

BAPTIST LIFE



Baptist Union
of Great Britain
Encouraging Missionary Disciples



Supporting Marriage



Saints on the
Streets



Baptists:
Inclusive?



Vote for a
winner!

INTRODUCTION

by Jonathan Edwards - BUGB General Secretary



THE GIFT OF MARRIAGE

The Royal Wedding provides a happy focal point amidst relentlessly depressing news. It is wonderful to see a young couple who are clearly deeply in love and who are committed to a life of service together. We have every reason to rejoice and to pray for William and Kate in their new life.

However this happy event is bound to attract the cynics like bees to a honeypot. They will point to the disastrous record of recent royal marriages, and will seek to encourage a spirit of despair in the allegedly outdated institution of marriage. I believe that we need to resist this spirit of cynicism very strongly.

Marriage often goes wrong. That is a fact of life, and probably every one of our families provides ample illustrations of this. My own family is certainly no exception. But these sad facts do not in any way detract from the truth that marriage is a gift of God, and needs to be treasured and guarded. Marriage is what we call a creation ordinance. From the beginning of human life on earth God intended men and women to live together.

It is vital that churches offer support to those who are thinking of embarking on marriage. It is often observed that people prepare for their driving test with far more effort and time than they invest in the life-long commitment of marriage. It almost seems to be assumed that marriage is something you pick up naturally. But this is simply not the case, and careful preparation for marriage is extremely important. This edition of *Baptist Life* gives some helpful illustrations of what can be done.

But things don't always end happily, and as a Gospel people we need to ensure that we are welcoming and supportive of people whatever their circumstances. Many people in our churches bear disappointments and wounds from married life, and some have never felt called to marriage.

Everyone is special, and as churches we need to make sure that every individual knows that they are loved by God.

Yours ever, in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan".

In this feature, we focus on churches or ministries that have received a BUGB Mission Grant from Home Mission. Everything we feature in *Baptist Life* benefits from Home Mission in some way. For more on Home Mission go to: www.baptist.org.uk/home-mission.html

A church with a vision, a building with a purpose



Can you remember what you were doing in 1984? Were you even alive?! Back then the Revd Alf Waller, minister of Finchampstead Baptist Church, near Wokingham in Berkshire (Southern Counties Baptist Association) received a prophetic word for the church to be at the heart of their community inspired by Genesis 48:4: 'I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples'.

Through 26 years of twists and turns the church kept coming back to this vision of community and moving to a building that gave them 'crossingplace' opportunities. In 2010 that vision was finally realised with amazing results. You can see this story of faith, sacrificial giving and how your Home Mission money played its part on the brand new BUGB DVD that will be soon sent to your church or you can watch it now online:

www.baptist.org.uk/baptistlife

From strength to strength



Many of you may know the story of Buttershaw Baptist Church in Bradford which has been supported by Home Mission for some time and was featured on the 1994 BUGB video and again on our 2009 DVD. Since that last film Buttershaw has received a second BUGB Mission Grant for the ministry of Gavin Humphries and his wife Maz who have come to the church as part of Christian organisation, the Eden Network, which works with young people in deprived areas. It is only the second Eden team to be planted outside Manchester. The impact has been substantial with five baptisms in the last year

and increased attendance at church. Buttershaw minister, the Revd Stuart Gregg, says that Gavin and Maz have been able to tap into years of the church planting seeds in the community and are starting to reap the harvest. "We know that Home Mission has taken a risk giving us a second grant but it is paying huge dividends and there is a lot more to come," Stuart says.

www.eden-network.org.uk www.buttershawbaptist.org.uk

Keeping Marriage on Course

Prince William and Kate Middleton are just one of the thousands of couples who will get married in the UK this year. Baptist Union churches are playing their part in supporting couples getting married and those already married by helping them prepare for circumstances and issues that may challenge their union.

"I like to speak to couples as soon as possible, ideally before they get engaged," says Matt Frost, minister of Cirencester Baptist Church (West of England Baptist Association). "I get them to think about things they may not have considered, like what their expectations of marriage are and their family backgrounds as quite often patterns tend to repeat themselves which may cause friction in the marriage." Matt also encourages them to attend the Christian courses Engaged Encounter and Marriage Encounter.



