

Floods and prayer

‘PRAY for our communities – both now and in the long term.’

That has been the consistent response of Baptist ministers at the heart of areas affected by the current floods.

The Revd Barbara Carpenter is minister of Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church in the Somerset Levels. The floodwaters had not reached the village of Stoke St Gregory, but had closed five out of the six roads that access it, causing major transport difficulties. Surrounding areas had been more directly affected.

‘It’s awful around where we are,’ Barbara said. ‘Some homes have been flooded, including people connected to the church. We have families at the school who are connected with Moorland (the village where residents were asked to evacuate). There are farmers whose crops are under water.’

‘It’s just very bad – there really are no words.’

Amidst the difficulties, she said the community had rallied together. ‘People, including many from our church, have been involved in sandbagging, helping people access buses, providing food and hot drinks. People have come together without a doubt – people who didn’t perhaps



know each other are uniting and helping each other out, working long days.’

In terms of help from others, Barbara added that the church had been supported by funds from people in the neighbouring West of England Baptist Association, which had been used to help cover increased travel costs and getting children to school. She requested any further donations be sent to the Somerset Community Foundation flood appeal. Items like food or blankets were no longer needed.

Above all she requested prayer. ‘Praying for people is always the place to start. All prayer is much appreciated for in a sense this is the beginning – we will need long-term support.’

Her words were echoed by the Revd Gary Birch, minister of Creech St Michael Baptist Church, a little further away from the Levels and close to the M5. Though not directly affected, the church has members in some of the worst-hit villages, like Moorland.

In terms of responding, he said, ‘The first thing to do is pray. We pray specifically for the jet stream to move, we pray for protection.’

The church is linking with local organisations and charities working on the ground, and Gary is both an accredited chaplain who could be called to a situation by the emergency services, as well as an army reservist.

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Church opens after car tragedy outside its doors

A CHURCH held a special service for the grieving family and friends of two young men killed in a car accident outside its doors.

Lee Mount Baptist Church in Halifax overlooks the dual carriageway where Benjamin Brearcliffe, aged 20, and front seat passenger Michael Hudson, 19, died when their vehicle left the carriageway and collided with a lamp post on 10pm on Friday night.

Minister the Revd Terry Hepworth noticed the number of young people gathering at the site of the accident when he arrived at the church for the Sunday morning service.

Feeling they needed a focal point for their grief, he decided, in discussion with his deacons, to open the church that Sunday evening at 5pm.

The two men were not from Halifax, but Queensbury five miles away. Terry was able to advertise the service through



The tragedy happened in front of Lee Mount Baptist Church. Picture: ITV

Facebook.

Word spread, and around 70 people came to the service, including the mother, sister and uncle of one of the men killed.

Terry led from the front, saying prayers. Candles were lit and a number of those gathered spoke.

Church members were on hand to sit and pray with people. The gathering lasted a couple of hours, and meant the evening service was cancelled.

‘I just felt that they needed somewhere to pay their respects,’

said Terry. ‘My deacons thought it was a good idea.’

‘We weren’t sure if anybody would come as the lads were not from the area, but even so felt it important that the church showed we cared.’

‘There were lots of tears, lots of candles lit. We gave them space, we prayed with them. One of the mothers thanked me.’

‘We simply offered them our love at a tragic time.’

‘My church members did all the work – they are absolutely wonderful.’

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Elsewhere the flooding has been affecting the Thames Valley, including Wraybury, between Windsor and Staines. The Berkshire town was heavily featured in the media on Tuesday following the arrival of the army to help.

Baptist minister the Revd Carolyn Urwin said Wraybury had experienced weeks of flooding, but had worsened significantly since the start of the week. Around 80 per cent of the town had been flooded,

with around 100 evacuations. Her church was making itself available as venue to gather and for hot drinks now the emergency services were using the control centre.

She reported both a sense of community spirit – and anger that nothing had been done for the town’s flood defences.

‘People want to come together to help each other, but there is anger too. Wraybury never used to flood until the Jubilee River. We have asked for help since

2003, but nothing has happened.’ She too requested prayer, and any messages of encouragement for all those working to help the town.

‘A lot of people are getting to the end of their tether through tiredness - many are up at 5am and not going to bed until midnight or later.’

‘And when all the immediate attention has gone away, which it will, more needs will come to light. It’s going to be a long haul.’

The Baptist Assembly 2014

DELEGATES will be encouraged to understand God as 'bigger than anything we can possibly conceive' at this year's Baptist Assembly.

The Higher, Deeper, Wider theme of the event is taken from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and will form the basis of the residential year of the Revd Dr Chris Ellis.

