



22 July, 2015

News:

Baptists gather for World Congress

Baptists from more than 80 countries will participate in the 21st Baptist World Congress in South Africa this week

The event, which is taking place in Durban from July 22-26, runs every five years. It is the first Baptist congress in Africa, a region with the fastest numerical growth among Baptist Christians.

'The rich culture and diversity of the global Baptist family will be on display as participants engage in worship, study, fellowship and the discussion of theological, ecclesial, missional and justice concerns that affect the lives of Baptist Christians,' said the Baptist World Alliance in a news release.

Highlights, the release added, include the installation of South African Paul Msiza as BWA president, the first African to hold the position since William Tolbert of Liberia, who was president from 1965-1970. Msiza is currently a vice president of the BWA, past president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and former general secretary of the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

The Congress Human Rights Award will be presented to Rwandan Corneille Gato Munyamasoko, general secretary of the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda, for his work in peace and reconciliation after the 1994 genocide in his country. Past human rights award winners include former President of the United States Jimmy Carter.

In addition there will be "a feast of rich music", including groups, musicians and singers from Africa, Asia, South America, North America and Europe.

The Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary of our Baptist Union, will be among those present. Already, several hundred Baptist women are gathered in Johannesburg for the Baptist Women Leadership Conference which precedes the congress, running from July 18-21.

Congress participants and others from around the world can follow the latest events on the website of the Baptist World Alliance at www.bwanet.org.

Daily updates will include live video streaming of plenary sessions; constant flow of

information through the BWA congress app; videos and photos on social media through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube; and regular press releases.

Elsewhere Ethics Daily is planning a comprehensive Congress coverage, through video news stories, Twitter, text news stories and photos through its Facebook and Pinterest accounts.

The twitter hashtag is #BaptistCongress15

The congress was first hosted in London in 1905, and returned to the UK 100 years later when it was held in Birmingham in 2005.

Seriously awkward - new teenage campaign

The Children's Society says a generation of teenagers are being let down by society and lobbies for new protections

More than a third (34 per cent) of 16 and 17-year-olds are so anxious that they have suffered sleepless nights in the last year, according to new research from The Children's Society.

The new campaign Seriously Awkward, launched in late June, reveals that we are in danger of creating a 'worried generation' of 16 and 17-year-olds - with one in three (34 per cent) saying they frequently feel anxious and a quarter (25 per cent) reporting they often feel sad. One in four say they do not feel optimistic about the future.²

The report, based on an Opinium poll of over 1,000 16 and 17-year-olds across the UK and new analysis, shows two in three (69 per cent) said they felt judged simply for being a teenager.

And the concern is mirrored among parents. Seven in ten (70 per cent) parents agree that life is tougher for teenagers now than it was for them.

The Children's Society's new Seriously Awkward campaign highlights the huge challenges that 16 and 17-year-olds face. They are more likely to go missing or be a victim of violent crime than any other age group and they are at a high risk of sexual exploitation and domestic violence.

Yet they are being systematically let down by the law and don't get the same basic safeguards as younger children. For instance, while laws exist to protect 16 and 17-year-olds against specific incidents such as assault or sexual offences, there is no catch-all law to protect them from sustained child cruelty and neglect in the same way as there is for younger children.

The charity says there is a misconception that teenagers do not require as much protection as younger children. But they are so often more in need of help than any other age group. They have greater freedom than younger children which can put them in potentially risky situations such as being exposed to drugs, alcohol or adults who intend them harm.

Teenagers suffering abuse and neglect may be overlooked by children's services because they are deemed older and more resilient but lack financial independence to remove themselves from harmful situations.

The Children's Society is therefore lobbying for a change in the law to protect children aged 16 and 17 from abuse and neglect. It wants to ensure that support services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health services, always treat them as children and offer them support when they need it.

An estimated half a million 16 and 17-year-olds face particular risk of harm because they are already dealing with multiple issues such as poverty, poor health or a lack of supportive relationships.

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of The Children's Society, said: 'This research reveals that a generation of teenagers are being let down by society. Many are struggling with a range of issues but are dismissed as resilient enough to cope, and denied the same legal protection and services as younger children.'

'For the most vulnerable teenagers, those suffering from abuse, neglect and homelessness, and mental health issues, the future can be even more bleak.'

'All children including those aged 16 and 17 should feel safe and supported and that's why we're urgently calling on the Government to change the law to protect all 16 and 17 year olds from abuse and neglect, provide better services to support them, and offer special protection for those who are most vulnerable.'

