



26 August, 2015

Understanding Calais

It's been the focus of much coverage this summer – but beyond the headlines what's life like for those living in the [Calais “Jungle”](#)? And is there anything those moved by the unfolding humanitarian situation a few miles from our shores can do to help?

In an attempt to understand the situation a little more a small group of volunteers with a bus load of supplies travelled to Calais last week. The trip was in part organised by [Jamie Cutteridge, deputy editor of Premier Youthwork magazine](#), and included two Baptist ministers and a number of young people in Baptist churches.

Gemma Dunning, Children, Youth and Families Pastor at West Cliff Baptist Church in Bournemouth, initially wasn't planning to go when she shared Jamie's Facebook post requesting items to take to those living in the camp.

'I was just trying to find things for Jamie, who's a friend of mine,' she said. 'But another friend (fellow Baptist minister Juliet Kilpin) saw the post and said she had been thinking about going.'

'When [Lynn's statement came out on the Friday](#), it just felt right to go. Part of Jamie's goal was to find the truth, as well as what could be useful longer-term. At our church we have this expression “not just charity, but solidarity”, and the visit seemed to fit with that.'

Gemma booked a ticket for herself and her 17 year-old son on the Friday. They were in Calais on her day off the following Tuesday (18 August).

The reality was both “heartbreaking... and beautiful”, said Gemma. There are 4,000 people living in the camp, with just three taps. Four hundred meagre food parcels are handed out twice a week (on Tuesdays and Saturdays), on a first come first served basis. A food delivery took place while the group was there, which they supplemented with biscuits from a nearby Lidl.

More general supplies such as clothing, blankets and toiletries are less of a problem,

but their distribution is, continued Gemma. There are simply not enough people on the ground to sort through what has been sent to the camp. Jamie captured the situation in a short clip [he subsequently posted on Youtube](#). The centre is based in an old Catholic church run by the Secours Catholique charity, and opens once every three weeks, for 500 people.

The fact that no major aid agencies are currently operating in the camp contributes to the lack of food and distribution issues.

‘The charities on the ground are local and small,’ Gemma says. ‘The distribution centre is run by [a remarkable man called Pascal](#), but there is only so much he can do. I couldn’t believe there was no major agency there but the feedback I’ve had off the record is that it’s too political.

‘Whatever your view on immigration, this constitutes a humanitarian crisis. It’s a refugee camp, and these people are going nowhere fast.’

But amid the desperate conditions, there was something else. ‘Since I’ve returned and reflected on the visit, I’ve described it as “beautiful, heartbreaking, joyful; and worship-filled,”’ explained Gemma.

‘We met some amazing people. I was struck by their resilience, strength - people from countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Afghanistan. Many were fleeing political situations. They had spoken out about something, and it was made clear they couldn’t go back home. ‘There were beautiful creations of homes; some were wonderfully creative structures. Life was happening.’

The group was able to visit St Michael's, the temporary church in the camp, the scene of [that weekend’s much-debated edition of Songs of Praise](#). They spoke with Mima, an Ethiopian with a theology degree who helps lead it. Mima told them that while he originally wanted to reach England, [he now feels a call to stay](#). ‘The church has such a presence God,’

Gemma said. ‘It is giving people such hope.

‘Because a number of English people had travelled to the camp with the BBC that day, the church collection bag was fuller than usual. They decided to buy a speaker – so more people could hear the gospel.’

Through their various contacts the group have been trying to raise awareness of what they saw, and lobby for greater help. Between them they have made contact with a number of larger aid agencies.

Teenager Matt Dominey of Leigh Road Baptist Church in Essex penned [a reflection](#) that has been picked by both his local newspaper and *The Baptist Times*. In the piece he explains why he has created [a petition lobbying the UK Government to take in its fair share of refugees](#). Another young Baptist, Grace Claydon, [wrote the following blog](#).

‘All of us, in our own ways, have some influence in getting the truth out there,’

Gemma says. 'We want to use those positions to influence and educate people, and work out what's useful and sustainable for the long-term.'

