

Rejecting all racism

BAPTISTS have been urged to take a resolute and strong stance against racism.

The call came from Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary the Revd Dr Neville Callam as he delivered the second annual Sam Sharpe Lecture in both the Northern Baptist Learning Community (Manchester) and the International Mission Centre (Birmingham) earlier this month.

The leader of the BWA, which represents 42 million Baptists in 121 countries and territories, said Christ is the example 'par excellence for rejecting racism.'

Christ, he said, broke 'down the walls that separate people from one another.' A faith centred on Christ 'will not accommodate the racism that trades in negative images of others.'

Instead, that faith asserts not only the common humanity of all people, but also the 'shared identity in Jesus Christ' that Christians enjoy.

Dr Callam (pictured) also emphasised the need for Baptist Christians to be responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. True openness to the Holy Spirit will enable believers to become aware of the sin of racism and other sins in their midst, including 'the unspoken racist



thoughts and unacknowledged racist assumptions that inform the attitudes [of] many.'

The Spirit, Dr Callam stated, can help people to become aware of ways in which they are beneficiaries of institutional racism 'which, whether we like it or not, makes us complicit in the sin from whose perpetration we continue to reap privileges and benefits.'

Reading the Bible with eyes wide open is important in confronting and overcoming racism, Dr Callam told participants at the lectures. This way of reading Scripture is necessary if the church is to come to terms with the "dominant readings" of certain passages in the Bible that some groups use to justify or reinforce racism.

Open-minded Bible reading would 'thoroughly undermine the claims of those who make the Creator culpable for the racist ideology that denies the equal dignity of all human beings created by the one

God.' Examples of enlightened Bible reading include 'the thoroughgoing critique of social injustice in the tradition of the great prophets of ancient Israel' and 'Jesus' ethic of radical love of neighbour.'

He said the church has a responsibility to oppose racism that still persists, even in the church. Churches that refuse to do so, he declared, are guilty of a major failing.

The BWA leader said racism is heretical and those churches that accept the ideology of race, provide shelter for known racists, and refuse to join in the struggle against racism are denying the Gospel they are called to proclaim.

'Christians and churches defending racism are guilty of heresy.... They can no longer be regarded as churches in the true sense because they have forsaken, and are living in corporate betrayal of, the true gospel and its just demands.'

The Sam Sharpe Project seeks to explore and promote the story and legacy of Baptist deacon Sam Sharpe and his influence in the process leading to the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Visit <http://www.samsharpeproject.org/>

Serving the refugees from Syria

THE situation in Syria is tragic – but the small Christian community in the region is sharing God's love with thousands of refugees.

So says Nabil Costa, the Executive Director of the Lebanese Baptist Society (LSES), and a BMS World Mission trustee.

Mr Costa is currently in the UK as a guest of the charity Embrace the Middle East. He was the keynote speaker at the charity's annual service last Saturday, and is addressing churches throughout this week, including Newton Mears Baptist Church in Glasgow on Saturday. He also met with the Bishop of Coventry on Wednesday.

The civil war has seen more than 1.2m Syrian refugees flee to Lebanon, he explained, in addition to the 300,000 Palestinian and a further 100,000 Iraqi refugees who have sought refuge there.

Though Lebanon cannot really handle this influx (its population is only 4m, and 'our infrastructure is not up to date' said Mr Costa), Baptists are playing their part: they are reaching 25,000 Syrian refugees with a mix of food,



medicine and shelter, said Mr Costa, and providing education to 150 children. Baptist partners in Jordan are responding in similar ways.

'We cannot deal with everything, but this should not stop the church helping as much as we can,' said Mr Costa. 'The role of the church is to help those in need.'

The focus on the refugees comes in spite of something of a fractious past: Lebanon experienced Syrian occupation until 2005; there was Syrian involvement in the Lebanese civil

war between 1975 – 1990.

'Regardless of our history together, now it is the time to practise our true Christianity. It is our duty to serve them. So what God gives to us, we are sharing. And the more we share, the more God gives.'

He continued, 'We are finding that people are surprised when we help. They don't know the church has this role.'

They ask, 'Why are you helping us?' and we are spreading a Christian message about love and sacrifice. They are seeing this message.'

New Welsh language missional community

A NEW Welsh language missional community launches this weekend.

Calon Lân, named after a popular Welsh hymn, will hold its first Sunday gathering on 20 October at 5pm in Cardiff's Rhiwbina Baptist Church.

Cardiff's population currently stands at 350,000 and rising. More than ten per cent of its residents speak the Welsh language and the group hopes to reach out to the tens of thousands

of speakers who have little or no connection with any church. Church attendance statistics suggest that Wales has the lowest number of people in church on Sunday.

Gethin Russell-Jones, one of the leaders of Calon Lân, said, 'We are here for the unchurched, de-churched and people who are hungering for some spiritual reality in their lives. It will be fresh, contemporary and open to anyone.'

'Whilst many Welsh speakers have distant connections with church or chapel, Christianity is often viewed as a museum piece belonging to another century. Calon Lân exists for all ages and all language abilities; in fact our songs, prayers and talks will be bilingual.'

'Calon Lân's mission is to create a community where people are loved and valued and where God's dynamic kingship is experienced.'

