

BAPTISTS

September 2013

# TOGETHER

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS



**Allan Finnegan:**  
A story of faithfulness  
and consistency

**Lynn Green:**  
Trust and Teamwork

News / Interviews / Prayer / Comment / Events  
*The magazine for the Baptist Union of Great Britain*

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TOGETHER**

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# Unfinished business . . .

We live in a fast-moving and constantly changing society where instant access, quick-fix solutions and rapid response are the order of the day. One of the criticisms often levelled at the Church is our failure to keep pace with all this change, but while this may at times be justified, there is also something to be said for our ability to be an enduring and consistent presence that neither ignores the world around us, nor is simply squeezed into its mould.

In my home city of Liverpool, many of the council offices and departments are sited in Tithebarn Street - a name which gives away the location's past, serving as a reminder that long before the days of statutory provision and welfare reform, the people of God were already in the business of implementing widespread social care. As a growing network of Foodbanks in this, and many other towns and cities, increasingly turns our halls and cellars into distribution warehouses, we might recognise that *doing what you've always done* is not always such a bad thing.

Taking the long view is very much the theme of this first edition of *Baptists Together*; the main feature tells the story of one church's long term commitment to its local community and a vision for mission that spans several decades. Wale Hudson-Roberts reminds us that fifty years on, the dreams of that famous Baptist, Martin Luther King are no less relevant or challenging for our contemporary world. This was a reality that I was poignantly reminded of as his words were emblazoned on a banner unfurled over the Anfield Kop at the first Liverpool home game after the publication of last year's Hillsborough report. It is by taking a long view that Baptists in Europe are asking what they can do to tackle the iniquitous practice of people trafficking, by addressing at source some of the issues that make people vulnerable to deception and exploitation - and in the midst of this busy and demanding world, there are some vital lessons to be learned from Sarah Bingham's helpful article on stillness and prayer.

These are just a few of the features in this launch edition of *Baptists Together*, which itself is one of the first-fruits of a significant re-structuring of the life of our Baptist Union. This has not been without short-term cost, but we believe it to be vital if we are to continue as a sustainable and effective Christian presence in our world. We always recognised that our futures process would never in itself achieve the changes that we aspired to, but rather would create the environment in which this could begin to happen. As a Gospel people, we are all too aware that ours is an unfinished task, and being responsive and flexible to emerging needs and possibilities, while at the same time holding fast to our defining principles and truths, lie at the heart of who we are. Let's get on with the task together . . . .

**Phil Jump** - Regional Minister, Team Leader - North Western Baptist Association

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## LETTERS:

We welcome your views and ideas for future editions of *Baptists Together*. Write to the Editorial Group at [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk) or using the Baptist House address.

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## Baptists Together

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## 'Christians airbrushed women out of history'

A band of forgotten women were hugely influential in the rise of Christianity, a five-year study has found.

But Professor Kate Cooper, from The University of Manchester, says their contribution has been neglected by the mainstream churches.

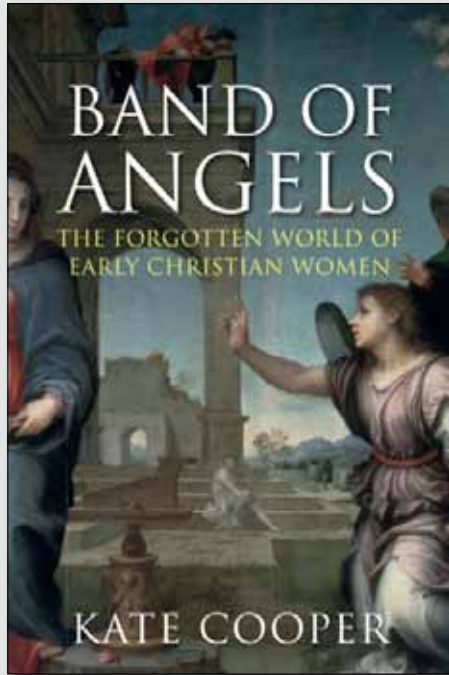
The study identifies dozens of forgotten Christian women who were influential in the first and second centuries, during a period when Christianity was - in some respects - more progressive towards women than today.

They include Lydia the Purple-seller of Philippi remembered in the Book of Acts, who was the first person to sponsor St Paul.

According to Professor Cooper, women played a central role in spreading the new Christian faith through informal friendship and family networks.

Their authority within Christian communities was earned through their role as parents, community organisers, and small business owners.

They regularly preached the gospel in the first two centuries of Christianity, and in some communities women carried out baptisms.



It wasn't until the Roman Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity, in around 313 AD, that the religion became institutionalised: male bishops were now government officials and women came to be seen as players in the background rather than public figures.

Professor Cooper said, 'These women - saints who had a radical and powerful presence in the early church - have been hidden in plain sight.'

'Many Gospel stories, for example - such as the story of Mary and Martha in the Gospel of Luke - can tell us far more about women's role if we stop to pay close attention - something male writers have not done.'

'The ancient sources mention the women, but over time less and less attention was given to their role. Really, they have been airbrushed out of history.'

'It is quite sad that a religion which began with a mother and her wonderful baby should still have so much difficulty with remembering to honour the contribution of its women.'

*Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women* by Professor Kate Cooper from The University of Manchester is published by Atlantic Books.

## London church attendance 'growing fast'

The total attendance in London's churches has jumped 16 per cent in seven years, from 620,000 in 2005 to just over 720,000 in 2012. Nowhere else in the UK has attendance grown so dramatically.

While these numbers are across all denominations, the growth is especially seen in the Black Majority Church (BMC) and immigrant churches.

The figures come from the London Church Census, commissioned by London City Mission and undertaken by the Brierley Consultancy.

However, the increase may not continue. Not all churches are growing, and while both of the main growing groups are doing so because many immigrants are coming to London, not all immigrants stay in London.

Crossing London is the first united all-age London mission in the past 20 years for churches of all denominations, and, responding to the figures, Andy Frost, its Mission Director, said he was 'encouraged'.

However he added, "Although the statistics show that church is still an important part of many lives, there is so much more to do, so many things we still need to pray about and work on if every man, woman and child in London is to be reached with the transforming message of Jesus."

### Questions:

- » **How may church growth among immigrants best be encouraged in other UK cities and urban areas?**
- » **Why is the church growing more rapidly among BMC and immigrant churches than traditional English denominations?**

## John Humphrys' programme on benefits breached BBC rules

A BBC television programme that spoke of a 'benefits dependency culture', breached the corporation's own rules on impartiality and accuracy.

The BBC Trust was largely supportive of *The Future of the Welfare State*, presented by John Humphrys and broadcast on BBC2 in October 2011.

However it found that viewers were 'left unable to reach an informed opinion' because of a lack of statistical

information, and had misleading statements about benefits spending. The programme therefore breached the BBC's guidelines on accuracy and impartiality.

The complaint was made by the Child Poverty Action Group. Its chief executive Alison Garnham said, 'This programme, like too many media stories, failed the public by swallowing wholesale the evidence-free myth of a 'dependency culture' in which unemployment and

rising benefit spending is the fault of the unemployed.'

The Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church has attempted to highlight the myths surrounding poverty in the UK through its *Truth and Lies* report and subsequent campaigning on the issue.

It has called on both the Government and media to stop misusing statistics and misrepresenting the most vulnerable.

# What was the impact of MLK's "I Have a Dream..." speech?

A number of Baptist Associations will be exploring the legacy of Martin Luther King's seminal 'I Have a Dream...' speech this autumn.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the speech, in which Luther King, a Baptist minister, called for an end to racism in the United States.

This anniversary is an opportunity to explore if things have changed, explained the Revd Wale Hudson-Roberts, the racial justice networker for the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB).

"The speech was basically about integration", he said, "and we are asking the question: have things changed? If so, by how much? Or haven't they changed?"

"Looking at the Trayvon Martin case, you could say lots of things may have changed, racism is still prevalent in society.

"Similarly in the UK, with the recent Home Office vans targeting illegal immigrants: we have made some progress, but how much? The hope is that the events will explore the speech and the legacy."

***I Have a Dream: The Unfinished Business?*** events are taking place in the East Midlands (EMBA), Southern Counties (SCBA) and West of England Baptist Associations (WEBA). The WEBA event is a partnership between Bristol Baptist College and the Church of God of Prophecy.

**This year marks the 50th anniversary of the speech**

Speakers include the Revd Joel Edwards (WEBA), Dr Anthony Reddie (SCBA), and the Revd Dave Ellis (EMBA).

Mr Hudson-Roberts said the events will inform the Racial Justice Group and link to *The Journey*, the ongoing programme of work that has the aim of ensuring that BUGB develops into a fully multicultural Union.

For more on Martin Luther King, see page 28.

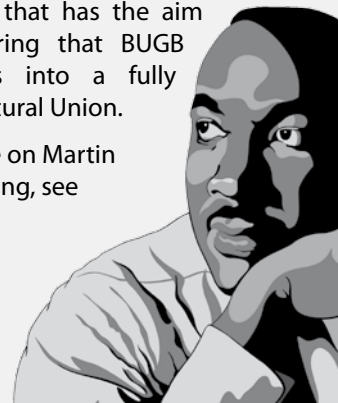


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## Get social, churches told

Baptist churches in the UK have been encouraged to maximise the potential of social media.

Social media is the 'digital water cooler or campfire of today', according to Steve Fogg, communications director at Crossway Church, a large Baptist church in Victoria, Australia.

'I'm excited about the opportunities social media presents for churches,' said Steve. 'The traditional gatekeepers of media aren't there. Churches can build their own platform in the community to spread the gospel.'

Steve spoke to a number of churches during a visit to England earlier this year.

He encouraged church leadership teams to think about providing 'great content' for congregations to share with their friends.

'If you tell stories about what your church is doing, stories of what volunteers are up to, people have a different perspective of what church is about. It's a great engagement tool to start conversations. It provides opportunities for people to connect and ask a question.'

During his visit to the UK he addressed Baptist audiences in the north east and Essex, and noted that churches were 'cautious' in their approach.

'Many are at the starting point – they might be using it internally, for their congregation. But social media is not a new thing. It has reached saturation point in the west. The older generation has adopted social media. We all have a story to tell – let's get out there and tell it.'

