

Women bishops welcome

BAPTISTS Together have welcomed the Church of England's 'historic' decision to allow women to become bishops.

On Monday each of the General Synod's three houses gave the necessary two thirds approval to legislation introducing the change.

A similar proposal had been narrowly defeated in 2012. The new legislation made concessions to those who hold a traditionalist view, with parishes being able to ask a woman bishop for a male alternative.

A statement issued immediately after the General Synod vote on the Baptists Together website applauded the move.

'On this historic day for our sisters and brothers from the Anglican Communion, we celebrate and welcome the decision of the Church of England Synod to allow women to become bishops.

'We believe that this decision to value the ministry of women at every level, and especially in the oversight of the Church, is both culturally appropriate and biblically based, and will assist the Church of England, with its ecumenical partners, in responding to the many challenges and opportunities that lie before it.'

The statement quoted Regional

Minister (Team Leader) of the East Midlands Baptist Association

Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure

GS 1925B

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the Revd Dianne Tidball, who said, 'Congratulations to our Anglican friends on having the wisdom, courage and grace to open the door to women becoming bishops. We are delighted that the wider church will have the opportunity to benefit further from the gifts and experience that women, already in senior roles, will bring.

'We pray for our sisters and brothers in the Church of England for continued generosity to each other, so that as adjustments are made and new patterns of relating and working together develop, the mission of God might be fruitfully extended.'

The statement spoke about our Union's own journey of Baptist women in ministry, acknowledging both advances and difficulties.

'The Baptist Union in 2012 confirmed afresh through its Council the full equality of men and women in ministry. With Baptist women exercising regional oversight as Regional Ministers, and through its current General Secretary, the Revd Lynn Green, the leadership of women and men together and as equals is an expression of this commitment.

'In celebrating this, we also recognise that within our own community there is much to be done in making ministry more accessible to women.

'Despite having ordained women a lot longer, there is still much within our structures and local churches that perpetuate difficulties for women called to serve as ministers with our Union. "The Lydia Question" tells much about this, and we continue to strive towards living out our previous affirmations of recognition of our women in leadership.'

Finally, the statement encouraged the churches of our Union to continue to pray for all who are affected by this decision, 'and as our sister church seeks to implement the vote, that unity of the church will be maintained. We continue to pray for Justin Welby at this time.'

Faith leaders speak out against Assisted Dying Bill

BAPTIST representatives have joined other faith leaders in calling for Lord Falconer's Assisted Dying Bill not to be enacted.

Stephen Keyworth, Baptists Together Faith and Society Team Leader, and former General Secretary Jonathan Edwards, now Deputy Moderator of the Free Churches Group, were among 20 leaders to sign a statement ahead of the Bill's second reading on Friday (18 July).

The legislation would make it legal for adults in England and Wales, judged to have less than six months to live, to be given assistance ending their own life.

But the faith leaders said that the bill would have "a serious detrimental effect on the wellbeing of individuals and on the nature and shape of our society" if passed.

Their statement continued, 'Every human life is of intrinsic value and ought to be affirmed and cherished. This is central to our laws and our social relationships; to undermine this



Picture: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

in any way would be a grave error.

'The Assisted Dying Bill would allow individuals to participate actively in ending others' lives, in effect colluding in the judgment that they are of no further value. This is not the way forward for a compassionate and caring society.'

Other Christian leaders to sign the statement include Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, Martyn Atkins, General Secretary of the Methodist Church, and Eric Brown, Administrative Bishop, New Testament Church of God.

Leaders of different faiths were also represented,

including Ramesh Pattni, Secretary General, Hindu Forum of Britain, Dr Shuja Shafi, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, and Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.

Elsewhere some Christians have announced they are dropping their opposition to the bill. These include Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, who said, 'Today we face a central paradox. In strictly observing the sanctity of life, the Church could now actually be promoting anguish and pain, the very opposite of a Christian message of hope.'

In response to one of his predecessors, Archbishop Welby said that legalising 'assisted dying' would be 'dangerous, abusive and mistaken'. Elsewhere the Care Not Killing Alliance described Lord Carey's change of mind as 'an unhelpful and misleading contribution to this important debate'.

Separatists take Ukraine Baptist seminary

PRO-RUSSIAN separatist terrorists have taken control of the campus and buildings of Donetsk Christian University (DCU).

DCU is a leading Baptist seminary in Ukraine and was founded with the help of American missionaries in the early 1990s.

Reports suggest that more than 20 staff members and their families were trapped inside.

The school is one of many

public buildings the separatists are occupying in an attempt to solidify their hold on the city, where they have been regrouping following a government crackdown on rebel forces.

Dr Joshua Searle, a tutor at Spurgeon's College, worked there with his wife between 2011 and 2013. He described the events as "disturbing".

'The fear is that the staff members will be used as human

shields in the event of an attack by the Ukrainian Army,' he added.

In an email to supporters Sergey Rakhuba, President of BMS World Mission partner Russian Ministries, requested prayer. 'Please pray that (the staff) will be able to leave the campus... that the Ukrainian army will not attack the university in an effort to defeat the insurgents, causing even more destruction and possibly casualties.'

Baptist youth making a difference

BAPTIST youth groups have been going the extra mile to raise funds and awareness for the most marginalised in society.