Anne and Ray Petre have been running the Marriage Course, written by Nicky and Sila Lee (Holy Trinity Brompton), at Croes-y-Parc Baptist Church in Peterson Super Ely (South Wales Baptist Association) twice a year for the last six years. The course consists of seven sessions, each one covering a different topic: Building Strong Foundations; The Art of Communication; Resolving Conflict; The Power of Forgiveness; The Impact of Family, past and present; Good Sex; Love in Action. Each evening begins with a two course meal followed by teas or coffees. "Annie and I have both previously been divorced so are very aware of how marriages can so easily go wrong and the pain that results from just not being aware of how to address the difficulties that inevitably arise," says Ray. "We feel we have been blessed by God giving us a second chance and we are now passionate about helping other couples not to make the same mistakes we made.



"The feedback from everyone has been very positive, whether their marriage/relationship was really good or in difficulties before they attended the course. One surprising feedback were comments on how much better behaved their children were when their marriage relationship improved!"

Baptist ministers naturally are not immune from marriage pressures. Connexion is a support network for those married to Baptists in ministry, mission, training and retirement, as well as those who have been widowed. "There are times when it is hard," says Connexion's Christina Carter, who is married to a Baptist minister. "Church life can often dominate our thinking and conversations and it is difficult not to be on call 24/7. It is at times difficult to have close friends within our churches, people we can offload to, so when there are things going on in the church leadership that cause uncertainty, there is no one that you can talk to about those pressures.

"If these pressures are not addressed, it can lead to frustration and disillusionment. If left, these things can have devastating effects not only on the marriage relationship, but also distance us from God. Connexion seeks to offer a place for spouses to build friendships with other ministers' spouses in order to offload, talk through issues and pray with others that understand the pressures in the strictest confidence."

www.marriageencounter.org.uk/
www.alpharesources.org/The_Marriage_Course_W9.cfm
www.baptistconnexion.org.uk/

NEPALESE GET BAPTISED IN READING

Anderson Baptist Church in Reading (Southern Counties Baptist Association) had one of its largest baptism services in recent times last November when eight from its growing Nepalese congregation were baptised by their minister, Tulasi Rai and Youth and Families Minister, Judith Wheatley. For a Nepalese person being baptised has a cultural significance as they have to agree not to worship ancestors and idols and to defy the rigid caste system and welcome those of a higher and lower caste to them. They also agree to not smoke, drink or have sexual relations outside marriage. All eight candidates were or had been Gurkas or were related to them. "I have been attending Anderson Baptist Church for 30 years and have not witnessed so many baptised at the same time," said church treasurer Andrew Debney.

<http://www.andersonbaptistchurch.org.uk/>



KEEPING THE FAITH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The multi faith chaplaincy centre at the University of Plymouth (South West Baptist Association) has been transformed thanks to a move to a new building last September. The change of venue, to ensure there was better disabled access, has enabled the centre to be used for more activities and doubled the amount of visitors. "Lecturers comment that there is always something happening here," says Baptist minister, David V Evans, who heads up the chaplaincy. David works with eight church chaplains from different denominations including fellow Baptist minister Glen C Graham and five representatives from other world faiths. "People remark of the strength of the chaplaincy and how well we work together from different traditions. We don't compromise what we believe but learn from each other."



SPECIALLY 4 U

Minchinhampton Baptist Church in Gloucestershire (West of England Baptist Association) has two services running simultaneously on a Sunday morning, one of which takes place in the local pub! Specially 4 U is a time of bible study, prayer, activities and food aimed at those with learning disabilities that began as part of a Fresh Expressions initiative at Minchinhampton Baptist Church, and has continued at the Crown Inn. Rose the landlady provides the room for free because she thinks "it's wonderful" what the church is doing. Organiser John Barnard, who takes his adult daughter Lynn to the group, says, "We've had people from church come along who are obviously in a bad place - people feel more comfortable here." Many participants come with carers, often from residential homes. "The carers used to sit and read newspapers," says John. "Now they join in."

<http://www.minchbc.org.uk/>



SAINTS ON THE STREET

By Chris Duffett, Vice President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain



How can the greatest good news story that the world has been lavished with be communicated to people who don't have much of a clue about Jesus? When words such as salvation, atonement and repentance need heaps of explanation how can the gospel connect with those who wouldn't consider going to church? How can we communicate the gospel in such a way that people 'get it' and make some sense of the Christian faith? Saints on the Street (St St) allows people to engage with the Christian faith in providing space for questions, engage creatively, observe from afar or participate. St St happens on a Sunday morning when the majority of people in the UK don't attend a church service - rather they are shopping, working, or having family time.