**To read more tips from Steve, visit [www.stevefogg.com](http://www.stevefogg.com)**

# Faith in our Life

Being a follower of Jesus is not simply a matter of being involved in a local church, but affects the person we are in every aspect of our life. **Simon Macaulay** is the managing director of Anglo Recycling Technology Ltd, a Lancashire-based business which manufactures felts from recycled fibres. He explains how his own faith commitment let him to develop a chaplaincy, and the impact it has made on his workforce.



Simon Macaulay

I went to church when I was growing up, but only because it was something we did at school. My parents weren't really churchgoers, and there wasn't much encouragement about it.

Things changed when I moved up north in 1998. I started going to Altrincham Baptist Church, and there I did an Alpha Course, and then another course post-Alpha. Around this time I met Mark Greene from the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. He was speaking about being a Christian wherever we are, seven days a week, not just on a Sunday.

It got me thinking. As far as I knew there was no other Christian in our workplace, it's something that just wasn't spoken about.

We were also in a period where we had a high staff turnover. The factory is in an area of Lancashire with high social deprivation. There was aggression among the staff - there was an incident in the car park one morning when a guy was attacked.

I just thought it was a terrible environment. It was a dark place. And I felt God asking me to do something about it. I basically wanted to make the working environment better, to bring some light into it.

My route to work took me past a Baptist church. I was struck by its regular array of posters, which had a relevance to everyday life, without being too churchy. I felt this was the ethos I wanted to capture within the company. So I approached the minister, Ron Phillips, and asked him to be our chaplain. My experience of Baptist ministers is that they've generally been in some form of employment or industry before they've become a minister.

When I mentioned it to the staff they were perplexed. In an area like ours the church has little relevance. I remember the first year I asked Ron to say grace before a Christmas lunch, and one member of staff just laughed – they just weren't used to it.

*It feels like God's love has shone a light onto these people*

But generally, as I was managing director, the staff were very good and went along with it. Some would hide behind machines when Ron came, though gradually they got used to it. It really made a difference when things got difficult – money troubles,

problems with relationships or health – for then they would turn to Ron or David Livermore (the current chaplain, minister of Trinity Baptist Church in Bacup).

A couple of years ago we started a lunchtime group on our site - 'Pie with the pastors', which was developed with Churches Together in Whitworth. Generally around 15-20 people come, a good mix of Anglo and local people from outside the business. We use an LICC prayer pathway, which we share between us on emails.

Over the years the place has been transformed. We now have a stable workforce. People are much kinder, nicer, better to each other. There isn't the same aggression. They are wanting to show their good sides, not dark sides to each other.

And it's not just a workplace, it's more of a community. We have started a social enterprise offering work experience to young people with autism and special needs conditions. Both Ron and David are liked and respected. They come in every couple of weeks, and people appreciate it.

It feels like God's love has shone a light onto these people. I'm not saying people are going to church every Sunday, but the organisation has come round from a really difficult time. God is at work.

Do you have a story of how God is at work in your life? Share your story with us at [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk) or 01235 517677.

Anglo Recycling Technology Ltd's factory



# Entering politics

Early autumn is party political conference season and our churches will be present, writes Stephen Keyworth

Every year since 2003 leaders of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church, together with the Salvation Army and Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), have attended the autumn conferences of the three main political parties.

The aim of these delegations is to meet with Christians and politicians from the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative parties to convey the current concerns of the churches and to demonstrate support for people who serve the public through political life.

A feature of each conference is a prayer breakfast organised by the Christian fellowship of each party and members of the delegation have often led prayers or a short reflection as part of the general gathering. Often local Baptist churches have taken the opportunity to share in these prayer breakfasts.

There are also opportunities to meet with MPs and ministers to enable deeper discussion and to raise concerns around particular issues. Meetings at which the church leaders set the agenda, albeit only for a very limited time. But the fact that the delegation is received in this way is a mark of how valuable these meetings are felt to be for all parties.

At the time of writing we do not know exactly which MPs we will be able to meet with, but last year we shared in conversation with a number of MPs including the Attorney General, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP, and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP. We raised issues around the use of armed drones under international law, the marriage bill, the treatment of people in poverty and the role of religion in public life.

**Eric Pickles MP**, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (with Dr Helen Cameron Head of Public Affairs for the Salvation Army, and the Revd Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader BUGB) at the Conservative Party Conference 2012

## What are the concerns you would like us to raise with the MPs?

Please send your ideas to:  
[faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk](mailto:faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk)

*Please take time to pray* for each of the conferences and the delegation in the next few weeks: Pray for opportunities for significant conversations as we raise Kingdom concerns and values.

*Representatives of the Baptist Union of Great Britain at this year's conferences are:*

**Stephen Keyworth:**  
Liberal Democrat in Glasgow  
16 - 17 September

**Chris Ellis**  
Labour in Brighton  
23 - 24 September

**Ernie Whalley**  
Conservative in Manchester  
30 September - 1 October

They warmly invite representatives of local churches to come to the breakfast meetings.



**David Lammy MP** and the Delegation at the Labour Party Conference 2012 - including the Revd Dr Simon Woodman (3rd left), minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Church

**The Revd Stephen Keyworth** is BUGB Faith and Society Team Leader





# Beyond the Boundaries

Baptist networks across Europe are caring for the victims of human trafficking, as well as trying to prevent vulnerable people being trafficked in the first place. By Tony Peck

Dorine applied for a foreign, well-paid job advertised in Romania. She was supposed to work in a bar in Italy but she found out too late that the Milan night club was not looking for waitresses. Since they took away her passport and documents she could not flee. At the border she had to smile, because they threatened to kill her if she revealed the purpose of her travel.

*European Baptist Federation Anti-Trafficking Resource Book 2*

Sadly Dorine's story is all too common. According to the United Nations, human trafficking is the fastest growing means by which people are enslaved. Naturally many churches and other organisations are concerned about this modern-day slavery - and for several years European Baptists have sought to play their part in the fight against it.

The aim of the EBF Anti-Trafficking Network, which was formed in 2005, has been to mobilise our strength as a grassroots network of churches in almost every country of Europe. They bring together strong Baptist Unions from the so-called 'sending' countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Moldova, and also Unions in the so-called 'receiving' countries such as Netherlands, UK, Spain and Italy.

Dr Luran Bethell has worked for many years in anti-trafficking work in Thailand and Europe, and has been an inspiration to the members of the EBF Network. Far from despairing at the scale of the problem, she encourages us to pray that more people would hear God's call to reach into these dark corners.

"Though it seems an overwhelming task, there is great HOPE! God is at work, calling women and men to creatively enter into places where many

## What could the Anti-Trafficking Network achieve?

**1 Raise Awareness** among the Baptist churches of Europe. The subject of girls and young women being trafficked and then 'sold' into prostitution has not been part of the normal discourse of most of our Unions. This is slowly changing, though in some Unions there is a long way to go. The EBF Anti-Trafficking Network has produced a series of excellent resource books that combine social analysis, Bible study, theological reflection and practical suggestions of what individual churches and Baptist Unions can do.

**2 Encourage prevention initiatives** which seek to prevent vulnerable individuals (mainly young women) from being trafficked. Some remarkable projects are being spearheaded by Baptists, for instance

in Moldova, the economically poorest country in Europe. One tries to help girls who are leaving orphanages to find meaningful paid work, which makes them less vulnerable to being trafficked.

**3 Care for the victims.** European Baptists are involved in several countries in providing safe houses for girls who escape the clutches of the violent gangs of traffickers; in other projects local Baptists take to the streets to befriend and seek to help the girls they find there.

**4 Work in good partnership with others** - whether Christian groups or 'secular' organisations that are fighting human trafficking. In Sweden Baptists are partnering in pioneering work being done by government and NGOs.

Christians would rather pretend didn't exist. God is at work, and brings hope where some would simply feel overwhelmed. God is at work, desiring that all - abused and abuser, those prostituting as well as pimping - come to know God's help, healing and hope for an eternal future!"

**It's a huge problem, but there is hope.**

The Revd Tony Peck is  
General Secretary of the  
European Baptist Federation

## Resources

All EBF anti-trafficking materials are available from:  
[www.ebf.org/anti-trafficking-materials](http://www.ebf.org/anti-trafficking-materials)

See also:

**Stop the Traffik**  
[www.stopthetraffik.org](http://www.stopthetraffik.org)

**Hope for Justice**  
<http://hopeforjustice.org.uk>





# BAPTISTS TOGETHER

## Our new website and logo - launching 9 September

Eighty per cent of households in Britain now have access to the internet, a figure which rises to 95 per cent of households with children. With over two thirds of the adult population now identifying themselves as being on-line daily\*, having an attractive and accessible website has never been more important. The launch of the *Baptists Together* magazine coincides with a major update and re-design of the Baptist Union's website. This is more than simply re-organising the available information or maintaining a fresh and contemporary design, it has involved re-thinking who might visit our website and why.

The internet is shifting from primarily being a source of technical and reference information, to being the means through which people shop, keep in touch with friends, catch up with their favourite TV programmes and explore new ideas and experiences. Until now the BUGB website has been primarily designed to provide resources, information and support to local churches, and while all of these features will remain, we have recognised that it could increasingly become the gateway through which many people are introduced to the story of Jesus and life and witness of their local Baptist church.

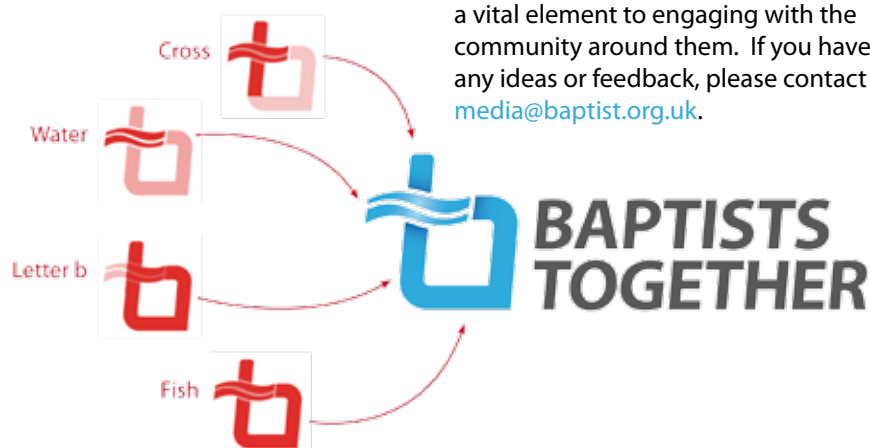
The new site has much more of a 'feel' of engaging with a spiritual community and seeks to make it easier for visitors to find their way around. We are first and foremost a community of interdependent churches, associating together to make Jesus known in our communities and to the world.