The youth group and friends group at Leigh Road Baptist Church (LRBC) bedded down in the gardens of the church with nothing to house them but a cardboard box and a sleeping bag on Friday (11 July).

It was done in partnership with local children's charity, Southend YMCA, as a pilot for its fundraising campaign Sleep Easy in Churches.

The group raised more than £2,000 towards developing Southend YMCA's housing provision, in particular for move-on services for its residents preparing to leave supported accommodation.

Steve Tinning, LRBC Associate Minister, said, 'It was wonderful to see the young people of Leigh Road Baptist Church demonstrate how faith can be exercised in this practical and compassionate way.'

'Their initiative and prayer showed a desperate concern for local young people, their age, who face homelessness on a daily basis – and partnering with the YMCA, who work tirelessly



to alleviate the desperation these young people face, was a real privilege.'

The event was planned and delivered by the youngsters, giving them valid fundraising, PR and event management experience and the chance to help those less fortunate than themselves.

LRBC youth group member Michael Willcock, 17, said, 'When we heard that Southend YMCA were doing something about youth homelessness in Southend, we wanted to see how we could help. The Sleep Easy in Churches fundraiser is our response; to raise awareness, funds and make a difference to those our age, but less fortunate.'

The YMCA subsequently described them as 'an incredible

group of young people'.

Elsewhere Fleckney Baptist Church's Youth Alpha group took part in sponsored go-kart event to raise funds for an anti-trafficking organisation

Twelve members of the group, all aged between 14 and 21 years, spent a whole 24 hours driving go-karts around a specially constructed track in the church car park.

The group was divided into two teams of six, covering in total 6,400 laps, an estimated 420 miles in 24 hours.

They did it to support the Red Light Anti-Human Trafficking organisation, which has been set up in South Africa to create awareness of the extent of human trafficking and to find ways of combating it.

churches could be doing in the summer

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> With tensions so high in the Middle East, this is a time for people of faith to repent of our hatred and contempt for each other, and repeating damaging propaganda about the other side, writes Dr Salim Munayer

bit.ly/UcaKMv

New BWA president elected

NGWEDLA Paul Msiza of South Africa has been elected president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Msiza and 12 vice presidents were elected by the BWA General Council, which convened during the Annual Gathering held in Izmir, Turkey, from July 6-12.

Msiza, 53, will take office at the conclusion of the 21st Baptist World Congress in Durban in July next year, succeeding John Upton of the United States.

He is the second African elected to the BWA presidency. William Tolbert of Liberia was BWA president from 1965-1970. Tolbert served as president of his country from 1971 until his assassination during a military coup in 1980.

A BWA vice president, Msiza has been actively involved in the BWA since 2000.

Msiza was president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, one of six regional fellowships of the BWA, from 2006-2011 and general secretary of the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) from 2001-2010.

He currently pastors Peniel-Salem Baptist Church in Pretoria.

European Baptist Federation General Secretary Tony Peck, praised the choice. Commenting on the EBF Facebook stream, he wrote, 'Paul is a friend and wise Christian brother to any of us.'

Unplanned camp baptism

CHRISTCHURCH Baptist Church (Dorset) has celebrated an unplanned baptism at the end of its summer camp.

Each year around 80 campers from a cross-section of the

church community pitch their tents at Headlands Adventure Centre, near Ringwood. The centre has a large lake set within its grounds,

and this year, as well as all the usual activities of archery, canoeing, rope swings, rocket launching, games, eating together and a Sunday morning time of worship, the church would unexpectedly make use of it at the end of its time together.

Minister Chris Brockway takes up the story. 'Vicky had been having various conversations with folk throughout the weekend about all things life and faith,' he said. 'This culminated in her asking to be baptised there and then

because she felt the prompt of God "to get on with it!"

'As such, I chatted with her about baptism, its purpose and meaning, and we concluded that it was the right thing to do. It

was one of those Acts 8:36 moments where she saw water and asked us, "Why shouldn't I be baptised...?"'

Chris and wife

Meg baptised Vicky

in the afore-mentioned lake. She shared that she'd been 'powerfully challenged by God in the weeks leading up to the camp and particularly during the camp,' Chris continued.

'The result of Vicky's baptism was loads of really good conversations with all of the people who witnessed it, many of whom are on the fringe of church life through our youth and children's programme or are friends of other campers.

'Sometimes things are best done on the spur of the moment!'



DEATH

SAUNDERS, the Revd Peter Gwilym, MA MSc, passed away peacefully on 7 July at the University Hospital of Wales. He trained at Regent's Park College, Oxford and had pastorates at Christ Church and Upton Chapel, Westminster Bridge Road, Lambeth, 1957-63 and Andover, 1963-68, before moving to an educational appointment 1968-70. He became Tutor in Christian Doctrine at the South Wales Baptist College in 1970, and served as Area Minister of the South Wales Area 1981-91.

A service of thanksgiving will be held at Bethany Baptist Church, Heol Llanishen Fach, Rhiwbina, Cardiff on Tuesday, 22 July at 12:00 noon. Gifts in memory of Peter may be sent to the British Heart Foundation.

BAPTISMS

Christchurch Baptist Church, Dorset: Vicky Fox. 1
Wealdstone Baptist Church, London: Jessica Baird, Nathan Gordon, David Hanton, Kristina Valen 4

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