Here are four simple ideas to get you started on connecting with people and to 'be church' on a Sunday morning 'out there.'

- 1.** Take a couple of comfy sofas on to your local high street and set up a sign that says 'I will listen.' As well as making an unusual spectacle you may be surprised as to how many people are gagging to have someone to talk to.
- 2.** Do some simple street theology. Recently I set up a fruit stall that simply represented the fruit of the Spirit. As well as people enjoying arm loads of free fruit some also connected with the gifts that we can receive from God.
- 3.** How about doing something fun on a Sunday morning? This usually is contrary to people's perception of church! I placed a maze in the middle of Peterborough city centre and invited people to find their way to the treasure in the middle. As well as fun games we had lots of conversations about why the treasure was a book of stories of a man who lived over 2000 years ago (and sweets for children)! People loved the gesture and commented on how much they appreciated the church doing something to communicate what it believes.
- 4.** You could head down to your local car-boot sale. Some of my Light Project colleagues in Chester gathered items of value from local churches (such as an iPod and paintings) and when people enquired as to how much they were they offered them for free! This caused a stir, especially when punters where told that they could give nothing in return. An explanation of 'grace' was given as people enquired about the lavish free gesture. This kind of 'give-a-way' could also work with offering free tea and coffee or even free prayer.

For more ideas, visit my web site www.lightproject.org.uk or follow my blog on <https://duffett.wordpress.com>



For over 10 years now the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) has followed Five Core Values, declarations about the sort of Christ-centred people we ought to be. The Opinion section of *Baptist Life* is looking at these core values over the next few issues.

This time Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed looks at what it means to be an inclusive community.



Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed was the first Racial Justice Co-ordinator for the London Baptist Association and now works with the Baptist Union of Great Britain as a consultant.

Our denomination is a lot more inclusive and justice-aware than in days gone by. It is easy to become either self satisfied or defensive when we consider the moves forward that have been made. However, it is worth saying that if we had been living and breathing the ambitions of what we want an inclusive community to look like, we would be much further along. Society would be looking to Gospel people as a whole for the lead, not just pockets of hard working people here and there.

We are not an inclusive community when we just stick to those who are like us. We are called to stretch our hearts and minds beyond all imagination to include the different, unfamiliar and uncomfortable. We are called to make room at the table even if it means making ourselves smaller, less prominent, or less powerful. We are called to make room at the table, to engage with the gifts brought, and to ask the bearer how *they* want to include their gift. People are much more than the food and music they represent. At a time when "telling the story" seems to be the fashion, we have to remember that getting someone to tell their story should be the ripe fruit given after a relationship has been sensitively developed and nurtured.

To be a truly inclusive community, we have to stop seeing the other as a problem. If you are someone who says, "We don't have ... therefore we don't have a problem," may I suggest that YOU are the problem. You are missing the point. Now is an opportunity to prepare yourself through the education and resources on offer. Prepare for the time when, not if, the "other", the stranger arrives. Prayerfully support those who intentionally embrace being an inclusive community and seek to expand their context. Seek to learn from their example.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his Absalom Jones Lecture, reminded us that we are all made in the image of God. He suggested that diminishing anyone because of what you think you know about them is tantamount to spitting in the face of God. Being an inclusive community really means that when we look at those who are different from us because of gender, language, ethnicity, class, age and culture, we find ourselves looking at the face of God in each other.

For more on Five Core Values visit:

www.baptist.org.uk/baptist_life/what_is_a_baptist/five_core_values.html

Have you seen baptist.org.uk lately?

- Easier navigation
- Brand new layout
- Dedicated areas for ministers, church secretaries and other church leaders
- Brand new Baptist store
- Online events, registration and booking
- Full of useful info and resources
- And much, much more