### [www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)

It is in those churches that our message is primarily lived out, so it is the life of those churches that we want to highlight, alongside of course providing them with the technical support, advice and resources that they need.

A team of people has been working hard in recent months to get the site ready for launch. They are keen that others from our Union should also be able to contribute to the site, and commented, "We want the website to reflect our new sense of identity, to be a place where people do not simply find out about Baptist life, but have the chance to share their own story and place within it. We know that we won't have got everything right straight away and would love to hear comments and suggestions for how it can be developed."

A feature of both the website and this magazine is a new logo that will be increasingly used as a symbol of our working together.



Designed around the shape of a letter 'b' it retains the core symbols that have been used by our Union for over half a century – these are more than mere graphics, but an expression of who we are:

**The cross** – at our very heart is the Gospel message of Jesus, whose life, death and resurrection is the foundation of our faith; a symbol that connects us with a wider Christian community and defines us as centered on Christ.

**The fish** – one of the earliest symbols of Christian community, reminding us that we belong to each other and are called to walk together and watch over one another in love.

**Water** – expressing our defining commitment to believer's baptism and the cleansing and renewing by God's Spirit that undergirds our identity as disciples of Jesus.

As our world becomes increasingly 'on-line', we hope that this site will be a valuable mission presence that Baptists can be proud of. We hope that it might inspire and encourage local churches to recognise that their own websites are a vital element to engaging with the community around them. If you have any ideas or feedback, please contact [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk).

\*Office for National Statistics: Statistical bulletin: Internet Access - Households and Individuals, 2012



Photo: rgbstock.com

## Developing the use of silence in prayer

Are we spending enough time listening to God when we pray? by Sarah Bingham

We live in an increasingly noisy world. Twenty-first century Europeans rarely experience silence. Yet in exercising faith, silence has always played a role. After his dramatic showdown with the priests of Baal, Elijah needed fresh vision to carry on. His encounter with God came not in all the noise and drama, but in 'sheer silence' (1 Kings 19:12, NRSV). Habakkuk calls the earth to silence in response to his vision of what God will do (Hab. 2:20).

Too often, all our teaching about prayer focuses on speaking to God, rather than listening for his voice. Prayer as conversation, or even prayer as sitting quietly in God's presence, seems to be off the Baptist discipleship agenda. Other traditions seem equally ill at ease with the practice; within the Anglican liturgy in use in the mid-seventies, the phrase 'silence may be kept' occurred. This intrigued me; it often seemed that silence was kept only if the service was not 'running late'! No one ever explained what was meant to happen in the silence, or why it might be kept.

Troubles and trials come upon us as we age and mature and I gained more insight into what Paul meant when he said the Spirit could pray in and through us without words (Rom 8:26). I also realised, finally, what the silences in the Anglican service were for – to allow reflection and listening for the Spirit to speak directly to us *internally*.

I decided to spend 15 minutes every day over the college vacation 'Son bathing'<sup>1</sup>. My intention was that it would not be a time of speaking, but of quiet openness, with no agenda.

**“Should every  
believer meet God  
regularly in silence?  
Is it integral to  
prayer?”**

Initially, I found it very difficult to 'still' the internal monologue of inconsequential thoughts, or thoughts relating to specific issues in my life. This undermined my desire to hear God's agenda rather than impose my own.

However, I had read the *Cloud of Unknowing* whilst at London School of Theology and knew that the author suggested the use of a short phrase as a means to set distractions aside<sup>2</sup>. I also knew of the prayer practice of turning hands down to symbolically release things or put them aside, and to sit with hands up as a symbol of being open to receive from God. I combined these two elements to aid both an external, physical focus and an internal, emotional focus, hoping to permit a whole 'spiritual' focus on God alone.

I would, therefore, turn hands down as I exhaled and mentally said (eg) 'fear' and turn hands up as I inhaled and said

<sup>1</sup> This is a term I coined to describe sitting in God's presence trying to be actively receptive to all he might say or do.

<sup>2</sup> Halcyon Backhouse, ed and trans, *The Cloud of Unknowing* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985) pp 62-65.

(eg) 'love'. This lessened the extent to which I was setting an agenda, more so when I used the actions without words. In his book *Praying with our Hands*, Jon Sweeney suggests:

Praying with our hands is a way of practising mindfulness. It can give stability to our spiritual lives... When words don't say adequately what we mean, our hands might be able to show it<sup>3</sup>.

A number of issues arise from reflecting on this practice, including:

- » should every believer meet God regularly in silence? Is it integral to prayer?
- » how can believers be helped to explore silence communally and individually? Does silence work differently for different people?
- » how do we know when silence is our best response? What if God's response seems to be silence?
- » how do we each balance spiritual practices necessary for our personal relationship with God, with requirements for work or study purposes?

In this article, there is not space for comprehensive exploration of those questions; however I offer these brief comments as a 'starter for ten'.

If we believe that we follow a God who speaks, we must, like Samuel, be able to recognise God's voice and respond by saying 'speak, LORD, for thy servant hears' (1 Sam 3:9). The greatest implicit reason given by the Bible for believers to pray using silence is their need to hear God's voice, even as the prophets did. Ideas for gaining familiarity with using silence in a group context can be found in Yaconelli's *Contemplative Youth Ministry* or Scripture Union's *Prompting Prayer*.

The main method is to outline the purpose of being silent, to define a period of silence and try it, and to then allow a time for sharing or feedback. Some, in silence, will see a picture or unfolding scene; another may find a Bible verse springs to mind or a word of knowledge comes to them. Others may receive a profound sense of peace, comfort or contentment.



For some, fear may prevent such engagement – in silence, we confront both God and ourselves, but facing the fear may be the best thing to do.

Sometimes in relationships, shared silence reveals the depths of trust and intimacy that have been achieved<sup>4</sup>. Job's friends did their best work in bringing comfort when they purely came and sat with him (Job 2:11-13). It was in speaking that they went wrong. Some things are too deep for words.

Followers of God do experience times when God seems silent and distant for extended periods. This is sometimes referred to as 'the dark night of the soul'.

God's seeming absence can be a time of refining faith, of deepening trust and developing our relationship with him. Taking away 'consolation' from our relationship means we are forced to depend purely on God and seek him for himself, rather than any comfort, blessing or gifts that we might receive from him. In groping around in the silence, we may indeed find him for himself (Acts 17:27).

A common saying is 'pray as you can and not as you can't'<sup>5</sup>. We may try different methods or patterns of prayer, of Bible Study or worship within our personal walk with God, but we also need to be honest enough to admit that what works for one may not work for another.

Finding the balance of work and play, worship and rest, may be a lifelong task, because when we have found it, our life will move on and the balance point will change. Perhaps this is a reason for celebrating the metaphor of life as a pilgrimage; until we reach our final destination, we will need to keep moving on and experience new terrain, new vistas, new people and new challenges.

Formerly a teacher, then Scripture Union Evangelist, **Sarah Bingham** is a second year Minister-in-training at Spurgeon's College and Minister of East Worthing Baptist Church.



## Helpful starter books:

*The Cloud of Unknowing* Backhouse, Halcyon, ed and trans, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985)

*Wisdom from the Monastery* Barry, Patrick, OSB and others (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005)

*Prompting Prayer*, Top Tips Bingham, Sarah and Blythe, Vikki, (Bletchley: SU, 2008)

*Celebration of Discipline* Foster, Richard, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2005)

*Encountering the Depths* Mother Mary Clare SLG, Townsend, Ralph, ed (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981)

*Reaching Out, the Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* Nouwen, Henri JM, (London: Collins, 1976)

*The Lost Art of Meditation* Pritchard, Sheila, (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2003)

*Sacred Rhythms* Sine, Christine, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003)

*Contemplative Youth Ministry* Yaconelli, Mark, (London: SPCK, 2006)

3 Jon M Sweeney, *Praying with our Hands* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2001) p72.

4 Mother Mary Clare SLG, Ralph Townsend, ed, *Encountering the Depths* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981) p32.

5 This phrase was originally coined by Abbot John Chapman of Downside Abbey.





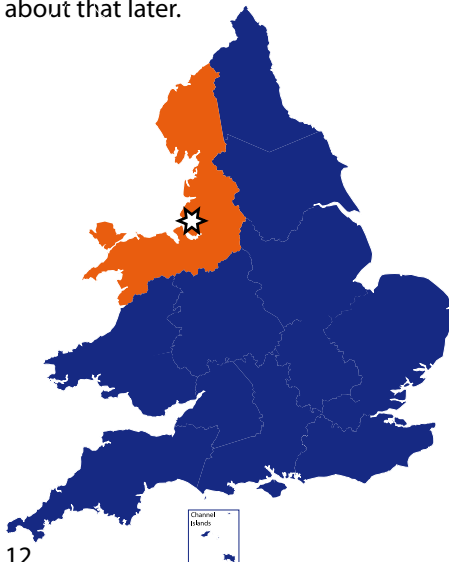
## A STORY OF FAITHFULNESS AND CONSISTENCY

Netherton has many indicators of high social deprivation – but with a lick of paint, a dose of comedy and a committed response to God’s call, a Baptist church is working creatively to make a long-term difference. By Phil Jump

Picture courtesy of Liverpool Echo

*“It’s taken 40 years for our community to get into this state, and it will take 40 years to bring about lasting change.”*

It’s with comments like this, that Allan Finnegan lets you know that, as far as he is concerned, mission is about being in it for the long haul. Allan is minister of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Netherton, Merseyside but is becoming increasingly well known as one of the upcoming new faces on the vibrant Merseyside comedy circuit - more about that later.