For more, visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk/seriouslyawkward

Coming to faith at the Brighton Fringe

Holland Road Baptist Church joined up with evangelical ministry OAC (Open Air Campaigners) at this year's Brighton Fringe Festival – and saw a man come to faith

A team from the church had been invited by OAC to volunteer at a provocative art exhibition it had curated. Called *A Sideways Look*, it contained contemporary photographic interpretations of Old Masters paintings with text to help contemporary audiences re-think spiritual issues.

At the same time in the nearby precinct area, other OAC Evangelists gave brief messages accompanied by sketchboard painting. Church volunteers were on hand to discuss these themes with spectators.

After one presentation a spectator began talking about Christianity to Community Chaplain and Holland Road member Phillip Deuk - and during the course of the conversation the man, called Les, gave his life to Christ.

'As part of the team, I attended the two hour slot that OAC offered us,' Phillip explained. 'At the end of a presentation, the man standing next to me lingered. Evidently he was open to talk.

'After a few exchanges it was apparent that, though very positive about the faith, he had not committed his life to the Lord. When asked if he would like to, he said yes and I shared the Gospel with him. He then allowed me to lead him in a prayer of commitment.'

It emerged that Les' spiritual journey spans years. In his school days, one of his music teachers wrote Christian songs. Later when a friend moved overseas, he travelled half-way around the world to visit him in Australia. There he attended his friend's church which made a great impression - and of course people had been praying for him.

Since the conversation Phillip has kept in contact, and Les was baptised on Sunday (12 July).

The baptismal service was "a special and encouraging day" for Holland Road Baptist Church, said Phillip, adding, 'It was a real pleasure to see, especially for those who went out.'

Les has plans to do the Alpha course this autumn to continue to develop his new faith.

OAC is an evangelical ministry which works in partnership with the local church, 'Presenting Christ by all means everywhere' with particular emphasis on open air evangelism.

Its exhibition was designed by OAC National Director Martin Holmes. Remaining true to

the original art and biblical ethos, striking variations emerged such as Mary Magdalene reformatting her laptop.

Seconds out... minister's boxing mission

A Baptist minister has literally put his body on the line for the gospel

The Revd Adrian Redfearn challenged his personal trainer to come to an Alpha Course – if he could knock him down in a single round of boxing sparring.

Adrian (**pictured right**) is the minister of Castlehold Baptist Church in Newport on the Isle of Wight, and has been working with trainer and martial arts expert Martin Dell (**left**) for more than a year.

Martin is not a Christian but has an interest in spirituality and was happy to accept Adrian's friendly wager.

So earlier this year the duo went toe-to-toe in an exhibition sparring bout in front of members of Adrian's church, who had attended a self-defence thinking seminar taught by Martin at the Island Combat and Fitness Martial Arts Academy.

The seminar raised funds for the Living Room, an ecumenically-run community café next to the Baptist church in Newport High Street, where a number of people have been listened to and received help with physical, social and spiritual needs.

Though the minister performed creditably – Martin acknowledged he had made him “see stars” three times – Adrian didn't land the knock-down blow.

'I recognise that not all Baptists will approve,' said Adrian. 'My wife doesn't.

'However, how else are we going to reach people like Martin? It was really really hard. After two minutes and 20 seconds I was exhausted.

'He might not (yet) be coming to our Alpha Course, but I have won his respect.'

The bout was filmed by church's trainee youth worker Samuel Hughes, and has been viewed more than 500 times on Youtube. It showcases what Adrian has learnt under Martin's guidance.

'He performed really well on the night and impressed everyone with his performance,' said Martin.

'Adrian initially contacted me because he was a keen fan of boxing. Over the time he has been training with me he has dramatically improved his health and fitness which has allowed him to manage his work load as a minister more effectively.

'And though I'm not a Christian I have learned from Adrian many things about Christianity

during our training sessions which I would have otherwise not have learned.

'He didn't quite manage it on the night but we are continuing our wagger throughout our sessions.'

'My interesting in boxing is genuine,' continues Adrian. 'I absolutely love it. I also took it up because as a church minister I just wasn't looking after my health properly, and I find exercising on my own so boring.

'At this level it's an extremely carefully regulated sport.

'I admit it's a controversial way of evangelism. But there's no way Martin would go on an Alpha Course otherwise. Some church members have even said it's "amazing". What point of principle am I willing to bend for a greater principle?

'I asked this of Castlehold recently: "I'm willing to take a punch in the face to get someone to an Alpha Course. What are you doing?"'