Dulcea's Diary

Entry Number 557

Dear Diary

Sometimes don't you wish God were a bit more Old Testament? He seems to have lost his Old Testament mojo and gone a bit well... New Testament! You know what I mean - there's no more wrath and fire these days. Whatever happened to frogs and plagues of locusts - much more interesting. Now people are getting rid of their leaders by twittering and sit-ins. Don't get me wrong - it's exciting to see people liberate themselves, hallelujah! My chains fell off, my heart was free! But I would have loved to have been in Egypt back then when Pharaoh was getting a hiding. Now that's how you get rid of a tyrant with style. Can you imagine the headlines if God did the same thing today, "Mubarak toppled by plagues". But God just doesn't seem to go about things with the same sort of gusto he used to. Then again if he'd stayed all Old Testament we wouldn't have had the cross and we wouldn't have had the resurrection. And as far as miracles go you can't really beat the resurrection. Praise the Lord! Up from the grave he arose! So although it would have been interesting seeing lambs slaughtered and the angel of death at work I'm so glad God gave up being so Old Testament for Lent. And maybe I need to be a little less Old Testament myself, Diary. I wasn't very nice to Mrs Campbell, the choir leader, when she cancelled rehearsals for the second time whilst we're trying to get ready for the church anniversary. I said I could do a better job and got the ladies behind me to force her to step down. I didn't even consider that she is struggling to take care of her sick husband. I need to put a bit more cross and resurrection in my life. So I think I'll offer to step down from the choir myself and take care of her husband whilst she goes to rehearsal nights. After all, I think God wants us all to be a bit more New Testament, doesn't he?

Prayer Guide



Discipleship

Almighty God,
we give you thanks for your Son, Jesus Christ,
who was baptized in the river Jordan
and passed through
the deep waters of death.

We praise you that you raised him to life and exalted him.
Help us to follow in his way
as disciples and faithful servants of his gospel.

By your grace, help us,
that being united with him,
we may continually die to sin
and live to your praise and glory,
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Taken from *Gathering for Worship* available from BUGB Publications
(telephone 01235 517708 or go to www.baptist.org.uk/resources.html)

Welcome to the second quarter of the 2011 Prayer Guide – your opportunity to pray for the wider Baptist family over the next three months.

✚ If you would like to access more prayer resources contact your Baptist association or go to www.baptist.org.uk/prayer_worship.html where you will find a range of materials including monthly prayers of intercession.

May



1-7 May 2011/12 BUGB President

Pat Took is the 2011/12 President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). Pat says, "The knowledge that people will be praying for me as I serve as President is wonderful. Please pray that God will give me a ministry of hope and encouragement to the churches and ministers of the BUGB."



8-14 May Baptist World Alliance (BWA)

The BWA calls on Baptists everywhere to pray for the homeless; as well as those who are tortured for their faith, beliefs, and convictions. Pray for the freedom of assembly, expression, conscience and association, as well as protection from arbitrary arrest or detention in all countries. Pray for homes for the homeless.

www.bwanet.org



15-21 May Eastern Baptist Association (EBA)

The association continues to review its support for churches and ministers. 'Listening events' are about to take place following last year's questionnaire. Training for core leaders is planned soon. Mission strategy is developing after the Task Group review. With thanks for a recent ministers' conference, they value your prayers for the above.

www.easternbaptist.org.uk



22-28 May Chaplains – Higher Education

Pray that Baptist chaplains working in universities and higher education colleges will have opportunities to build good relationships with Christian Unions, students and staff and interact with people from different faiths or no faith. Pray they will be able to provide pastoral care to those that need it, especially during the current exam and assessment season.

June



29 May - 4 June National Family Week/Big Lunch

National Family Week is a great celebration of family life in the UK and this year's Big Lunch, an initiative of the Eden Project, falls at the end of the Week. The BUGB is encouraging churches to support these national events. Pray for churches using these 'crossingplace' opportunities to build relationships and share the good news of Jesus.

www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk



5-11 June BUild

Pray for BUild (Baptist Union Initiative with people with learning difficulties) in their ongoing support of churches which have people with learning disabilities. Pray for the planned setting up of the new BUGB Disability Justice Group, for wisdom in choosing the right members and for identifying and carrying through priorities in its work.



12-18 June The Baptist Assembly in Wales: Momentum - Moving Forward in Christ

On 17 to 18 June Christians are joining together from the South Wales Baptist Association and the Baptist Union of Wales, along with BMS World Mission, for the All Wales Baptist Assembly in Carmarthen. Pray that all those attending will be blessed as they worship, share fellowship and the Word with one another.

www.baptistassemblyinwales.org



19-25 June Scottish Baptist College

Pray for Jim Gordon and the teaching staff as they continue to provide instructive and relevant training. Pray for all students, especially those completing courses this year and seeking service opportunities. Give thanks for a wonderful spirit in the college and a great witness on the University campus.

www.scottishbaptistcollege.org



26 June - 2 July Southern Counties Baptist Assn

Pray for the new regional ministers: Lynn Green, Colin Norris and Jacky Storey who took up their posts in January. Together with the team leader, Grenville Overton, they will offer pastoral oversight across the geographical spread of the association's 13 counties. Special emphasis will be on mission (Colin) and Children, Youth and Family (Jacky).

www.scba.org.uk

BAPTIST PORTRAITS

INTERVIEWS WITH PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN.