Allan’s story begins at quite a low point in the life of Emmanuel. The church had been through difficult times - people had left; leaders had fallen out, but a handful of faithful believers stuck together and sought to try and take things forward. Allan was one of them, and it was perhaps his blunt honesty, particularly about some of the events in their recent past, that made him a natural leader. But it was also at this time that they experienced a very real sense of God’s hand in rebuilding his church - people began to come back; people who had found faith some years earlier, drifted away but were suddenly stirred to re-connect with God and his people; adults who in earlier years attended Emmanuel’s once thriving youth and children’s work, suddenly remembered with affection the church they had once been part of. A new church community was beginning to be raised up.

As they continued to grow, the church members began to ask whether this was a time for them to again consider calling a minister.

They met with newly appointed Regional Minister, Phil Jump to explore things further. But within the dynamics of that meeting, Phil very quickly recognised something that a number of the deacons had been saying for some time - if anyone was to be the minister at Emmanuel, it needed to be Allan; God’s call and anointing seemed obvious to everyone but him.

The journey through college was not an easy one for Allan. His background was as a manual labourer and he had never thrived academically. Thanks to Northern Baptist Learning Community (NBLC), it was quickly identified that his supposed lack of intelligence was in reality previously un-diagnosed dyslexia (Allan joked at his ordination a few years later “Until then I just thought I was thick!”) Part of the college’s learning programme included a mission trip to India, and it was as he reflected on this experience that Allan began to recognise the scope of the ministry and outreach that Emmanuel needed to embrace.

Netherton was built in the early years after the Second World War, and it was a visionary step when Stanley Road Mission re-planted itself in the newly formed community. But like many of those 'New Jerusalems', in subsequent years, it has come to be known as a place of 'multiple deprivation' and the preoccupation of statisticians and social policy makers alike. The socio-economic circumstances have certainly made their mark on the church, but the church has also made its mark on the people. Amongst its congregation are those with vibrant testimony of lives transformed from dependency on drugs, debt and toxic relationships. Of course not everyone's experience is quite so straightforward, and the church works hard to embrace people from a variety of backgrounds and lifestyles.

The community also has an impact on the sustainability of the church. "The problem with this place" Allan explains "is that it's somewhere you move away from. People come to the church, get their lives together and then aspire to live somewhere else. It's totally understandable why they do it, but it makes it hard to keep the church going."

It was reflections like these that led the church to explore a partnership with Eden. It was not so much that Emmanuel needed to change - Netherton needed to change, cease being a place to leave and become somewhere that people would want to come to.

## I felt God offering me a real challenge: 'are you prepared to dig your grave here?'

Originally formed in Manchester through the work of the Message Trust, Eden invites Christians to move into an area to form an intentional mission community. In partnership with a local church, and co-ordinated by a paid team leader, they commit to live and work for a minimum of five years at the very heart of local life. Allan is quite blunt in his assessment of more orthodox community programmes. "We are used to people coming into communities like ours with their own agendas and their own money. They seldom succeed and once the money runs out they clear off, taking the jobs they created with them. Local people are just left feeling even more let down. Everybody wants to save the 'poor scousers' and frankly we are fed up being patronised."

What attracted the church to Eden is that they are in it for the long haul. They don't plan for success, they plan for sustainability, recognising that it takes years to build up trust in communities that have been on the receiving end of decades worth of schemes and projects. "We need to change people's perception of Netherton" Allan continues, "this is why we are going for this."

Emmanuel is a church that takes 'Word and Spirit' seriously, and much of their vision is rooted in a sense of what God has been saying to them through the Scriptures. Allan speaks of recognising through the narratives of the Old Testament, that those who begin the work of God's Kingdom might well not live to see its fulfilment. "I felt God offering me a real challenge," he continues, "are you prepared to dig your grave here?" Allan is not so self-absorbed to imagine that that everything that happens is dependent on him, it is more a matter of recognising that the purposes of God extend beyond human agendas and lifetimes - this is what distinguishes us as more than just another agency of care.

It was also within the Biblical narratives that the church's understanding of social and spiritual regeneration is rooted. They were inspired by the account in Nehemiah 11 of a 'tithe' of people being released to re-populate Jerusalem. Their vision is for a tenth of the community to become part of the worshipping congregation of Emmanuel. From there they will be dispersed as agents of social change throughout the neighbourhood. It is a bold and ambitious vision, but one you can't help taking seriously and being inspired by.

Emmanuel's is not a story of immediate success, but one of faithfulness and consistency. The faithfulness of God in restoring his people, and the faithfulness of those people in their commitment to their community. The church has grown by people being released and envisioned to do what they can. One obvious example of this is the internal decor of the premises. Allan's experience in the building trade has not been wasted in transforming the interior into a bright and welcoming worship space. But look more closely and you realise just how much can be achieved with a few sheets of MDF, a can of lilac paint and some well-positioned down-lighters. This is not well-heeled extravagance but local, creative people doing what they can. The adjoining hall may be of quite low grade construction, but its brightly painted walls, Hawaiian style coffee shop and themed stage make it a stunning location for a now vibrant youth, children and family work.



The church building before refurbishment





Picture courtesy of Liverpool Echo

### local, creative people doing what they can

He decided to enrol on a course with the Merseyside based Comedy Trust. "I want people to see that you can be a Christian and still have a laugh; religion can become something quite dangerous if you can't stand back and laugh at yourself".

Through Allan's involvement with the Comedy Trust, plans are now being developed through the North Western Association for a course specifically for Baptist Ministers. Many of the key skills that the Trust seeks to identify and develop are akin to those employed by effective preachers. A pilot course recently arranged in Lymm was over-subscribed and considered hugely beneficial by many who attended.

It is great to hear Emmanuel's story and to recognise not only the difference that Home Mission investment can make, but also the support structures that it also enables. It is a reminder that mission is about the long haul and an encouragement for local churches to not always seek the quick fix of short-term success. But long haul is not about sitting around waiting for someone to turn up - this is a church that takes its responsibility to the local community seriously, and seeks to attune every aspect of its life to that end.

**The Revd Phil Jump** is Regional Minister, Team Leader in the North West Baptist Association



It's when you talk about fabrics that you begin to realise how holistic the church's vision is. "I felt the building was speaking to us about who we were," explains Allan, "it was falling apart and so were we. People need to come in here and sense that it is a place of hope and possibility - what chance have they got of that in a building that speaks of decline and neglect?" Anyone who thinks that maintenance and mission are somehow opposites, will think again once they've spent time at Emmanuel.

Even Allan's developing work as a comedian is part of a wider vision of God's Kingdom. He first gained the confidence to try stand-up through being encouraged as part of his training at NBLC to 'explore an alternative learning context.'



## Baptist Christians working creatively across the country

Here are some examples of new pioneering projects:

### Rise and Shine, Bristol

Rise and Shine is a new multi-cultural church in East Bristol.

It brings together the Church of God of Prophecy UK, a black-led Pentecostal church, the West of England Baptist Association and the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Last summer the leadership team of The House of Praise (a Church of God of Prophecy congregation) invited Baptist minister Var Smallwood and wife Emma to join and develop a church planting strategy.

The goal is to develop a prophetic worshipping community which is multi-cultural ('inter-cultural') in its very DNA. Its name is inspired by Isaiah 61.

A group has been meeting to pray and study John's Gospel most weeks, and 7 September sees a formal launch event.

Var, who has an MA in Biblical Studies focused on 'How can Caribbean-British and White-British Christians be One?' says, "Building a church that seeks to be 'multi-cultural' is ... complicated. The difficulty is that white privilege - the core issue at play - is rarely, if ever, addressed.

"The issues revolve around questions of 'who's in charge?' and 'which culture is dominant?'"

"Despite the issues, we have great fun. Following Jesus is always a great adventure!"

For more information, visit: [www.one-hope.co.uk](http://www.one-hope.co.uk)

### Shard End Urban Expression team, Birmingham

"It's very hard to explain church planting on a housing estate in north east Brum", says Jo Fitzsimmons. "It's a combination of a lot of things - a lot of food, a lot of laughs, a lot of conversations, a lot of hanging around, a lot of prayer, a lot of listening to our community."

Jo is one of a core team of six who have moved into Shard End. They have involved themselves in the community in a variety of ways, from litter picks and community meetings to the local football club and the allotment.

A group of about 10-18 meets every Tuesday evening around the meal table for discussion, food, debate, learning and listening together.

"People who come are from a range of backgrounds all living in Shard End, asking questions about God and trying to work out how to live for others", explains Jo. "We have joined things that have been developed, sought to join in what God and neighbours have already begun."

For more about the Shard End team, and other Urban Expression teams see: [www.urbanexpression.org.uk/getinvolved/teams](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk/getinvolved/teams)

### This Hope Baptist Church, Newton Abbot

This Hope Baptist Church in Newton Abbot, Devon emerged from the closure of the town's Baptist church. The South West Baptist Association ring-fenced the money from the sale of the church building with an approach of 'let's just see what happens.' Joe Haward, an eighth generation oyster fisherman and recent Spurgeon's College graduate was called with wife Sarah. They spent the first year steeped in prayer, and relationships began to form.

In the autumn of 2011 a group of ten people gathered together in a home, ate together, broke bread, prayed, listened to and discussed the Bible, committed to one another; a church was born.

They meet every Saturday, in Joe and Sarah's home. As the fledgling church is growing – often with those on the fringes of church life – they are exploring the possibility of meeting in a larger venue.

"Our hope is to be a people whose love for God is seen through the way we live and the way we gather together", says Joe. "Not only that, but we are trying to love each other well and to also reach out in acts of love and kindness to our community, especially to those who are facing trials and difficulties."

For more information, visit: [www.thishope.co.uk](http://www.thishope.co.uk)

### Glendale Crossing Places, Wooler

Glendale Crossing Places in Wooler is an initiative that seeks to share the good news of the Christian faith, build friendships and serve the communities in Glendale - without a traditional church set up.

Welcoming people of all backgrounds and ages, believer, unbeliever, church goer or unchurched, seeker or the merely curious, the group meets for brunches, meals and film evenings. It meets to talk about issues of life and faith, encourage and support one another, go for walks and other outings. Crossing Places runs the Wooler Community Food Garden, occasional children's parties, guided walks and helps with the Credit Union.

