

# THE BAPTIST TIMES

www.baptisttimes.co.uk

WEEKLY SINCE 1855

July 31 2008 • 80p • No 8237



## CHURCH

The challenges facing China's Christians • p10/11



## MISSION

BMS in China, then and now • p12



## SPORT

Ministry at the Olympics • p13

SPECIAL CHINA EDITION

# Churches urged to take a stand against trafficking

By MARK WOODS

BAPTISTS around the country are being urged to support a new movement aimed at stamping out human trafficking and sex slavery.

Hope For Justice is an initiative supported by the Mainstream network of Baptist churches, and is to be launched in November at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre (NEC).

The launch event, The Stand, will feature chart-topping Christian bands including Delirious?, yfriday, Bluetree and Mary Mary. Speakers will include Andy Hawthorne of Manchester's Message Trust, Steve Chalke, Baroness Cox and Joseph D'Souza, international president of the Dalit Freedom Network.

'It will be an overwhelming day, and people will be overwhelmed by what they hear there,' said Mainstream network minister the Revd Rob White.

He said that the purpose of Hope for Justice was to call the Church to take a stand against all forms of slavery. 'We want to raise up a justice generation,' he said. 'We want to keep this high on the Church's agenda.'

'No-one is free until everyone is free. We can't continue to lean on our freedom in Christ while so many people are living in bondage.'

Globally, an estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked every year, and the trade in human trafficking is worth approximately \$10 billion a year. According to the United Nations, it is the third largest source of income for organised crime, exceeded only by arms and drugs trafficking. It is the fastest growing form of international crime.

Victims of sexual exploitation are either trafficked from country to country and their passports confiscated, or trafficked domestically and kept in saunas and brothels, or hidden away in private houses and apartments. In West Africa

## Bishops' march targets Government poverty goals

'ONE of the greatest public demonstrations of faith that this great city has ever seen.'

That was how prime minister Gordon Brown described last Thursday's 'Walk of Witness' march in central London by the 650 bishops attending the Lambeth Conference.

The aim of the event, co-organised by Christian anti-poverty coalition Micah Challenge, was to call on governments and the Church to renew their commitment to grasp the opportunity of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – eight measurable goals to halve global poverty by 2015 – afford the world.

The bishops, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, slowly made their way past the Houses of Parliament to Lambeth Palace. They were joined by other Christian and interfaith leaders, with many carrying placards stating 'Halve Poverty by 2015' and 'Keep The Promise'.

Mr Brown spoke at the rally at the end of the march, praising the on-going influence of the Church around the world, both in providing education and health care to the poorest and in using its voice to bring an end to injustice.

He urged the bishops to

up to 15,000 child slaves work on cocoa plantations. Other children work as domestic slaves, or are forced into armed militias.

Hope For Justice is the brainchild of Ben Cooley, a member of Sale Baptist Church. The movement's founder and chief executive officer, he believes he has a life-long call to help combat trafficking.

He stressed the scale of the problem after returning recently from India. 'I met a child of 11 who has been working in the



continue marching and to 'have confidence' that working together they could see global poverty eradicated.

The UN will be convening an emergency meeting on the MDGs on September 25 in New York, where

world leaders will review progress and commit to concrete efforts, resources and mechanisms to bridge the gaps.

Andy Clasper, executive director of Micah Challenge, said urgent action must now be taken if the MDGs are

to be achieved before the deadline.

He said, 'We call on people of faith and good conscience around the world to join us in campaigning on this greatest of causes.'

'The promises made to the world's poor must be kept.'

these communities.

'Our aim is to inspire the Church for this to be on their agenda.'

Hope For Justice intends to develop strategies for taking people out of slavery, including the provision of safe houses in the UK. Another plan is to develop a gap year programme so that young people can see for themselves the conditions under which people in poor communities – from which the vast majority of victims come – have to live.

All participants in the November event will be given a resource pack to take back to their churches, and organisers hope that The Stand will prove to be the beginning of a grass-roots movement in the Church as a whole.

'We aim to equip the Church for action, call on God for justice, and finance global and local projects,' Mr Cooley (pictured) said.

More information about Hope for Justice can be found at [www.hopeforjustice.org.uk](http://www.hopeforjustice.org.uk).

Tickets for The Stand are £20 until mid-September, then £25, and may be booked online.