Kavana joins homeless community actors in new film

The Box is the latest film from Baptist-supported ministry Acting on Impulse

Filming has recently finished on the latest project of a Baptist-supported ministry that trains socially excluded people to become actors.

The Box is the new production from Acting on Impulse, a charity supported by Altrincham Baptist Church and set up by church member Lauren Pouchly.

Co-written by Lauren and directors Ed Lilly and Jo Chambers, it is a satirical film taking on both reality TV and dealing with the treatment of those living on the margins of our society.

As welfare reforms and cuts to public services hit the most vulnerable in the UK, the film draws "unnerving parallels with the realities of life for the marginalised and raises questions about the way we treat those who need our support the most," according to its press release.

Previous Acting on Impulse Projects include short films, a soap series and the music video *Street Life*, which has received almost 70,000 views on Youtube.

As with these productions, almost the entire cast of *The Box* have been homeless and the story-lines come emerge from workshops for the actors, adding poignancy and truth to the dramatic works.

The cast attend acting classes, develop new skills and build self-esteem. 'They get to be creative, work as a team and commit to something which results in a professional end production,' Lauren said.

'We see people come for the first time, sometimes unable to look you in the eye and not sure about joining in. Fast forward to the filming and they are confident, talented and engaged.'

The Box guest-stars Kavana, a singer and actor who recently appeared in *Celebrity Big Brother*. 'This was flash-back time for me!' he said. 'I got on really well with the guys, it's hard to believe that they are not professional actors. I think what the charity does is brilliant. This film is really ground-breaking, flagging up important issues at a critical time.'

Lauren's hope is that Kavana's presence will not only increase the film's status, but will also inspire and encourage the actors who worked with him.

She added there are big ambitions for *The Box*'s release later this summer. 'We hope to have a successful premiere event with a full house!', she said. 'We will then either launch online or put it into festivals. Either way we want to be able to use it to raise awareness.'

Acting on Impulse has been supported by Altrincham Baptist Church from its first beginnings. 'I have been blessed with the support and encouragement of the church', said Lauren.

'We are an official supported ministry which is great. And for every production, it just takes a message in the newsletter and we are inundated with props, catering, volunteers and many other weird and wonderful things that we may request!'

There will be a private premiere for *The Box* on 1 August at HOME in Manchester. Tickets can be requested and there will also be an online launch to follow, date yet to be confirmed.

Baptisms:

Carey Baptist Church, Moulton, Northampton: Jill Halton

Greenfield Baptist Church, Llanelli: Simon Blacker

Hawkshead Hill Baptist Church, Ambleside: Malcolm Hodsden

Hertford Baptist Church, Herts: Seona Colligan, Maddie Hunter, Caleb King, Elias King, Iain Macpherson

Mills Hill Baptist Church, Greater Manchester: James Bradshaw

Openshaw Baptist Tabernacle, Manchester: Imogen McBeath (baptism took place at Hawkshead Hill Baptist Church)

Park Baptist Church, Great Yarmouth: Andrew Hillier and Natalie Connell, Iona Nixon and Rebecca Worden

Pershore Baptist Church, Worcestershire: Joe Burfitt, Josh Pearson, Sally Barrett, Carole Sefton, Bev Robinson and Barbara Evans

Tabernacle Baptist Church, Wolverhampton: Bex Tooms

Well Street United Church, Buckingham: Oli George, Chris George

Jobs:

Safeguarding Administrator, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Regional Minister Team Leader, East Midlands Baptist Association

Legal and Property Officer, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Youth Specialist, London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft

Pastor, Jersey Baptist Church, Channel Islands

Director of Ministry, Prospects

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

Events/resources:

The Baptist Steering Group met last week - click here to see Lynn Green's report of what happened

This August sees the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombings. The Joint Public Issues Team has prepared resources to help churches mark this anniversary on 9 August, including a service outline, powerpoint and a survivor's story.

Click here to access the Never again... resources

Gathering Round the Table: Children and Communion has been reprinted. It now features an updated resources section.

Visit http://www.baptist.org.uk/Shop/Products/495693/Gathering_Around_the.aspx

The Big Welcome

The Big Welcome is a simple idea to encourage Christians to invite someone they know to something they love - and this year's resources are now available. To find out more visit the Big Welcome website.

Notices

Does your church need seats? Frimley Baptist Church in Surrey has 125 padded seats and 150 plastic chairs to give away. Free of charge, but must be collected. Contact Mike Johnson on 01276 20405 or mikejohnsons77@btinternet.com