It is led by Bill Eugster who worked for 32 years as a Baptist pastor. "We wanted to see what it would be like to meet unchurched people without a church, and without wanting to build a church in a traditional sense.

"We are a group of friends who've come to love God and share a love and commitment to Glendale - its people and place. Crossing Places seeks to sow seeds of hope and encourage friendships and community across the generations and between people of all kinds."

For more information, visit: [www.glendalecrossingplaces.org](http://www.glendalecrossingplaces.org)

### Church for 18-30s, Southend

Plans for a missional, culturally relevant church for young adults in central Southend are taking shape.

With a college, new university, thriving retail and night-time economies, affordable town centre accommodation and the seaside, the town is increasingly a magnet for young adults.

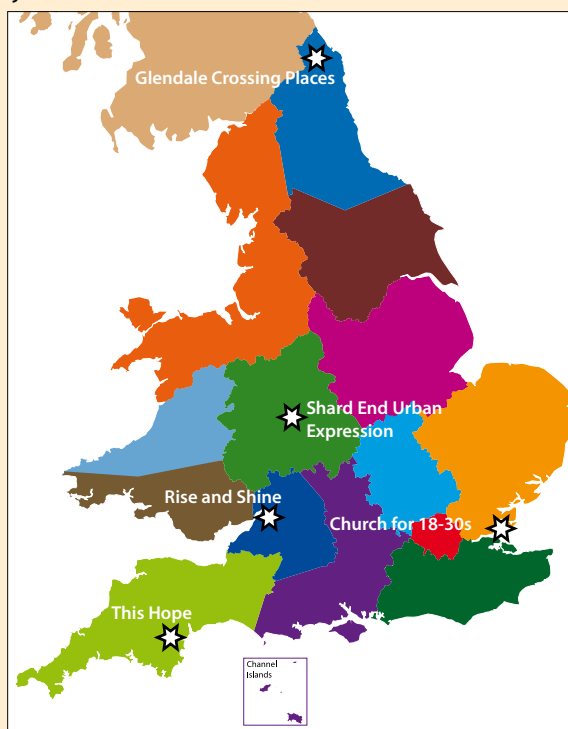
In recent years there have been conversations among Baptist leaders about planting a new church in the town to reach these young adults.

Last year Baptist minister-in-training Dan Pratt arrived to help develop the project, and local church planter and mission entrepreneur Peter Dominey was released by Church from Scratch.

As the plans develop, a Southend Mission Partnership is coming together, comprising local Baptist churches and organisations, to support the work and for wider mission co-operation. (There is a higher density of Baptist churches in Southend and Rochford than anywhere in the country.)

"What if we not only invited young people into our churches, but God actually planted a church right in the midst of them?" said Dan. "What if clubbers and students were so transformed by the love of God they started reaching out to their friends, families and neighbours?"

For more information visit: [www.southend.org.uk](http://www.southend.org.uk)



## OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO DISABILITY

What does full inclusion look like? At a Baptist Assembly seminar earlier this year, one of the speakers, **Glen Graham**, unpacked the importance of the Bible in exploring this issue. We asked him about it.

**Q** The Baptist Assembly seminar was called 'Overcoming Barriers to Disability'. What was the context?

**A** There are two explicit givens here. First of all, that there are barriers in churches to people who are disabled. We are moving with the assumption that there are and they need to be addressed now. (Glen convenes the disability justice group of the Baptist Union of GB).

The second relates to the word inclusion. Often we think we are being inclusive when we say disabled people worship at our churches, where disabled people are welcomed when we provide access points - and for many people that is a huge step forward. From my point of view, that is an issue of welcome. Welcome is not what I mean by inclusion, it's step one.

Welcome is a starting point but we want to go beyond that so that disabled people are leading churches in all sorts of capacity, taking part in every aspect of church life, being involved

in worship, being part of our Union's structure, not just being invited or given a token seat at the table. It's actually about playing a part equally with everyone else in church life.

**Q** In the seminar you suggested some of the problems start with a mistaken interpretation of the Bible, even describing the Bible as being 'fraught with danger'. Can you expand on that?

**A** I called this section of the seminar, 'The Bible, savaged text or simply misunderstood?' I got the title from a friend of mine called Adrian Thatcher, who wrote a book some years ago called *The Savage Text* where the basic argument was that the Bible has been used and interpreted in wrong ways to keep certain people down.

Some people say, "Well I believe every word as it is". If you did, I shouldn't have taken this seminar, or be the minister of my church. Quite frankly I am ritually unclean.

**Q** Regarding disabled people, can you give examples of mistaken interpretations of the Bible, and have you, as a blind man, had personal experience of this?

**A** Firstly, there is the link between sin and sickness. When I was about four or five, I remember vividly a conversation in my village. People were obviously looking and pointing, and saying, "Well, which one of his hell-bound parents caused this?" "One of them must have done it, these sort of things don't just happen". "Isn't it a shame the way he is."

I knew that they went to the local chapel in the village, not the Baptist Church. They were obviously borrowing from a warped understanding of scripture that says sin and punishment equals blind boy. They used this thing as a savaged text, where we think of perfection as whole, wholesome, moving, where the body is perfect. Actually none of us are perfect.



Another aspect relates to who could perform religious rights. I have been challenged with this over the years: "You as a blind person shouldn't minister because you will bring uncleanness amongst the flock." Again it's a savage use of an Old Testament passage.

But it is not just confined to the Old Testament.

**Q** How does it occur in the New Testament?

**A** Let's consider for a moment, sickness and healing. I believe in healing, I believe that I have seen God heal minds and bodies in many amazing ways.

But I have also been the victim of many people's attempts. It suggests there is something wrong in the way that God made me.

It gets to the root of what the Bible says. Through weakness things were made known, that's the way things are. Paul's thorn in the flesh never went. My asking for healing is implying that something needs mending and frankly I'm not broke! I'm whole; I am as whole as anyone else in the room. We are all working towards shalom and wholeness. Everybody!

We often live our lives wanting to mend and fix people rather than releasing them to be the people they want to be. And we need to remember that these texts all had a context: they were written for specific reasons.

**Q** You've spoken about some of the ways in which we need to exercise great care when interpreting the Bible. What about the other side – how does the Bible inform our understanding of inclusion?

**A** The Bible is a narrative of hope and inclusivity. The Bible story is a story about hope, but it is also a story of power and powerlessness. God gives us some power, but then we grasp power back again in the fall narrative. But God reclaims his loving power through all sorts of different ways, through the so-called 'broken vessels' of this world.

It happens when we co-operate with God, when we are partners and participants in God's wonderful schemes of bringing power back to where it really belongs. And it happens through his people of many types, not through grasping human beings. It's power paradise regained. A story of hope!

**Q** And in this story of hope, particular themes emerge, which point to God's new order?

**A** Yes, amid the strict laws were laws to maintain justice, to provide new roads for people and straight paths to lead the blind in new ways. For example: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to release captives'. All that sort of thing.

That's not just about healing folk or releasing folk in the physical realm, it's about a new order where the poor and all the others this world despises, in the next will be championed.

**The wounded healer, not superman, saves the world.**

It is the churches' job to start that journey now, and that's even in the Old Testament. The prophets held the nation of Israel to account for the ways in which they had dealt with the marginalised.

With the coming of Jesus, those on the edge were brought right into the middle. Yes they were healed physically, but the most important thing

was Jesus touching them before that happened. He touched lepers at the risk of contamination; he brought them into the middle of society. He was fully part of their lives.

**Q** So the church has a vital role to play?

**A** The church is an inclusive community where gender, society, social class, able bodied and so-called disabled doesn't matter, in one sense, because we are all journeying on the same page. Yet amid our diversity we get a glimpse of something of a new community where powerlessness in the eyes of the world, or the majority of the world, is power to God. The God who allowed himself to be disfigured, broken. The God who disabled themselves to participate in the lives of the broken world. Where the wounded healer saves the world.

The wounded healer, not superman, saves the world. Doesn't that tell you of a path where those that seem to wear wounds are those who heal and have that capacity? Aren't we missing out on some untapped resources in our churches?

If you want to see heaven on earth, you see it through the diversity of the church. You see it through all of us who are disabled in various ways working in harmony together. Where we are all part of this new way of living together; it's a city pulsating with life, pulsating with creativity, a cosmos restored and a banquet to enjoy.

Our Bible story isn't about who is in and who is out; it's not about a privatised religion. It's a narrative of hope for the whole world where we can all mirror true inclusivity.

**The Revd Glen Graham** convenes the disability justice group of the Baptist Union of GB. He is minister of Salisbury Road Baptist Church in Plymouth.



Glen leading the Baptist Assembly seminar with Martin Hobgen



# The lame walk: BMS rehabilitation work in Nepal

Paralysed at 19, Maya has spent the last nine years lying on the same bed in the same room in the same small house in Nepal.

She fell from a tree while cutting leaves to feed goats; she was just doing her job. Her loving family, who were very poor, sold their land and their animals to take her to different hospitals, even travelling to India in the hope of finding treatment – but all the doctors told them the same thing: ‘your daughter’s spinal cord is completely severed and she will never walk again.’

So Maya lay on her bed, unable to move her arms or legs, hopeless. At first she had no control over her bladder or bowels, but over time this came back – and her family would lift her on and off a seat with a bucket under it, enabling her to restore a bit of her dignity by using a toilet. A small blessing in a bleak existence.

But then everything changed.

Maya heard about the International Nepal Fellowship (INF) Surkhet Clinic where BMS worker Megan Barker serves as an occupational therapist. The clinic is the only centre in the whole of Nepal which provides a full rehabilitation service for spinal injury patients, from arrival to adjusting back into community life.

“When Maya got here she wasn’t engaged with what we were doing at all,” says Megan. “I think she was chronically depressed. She probably wished she was dead.”

Doing rehabilitation sessions twice a day, Megan and the staff gradually built up Maya’s muscle strength. After a week they tried sitting her up and gave her exercises to strengthen her back, then they began to work on her grip, then they got her standing.



**Maya walked for the first time in almost a decade**

In June this year, Maya walked for the first time in almost a decade, with the aid of a frame.

