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News:

'Light beacons of prayer across the UK'

God is calling us to prayer to "make space" for him to speak and move, says General Secretary Lynn Green as she launches call to prayer

Baptist Union General Secretary the Revd Lynn Green has invited Baptists join her in lighting beacons of prayer across the UK.

Explaining that God has been speaking to us from Isaiah 43:18&19, she explained that she now has a "clear sense that God wants to do a new thing and he is calling us to prayer to "make space" for him to speak and move."

She senses that God wants to light beacons of prayer, "beacons of prayer that are people inspired to pray and seek the Lord, not with our own agenda but simply that we might draw close to Him and open ourselves and our churches to him so that he would have the freedom to move amongst us and through us by his Spirit."

Lynn believes this is a word for the church in the UK. 'But my first role is to devote myself to prayer for God's new thing and to call Baptists to join me in beginning to light these beacons of prayer,' she said. 'I shared this with Baptist Steering Group last week and they also feel that this is God's word to us now.'

To help facilitate this call to pray she has created a new blog – called Beacons of Prayer – where she will be regularly posting short passages of Scripture she will be using to inspire her own praying.

'I hope that they may help others to join us as we pray together,' she continued. 'I have no idea where this will lead but I am being obedient in taking the first step and trusting the Lord for what comes next.'

'So please follow the blog – and quite simply, pray!'

**To find out more and view the Beacons of Prayer blog, visit:
www.baptist.org.uk/beacons**

Climate change concern as crucial meeting looms

Tackling climate change has been firmly in the spotlight in recent days as the countdown to December's crucial meeting in Paris continues

At the end of the year almost 200 countries will gather in the French capital to attempt to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change. In the run up people have been making their concerns heard.

Last Wednesday (17 June) thousands gathered in Westminster for the first mass lobby of this Parliament, and called on their elected leaders to tackle climate change. The lobby was organised by the Climate Coalition, which encouraged people to speak up for what they loved that may be affected by climate change. Around 9000 people from all over the UK spoke to more than 330 MPs.

Many from Baptist churches were among them. Dr David Golding CBE, an Honorary Chaplain at Newcastle University and member of Whitley Bay Baptist Church, helped to organise a delegation from the North East. He said he was received "courteously" by local MP Alan Campbell, Deputy Opposition Chief Whip, presenting both a briefing by the Climate Coalition, and a petition bearing the names of 120 'Members and Friends of Whitley Bay Baptist Church'.

He said, 'My overall impression is the great majority of our elected leaders are people of sincerity and good will.

'Many of our elected leaders assure us they'll do what they can to curb climate change; far too few commit themselves to doing what needs to be done! They live in a world where compromise is, necessarily, the name of the game.

'However, as I never tire of telling them, you can't negotiate or compromise with the Laws of Physics - these laws are inexorable and they make no allowances for good intentions! Indeed, unless we meet their requirements, they will sweep us and all we love away.'

A delegation from Yorkshire was also present, including the Revd Dr Keith Jones of Shipley Baptist Church, Bradford.

He said, 'It was great to be part of the Climate Coalition peaceful lobby of Parliament with 9,000 others from many different Christian traditions. It was encouraging to listen to several committed Members of Parliament explaining what they were doing to press the UK Government to take a positive stance at

the Paris Climate Conference later in the year and to know that about 330 MPs were lobbied by their constituents.'

Environment and climate change problems are the main issues facing the world over the next ten years, according to ComRes polling commissioned by international development charity Tearfund ahead of the lobby.

Asked unprompted to identify the main social and political issues they believe the world will have to face over the next ten years, practising Christians in the UK are most likely to say climate change or the environment (28 per cent).

'We're in churches every Sunday and at lots of times throughout the week, meeting with our supporters, and we know they're passionate about the environment and see it as a justice issue,' said Paul Cook, Tearfund's Advocacy Director.

There was also widespread Christian backing for the Pope's encyclical on the environment and climate change.

Christian Aid called the encyclical "game-changing", and praised Pope Francis for his call for "a radical rethinking of humanity's relationship with the earth". It urged both people of faith in all walks of life "and especially politicians" to heed his appeal for action to address climate change.

Christian Aid's Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Christine Allen, said the intervention was a natural extension for his ministry for those in poverty.

'The hallmark of Pope Francis' ministry has been his care for the poor,' she explained. 'You can't claim to care for the poor and ignore climate change. Climate change is not just a scientific phenomenon, or a political football, it is a moral issue which demands an ethical response.'

Elsewhere Nicky Bull, chair of ecumenical Christian charity Operation Noah and Baptist church member, said, 'The climate crisis offers us a unique opportunity to change the way we do things on a global scale - to create a fairer, safer and more sustainable world for all.