'Rethink language used about migrants'

Lynn Green joins leaders of three UK Churches to call on the government to change the way it speaks about the migrant crisis

The Government has been asked to "adopt language which better reflects the British values of compassion, hospitality and respect for human dignity" in its discussions on the situation in Calais. [In a statement issued by the Joint Public Issues Team](#), Baptist Union General Secretary the Revd Lynn Green has joined Dr Jill Barber, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd David Grosch-Miller, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, the Rt Revd Angus Morrison, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Revd Steve Wild, President of the Methodist Conference, in calling on the Government to promote "a more informed and higher level of debate on the issue".

On 30 July Prime Minister David Cameron, described people crossing the Mediterranean as "a swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean seeking a better life", which was subsequently described as "awful, dehumanising language from a world leader" by the Refugee Council.

Speaking to the BBC last week the Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, said, "So long as there are large numbers of pretty desperate migrants marauding around the area, there always will be a threat to the tunnel security".

'The language in which the Calais situation is being discussed blurs the distinction between people fleeing oppressive regimes and those seeking to come to Britain for other reasons,' the statement said.

'To talk of those gathering at Calais as a 'swarm', or 'marauding around the area' encourages people to see those in desperation as less than human, and so less deserving of sympathy, respect or dignity.'

The numbers involved do not warrant talk of an 'invasion' or 'flood' of migrants, the statement continued.

'The people at Calais represent a tiny fraction of the overall number of migrants who have entered the EU in the past year. In 2014, Germany took three times more asylum seekers than the UK's 14,000, and Sweden twice as many. France, Italy and Switzerland also granted asylum to more people than the UK.

'Many of the migrants congregating at Calais are fleeing repression and have stories of suffering and hardship to tell. Some are unaccompanied children.'

The statement welcomed the affirmation by Home Secretary Theresa May that Europe would "always provide protection for those genuinely fleeing conflict or persecution".

'We share the concern of all involved to see a peaceful and humane solution to this particular expression of a far broader catastrophe.' The Churches have also asked the Government to recognise that most migrants cannot be returned to their country of origin and to accept the need for the UK to take its share of migrants.

The statement concluded by encouraging an urgent call to prayer, "to remember in our churches the importance and equal value God places on every human life, and to seek wisdom that we can challenge injustice and work for peace for the whole world. Let us seek direction and discernment for ourselves and for our leaders for solutions to this ongoing crisis, for the sake of all peoples."

'Honesty from DWP' call by General Secretary

Baptist Union General Secretary the Revd Lynn Green was one of a number of signatories to an open letter sent to *The Telegraph* in response to the revelations that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has been using fabricated stories to justify its imposition of benefit sanctions

[On Tuesday \(18 August\) it emerged the DWP](#) had admitted making up comments from supposed benefit claimants in a leaflet (below) about sanctions.

Responding to a freedom of information request by [the Welfare Weekly website](#), the DWP said the names "do not belong to real claimants", their comments were "for illustrative purposes only", and that stock photos had been used. The leaflet has been subsequently withdrawn from the government's website.

Mrs Green joined church leaders in writing to *The Telegraph*, and [their letter was published on Thursday](#) (20 August).

It stated:

It is astonishing that the Department for Work and Pensions fabricated disabled peoples' testimonies, giving the false impression that claimants believe the sanctions system to be helpful and fair. It is also deeply disappointing that the DWP has chosen to defend its use of false stories as 'illustrative'.

When claimants are allowed to speak for themselves the stories they have told us are very different. The system has been described as "unjust", "brutal" and encouraging "a culture of contempt" towards sick and disabled claimants. These quotes are both real and illustrative of system which urgently needs to be changed.

We are among a broad range of faith groups, charities and professionals calling for a full review of the sanctions system, to examine real evidence from real people.

Other signatories included The Most Rev Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales; The Rev Steve Wild, President, Methodist Conference; Dr Jill Barber, Vice-President, Methodist Conference; Paul Farmer, Chief Executive, Mind; Niall Cooper, Director, Church Action on Poverty; The Rev John Proctor, General Secretary, United Reformed Church; and The Rev David Grosch-Miller, Moderator, United Reformed Church General Assembly.

Following publication of the letter, Mrs Green said, 'We recognise that there are a variety of views about how our welfare system should function, but whatever our opinion, it seems reasonable to expect that it is founded on truth, honesty and openness.

'These values lie at the heart of our Christian faith and need also to lie at the heart of our public life as a nation if people are to have confidence in our systems and processes of government.'

