British Isles and Ireland Airport Chaplains’ Network.

Michael said, ‘It has been the most privileged and enjoyable ministry of 18 years that any chaplain could have.

‘Ministering to such a friendly, diverse and receptive community that is also a family and all serving the most

wonderful industry of aviation.’

Glyn Jones, Managing Director, London Luton Airport said, ‘Michael has been a great asset to the airport and I think I speak for the whole airport community when I offer my heartfelt thanks to Michael for his enthusiastic and dedicated service over his many years at London Luton.’

Employing over 500 people directly and some 8,000 people indirectly, London Luton Airport is the UK’s fifth largest passenger airport, dealing with 9.6m passengers in 2012.

Free HIV testing at London church

A BAPTIST church became a HIV testing clinic as part of a campaign to combat the high rate of HIV among African people living in the UK.

Living Flames Baptist Church in Walthamstow offered the free testing on Sunday to coincide with HIV testing week (22 – 29 November).

The testing was a collaboration between the ActionPlus

Foundation and Positive East, an east London HIV Charity.

The incidence of HIV amongst Africans living in the UK is more than 30 times higher than the general population. ActionPlus Foundation believes that churches have a central role in dealing with this problem, though training programmes to educate church leaders and the introduction of testing clinics in churches. This

replicates a similar campaign in Ghana where clinics are held in churches, schools and even nail bars.

The founder of ActionPlus, Pentecostal minister the Revd Fred Annin, said, ‘It shouldn’t be taboo to discuss it in churches. It’s a medical condition and people need medical help. Prayer cannot bring our health back when we ignore medicine’.

Baptist history's hidden treasure

A project to provide opportunities for people to learn about the important part Baptists played in the history of the UK and the world has stepped up a gear, with the launch of a new website and the beginning of its outreach phase.

Earlier this year Oxford's Regent's Park College received £488,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and The Baptist Union Newington Court Fund for the *Baptist History - Hidden Treasure* project.

Regent's houses the Angus Library and Archive, which now comprises over 70,000 printed books, pamphlets, journals, church and association records, church histories, manuscript letters and other artefacts from the late fifteenth century to the present day. Last week the new website - www.theangus.org.uk - went live.

The website will provide information about using The Angus as well as providing a portal to the many resources and activities that are being developed as part of the project.

An outreach phase, which will enable people to learn from and participate in the heritage contained in the collection via a



multitude of outreach methods, is also a significant part of the project.

From January people will also be able to start downloading the school resources from the website, and later in 2014 they will also be able to search the Archive catalogue.

The school resources will include lesson starters and in-depth teaching resources are being created specifically for Key Stage 3 & 4 students, in collaboration with volunteer teachers from a variety of schools across the UK.

In addition two free

exhibitions are held in college each year throughout the duration of the project, with two accompanying seminars given by an expert for each exhibition.

And finally, as part of the legacy plan, the Angus will be holding *Protecting and Telling your Church's Story* courses in churches across the UK. The courses will train church communities in the skills needed to preserve church records for future generations, and teach them how to tell their story by writing church histories.

Visit www.theangus.org.uk

three of my favourite things - photography, social history and, of course, Girls' Brigade, writes Sally Claydon

<http://bit.ly/lsMgZw>

>Re-enchanted the world - the church needs to listen to CS Lewis again

<http://bit.ly/187fVhW>

> Interdependence is counter-cultural - have we lost the value of interdependence?

<http://bit.ly/1gieCSO>

> 'Characterised by honesty and vulnerability' - a report from the larger churches' conference

<http://bit.ly/1aV66ru>

Channel 5 *The Bible* resources

TWO of the largest Christian charities in the United Kingdom have teamed up to help everyone to join the conversation around the 10-hour Emmy Award-winning television mini-series *The Bible*.

The five-part series, which has become a rating success on American television, premieres on Channel 5 this coming Saturday, 30 November at 9pm.

Educational charity the Damaris Trust, working directly with Channel 5, has produced an official souvenir guide to the series. This 24-page glossy, photo-rich book features articles and information on each episode, and explores the major themes such as choices and consequences, faith and life, forgiveness and transformation.

Now the Evangelical Alliance is offering free online resources which provide background biblical material linked directly to each of the discussion questions in the official souvenir guide.

Krish Kandiah, executive director of churches and mission at the Evangelical Alliance, described the series as a 'fantastic opportunity for ordinary people in the UK to get a glimpse of the grand sweep of the story that has shaped the British culture'.

Both the Souvenir Guide and the background biblical resources are available at www.eauk.org/thebibleuk

New pensions website

A NEW website for all involved in the Baptist Pension Scheme went live this week.

The website is for every member of the scheme, including both deferred and retired members, and those who are looking to join.

Its main aim is to communicate with members and employers more effectively. As well as comprehensive sections providing both churches and employers with important information, there is a latest news section and links to the scheme's newsletter, the first of which was produced in October.

Mark Hynes, the Pensions Liaison Officer for the Baptist Pension Scheme encouraged

members to take a look and offer feedback.

He said, 'We are delighted with the new website which provides our members, churches and other employers with instant access to detailed information about the scheme, as well as updates on the latest pensions news and legal developments.'

'We hope everyone involved with the Baptist Pension Scheme will explore what the new site has to offer and we would really welcome feedback from users on what we can do to improve it further.'

Visit <http://www.baptistpensions.org.uk/>

JOBS

Intern, Joint Public Issues Team

We're recruiting an intern to work with the Joint Public Issues Team: Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working together.

This ecumenical Team is responsible for helping churches and Christians to speak out on issues of justice and peace, working with churches, politicians, the media, and voluntary bodies.

The JPIT intern will support team members working on a range of issues including the environment, poverty, and peace. The intern will also support the communications work of the team, particularly through social media.

This is a six month post for 21 hours a week and will be paid at the London living wage.

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

BAPTISMS

Dorchester Baptist Church, Dorset: Kevin Parry, Roger Joliot	2
Downend Baptist Church, Bristol: Jamie Gilbert	1
Herne Bay Baptist Church, Kent: Bridget Renwick	1
New Life Baptist Church, Surbiton: Katy Treharne, Andrew Kumah and Sean Madden	3
Parkstone Baptist Church, Poole: Stephen Downey	1
Streatham Baptist Church, London: Norissa Modesta-James	1
Tabernacle Baptist Church, Penarth: Rebekah Coles, Karen Grey	2
Totterdown Baptist Church, Bristol: Scott Buckland, Kevin Giles	2

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

From the www.baptisttimes.co.uk

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

> A trip down memory lane - I've been indulging myself with a project that combines