'We hope that the Pope's moral guidance will catalyse the faith community around the world to speak out and take urgent, radical action on one of the most pressing social justice issues of our time. His call for a "new and universal solidarity" to work together as one human family cannot come at a more important moment for the protection of the Earth, its creatures and future generations to come.'

Blood donor increase from churches

New research reveals impact of **fleshandblood** campaign; much more still needed

There has been a 77 per cent increase in the number of local churches that talk about blood and organ donation since 2012, new research has found, as well as an upsurge in donors from the Christian community.

The increases have been attributed to the **fleshandblood** campaign, the first initiative between the Church and NHS. The campaign began in 2012 in association with a number of denominations, including the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The campaign witnessed "widespread support across churches, community groups and from government ministers, with more than 35,000 church leaders across the country having been resourced and registering some of the most successful recruitment drives for new donors in the history of NHS Blood and Transplant", according to a statement released today.

Highlighting the advocacy and support of UK churches, the research found that close to 10 per cent of Christians gave blood in 2014, compared to around 4 per cent of the general population who have given blood in the last two years.

The research was released by **fleshandblood** to coincide with World Blood Donor Day (14 June). It's the first time the day has fallen on a Sunday since 2009, and churches are using the opportunity to raise awareness of blood donation needs among the estimated six million regular churchgoers in the UK.

The push comes in response to figures released last week by NHS Blood and Transplant, revealing that 40 per cent fewer new volunteers came forward across England and North Wales to give blood last year compared to a decade ago.

Last week church denominations, including the Baptist, Methodist, URC and Anglican churches also took part in NHS Blood and Transplant's own #missingtype campaign during National Blood Week by removing the letters A, B and O (the letters that make up the blood groups) from their logos to help raise awareness for the need of new donors.

Writing for the Church of England, the Bishop of Carlisle, Rt Rev James Newcombe says: 'When you visit a donor session, the smiling nurses who attend to you and put you at ease actually take 10% of your body's blood volume. A perfect tithe...

'I do hope that many more who call themselves followers of Jesus may choose to offer a tithe of their blood as a gift to strangers whom they will never knowingly meet as a natural act of faith, asking in return only a cup of tea and a digestive biscuit.'

The research was conducted by Christian Research in December 2014, among a representative sample of UK churchgoers, and compared with a corresponding Christian Research survey in December 2012, prior to the launch of the **fleshandblood** campaign.

The **fleshandblood** campaign directors are Matt and Juls Hollidge of the Kore creative agency and members of Shoeburyness and Thorpe Bay Baptist Church.

Kirchentag Stuttgart: That we may be wise **A report from Germany's huge, biennial Protestant festival**

Angela Merkel, Kofi Annan, and a 500 page programme of Bible studies, political talks, podium discussions, and concerts - a report from Germany's huge Protestant festival. By Jonathan Barr

“Lehre uns bedenken, daß wir sterben müssen, auf daß wir klug werden.” reads Psalm 90 verse 12 in Luther’s translation. *“Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”* This was the slogan plastered over the town of Stuttgart last week, the scene of the 35th Kirchentag, the German Protestant Church Assembly.

The Kirchentag takes place every two years in a different German City, and brings together over 100,000 people from different parts of the country, and abroad, for a festival of music, theatre, for engagement in discussion on matters of politics, church and society, and in celebration of the Protestant faith.

The festivities opened with large open air services in different parts of the city, leading into a so-called ‘Encounters Evening’. The streets were filled with small stalls selling the delicacies of different regions and cities. There is no better way to get to know Germany. Happily one could roam about, from one stall to the next, sampling Maultasche from Swabia or Himmel und Erde from the Rheinland, collecting all sorts of leaflets and trinkets from various places, and pausing now and then to soak in the buzzing frivolity and warm dusk.

Finally, once it was dark, a large choir took to the stage in the central square of the city and launched into a medley of local folk songs interspersed with hymns. The crowd of people in the square joined in with enthusiasm. Meanwhile the young Kirchentag helpers gave out candles, and soon, once the singing had given way to a short service of blessing, the night scene was aglow.

The Kirchentag began in earnest the following day, and, equipped with a Kirchentag ticket which entitles the holder to free, unlimited travel on public transport and a 500 page programme of Bible studies, political talks, podium

discussions, and concerts, the participants darted about the city to attend their choices.

The events were all to a greater or lesser extent focussed on the title theme: that we may be wise. To offer a few highlights: Wolfgang Schäuble studied the parable of the shrewd manager and how no one can serve both God and Money. He said that as Finance Minister of Germany he found the text 'useful.' Angela Merkel, shortly before the G7 talks in Bavaria, contributed to a discussion group on the digitilisation of communication and transactions. Kofi Annan, the former secretary of the United Nations, spoke on "A World Falling Apart."

Truly there was plenty to choose from. The only trouble was that the summer heat warmed the rooms to that temperature where it becomes a struggle to remain awake, let alone to follow fully what was being said.