[The Joint Public Issues Team](#), which brings together Baptists, Methodists, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland to help local congregations engage in public life and be a prophetic voice in our society, [has been consistently calling for a review of benefit sanctions](#).

In March it released a report (alongside Church Action on Poverty and the Church in Wales) entitled [Time to rethink benefit sanctions](#), which cited how sanctions were affecting vulnerable groups such as children and those with mental health problems.

Its 2013 report [Truth and lies about poverty](#) highlighted how statistics are misused by both government and some sections of the media to create a narrative that key factors driving poverty are the personal failings of the poor.

Church's slot at prominent music festival

A Baptist church finds itself sharing the same billing as UB40 and Gabrielle this weekend

Upton Baptist Church in Worcestershire has been invited to run a holiday club as part of the [Sunshine Music Festival](#), a three-day event that unites a host of top 80s and 90s music acts.

Set in the riverside setting of Upton upon Severn, Sunshine bills itself as "England's greatest family festival", with this year's headliners the reggae/pop band UB40, who have sold more than 70 million records, and Gabrielle, whose debut single Dreams topped the UK charts in 1993. In total the event will feature more than 100 artists across four stages.

The church is directly involved for the first time, bringing a little bit of the seaside to the Worcestershire field by running a Christian-based holiday club on the Saturday and Sunday morning for five to 11 year olds under the banner 'Seaside Rock'.

The holiday club has been arranged to enable organisers to open up the festival to children within the community of Upton. While half the places are allocated to festival goers, the rest are open for the community, and visiting parents will be able to enjoy the coffee and breakfast area of the festival for free whilst their children are having fun.

This is the first time that such an initiative has been attempted, and the Revd Paul McCabe, minister at Upton Baptist Church, hopes the arrangement will benefit all.

‘In discussions with the Sunshine Festival over the last few months we have come to realise how much of a heart for those who attend the festival and for the community the organisers truly have,’ he said.

‘We have both agreed that we will learn and develop together not just for this year but for next year as well. I have no idea if this has ever been done before at a major UK festival but this is an opportunity for the festival visitors and for locals alike.

‘Being a part of the festivals is close to our own heart for our community. Upton is known for the festivals held in the town throughout the year and it has been a real pleasure to work with the festival organisers.

‘We are called as a church at the heart of its community to bring the good news of Jesus to all of our community – we believe that this new initiative does just that.’

The church’s programme will bring together craft activities, games and fun and will feature a live band. The programme will be based around the story of Peter the Fisherman and aims to deliver a quality children’s programme for the morning sessions, building on the church’s successful Messy Church initiative.

Steve High, the Festival’s head of PR, said, ‘It’s great to work alongside the local community and investigate new links, especially with such a dynamic and inspirational leader as Paul.

‘The seaside in the country side may sound like a crazy idea but in reality both organisations say that their main aim is to serve their communities, whether the children of festival goers or the local children, and if it works it could well prove a good blueprint for other joint community initiatives.’

Blind minister in parachute jump for church

A blind Baptist minister is to put his faith and trust to the test when he jumps out of an aeroplane to raise funds for a major extension to his Hampshire church

Mark Madavan, who has just four per cent vision in daylight, is to jump 13,000 feet in a tandem jump with the Royal Logistics Corps’ RLC Silver Stars at Redlands, near Swindon in September. Mark is the Senior Minister at [Locks Heath Free Church](#) near

Fareham.

The church, which has been established for more than 100 years, is planning a £4.2m extension. And while pledges and donations from the congregation and church family have covered a large part of that cost, there is still a shortfall. Some members are taking part in the three peaks challenge, but adrenaline-junkie Mark wanted to do something different.

'I have always wanted to do a parachute jump and, when I told people, one of our congregation said he could help to make that happen,' he said. 'I want to raise a decent amount for the church - surely people would be happy to pay for a blind minister to jump out of an aeroplane at 13,000 feet wouldn't they?'

Mark has had the degenerative eye condition retinitis pigmentosa since he was young.

His eyesight has worsened as he has got older so that he now has just four per cent vision in daylight.

More than 800 people use the Locks Heath Free Church building during the week for a wide range of community functions as well as services - but it now needs to be extended to cater for even greater demand.

Mark said: 'The church building has always been a place for worship, but it is also a vital hub in reaching and enriching the wider community.