Suddenly, Maya has a future that she thought had been lost – and her mum can’t stop smiling. “Seeing her mum this morning, it made me cry. She is just so happy,” says Megan. “I heard her saying to a relative of another patient, ‘I was so hopeless, this was my daughter and she was so beautiful and there was so much life ahead of her and then it was all taken away.’”

“Now she has it all back again.”

Maya never got much education, being from such a poor family, but now she’s dreaming of studying: “It’s amazing to see that now she’s actually talking about what she’s going to do in the future,” says Megan. “She has a future to talk about. And there’s nothing to stop her moving on, she’s bright.”

Megan hopes that in time Maya will be able to walk inside, on flat surfaces, unaided, although outside, with the nature of Nepal’s landscape, she will probably always need a stick. One thing is certain: the depressed, hopeless young woman who Megan first saw has been transformed. Maya is 28, she has her life back and she is beaming.

**Her mum can’t stop smiling**

Megan’s work is only possible because of the faithful giving of UK Baptists. Thank you.



This story first appeared on [www.bmsworldmission.org](http://www.bmsworldmission.org)



# Q&A: Moltmann on the mission of the mind

Some call him the world's greatest living theologian, but Jürgen Moltmann thinks of himself as 'only a child of God in the Community of Christ'.

The celebrated German theologian, famous for his work on theologies of hope and liberation, including *The Crucified God*, will be speaking at a BMS World Mission event in November. **Catalyst Live** will take place on 27 November in Manchester and 28 November in Reading. In addition to Professor Moltmann, **Catalyst Live** will also feature Professor John Lennox and Christians from the worlds of science, art, apologetics, poetry, creation care, Middle Eastern political theology and leadership theory.

In advance of his visit, Professor Moltmann spoke to the BMS magazine *Mission Catalyst*. Here's a flavour of what he said:

## Moltmann on economics

"I am a great defender of the social state. Social legislation came into being during the time of Bismarck in Germany and it is full of Christian ideas. The social state means security for everyone. Another Christian principle is fairness in competition."



Photo: Andrew Firth firthphoto.com

"Christians since the first community at Pentecost have known that there is enough for everyone, and this can be translated into global economics."

"The social state means security for everyone."

## Moltmann on fundamentalism

"Fundamentalism is dualistic: 'here are the faithful, there are the unbelievers, and the unbelievers must be suppressed or killed'. This is a strange anticipation of the idea of Armageddon, the end, where the final battle of God and the devils will take place. This is not Christian, this is apocalypticism in a modern form, and in politics it is friend-foe thinking: 'who is not for us is against us'."

## Moltmann on anti-environmentalism

"If some Christians read the apocalyptic verses in the New Testament, they should read to the end; because the Christian hope always says that in the end is the beginning and, therefore, we don't give this world up to hell."

## Moltmann on politics

"One thing we learnt from the Nazi state in Germany is that we must be involved as soon as possible if a dictatorship arises. The separation of politics and faith was an obstacle for many Christians becoming involved in resistance against Hitler. Since that time, I would rather be involved in politics, even if I'm wrong. Not being involved is much worse."

## Moltmann on Moltmann

"I'm not a church Father! I'm only a child of God in the Community of Christ."

"I would rather be involved in politics, even if I'm wrong."

"I am not an authority. I feel more like a brother, a friend in a large community where I learn and speak and give what I can and take what I can. I am only one in a long chain of theologians."



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# Throwing stones?

Focusing on Jesus' response to a woman caught in adultery, Andy Williams looks at ways of dealing with contemporary issues in a Christ-like manner

Photo: rgbstock.com

Those of us who live, or work, with teenagers may have received the challenge to, "Get real". I suggest that this is a contemporary way of expressing the challenge issued by Jesus to the scribes and the Pharisees in John chapter eight, verse seven, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone...' In this article, I explore how these words, and the context in which Jesus said them, may help us in responding to people and some of the contemporary issues of our day.

The account about the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8: 2-11, is presented in the context of the preceding chapter of a growing conflict between the scribes and the Pharisees with Jesus. This incident is set up to test Jesus, with the life of a woman at stake. If Jesus upholds the Mosaic Law on adultery with its penalty of death by stoning, he will be in conflict with Roman law, under which adultery was not a capital offence. If Jesus does not uphold the Mosaic Law, then the scribes and Pharisees can discredit him and his teaching, in front of the predominantly Jewish audience. How will Jesus respond pastorally, with justice and with integrity?

'Now what do you say?' is their question. The response of Jesus is to bend down and write with his finger on the ground. Is he playing for time? Was he not interested in the question? He must have known it was a trap aimed at discrediting him. We're told that they 'kept on questioning him'. Eventually, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'



Photo: rgbstock.com

With this response, Jesus transformed the argument from a legal one about penalty to a personal one about the reality of human living before God. If you have not sinned, if you have not fallen short before God in some way, then you throw the first stone. 'And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.' Jesus was not accusatory towards the potential stone throwers; he bent down and left them each to work out the personal implications of his words. Not surprisingly, elders first, they all gradually melt away.

**'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone...'**

*John 8:7*

What are the implications of this event for those of us who seek to be Christ-like amidst the opportunities, demands and challenges of our contemporary cultures and world?

How might reflecting on this event help to shape our responses to contemporary issues, for example, the changes to social security, sexuality, immigration, and relations with those of other faiths?

Jesus suggests that if we are tempted to pass judgement on others for their shortcomings, we should first 'get real' about ourselves. What are the ways in which you personally fall short, or are tempted to fall short, of the standards you, or the Christian faith, seem to expect? Let's 'get real' and recognise that life is complicated and that God has made and enabled us as human beings to be wonderfully complex and diverse.

Let's recognise that in this materialistic society, facing the challenge of austerity, we, or many people, spend more than our income and struggle to live within our means. Why then should those on social security face reductions in their modest incomes, when many rich people set up companies or pay accountants to minimise or avoid paying tax, not to mention certain global companies? On another occasion when the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus, they asked a question about paying taxes (Matthew 22:15-22, also in Mark and Luke).

Let's recognise the power of sexual desire in our lives and consider the times when we looked at, or related to, another person, primarily out of that desire. The assumption made in the passage is that the woman did commit adultery, but no information is provided about the man involved. Jesus showed no inclination to judge or condemn. His concern is for the future. In our highly sexualised society, with high levels of what some would call relational chaos, does this suggest that our concern should be with the future and with calling ourselves and others to relational and sexual faithfulness, rather than dwelling on the past? How does this inform our response to civil partnerships and the prospect of same sex marriage?


Let's recognise that there are those we know who have emigrated to other countries for a better life for themselves and their families. Did we try to deny them the right to choose where to live in the world? Probably not, so why should people be prevented from coming to live in the UK for a better life for themselves and their families?

**How does this inform our response to civil partnerships and the prospect of same sex marriage?**

Let's recognise our shortcomings in living our faith, and the sins of Christianity through history, and how Christianity has been mis-used to support other agendas. Let's resist the temptation to pass judgement on the worst shortcomings in the practices of a tiny minority in another faith, or how their faith is mis-used to support other agendas. Without denying the

shortcomings of the people of any faith, let's focus on the good common ground among people of faith and celebrate ordinary and amazing contributions that people of faith make to our society and world.

Other similar teaching from Jesus is that of 'the log and the speck' (Luke 6: 41-42). Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? If we adopt this approach of being prepared to see our own 'log' and face our own shortcomings and sins, we may be better able to live out both the compassionate justice of Christ on the one hand and the challenge of Christ, from the position of writing on the floor, to those who hold power and pass judgement on others.



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Whether we might see ourselves in this event as like the woman, or those ready to throw stones of judgement, all walk away - facing a great personal challenge. The woman must have been amazed to have been walking away at all, as a result of the compassionate justice of Jesus. Nonetheless the challenge to 'get real' and to change is clear. "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again".

**The Revd Andy Williams** is Minister, Sion Baptist Church, Burnley. He is also Community Development Worker, Faith Network for Manchester



All quotations from NRSV

We'd love to hear your views - join the conversation at:  
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Every issue of *Baptists Together* will pose a question that is pertinent to our shared life together, and publish a collection of responses, before inviting readers to continue the conversation online.

With more than 400 of our churches in rural settings (and many more ministering to those in rural contexts), we asked this:

**“We are a small rural church, what is our purpose, and how can we really make a difference to our community? Any ideas welcome!”**

**Responses:**

Don't forget to 'be' as well as 'do'

The purpose of any church is to put Christ first; all else flows from that. But there are distinctives about being small and rural. In a village there may be only one pub, school, shop, WI - meaning people are more likely to know each other. So the life of your church and individual Christians is more visible.

We do summer prayer walks, offering prayer (if they wish) by a note through doors. We stand on street corners and pray, while others back at the church pray for the walkers. Support a local charity with some of your fundraising efforts - we support the Nancy Oldfield Trust, which provides sailing for the disabled. Being small helps people quickly feel part of your church, whether or not they attend on any regular basis. Ensure there's a warm welcome for all who come in - simple but so effective.

Have a regular lively column in the parish magazine. Being a Foodbank collection point shows care for those in need. But go the extra mile - buy the food you donate from your village shop and you're supporting two local enterprises at once! One key test is "Would our community be the poorer if we were not here?" And don't forget to 'be' as well as 'do', join at least one community group.



**Sue Seeley**, minister of Neatishead Baptist Church, Norfolk

It is better as a small church to do one thing and do it well

To begin to understand your purpose as a church you need to do a lot of listening. Listening to God through prayer and scripture, listening to one another, listening beyond the church through census data, community interviews and conversations, and finally listening to contemporary culture before attempting to share the Christian faith within it.

A key question I would be asking through all of this is; 'in light of who we are and where we are, what is God calling us to do?' As you listen to one another, look for key skills, hobbies and life experiences that could be used to build community links.

We live in a consumerist culture, and the temptation may be to do a bit of everything; it is better as a small church to do one thing and do it well, than to try many and do each badly!

Become aware of community flows, ie what your place looks like at different times of the day, such as school collection times, seasonal working patterns, tourists etc. Pick just one of these, and match it against the skills and abilities you have as a congregation in terms of opportunities to bless, fellowship and meet something of the felt needs.