Dr Ellis, whose induction as President will take place at Assembly, hopes it will enable people to experience God afresh.

'This theme comes from Ephesians, and from Paul's prayer for the church,' he explained. 'It is an encouragement to understand God as bigger than anything we can possibly conceive.'

'So higher is partly about worship, but it's especially about God. Deeper is partly about who I am, but it's especially about God's grace. Wider is about the world, but it's especially about God's world.'

One of the sessions will see a major focus on prayer, while there will be opportunities to hear about how the work of both BMS and our Union is impacting the UK and beyond.

As well as Dr Ellis, speakers include Jack Sara, President of the Bethlehem Bible College, and



the Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary of our Baptist Union of Great Britain.

An event highlight is always the recognition of ministers who have transferred to the fully accredited list and the valediction of BMS World Mission workers, and this will take place on Saturday night.

It will be Mrs Green's first Assembly as General Secretary. She said, 'At the Baptist Assembly we gather together to worship, to hear what God is doing in our nation and across the world and to be inspired and empowered for God's mission.'

'We always go as a whole family because our teenagers wouldn't miss Innovation and our younger children love the children's ministry. I am looking forward to meeting you there!'

The Revd David Kerrigan,

BMS General Director, added, 'The Baptist Assembly is always a highlight, and this year, in a new venue and with a theme that will both challenge and enrich, promises to be no different.'

'Don't miss out on the one occasion in the year when we can gather together as a Baptist family for worship, deliberation, prayer, fellowship, ministry and to seek God's will for our mission together in the UK and around the world.'

The deadline to make the most of the discounted registration for the Baptist Assembly is 28 February. There is the possibility of homestay with Baptist families in the area

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

gospel call of welcoming the stranger in a world that's fearful of them?

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

> Returning to work after severe depression: Doctor Cathy Wield shares her journey back to treating patients after recovering from her own ill-health

<http://bit.ly/NyHmOj>

> Ahead of Education Sunday the Baptist Education Group highlights the importance of connecting with schools – and links to lots of helpful resources

<http://bit.ly/1fZ78CV>

> A prayer about joining God where He is already working. I hope you can adapt it and make it your own...

<http://bit.ly/1m20txg>

The Rooftop in South Africa

THE Rooftop - already inspiring and enabling churches across the UK and the US - is now to be launched in South Africa.

The founder of the ministry, Baptist minister the Revd Dennis Pethers has recently returned from a tour of South Africa. This tour and launch are in partnership with the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

Revd Christopher Dikana, General Secretary of the Baptist Convention of South Africa said, 'The Rooftop' is a fresh and innovative model for soul winning or personal evangelism that can be a tool used to reach peoples of all cultures. It is a privilege to be involved in bringing this to South Africa, because here the church is growing through exodus of people from one church to another.'

Mr Pethers, International Director of 'The Rooftop' added, 'Across the world there are increasing numbers of people who face a lost eternity and, tragically, they don't even know they don't know Jesus and struggle from day to day without knowing the love, hope and transforming power of Christ in their lives.'

'The Rooftop' invites churches to a new adventure with God... to literally step outside their church buildings and look over their community asking God to reveal His heart.'

Visit www.therooftop.org.uk

Telling your church story

ARE you interested in protecting and telling the story of your local congregation? The Angus Library and Archive is running a practical training session at Abbey Baptist Church in Reading on 26 April, 2014.

The course will cover areas such as archiving, conserving and protecting your church records. In addition there will be help on developing new skills for writing your church history.

'We recognise that while many people acknowledge that it is important to protect and

share their church's story, they often are unsure how to do it, particularly given the changing forms of communication.'

Free tickets are now available for the session. If you are interested in hosting or participating in one of these courses, email: angus.library@regents.ox.ac.uk

Or visit <http://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk/?resource=writing-archives>

CHURCHES and chapels seeking funding for repairs and modernisation can apply to the National Churches Trust grants programme, which re-opened earlier this month.

The National Churches Trust supports a wide variety of projects through its grant programmes. Full details and online application forms are available on www.nationalchurchestrust.org

JOBS

**Regional Minister, Central Baptist Association
College Tutor and Coordinator of Community Learning, Bristol Baptist College**

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

NOTICE

Brackley Baptist Church (Northampton) has 75 church chairs which are free to a good home, but must be collected.

There will be help in loading at the Brackley end.

Contact Simon James on simmyjames@gmail.com or 07967 227367 or 01295 713598 (evening)



BAPTISMS

**Dagenham Baptist Church, Essex: 2
Selsdon Baptist Church, London: Jake Moir, Libby Marlow 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

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