

Welfare: ‘stick to the facts’

BRITAIN’S Free Churches have attacked the Government – including the Prime Minister – over ‘misleading’ and ‘wrong’ use of statistics to explain welfare policy.

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) of our Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist and the United Reformed Church has long been campaigning against Government and media misuse of statistics to denigrate the poor.

On Monday it issued a statement in the wake of the Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) response to comments made by Archbishop Vincent Nichols’ criticism to welfare reform.

In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* Mr Nichols said the reform was a ‘disgrace’ as the safety net for the poorest families had been ‘torn apart’.

The DWP responded by stating that welfare reforms will ‘transform’ the lives of some of the poorest families in our communities with universal credit, ‘making three million households better off and lifting hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty.’

However, this was misleading, said JPIT, for it only shows a carefully selected ‘airbrushed’ picture of UK welfare reform.



‘It neglects to mention that its own figures also state that over the long term 2.8 million families will be worse off under the new system.’

On Wednesday the churches responded again, this time following a piece in *The Telegraph* by Prime Minister David Cameron.

In the article Mr Cameron rejected Mr Nichols’ claim that government welfare reform is leaving people in destitution.

He said the system needed reform, and was about giving people ‘new purpose, new opportunity, new hope’.

Mr Cameron claimed that the number of workless households doubled over the last decade.

However, JPIT and the Church of Scotland, which together published the Truth and Lies report last year to dispel six myths

about poverty, pointed out that data from the Office for National Statistics shows the number of workless households increased from 3.7 million in 1997 to 3.9 million in 2010, not 7.4 million as his claim would suggest.

The statement also pointed out that claims regarding the long-term unemployed and housing benefit were wrong.

‘Mr Cameron repeats tired and discredited numbers which paint an inaccurate picture of ‘welfare dependent’ families spending years on benefits and receiving huge amounts of money,’ said Paul Morrison, Public Issues Policy Adviser and author of the Truth and Lies report.

‘If Mr Cameron can’t even understand his own figures, how will he ever grasp the reality of UK poverty?’

‘It is disappointing that the response to the Archbishop has been characterised by misleading numbers from the DWP on Monday and straightforwardly untrue numbers from the Prime Minister on Wednesday.’

‘Last year half a million people relied on foodbanks, this year we expect that number to be much higher. The key question – why Churches and charities are seeing more people in abject destitution – remains unanswered.’

Ukraine at ‘critical turning point’

A UKRAINIAN Baptist has urged prayer following another deadly wave of violence that has left his crisis-hit country resembling a ‘war zone’.

Pavel Unguryan is the International Missions Department Director with Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine, and was a member of Parliament between 2008 and 2012. In a letter to Baptist contacts around the world he said this week’s violence was the worst since November when the protests started.

At least 28 people have died in clashes between protestors and police in Independence Square in the capital Kiev, with hundreds more injured. Mr Unguryan said the Baptist headquarters in Kiev and other churches were being used as makeshift hospitals to tend to the injured, who are too scared to go the city’s already overcrowded hospitals.

With clashes spreading around the country and showing no signs of ending, Mr Unguryan said the country was at a ‘critical’ point.

‘Ukraine is at the critical turning point and we realise that only God can prevent Ukraine



from sinking in blood,’ he wrote.

‘We urge you to lift up prayers to the Lord in this crucial time for Ukraine’s future. May God help both parties to stop the escalation of violence and find a solution through negotiations and reconciliation.’

The protests in Ukraine started last November after President Viktor Yanukovich pulled out of signing a free trade deal with the European Union in favour of closer economic ties with Russia. The unrest turned violent in January when protestors in Kiev clashed with riot police. It worsened again this week. On Tuesday night there were violent

clashes between protestors and police, and despite reports of a truce, there was more bloodshed on Wednesday.

Regarding churches tending to the injured, Mr Unguryan said, ‘The Christian doctors take turns and help those who need medical care.’

‘The headquarters of the Baptist Union decided that in case of necessity and lack of room in the churches it will also open up the doors for examination and treatment of patients.’

‘We see it as an opportunity to witness of our love to Jesus and our neighbour.’

‘Start a serious search for peace’

BAPTISTS in Africa have expressed deep displeasure at ongoing conflicts on the continent that have led to ‘wanton destruction of life and property of defenceless and vulnerable citizens.’

Making special reference to the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the All Africa

Baptist Fellowship (AABF) called ‘upon all parties involved to put an end to their anti-social actions and to start a serious search for peace.’

AABF, a regional body of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), urged the respective governments to ‘fulfill their constitutional responsibility to provide and guarantee peaceful co-existence, safety and security

for all citizens irrespective of ethnicity, language, colour, gender or religion.’

Baptists in Africa and elsewhere were encouraged ‘to intercede for these countries that respect for human life, peace and stability will soon be restored’ and to ‘take practical action to express their Christian love and compassion to those affected.’

Home Mission stories: the transformation of Carleton Rode Baptist Church

Home Mission support was a vital lifeline as the Norfolk church rebuilt, writes the Revd Mark Taylor

After only nine months into my ministry the church suffered a devastating arson attack.

