

A Scottish prayer

BAPTISTS have been encouraged to join a call to prayer for Scotland and its referendum on independence.

The leaders of all the main denominations in Scotland have issued a joint statement asking Christians to pray both about the vote on 18 September, and the kind of Scotland they wish it to become - whatever the result.

The statement, signed by Alan Donaldson, General Director of the Baptist Union of Scotland, refers to the actions the country's spiritual leaders 300 years ago when Scotland and England came together as one nation.

Just as then, today's leaders do not want to take sides, but give spiritual leadership.

'In the year leading up to the Union there was a call to pray and fast for the Queen (Queen Anne) and the two Governments (in Edinburgh and London) as they conducted negotiations on the details, with the following statement in mind, "That all may be done to the glory of God...."

'300 years ago the church gave spiritual leadership, without taking sides. Today, there is the same, if not a greater need for the church in Scotland to give such leadership once again.

'While the 'Yes' and 'No'



campaigns focus on the political, economic, social, educational and cultural issues, which are of course essential to the debate, as Christians we also care about Scotland's moral and spiritual climate. We believe that God is the ultimate authority and we have a biblical responsibility to pray for our nation and its leaders at this crucial time.

'Therefore, as Christian leaders we are asking the church in Scotland to join in praying about the Referendum and Scotland's future.

'What kind of nation do we wish Scotland to be?

'History shows us over and over again that prayer changes things and that God responds to the prayers of His people.'

The statement was shared by the European Baptist Federation, whose General Secretary Tony Peck was raised in Scotland.

Mr Peck encouraged Baptists across Europe to join in prayer, particularly as the debate intensifies in the days leading up to the referendum vote on 18 September.

He said, 'As the political campaign nears its end there are signs that the debate has become more bitter between the 'Yes' and 'No' camps, and of course the result could profoundly affect the whole of the United Kingdom.

'I would ask our European Baptist family to join this Call to Prayer, that whatever the result, there might afterwards be a coming together of the Scottish people as one and a healing of divisions.

'The Baptist Union of Scotland has always played a very active role in the EBF and we especially pray for our Baptist church members and leaders as they participate in this vote.'

Suggestions for prayer and fasting can be found on the Pray for Scotland website: <http://www.prayforscotland.org.uk>

Bring back our girls

MEMBERS of Girls' Brigade England & Wales are joining a campaign to pray and advocate for the kidnapped Nigerian school girls on the 150th day of their disappearance

On 14 April, 230 girls were kidnapped from the Chibok Government Secondary School by the terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria. All are still missing, and this Thursday (11 September) marks 150 days since the girls were taken.

Encouraging its members worldwide to 'raise a voice for the voiceless', Girls' Brigade International (GB) has produced a prayer resource, with help from Open Doors, for use on Thursday.

To generate a significant social media presence it also organised a Thunderclap for Thursday - Thunderclap is a website that allows people to pledge a social media post. All pledged posts went out at 1pm, pointing to the Open Doors website where users could post a message to the girls' families.

Members of the 18-30s GB



Grace Claydon, from 1st Hawkwell GB group, with her mouth taped shut to signify the silence of the kidnapped girls.

England & Wales's advocacy group will also be writing a letter to Prime Minister David Cameron to remind him about the missing girls, and urging him to use his influence in the international community to ensure everything is done to get them home.

Claire Rush, Participation & Advocacy Co-ordinator for GB England & Wales, said, 'Thursday 11 September marks 150 days since more than 200 Chibok young women,

some members of GB, were kidnapped by Boko Haram.

'These young women have been silent for 150 days but we have a voice that can be heard. Let's raise our voice for the voiceless on 11 September.'

Download the prayer resource from the Girls' Brigade website www.girlsbrigade.org.uk

Send a message via Open Doors: bit.ly/1owN2U5

Charity Viz-a-Viz to close

VIZ-A-VIZ Ministries (VAVM) UK, founded by Baptist minister Dennis Pethers in 1993, is to close.

In a statement the charity's trustees said the decision has been taken after 'much prayer and discussion' and will 'release its various ministries to flourish in new ways'.

Viz-A-Viz is an evangelistic organisation with several ministries under its umbrella, including The Rooftop, Check it Out, ARISE Ministries and

SOLID. The statement said that over the past two years it has been 'increasingly evident that God has been moving us into a new phase of ministry', as each of the individual ministries have developed.

'It has always been the intention of VAVM to help ministries to flourish,' the statement continued, 'and as this is no longer the case then VAVM has served its purpose.'

The statement also mentioned financial challenges, and is

requesting donations to help staff who have had reduced salaries in recent months. The statement added that three members of staff will leave at the end of September.

It also paid tribute to the impact of the charity over the years.

'We have a deep sense that so much of what was hoped for at the beginning has been fulfilled over 21 years.'

For a longer version of this story, visit: bit.ly/1ABMli4

Church helps feed local children

A BAPTIST church in Middlesbrough provided free lunches for children in need of extra support over the summer holidays.