Fortunately there were things to do other than listen to talks. Brass bands played on just about every street corner; there were open air group singing sessions all over the place; and the 'Market of Opportunities' - 17 large marquees full of stands relating to different clubs, social groups, charities, companies and churches - was always open to visitors.

Time passes quickly at the Kirchentag, and soon it was all brought to an end at a huge televised service in Stuttgart's 35 hectare festival grounds. An invitation was issued to all those present to attend the next Kirchentag, which will take place in Berlin in May 2017, and as it falls upon the 500th anniversary of the 1517 Protestant Reformation, it will include special events at nearby Wittenberg (where Martin Luther nailed his famous "95 Theses" to the church door and thereby began the Reformation in Germany) to mark the occasion and to look forward to the next five centuries of Protestant life.

The Kirchentag is one of the few things which have achieved the feat of making church 'cool'. If events on a grand scale which facilitate a meeting of religion, culture and society are your thing, then I can only recommend you pencil it into to your diary.

Jonathan Barr is a member of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Tributes to John Dolan

John played a key role in the Independent Methodist Connexion Covenant Partnership discussions with the Baptist Union

Hundreds of people packed Warrington Parish Church for a memorial service for John Dolan on Tuesday (23 June).

John will be remembered as one of the most significant figures within the Independent Methodist Connexion in recent years, playing a key role in the

Covenant Partnership discussions with the Baptist Union.

North Western Baptist Association Regional Minister Phil Jump was among those present, and spoke of how John's visionary yet gracious leadership had left its mark on many members of the Baptist community. He had himself been encouraged and influenced by John in his own early years of ministry.

The congregation not only brought together Independent Methodists from across the UK, but representatives (including the mayor) of almost every aspect of the life of his home town Warrington.

Having fought back courageously from a stroke about five years ago, John was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer just a few weeks before his death, and even up to a few days before, continued to diligently fulfil his role as manager of the Warrington foodbank.

John never married, but summing up his life, IM minister Ken McDermott spoke not only of the mutual affection for his sister, brother-in-law and their family, but that the gathered congregation was testimony to the fact that John had a bigger family than most.

As editor of the Connexional Magazine for more than 30 years, John often worked closely with *The Baptist Times*, and we are amongst the many who give thanks for his life, mourn his passing and offer our condolences to his family.

Baptisms:

Milford on Sea Baptist Church, Lymington, Hants: Lily Lesh, Annie Horton
Nelson Baptist Church, Lancashire: Nicki Popovici, Lucas Popovici, and Patrica Slyfield
Oakridge Baptist Church, High Wycombe: Sarah Ramsay, Elvis Jack
Parsons Heath Baptist Church, Colchester: Derek Allen, Leena Allen
Stony Stratford Community Church, Milton Keynes: Ian Webb, Philip Walters, Emma Walters, Zara Turvey, Lee Loveridge

Deaths:

WIGHT, the Revd William James Schofield (5 January 1938 - 18 May 2015) died of cancer at his home in High Wycombe. For most of his working life, Jim (as he was known) ministered in Yorkshire, before moving to Scotland, where his wife eventually died. In retirement, he was involved in the life and ministry of Oakridge Baptist Church having moved to remarry.

Jobs:

Minister - Stoke Row Independent Chapel
Youth Specialist - London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft
Catering Manager, Team Leader - Lee Abbey

For more information on these positions, visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:

msm online

The Pioneer Collective has facilitated a partnership with Fresh Expressions to deliver the first online mission shaped ministry in the UK. For over a decade this course has been the catalyst behind new expressions of church being planted and established congregations experiencing renewal. In this new flexible mode of delivery it becomes an accessible resource for building the Kingdom of God wherever you are in the country.

Individuals are welcome to register, but msm online will be most effective when small groups gather in a home to access the course together.

There is a 15 per cent discount for those groups who register before 30 June. Visit <http://www.missionshapedministry.org/online>

The Big Welcome

The Big Welcome is a simple idea to encourage Christians to invite someone they know to something they love - and this year's resources are now available. The resources are undated so that you can use them at any point in your church calendar but if you wish to focus your events on a particular time, then we suggest organising them on and around Sunday 20 September.

To find out more visit the [Big Welcome website](#).

Glass Half Full: Glass Half Empty? Exploring Bi-Vocational Ministry

Tuesday July 14th – Wednesday July 15th 2015
at Trinity College, Stoke Hill, Bristol, BS9 1JP

Book online at <https://eventbrite.co.uk/event/16232405562/>

More information including a flyer and a copy of the programme available at <http://www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/content/conferences>

Notices

Placement/accommodation available for one to two learning disabled adults to live in a beautiful bungalow in the Calderdale area. My brother owns and lives in the property and he has a full 24 hour care team. He has grown up in a Christian environment and would like to share with others who have a similar background. Please contact Ruth.bradshaw@blueyonder.co.uk for further details.