The chapel room was severely smoke damaged and the school room and stable wing were gutted by the fire.

This was not only emotionally difficult, but the implications on finances was huge. After much prayer and meeting together to discern where God was leading, Carleton Rode Baptist Church knew that God was calling us to redevelop the damaged building. To go far beyond repair and to build something new.

Plans were drawn to create a Community facility in the form of newly developed schoolroom and



a beautiful coffee shop.

We modernised the chapel with the removal of pews and purchasing comfortable seating. We had many prayer meetings asking in faith for God to release funding. The congregation responded with extreme generosity on a gift day. We committed to at least a £180,000 project.

We were granted a £30,000 loan from the Eastern Baptist Association (EBA) and people



began their pledged giving to cover repayment. Home Mission was our lifeline during this time, in recognition of the extreme circumstances we were under, and we were awarded a higher percentage support for one year to help us commit to rebuild and fund the ministry.

During this time we began to grow as a congregation, and regular giving increased. People of the community realised how precious the Chapel was to the community and were intrigued how a smaller church would step out in faith to rebuild and redevelop, without asking the general public to contribute.

Our building work was completed in May 2012 and in the summer of 2013 we paid off the £30,000 EBA loan nine years early. We also determined to commit faithfully in our regular giving in order to come off the reliance of Home Mission funding.

At Carleton Rode we are now a thriving and growing Chapel, with an extremely vibrant community outreach through the coffee shop and the monthly, all age community meal.

One of the ladies we have

had regular contact with is an interior designer and has designed and decorated a small office in the church, transforming it into a beautiful prayer room. She offered her services as a thank you for what the Chapel is doing in the community.

God has been so faithful and generous to us, the congregation have remained full of hope and vision, and have shown this through their generous giving;

But we also know that without Home Mission the story shared today might be of the church buildings being rebuilt, but no one to lead the ministry.

Our prayer has been, and continues to be – that with every new brick that was laid, let a new living stone be added to this spiritual house. Home Mission is vital in feeding and discipling that spiritual house.

Taken from the Home Mission Stories area of our website:

www.baptist.org.uk/stories

For more on Home Mission, what it funds and how to give:
<http://bit.ly/1ggYwaR>

Free Spring Harvest places for church leaders

CHURCH leaders who fancy a taste of Spring Harvest are being offered 24 hours free this April.

Approaching its 36th year, Spring Harvest is an all-age event with teaching, worship, seminars, kids groups and family activities, hosted at Butlins holiday resorts in Minehead and Skegness.

The Church Leader Taster offer is open to ordained church leaders or people training for ordination, and covers food and accommodation for a 24-hour stay at one of the four events taking place over the Easter period. The offer also includes discounted rates for family members for the same 24-hour period.

'Spring Harvest is an inspiring experience with people drawn from numerous churches and denominations,' said Malcolm Duncan, chair of the Spring Harvest Planning Group and Lead Pastor of Gold Hill Baptist Church.

'Many church leaders attend every year but we know there are some who've never had the opportunity to encounter Spring Harvest. So for those who've not yet thought about joining thousands of Christians at the event we're inviting them to get a feel for it, and then encourage groups from their churches to attend Spring Harvest in 2015.'

Church leaders can book their free 24-hour stay by ringing Customer Service on 01825 769000.

Talks at the Angus

FREE tickets are now available for the talks accompanying the next exhibition by The Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College - *Stethoscopes and Petticoats: The Changing Roles of Non-Conformist Women*

Stethoscopes and Petticoats will demonstrate the amazing contribution that non-conformist women made to the changing social landscape of Britain and beyond, in the fields of literature, ministry, medicine and social reform.

On Monday 17 March at 5.30pm Cindy Aalders will

speak on "The Life and Hymns of Anne Steele". Anne Steele is recognised as the most significant female hymn writer of the 18th century, composing over 140 hymns, numerous poems and prose meditations, and setting many psalms to verse.

On Wednesday 19 March at 5.30pm, Hilary Ingram will speak on "The Life of Dr Ellen Farrer", a pioneer female doctor who set sail for India in 1891. Booking is essential.

Visit <http://bookitbee.com/erybyr>

THE Revd Roy Searle, a former President of our Baptist Union of Great Britain, is one of the speakers at a major national day conference being organised to encourage, inspire and equip rural church leaders:

The event known as 'Germinate!' is being organised by the Arthur Rank Centre on behalf of the main denominations and organisations supporting rural ministry on 11 October.

The conference will start with a video address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

Through workshops and talks delegates will be able to explore creative uses of church buildings, ideas for welcoming children and families, how to run a successful Messy Church, sources of funds and income.

Visit <http://arankcentre.org/germinate>

JOBS

**Full time Youth Leader, Newbury Baptist Church
Chaplain, Royal Air Force
Tutor, Bristol Baptist College
Regional Minister, Central Baptist Association**

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

BAPTISMS

Barnack Community Church, nr Stamford: Jockey, Kim, Ted, Joyce, and Chanel 5
Stockport Baptist Church, Cheshire: Alison Rew, Helen Mullin 2

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