**Simon Mattholie**, Baptist minister and CEO of Rural Ministries

## Find fresh ways to reach people to break down preconceptions

on events to cater for different age groups. Do we get loads of people at these regular events? The answer is often 'no' and that can be somewhat demoralizing BUT it is a fact in many rural churches. We have to work hard to get the results!

There is more. We have a 'Chatty Church' with crafts, videos and puppets and an emphasis to get people 'chatting' about Christianity rather than just being 'preached' to. There have also been bigger events.

Robin J Trebilcock in his book *The small Church at large* says, 'Small is not beautiful. Big is not beautiful. Size and resources have nothing to do with the real beauty of a church. The beauty of the church lies in its willingness to learn and adapt its way so that it will reach the community and give as many people possible the experience of Jesus Christ.'

And that's what we aim to do – to find fresh ways to reach people to break down preconceptions and to show others that our Church is a place of security and safety. We want to show God's love practically and spiritually to our local community and to the wider world.

**Jon Pyper**, the husband of Val, the minister of Kimble Free Church in Bucks



## The starting point is agreeing your purpose

There is no one answer but we do have a free toolkit that should help lead to a right answer for your unique situation. We also offer a programme called '*Creative leadership in the Rural Church*', which equips leaders to answer this very question and turn it into action.

The starting point is agreeing your purpose. As someone who planted and led a rural church for many years, I believe this is around being Christ for the community we serve, and through this, drawing people into a relationship with Jesus, leading them on from being a friend to a follower to a disciple.

The next stage is an appraisal of your community and congregation: gaining an understanding of the most acute needs, the resources in the local church and potential partnerships; and then thinking through what might be a realistic approach. We have a 'toolkit' for this at [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications-and-resources/profiling-tools](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/publications-and-resources/profiling-tools)

The Arthur Rank Centre serves rural churches by providing a vast range of other resources online, covering worship, discipleship, evangelism, buildings, community engagement and examples of good practice. See [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk) and click 'Are you involved in a rural church?' for a summary, including links to this toolkit and our evangelism training resource for small rural churches.

**Jerry Marshall**, CEO of the Arthur Rank Centre



## What do you think?

Are you part of a small rural church? Continue the conversation at [www.baptist.org.uk/ruralquestion](http://www.baptist.org.uk/ruralquestion)

### Further information

**Rural Ministries** is a rural mission agency that seeks to encourage, resource and enable mission in and through the rural church. [www.ruralministries.org.uk](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk)

**The Arthur Rank Centre** is a Christian charity serving rural churches and their communities [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk)

'**Prayer changes things**' is the theme of this year's Rural Ministries annual conference. Taking place 18-20 October, it is led by Malcolm Duncan from Gold Hill Baptist Church, at Kings Park Centre, Northampton. Further details: [www.ruralministries.org.uk/conferences.html](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk/conferences.html)

'**Becoming your communities heartbeat**' is a training day for all rural churches being run by Eastern Baptist Association and Rural Ministries on 9 November, at Neatishead Baptist Church in Norfolk.

Do you have any 'Big Questions' you'd like us to consider in future editions of *Baptists Together*? Please email [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk) and let us know your ideas and suggestions.





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## Encouraging faith in church and at home

By Andy Goodliff

We worship together as all-ages because we are all-age communities. Seeing children and young people grow in faith depends upon a church that welcomes them and recognises what they offer alongside the rest of the church.

Earlier this year, a number of roadshows launched *Today ... Not Tomorrow*, a new resource put together by the Baptist Union and Arise Ministries, which helps churches explore being all-age communities. It offers, alongside the likes of *Messy Church*, *Godly Play* and the excellent *Barnabas for Children* website, the possibility of churches exploring what it means to be truly all-age.

The greater challenge beyond here is to see that a church that nurtures faith with all-ages must also encourage and enable faith to flourish at home. The recent little book *Making Disciples in Messy Church* by Paul Moore notes that discipleship in the Old Testament was 'nurtured with all generations together at both festival and family level!'

The challenge we face is how might we re-imagine a following of Jesus at a family level? Our Baptist practice of infant presentation (also known as infant dedication or blessing) commits parents and church to surrounding children with the life and love of Jesus, but the question many of us ask, (I write as a minister, but more importantly as a dad of a three year-old and six month old), is what does this look like?

Historically, the Sunday School movement, whilst being a largely positive development, increasingly allowed (and perhaps even encouraged) the tendency for parents to relinquish or hand over responsibility to the church and its children's ministry for nurturing faith – it's the church's job to impart and model faith (and in particular it's the children's worker or youth worker – especially where they are paid!). This runs the risk of inadvertently giving parents a feeling of inadequacy with regard to their ability and capacity to encourage and support faith with their child/ren. This is further compounded by the disjunction between faith and its practice in our consumer culture – we, and our children, are immersed in habits that sideline God and discipleship to church on a Sunday, and generate a lifestyle that is less likely to model faith in the home.



The prayer of the church and parents when a child is brought for blessing and welcome is that one day they will come to baptism. We cannot rely on the church's children's work to take sole responsibility for nurturing faith, for the simple reason that one hour on a Sunday morning (or whenever) is unable to counter the vast hours spent in school, in front of the television, or on the computer. What then is needed is a renewed attention and thought into the *vocation* of parents as those who embody and demonstrate ways of following Jesus. Faith practised at home says this is not just something we do on Sundays. Equally, faith practised in the context of the church gathered says this way of *faithful* living is not restricted to only our family. The intention then is to re-balance the responsibility of growing faith for all-ages, but especially children, between church and home. Our aim must be to inspire, equip and enable a (new) generation of parents to creatively allow a Christian spirituality to be habited into the daily rhythms of living. This might involve recovering habits of old, it will probably also involve developing new ones for a new time.

Where do we go here? One step might be to commission the *Today... Not Tomorrow* team to do some further thinking that seeks to resource us.

Another step for all of us might be to ask our churches three questions:

- 1 **I wonder what faith looks like at home?**
- 2 **I wonder what habits might help us surround our children with the life of Jesus?**
- 3 **I wonder what it might mean for our role as church and as parents to intentionally prepare our children for baptism?**

**Andy Goodliff** is the author of *To Such As These: The Child in Baptist Thought* (Regent's Park College, 2012) and the minister of Belle Vue Baptist Church in Southend.



He is grateful to Sarah Fegredo, Ed Jones and Rich Shorter for their comments in preparing this article.



**Suggested further reading**

*In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice* by Bonnie Miller-McLemore

*The Power of God at Home: Nurturing our Children in Love and Grace* by J Bradley Wigger

*Family Fun At ... series* by Barnabas For Children (books for Summer, Christmas and Easter)

*Making Disciples in Messy Church* by Paul Moore

There are also useful resources on the [www.faithinhomes.org.uk](http://www.faithinhomes.org.uk) website run by Barnabas and at [www.todaynottomorrow.org.uk](http://www.todaynottomorrow.org.uk).



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# Power of the Volunteer



Local churches simply could not function without the dedication and commitment of volunteers - they are the lifeblood of our churches. **Jon Bishop** suggests ways to bless the volunteers

I have been working as a paid youth worker or as a Baptist Youth Specialist for about 10 years now. In that time there has been one thing that has consistently amazed me: the power of the volunteer. Every single piece of youth work I have been involved in has been enhanced by the volunteers, who give up so much to help see young lives transformed by the power of the Good News of Jesus.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any church's ministry to young people. Even when paid workers are involved, they cannot do what they do without the time, energy and commitment of the volunteer. Churches have had a long history of being brilliant at volunteering, and I often find other organisations outside the church are amazed when I talk about the volunteers, the time they have given and how willing they are to serve. But this is something we must never take for granted.

So in honour of the volunteer here are three things that churches can do to bless, encourage and inspire their volunteers.

## 1 Buy a Coffee

It's pretty simple really, but why not from time to time buy one of your volunteers a coffee or other beverage as a way of saying thank you and sharing with them in their own journey.

Use the time you have to acknowledge all they have done and listen to their ideas and thoughts.

## 2 Organise a Volunteer Supper

I just recently starting doing this and found that it's been a wonderful blessing to my team. The first time we went for a sit down meal. Nothing too fancy - just jacket potato but it made such a difference to them to have something put on for just them. Other members of my leadership team helped with the food and set up and clear up. For once the volunteers were just coming to spend time together and share without having to put the chairs away at the end.

## 3 Pray for them

In most churches there are usually some people who are awesome at prayer. Why not ask them to take a list of the volunteers and start to pray regularly for them. Prayer is such an incredible thing and when the volunteers know that they are being prayed for, when they are serving and when they are not, it can make such a difference.

**The Revd Jon Bishop** is a dad, husband, Baptist Youth Specialist, follower of Jesus and occasional long distance runner





### Can you describe your journey to the UK?

I was born in Lagos, Nigeria. I came here in 1986 to study accountancy. My father ran a property business, and I planned to gain some overseas experience and return to work with him. But I met my husband and carried on studying. Now I have spent more of my life living England than Nigeria. I enjoy going back to Africa when I can, as I miss the fruits and the weather, but can't deny England is my home.

### How and when did you become a Christian?

I was born into a Muslim family. At 19, I met my future husband, and he was a Christian. Initially I was reluctant to start a relationship with someone from another religion, but he introduced me to more Christians and I started to going to church with him. I became attracted to Christianity. It took about three years. I liked the fact that you didn't have to pray five times a day. Then one day the pastor preached a sermon saying that if you were the only person on earth, God still would have sent his Son to die for you. He loves you. Something changed in me after that. I was baptised in 1995. My immediate family didn't really understand the decision, but they respected it, which was lucky as many others in my position may not have been as fortunate.

### Where do you worship?

Tyndale Baptist Church in Reading, where I serve as a deacon and also a member of the finance committee. It's a wonderful place to worship and has a very welcoming congregation. Words can't describe how supportive they have been to my family and me [Mary and her husband have four sons, aged between six and 24.]

### You joined BUGB earlier this year. Can you explain what your role is?

I am the Finance Manager. [Mary succeeded Philip Putman who retired in April.] It's a challenging, interesting and very diverse job. I found out about it through the church. It's just been a blessing, and I feel it's where God wants me to be, serving with my skills.