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN



Alan

Alan Elson is Safeguarding Administrator and Officer in the Ministry Department at the National Resource in Didcot

Favourite Bible verse: Psalm 16:6: 'The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. I have heard this sentence preached on or drawn to my attention at least four times in the past six months. It has given me real assurance about the future as God has caused the boundaries to fall in the right places, according to His will and purpose.'

Favourite hymn or chorus: *How great Thou art*

Any plans for Easter? I have taken my eldest grandson to France each year for the past five years. This year we are off again; possibly to Brittany because I need to be home a bit early to prepare for the Baptist Assembly.

How do you support a church when a child protection case happens?

Generally this is by telephone and linking with other relevant colleagues here at Baptist House or in the associations. Sadly distance means that it is not a practical proposition to be as close to people as might be needed.

How do you cope with the often challenging details that are disclosed to you? The hardest issues are those that concern people or churches I know personally. At the end of the day the most useful thing I do is to pray these things away from the 'worry area'. Otherwise I meet with colleagues from other churches where we support each other. I have good colleagues here who are a good support too.

Hilary Treavis is Faith and Unity Coordinator at the National Resource in Didcot

Favourite Bible verse: Matthew 28:20: 'And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Favourite hymn or chorus: *I, the Lord of Sea and Sky*

What do you prefer: starter or pudding? Usually starter – unless there are profiteroles on the pudding menu...

Any plans for Easter? Mostly I'm looking forward to spending time with my family – I have two small boys and I'll be away without them at the Baptist Assembly the weekend after.

What sort of things do you do in your role for Faith and Unity?

Since I returned from maternity leave I've worked two days a week and my time is mostly taken up with advising churches who are part of, or looking to be part of, Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). Currently a number are applying for charity registration with the Charity Commission, so I'm helping them through that.

Why is it important to work together with other denominations? I believe that we are better together. As Baptists we have much to give to, and receive from, other Christian traditions, especially with our understanding of covenantal relationships. Ecumenical working is not just about reorganising the church structures, the big vision is about the innate unity and oneness of all creation and that's got to be worth working for!



Hilary

Christian Events - April to June

April

- 3 **Mothering Sunday**, also known as Mother's Day
- 9 **Spring Harvest** Week 1 begins at Minehead and Skegness www.springharvest.org
- 13 **Toddler Rocks!** A Baptist Union and Care for the Family Day to help and encourage those leading and working in church Toddler Groups at Romford Baptist Church, Essex www.baptist.org.uk/events.html
- 17 **Palm Sunday**
- 22 **Good Friday**
- 24 **Easter Sunday**
- 29-2 **Baptist Assembly**, Blackpool www.baptistassembly.org.uk
- Just Pray No** - prayer event against drug and alcohol addiction
www.justprayno.org
- 30-1

May

- 2 **400th anniversary** of when the King James Bible was first published
- 10-13 **Christian Resources Exhibition**, Sandown www.creonline.co.uk
- 14 **Love Your Local School Day** (BUGB Mission Department)
Abbey Centre, Northampton www.baptist.org.uk/events.html
- 15-21 **Christian Aid Week**
www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/christianaidweek/index.aspx
- 28-29 **Big Church Day Out** www.bigchurchdayout.com
- 30-5 Jun **National Family Week** begins www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk

June

- 2 **Ascension Day**
- 5 **Environment Sunday, Disability Sunday**, and the **Big Lunch**
www.thebiglunch.com/index.php
- 6-12 **Pentecost Festival** www.pentecostfestival.co.uk
- 12 **Pentecost Sunday**
- 17-18 **All Wales Baptist Assembly**, Carmarthen www.baptistassemblyinwales.org
- 19 **Father's Day**
- 20-26 **Refugee Week** www.refugeeweek.org.uk

BUGB COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS 2011
In partnership with
The Baptist Times

The nominations are in. It's time to vote!

Since January we have been looking for the best church websites, best church magazines and best notice sheets. A panel of experts will decide on the winner of best magazine and best notice sheet but you get to decide who receives the prize for best church website!

Go to www.baptist.org.uk/commsawards2011 to vote.
Voting closes on 21 April and the winner will be announced during the Baptist Assembly in Blackpool (29 April to 2 May) and then on the BUGB website.