South Bank Baptist Church offered its premises three times a week for a pilot project that saw more than 200 free packed lunches given to local primary school pupils throughout the summer.

The Lunch Box Project came about via the Redcar Area Foodbank, for which the church is a distribution point, and in conjunction with South Bank Primary School.

The school referred the pupils who had received free school lunches in the previous academic year and were thought to need extra support through the holidays.

The church was asked to open up its premises and provide volunteers each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, which it was only too happy to do.

When the children arrived they picked up a brand new lunchbox, and were able to stay and take part in crafts, games and face paintings. When they were ready to leave they could take away a sandwich, bag of crisps, cereal



bar, and fruit drink. Parents were invited to stay, and the lunchbox could then be filled on their next visit.

Each session saw between 11 and 21 children pop by, and in total 208 lunches were distributed.

'We felt like we were offering a little bit of help,' said minister Jon Edwards.

'While it was a lot of fun and had a great impact on us, there's part of me that thinks it's dreadful that something like this is needed, where families like this are consistently struggling to feed themselves and their children. It's a shame there is such an issue; there's a real issue

locally and nationally.

'Something needs to be done. This is just a small project, a simple project, and it's the first time we've done it.'

However, he was impressed with how his church responded.

'The whole church took hold of it - it wasn't something that three or four of us were driving. They wanted to get involved and support and pray for it, and I actually had to turn volunteers away.'

'We would struggle to run a more traditional week-long holiday club, but this provides a more regular means of supporting local families over the school holidays.'

and rewarding opportunities to serve, writes a Baptist minister who has created a new resource specifically for this generation

bit.ly/1srhiF8

> How do I join in? Two very different examples of Baptist Christians in pioneering situations

bit.ly/1wh479Q

> University challenge: what impact does university have on Christian faith and how should churches respond?

bit.ly/1ABZ3gT

> Russia, Ukraine religious leaders meet: Oslo gathering aims to bring about mutual acceptance and understanding

bit.ly/WN9FM

From the www. baptisttimes.co.uk

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

> Ministering to older people: with a little imagination, an ageing population provides rich

Peacemaking Sunday

AS commemorations take place to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, Peacemaking Sunday is likely to have a special significance this year.

Peacemaking Sunday is the Sunday closest to the United Nations International Day of Peace on 21 September. This year, Peacemaking Sunday falls on 21 September itself.

The Baptists Together Faith and Society Team has produced worship resources for Peacemaking Sunday on the theme 'the politics of praying for peace.'

Resources include prayers of confession and intercession and sermon ideas entitled 'What good does forgiveness do?' (based on Matthew 18:21-35).

Special thanks go to Simon Woodman, co-minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, for the preparation of the material.

Visit bit.ly/YzGpKR to access the resources

Tickets are now on sale for the next conference of the Joint Public Issues Team on 21 February, 2015. The conference, called 'Love your neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote', has been designed to enthuse and equip delegates to be effective Christian disciples in the build-up to the UK's general election on 7 May 2015.

Visit bit.ly/YzHd2u

Lynn Green update

AFTER her cancer scare earlier this year, General Secretary Lynn Green has now returned to work.

The following update from Lynn was posted this week on the Baptists Together website and shared on social media:

I finished radiotherapy on the last day of term in July and we were able to get away on a family holiday to France in our caravan shortly after that.

We had a really good summer break, I have healed up and my

energy levels are beginning to return back to normal; I feel very blessed.

Once again it is hard to put into words just how much difference prayer makes, so thank you very much for your prayers for me, the family, my colleagues and our Union at this time.

I have a follow up appointment with the Oncology team in October, but apart from that I think it is a case of "business as usual" once again!



JOBS

**Part-time Regional Minister, South Eastern Baptist Association
RAF Chaplains**

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

DEATH

CUMBER - Steve died on 19 July aged 64 after a choking incident the Sunday before while out to lunch with his family. He served the church at Eldon Road as secretary for 34 years and had only just stepped down due to increasing frailty caused by Parkinson's disease, which he had had since 1996. He also served Enfield Baptist Church from April 2005 until his early retirement in 2013.

In her tribute to Steve, the minister of Enfield Mandy James said, "Steve was a no fuss, hardworking and quiet worker who got on with the job. But he was a true servant who lived his faith in his job. There was no sacred/secular divide. He put as much effort into the August polishing of the upstairs hall (which you could have eaten off) as he did talking to a walk-in off the street visitor, and he was an awesome Father Christmas."

His wife Jan and their daughters Beth and Lynn would like to thank everyone who wrote, emailed and texted. They really do appreciate everyone's prayers and support. Gifts in memory of Steve may be sent to the London City Mission. Also please pray for Bob Allaway and the family at Eldon Road Baptist Church as they adjust to Steve not being there to counsel and quietly guide them.

BAPTISMS

Parsons Heath Baptist Church, Colchester: Sam Wren and Mick Watson. 2
Tabernacle Baptist Church, Penarth: Richard Silk 1
Upminster Baptist Church, Essex: Karl Tucker, Richard Cooper 2

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