### Where did you work before joining BUGB?

#### Is there a different culture between there and here?

I used to work in the Financial Management department at the Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. I didn't agree with the reforms that were coming in. There was a lot of work pressure and I was doing ridiculous hours. I certainly learnt a lot, but the time had come to move on. The environment here is very calm, and colleagues are also helpful and supportive. I love the fact that we meet to pray every Wednesday morning.

### How do you relax?

I love reading. I'm currently on the *Left Behind* series (Tim La Haye and Jerry B Jenkins) – I can't put it down. I have also taken up knitting and am on a project of making a top at the moment.

### Favourite hymn/worship song?

Lord, I come to you,  
Let my heart be changed, renewed,  
Flowing from the grace,  
That I found in you  
Lord, I've come to know,  
The weaknesses I see in me,  
Will be stripped away,  
By the power of Your love

### Favourite Bible verse?

Isaiah 43: 18-19: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness, and streams in the wasteland."

Different verses speak to you at different times, and this is really speaking to me now.

### Who would you like to see featured here?

Send your suggestions for the Baptist People section of a future edition to [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk)



# 'I Have A Dream ...'

Martin Luther King's extraordinary speech is 50 years old. The context may have changed, but its message still has a resonance for the church today.

Image © Beaniebeagle | Dreamstime.com



Exactly half a century ago, Martin Luther King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC and said "I have a dream ..."

Seemingly delivered without preparation, possibly prompted by influential gospel singer Mahalia Jackson's cry: "Tell them about the dream, Martin", it was without doubt an extraordinary speech. Luther King had previously delivered similar words to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), but these words on 28 August 1963 came from another place, an unexpected place, somewhere very deep in the human spirit.

At the time of the speech, America's social context was grim. Both North and South America were marred by division of the very worst kind, legalised segregation endorsed by the law of the land. Concessions from those in power seemed improbable, and most blacks were firmly locked in poverty not of their own making. Any prospect of 'overcoming' such herculean obstacles seemed a million miles away; but for Luther King, founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which had organised civil rights activities throughout the United States, 'overcoming' had never left the agenda.

In August 1963 he led the great march on Washington, and there he delivered this memorable speech in front of 250,000 people. In that setting, laden

as it was with historical significance, the cry for freedom was issued in earnest. The quest for justice moved up a gear; to overcome the horror of racism was King's fundamental message.

"In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check," he said. "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of justice."

Justice was at the very heart of this speech; racial justice at its core. To the thousands that stood and listened, including Mahalia Jackson and the million or so who heard it broadcast on their televisions, the message was unambiguous: 'Let our people go!'

No one can question the rhetorical brilliance of this extraordinary speech; its content is without parallel. Its impact, however, need not be over, if only our own local churches will continue to give themselves to its core values.

For King, the local church was always the community called to action justice, to be the prophetic voice. King regarded the local church as 'the chief moral guardian of the community', by nature and definition an ethical

community. King argued that the church must assume the leadership in setting and advancing the highest standards of both personal and social morality. In his Dream Speech, King urged the church to be in the vanguard of America's consciousness, around issues of racial discrimination, economic exploitation and violence; bringing God to those who live with racism and its enduring legacy, King enabled the church to become the conscience of the community, nation and state.

In his latter years, King's speeches had broadened to embrace not only racism, but also gender and economic violence. King's ultimate dream was for the church to broaden its horizons ever wider: to challenge the status quo and to break the mores whenever necessary.

In words from the Old Testament, the church is 'set over nations and over kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build anew and to plant.'

King called the church to be a thermostat, changing and regulating the temperature of society; Christ still calls his 'beloved community' to do this in each and every age.

**Wale Hudson-Roberts** is the Racial Justice Networker for the Baptist Union of Great Britain



## I Have a Dream: The Unfinished Business? events to reflect on the 50th anniversary

- Wednesday 18 September - 18:45 - **Nottingham** - Speaker: The Revd Dave Ellis  
 Saturday 28 September - 19:00 - **Bristol** - Speakers: The Revd Joel Edwards and Marvin Rees  
 Sunday 17 November - 16:00 - **Oxford** - Speakers: Dr Anthony Reddie and Prof Christopher Rowland

For details, see: [www.baptist.org.uk/dream](http://www.baptist.org.uk/dream)

# Prayer

## Freedom, Justice and Peace

God of freedom, justice and peace,  
We pray for all those who are denied their freedom,  
Those in prison or under house arrest for their political or religious beliefs,  
Those trafficked as slaves and forced to service the will of others,  
Those who have sought asylum only to be held in detention centres  
Those who have fled homes and lands and dare not return.

Where human rights are violated and abused:

**You call us to walk in step with your spirit of freedom, justice and peace.**

God of freedom, justice and peace,  
We pray for all those who are denied justice,  
For women denied equal pay and struggling to raise a family,  
For people working in dangerous conditions and denied the right to protest,  
For people who are differently-abled but are disabled by our prejudices,  
For teenagers in our criminal justice system whose real need is for a stable home.

Where human rights are violated or abused

**You call us to walk in step with your spirit of freedom, justice and peace.**

God of freedom, justice and peace,  
We pray for those who are denied peace,  
For those who live in fear of violence at home from people who are supposed to care,  
For children who play in streets where soldiers patrol in armoured tanks,  
For people denied freedom of movement by peace walls and check points,  
For families and communities torn apart by war and constant disappearances.

Where human rights are violated or abused

**You call us to walk in step with your spirit of freedom, justice and peace.**

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first published on [www.dancingscarecrow.org.uk](http://www.dancingscarecrow.org.uk)

## Other Prayer resources

Have a look in the Resource Library on our website for our growing range of prayer and worship resources, including our *monthly prayer diary* and resources for:

### Peacemaking Sunday - 22 September

- » Resources to help a leader put together a service for Peacemaking Sunday on the theme 'The things that make for peace'.
- » Material in a foldable A4 booklet
- » Opening reflection for this year's services

### Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer - 4 November

- » Outline order of service, including stories, prayers and Bible study

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# Trust and teamwork

As she begins her new role, General Secretary Lynn Green outlines a vision for the future

*"If deep trust has got you this far, why do you think that God is going to give you a blueprint for the future now?!"*

That was what Roy Searle said to me while I was on retreat this summer. And as I let go of my expectations and simply enjoyed God's presence and waited on him I began to see clearly what I long for us to be as a Union of churches, Associations and Colleges...

I long for the Lord to be so utterly at the centre of all that we are and do that we would ooze Christlikeness out of every pore of our life together. It struck me that Mother Theresa is known throughout the world for her deep and authentic Christian faith. I long that Baptists would be renowned as people of authentic faith too.

Not just people that talk the talk, but people who walk the walk. To do this I believe that we need to get serious about prayer.

I long for teamwork expressed through trusting relationships

I long for us to cherish those closest to us. I have always tried to serve in ministry in ways that honour my calling as a wife and mother. Whilst I was on retreat God showed me that this is not just important for me, it is important for all of us. Embodying the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, when few others are looking, is a true mark of our maturity and also acts as a firm foundation for our more public lives.

I long for teamwork expressed through trusting relationships. We are one team across this nation, all playing our part in different ways. A few years ago I was fortunate enough to see the stage production of *War Horse*. I was spellbound by the magnificent 'puppets' that were the horses. All was so brilliantly observed and executed that you quickly did not see the people operating the horses from within, but were captivated by these incredible animals that seemed so real.



I long for us to be like this - a team that is such a breathtakingly gracious, co-ordinated collection of parts moving as one, that it is not the 'operation' that is seen, but that people are captivated by our movement.

I long that we would be instinctively engaged in God's mission to the world. Not because we ought to, or have to, but because it bubbles up and overflows naturally out of our lives as Kingdom people who embody, share and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and invite others to participate in that goodness too.

There is just one small problem... I alone cannot make this happen. But I do believe that, as we seek Christ together, and long for these things together, we will find ourselves becoming like this. Thankfully our future is not in my hands; it is in God's hands and all our hands.

**The Revd Lynn Green is**  
General Secretary  
of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

## Events

### Induction of New General Secretary

Lynn Green's induction will be taking place on **Sunday 22 September** at 15:00 at Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church. For details, see: [www.baptist.org.uk/induction](http://www.baptist.org.uk/induction)

### Disordering gender relationships

- women and men after Christendom. A day taking the hierarchy out of gender. With Fran Porter, author of the forthcoming book *Women and Men after Christendom*. **Saturday 26 October** At IMC, Selly Oak, Birmingham Visit [www.menno.org.uk](http://www.menno.org.uk) to book or call 0845 4500 214.

### 'The Accidental Universe? - No Source? No Guide? No Goal?'

With high profile speakers including astrophysicist Rodney Holder and molecular biologist Denis Alexander, **Saturday 26 October** 10:30 - 16:00, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 30

London. Cost £15 (£7 concessions). Register at [www.faithandthought.org.uk](http://www.faithandthought.org.uk)

**Sticky faith** - Training day for youth workers, children's workers, parents and ministers. **Saturday 9 November**, Salvation Army, Preston £15 including lunch.

### Lectures at St Paul's

Ten influential speakers including Director of Liberty Shami Chakrabarti, MP for Tottenham David Lammy, charity leader Camila Batmanghelidjh and former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, come to St Paul's Cathedral this autumn to discuss 'How to Change the World'.

All the events are free and unticketed. Full series information can be found at [www.stpauls.co.uk/howtochangetheworld](http://www.stpauls.co.uk/howtochangetheworld)

## Resources

**Christmas starts with a Christ** is a campaign that aims to put Christ at the heart of Christmas. It brings together the UK's leading denominations and organisations, including the Church of England, the Evangelical Alliance, the Children's Society and the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Throughout autumn, resources will be made available including specially produced Christmas cards, a chocolate Advent calendar with a copy of the Christmas story in the box and a national advertising campaign using posters and radio ads. To download resources for your church, or find out more about the campaign, see: [www.christmasstartswithchrist.com](http://www.christmasstartswithchrist.com)

## Your Feedback

Do you have any comments about the magazine or the articles in this edition? Write to [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk) or to the Baptist House address on page 3.





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