'We support people in the good times and the bad, providing vital courses and programmes, youth and children's work, relationship support and many practical facilities. But the building is now restricting what we can do, and our skilled staff and volunteers are facing the prospect of turning people away unless we can expand our space.'

He added, 'We are about £500,000 short in our funding. I am confident we can close the gap but fundraising events, like me jumping out of an aeroplane, will make sure that we do.' I am not frightened or scared of the jump - after all, I have my faith - but I am excited and looking forward to the challenge if it can bring in money to help our appeal.'

To support Mark Madavan's parachute jump you can make donations through

<https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/blindleapoffaith>

Baptisms:

Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church, Herts: Elsie Wilson

Christchurch Baptist Church, Dorset: Emma Wardell, Daphne Eason and Martin Jacques

Ford Baptist Church, Plymouth: Izabela Markovska and Mihai Simulescu

Kidlington Baptist Church, Oxfordshire: Caryn Hughes,
Oluwatofarati Adeniran

Muswell Hill Baptist Church, London: Masaki Hasegawa

Ryde Baptist Church, Isle of Wight: Linda Hoade

Treeton Baptist Church, South Yorkshire: Muriel Armson

West Kingsdown Baptist Church, Kent: Matthew Osei and
David Greenslade

Baptism stories:

At **Treeton Baptist Church** near Rotherham South Yorkshire, Muriel Armson aged 85 was baptised by Lay Pastor Chris Nuttall. It was a very spiritual service, with Muriel giving a wonderful testimony about her Christian upbringing, and how at 14 years old she was confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Linda Hoade has been told she only has a few months to live, but insisted that she wanted to be baptised. Retired Minister Howard Heyburn took the very moving service at **Ryde Baptist Church**.

Deaths:

PICKERSGILL, Ron

We announce the promotion to Glory of Ron on 16th August 2015 aged 93. The husband of the late Eileen Pickersgill for 67 years, Ron was a Deacon of Harris St Baptist Church Peterborough for 35 years and latterly a member at Park Rd Baptist Church Peterborough.

He was a hard-working and faithful servant of the local churches. He also served as a Regional Commissioner on the National Council of the Baptist Men's Movement for nearly 30 years and was an enthusiastic Collector for TWAM into his nineties.

A Thanksgiving Service will be held on Tues, 1 Sept at 14:30 at Park Road Baptist Church. Donations may be made to

Tools with a Mission. (www.twam.co.uk)

Jobs:

Administration Assistant (Finance), Support Services Team, Baptists Together
Finance Assistant, Support Services Team, Baptists Together
Part time Music Leader, Windsor Methodist Church
Children's and Youth Worker, Beckenham Baptist Church
Chief Executive, Parkside Residential Home
Full Time Associate Pastor, Southall Baptist Church
Regional Minister Team Leader, South West Baptist Association
Minister, Stoke Row Independent Chapel

For more information on these positions, visit

<http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:

Multiethnic Church – a new, six-week course for small groups, written by Baptist minister Malcolm Patten, to help develop healthy, integrated churches which reflect the richness and diversity of the Kingdom of God.

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/447072/Multiethnic_Church.aspx

Could you help shape the BMS World Mission website?

BMS is currently running a survey about its site, and would love to gather as much feedback as possible. Could you fill in the anonymous 15-minute survey and share among those in your church?

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YHWCJ26>

Navigating the Congo

Free exhibition and Talks

21st September – 26th September 2015

Regent's Park College, Oxford

Featuring artefacts, navigational equipment, maps, photographs, personal letters and diaries, Navigating the Congo is an exhibition which explores the history of non-conformist involvement in the Congo River regions during the 19th and 20th century. By looking at the collections held in The Angus Library and Archive, the exhibition seeks to bring to light some of the challenges faced in navigating this history and the relationships that developed between Baptist missionaries and the Kongo people during the period of European colonialism.

Two free talks will be held during the exhibition:

Tues 22nd Sept, 6pm – Bandi Mbubi (Congo Calling) will be speaking conflict in the DRC and Fairtrade technology

Thurs 24th Sept, 6pm – Dr Rob Burroughs (Leeds Beckett University) will be speaking on Protestant missionary travellers in the Congo Free State

For opening times and booking information please visit:

<http://bit.ly/1KSTG40>