

Baptists to be encouraged to rethink their understanding of mission at annual Assembly

Written by Administrator

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- **Baptist Assembly takes place from Friday 30 April to Monday 3 May**
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- **David Coffey to speak in one of his final engagements as Baptist World Alliance President**
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- **Former Iraq hostage Norman Kember to second resolution on nuclear weapon**
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- **Assembly attendees to donate to Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support**
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- **Baptists will be encouraged to rethink their understanding of mission ahead of their annual Assembly which begins this Friday (30 April to 3 May) in Plymouth, Devon.**

The theme of the weekend Assembly is One World, One Mission and will offer the 1500 participants an opportunity to reflect on the fast changing nature of mission. Recently, David Kerrigan, General Director of Baptist mission agency BMS World Mission, and Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, visited mission projects in Tunisia and Croydon to reflect on the nature of mission today. A brief film based on their journey will be shown on the opening evening of the Assembly. Jonathan comments, "David and I hope that our experiences will help to trigger creative conversations about mission at Assembly. We want the weekend to be one which sends people home buzzing with new ideas and encouragement for mission in their local church."

In the latest post on his blog Thinking Mission, David Kerrigan has reflected on the present mission context. 'Britain, like most countries, is no longer mono-cultural, mono-lingual or mono-anything. It's a vibrant blend of east and west, north and south...' he writes. 'And along the way, Christian Britain has become non-Christian Britain. Most of our neighbours and friends, whether immigrants or not, do not share our faith or our worldview or our understanding

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of what it means to be born in the image of God. The Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan are unknown narratives. The cross and resurrection make no impact in people's lives.'

He concludes by asking questions directly to Baptists attending this week's Assembly: 'In this new world of missionary encounters with our own communities, we need to ask afresh what the nature of church is. We still operate largely on a 'come and join us' model – what models might be needed to reach those who have answered 'no thanks!?' What model of Baptist ministry do we need for the generations to come? What kind of theology is needed? Where can we tap into the missiological skills and insights needed?'

At this year's Baptist Assembly speakers include Amy Orr-Ewing, Training Director at the Zacharias Trust, and David Coffey in one of his final engagements before stepping down as President of the Baptist World Alliance in July. Loretta Minghella, the new director of Christian Aid will be speaking on poverty as will Joel Edwards from Micah Challenge. On the final morning of the Assembly, two public resolutions will be debated: one on violence and human trafficking, and one on nuclear weapons which is being seconded by former Iraq hostage Norman Kember.

Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and former regional minister team leader of the South Western Baptist Association, is pleased that the Baptist Assembly is returning to the South West. He comments, "Assembly has always enjoyed its visits to Plymouth and we are enormously looking forward to this year's meetings. They provide us with a superb opportunity for reflection, worship and fellowship and it will be good to welcome people from all points of the compass." Assembly goers are being asked to donate items like men's clothing, toiletries and non-perishable food that will go to Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support. "The Assembly theme, One World, One Mission, is not only about us as Baptists sharing the message of Jesus Christ but also sharing his love as well," Jonathan says. "I am sure that Baptists will give generously to those in need in this beautiful part of the country."