Baptist Assembly
www.baptistassembly.org.uk

YOUR KINGDOM COME

GRACE
GOD CHURCH
BIBLICAL
KINGDOM
AND YET
HUMILITY
COME
MEN
YOUR
TRUE

POTENTIAL
BARRIERS
DISMANTLED
GLORY
SHALOM
BIBLICAL JUSTICE
WORSHIPPED
SIDE-DOWN
GOD
MEN
LAST FIRST
PEACE
DISCIPLE
BIBLICAL
SERVICE
KING
GOD CHILDREN

WOMEN
POTENTIAL
SHALOM
KINGDOM
LAST FIRST

YOUR
GREATEST
HEAVEN
LEAST
GOD
FREEDOM
SERVICE
CREATION DANCE
PEACE
HUMILITY

NOW
LOVE
JUSTICE
CREATION DANCES
JUSTICE
LEAST
CHURCH
HALLOWED
NOW
WORSHIPPED
NOW
KINGDOM

SPEAKERS:

Jeff Lucas Julie Pennington-Russell
Pat Took Wale Hudson-Roberts

WORSHIP:

Andy Scarcliffe

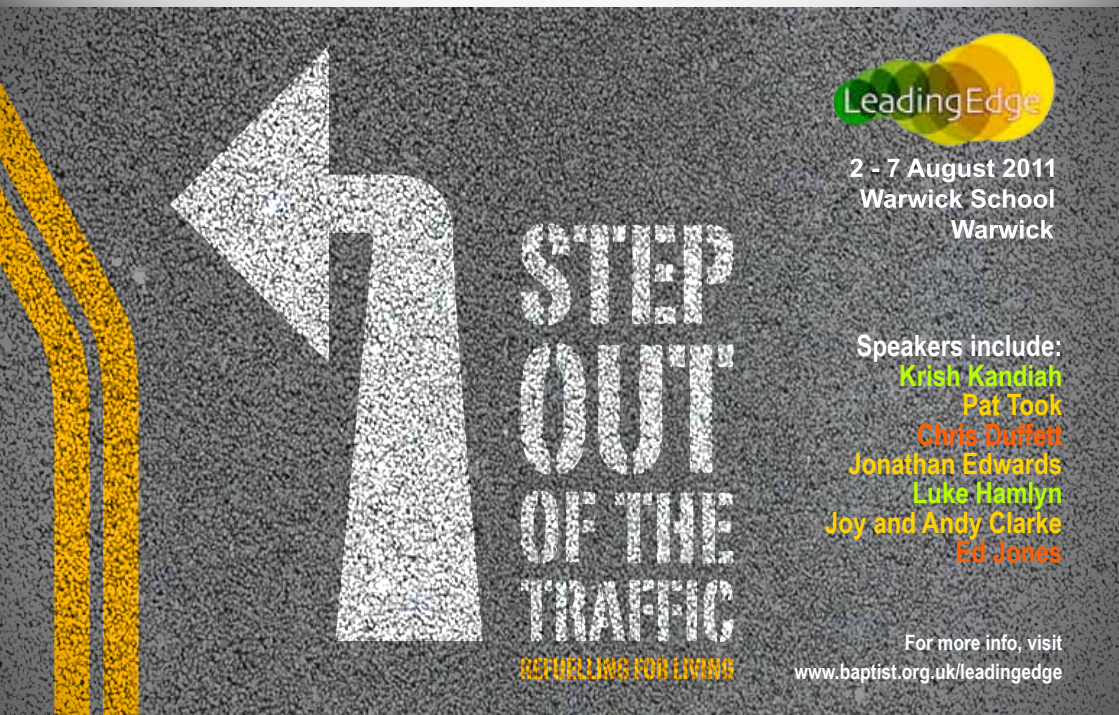
NEW THIS YEAR: Ministers and leadership stream

For further details and to register see
www.baptistassembly.org.uk or ring the
Assembly Office 01235 517621

**BAPTIST ASSEMBLY
BLACKPOOL 2011
29 APRIL – 2 MAY
WWW.BAPTISTASSEMBLY.ORG.UK**



Baptist Union
of Great Britain
Encouraging Missionary Disciples



2 - 7 August 2011
Warwick School
Warwick

Speakers include:
Krish Kandiah
Pat Took
Chris Duffett
Jonathan Edwards
Luke Hamlyn
Joy and Andy Clarke
Ed Jones

For more info, visit
www.baptist.org.uk/leadingedge

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