Sometimes I write words

A collection of poems by a Baptist church secretary speaks hope to all who have suffered the loss of a loved one

John Hermon, the secretary of King's Sutton Baptist Church (Northamptonshire), spent most of his working life as a teacher in both primary and secondary schools. He later served as a language trainer for mission students, but since retirement has developed a new passion as a writer and a poet. What prompted this new adventure?

A primary source of inspiration has been bereavement. Six years ago John



lost his wife Mandy to cancer.

Much of his writing since that time has been devoted to charting a course through grief and loss to a new hope rooted in faith of steel. This journey has of

course been intense and personal but John, who has two children and five grandchildren, hopes the writing will speak hope to all who have suffered the loss of a loved one.

He says, 'I write because I have a conviction that what I have experienced in bereavement, in a life lived in the presence of God, will resonate with others on their journey and encourage them on their pilgrimage.'

His collection contains poems for various seasons of the heart, helping the reader to find beauty in life amidst the pain of death.

Touching upon Easter, Christmas, and various biblical narratives, the poems give the reader glimpses of divine beauty, love and faithfulness. John's writing on the grief he experienced at Mandy's passing is reminiscent of the lament psalm in scripture, a candid conversation with God on the questions of life and its pain.

But this collection isn't exclusively about bereavement. The opening and closing lines speak of new beginnings, the womb of the dawn of God, and light is a recurrent theme.

God in whom is light and life



reveals himself to man through his word, through nature, through the seasons and, above all, through Jesus.

'I love writing,' John adds. 'It's an act of self-indulgence, if you wish. But this is not the only reason why I write.'

'I write for those who read and pray that the words I have crafted may be a channel through which God may touch their life.'

Sometimes I Write Words by John Hermon is published by Instant Apostle and available from Christian bookshops or online

perfect opportunity: to teach, to interact, to create a bond, to say in effect "You matter here!" <http://bit.ly/19PGOu5>

> 'The church is the people, not the building' is an oft-used phrase. But isn't there sadness when one falls into disrepair? <http://bit.ly/1gKDun5>

> Preaching with presence: it is more than the conveying of information in a logical way - it is when we are awakened by God, and is deeply interpersonal. Should it be done without a script? <http://bit.ly/15HZLNx>

> No more page 3, says Girls' Brigade <http://bit.ly/1bWtmYX>

From the www. baptisttimes.co.uk

Recent stories and comment pieces in *The Baptist Times* online

> Whatever happened to the children's talk? Sunday morning affords a

Tax justice resources from Christian Aid

CHRISTIAN Aid has launched a series of resources to help Christians engage with the subject of tax justice.

Multinational companies' tax dodging hits poor countries especially hard and costs them \$160 billion a year, and prayers, sermon notes and small group studies are now available from the Christian Aid website. They feature the Revd Jacob Wandusim, District Minister for Tamale, who works for Christian Aid partner the Northern Presbyterian Church in Ghana.

Claire Aston, Church Resources Manager at Christian Aid, explained that the hard questions Jesus asked about taxation are just as relevant to us today.

'These new tax justice worship resources are designed to help congregations get a deeper understanding of financial secrecy, which harms the world's poor and stops developing countries pay for essential services like schools and hospitals.

'Using Matthew 22 as a starting point for discussion, small groups can reflect on their own experience of taxation and consider our competing choices and values.

'It is our hope that churches across Britain and Ireland will pray together for greater transparency and accountability in secretive companies, as well as taking our latest campaign action.'

Visit www.christianaid.org.uk/tax-resource

Get in the Picture

THE 2013 Get in the Picture website is now live and being offered to Baptist churches.

Get in the Picture is a project that enables all kinds of people to be involved in the Christmas story.

After setting up a nativity scene in their local town, churches invite people from their local community to dress up and be part of the scene.

A photo is taken and then uploaded to this website, so that each participant can find their photo - and then print it, email it to friends or share it on Facebook at no cost to them.

The cost of running the

project is covered by the £50.00 registration fee. For this fee, each church or group is given full use of the Get in the Picture website and 300 information cards -

which not only direct visitors to the website to find their photo, but have space to add details of the local church.

Get in the Picture, which started in 2008, is a collaboration between our Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Light Project and Hope. Registrations are now being taken.

Visit <http://www.getinthepicture.org.uk>

THE Yorkshire Baptist Association has called on churches to set aside Tuesday, 22 October, 2013, for a day of prayer and fasting.

'This is a simple way in which we can corporately express our dependence upon God and pray for the life, health and growth of our churches in the Association,' said Regional Minister for Ministry the Revd Graham Ensor. Visit <http://bit.ly/15HRCsL>

JOBS

Jobs posted on www.baptist.org.uk

Full-time Assistant Pastor (x2), Southall Baptist Church

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

MINISTERIAL

An induction service for the Revd Tim Jenkins at Park Road Baptist Church, Peterborough takes place at 3pm on 16 November. The preacher is the Revd Adrian Smith. Contact office@parkroad.org.uk to confirm attendance.

BAPTISMS

Barnwell Baptist Church, Cambridge: Andy Staplehurst 1
Barton Baptist Church, Torquay: Lydia Dockray 1
Chatsworth Baptist Church, West Norwood: Angela Coleman, Maxine Christian, Omar Christian 3
Fleckney Baptist Church, Leicestershire: Ben Hughes 1
Streatham Baptist Church, Greater London: Sinnitta Carr, Melissa Pereira and Channon Greenway 3

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