

THE BAPTIST TIMES



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Payday loan campaign

A BAPTIST minister is among those leading a campaign in his community against excessive interest charges demanded by payday lenders.

The issue made national headlines earlier this summer when the Church of England, under the leadership of the Revd Justin Welby, revealed plans to out-compete Wonga by supporting the growth of credit unions as an alternative to payday lenders.

But in the Swansea Bay region a campaign had already begun. The Swansea Bay Fair Credit Campaign is a broad based movement including representatives of local communities, councillors, LASA (the Swansea credit union) and churches.

It promotes credit unions and is holding a rally against excessive interest charges demanded by payday lenders on Saturday 31 August.

The Revd Chris Lewis, minister of Mount Zion Baptist Chapel in Bonynmaen will be speaking at the rally.

Mr Lewis is helping to spearhead the publicity for the campaign, having contacted both local media and the local faith community.

News of the rally made *The South Wales Evening Post*, and



respondents include Greenfield Baptist Church in Llanelli and Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Manselton.

Mr Lewis believes the campaign has much faith support, explaining that the Bible gives a mandate to stand up for the injustice of excessive loan charges.

'It looks as if people are becoming the servants or victims of the economy rather than the economy serving people,' he said.

'I think this campaign can begin to restore a balance and help people take control. I speak for the Judeo-Christian tradition, which is strongly against exploiting people through the taking of interest and all that goes with it when the money isn't there to pay back the debt.

'Other faith communities will stand with us on this.'

He told *The Baptist Times* that at the rally he will refer to Leviticus, which speaks of how predatory lending is divisive

of society; Exodus, and of how humanity and morality demands that there has to be a limit to the power of restraint; and Nehemiah. 'We can and should call these people to account, and we are,' Mr Lewis said.

Elsewhere Matt Barlow, chief executive of Christians Against Poverty, said the charity was 'grateful' the Archbishop had spoken up, adding that this new payday sector was causing 'pain and injustice'.

'We have to acknowledge that this form of credit causes greater consternation than pretty much anything we've ever seen, excepting of course illegal loan sharks. It is simply wrong that someone should get approved for a loan so quickly, with so little thought being applied as to whether they can afford to pay it back.'

Mr Barlow described Mr Welby's vision as 'audacious', adding that 'to have Credit Unions as an answer to payday lenders or doorstep lenders would be a brilliant thing.'

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Baptismal blessings

Nigel Irwin shares how an already special day at Gilgal Baptist Church became even better

Sunday 23 June was a day like no other in the life of Gilgal Baptist Church, Porthcawl. We were excited at the prospect of a baptismal service with Rest Bay Church, another local evangelical church with whom we share a close relationship. An elderly gentleman from their church was due to be baptised along with three generations of one family; Pam Panter (grandmother), Alison Westwood (mother) and Gareth Westwood (son). But things just kept getting better!

Our Pastor, the Revd Martin Gillard, always makes an invite at baptismal services for any believer who has not yet been baptised, and who can make a confession of faith, to come forward and follow our Lord's instruction to be baptised there and then.

A lady from Rest Bay came forward, together with Rob Jones of our fellowship. Rob has been worshipping with us since Christmas and had taken Communion for the first time the previous Sunday. He has since given a moving testimony to the Church during a Sunday morning service and has asked for membership.

That was not the end of the blessings, as Martin said that we would leave the water in the pool until the evening in case any others wished to follow the command.

One of our young men, Scott Kilpatrick, gave his testimony in the evening, together with Beth, a lady from another local church where believer's baptism

is not usually celebrated. She is part of the leadership team of that church and the friend and colleague of one of our members.

Finally, Bev Poulton, another friend and erstwhile colleague of our above-mentioned member and Beth, was baptised.

Bev had not been to our church before that morning, but during the previous week she had passed by and felt an overwhelming call that she should be there for the service on Sunday morning.

She, and her husband, had followed that call and Bev had felt the Lord speak to her in a very real and powerful way and she knew that she too must be baptised. She gave a wonderful testimony of how the Lord had worked in her life in the past, and how she wanted to re-establish the relationship with Him that He had never severed, but she had allowed to slip. She has been with us every Sunday since and has joined one of our Bible study groups and she too has requested Church membership with us.

So we were excited at the prospect of four baptisms but ended up with nine! God is indeed very good, and we pray that all of those who answered our Lord's command on that wonderful Sunday will continue to grow in faith and seek to serve our wonderful Lord and Saviour in every aspect of their lives, as together we seek to follow our Church motto: 'To know Jesus better, and make him better known'.

Nigel Irwin is the treasurer of Gilgal Baptist Church

New mission

THE first Black Country mission will launch on Saturday (24 August).

The interdenominational initiative, the subject of prayer for 15 years, seeks 'to share the love of God in Jesus, bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ as Lord and Saviour and to provide healing and wholeness in the community.'

So far those involved distribute gospels, conduct open air evangelism every second week in Cradley Heath Market and visit three nursing homes each month to sing a variety of gospel songs.

There are also plans to have a healing and wholeness meeting once a month and grow the open air evangelism into different town centres.

The launch will take place at Cradley Heath Baptist Church, the home base for the mission.

Member Robert Jones said, 'This has been the subject for prayer for fifteen years. The emphasis is on the gospel and healing as we are endeavouring to follow the example of Jesus in Luke 4: 18-19.

'So far we have given out God's word to over 10,000 households in and around the Halesowen. We visit nursing homes, spread the Gospel on the street and do open air work in Halesowen and Cradley Heath. We continue to sow seed and are beginning to see the fruit of our ministry!'

'I read about Noah... it changed my world'

A Christian-based project is helping recovering alcoholics turn their life around. By Hazel Southam



'I drank until I collapsed and then I would continue in the morning,' says 49-year-old Ken Edwards (pictured).

Ken is a recovering alcoholic. He started drinking at the age of 12 having seen his father drink.

'It dawned on me that if he was happy when he drank, I could be too,' he says.

As a child he spent all his pocket money on alcohol, then started stealing his father's lager. 'I carried on drinking [for 35 years] until my main relationships ended.'

On a normal day he'd drink eight cans of Tennent's Super lager 'plus whatever friends gave' him.

When he got half way through his supplies Ken would start drinking through a straw in a bid to make the beer last longer.

But two years ago, Ken decided to give up drinking and found himself at the Christian-based New Hanbury Project in Shoreditch, East London.

Here, more than 100 recovering addicts are offered training in everything from literacy

to Spanish, computing and gardening. When a fellow former addict asked for a Bible study class to be added to the roster, Ken decided to go along.

'When I was a kid we were sent to a Seventh Day Adventist church and we were scared to death,' he recalls. 'There was lots of crying and praying.

'We thought they was going to eat us in a minute. That was my idea of church: people going mad.

'Now I'm a steward at Frampton Park Baptist Church and I go there every Sunday.'

He credits the Bible study classes, run by the project's manager Sheona Alexander, as having made all the difference.

'I read the Bible passages myself until I get the meaning,' she says. 'I read about Noah. I loved

that. It changed my world. 'It was an act of random kindness that saved the world. I thought, "I can do that." So now I give my seat to someone on the Tube. It all helps.'

Sheona Alexander, the project's manager, remembers starting the Bible studies with Psalm 139. 'They loved it,' she says. 'I thought the Bible could do this, so in a way I wasn't surprised [to see lives changed]. It is the living Word of God.'

'It's not been a one-evening wonder,' she adds. 'It's been a long journey for all of them. Through that we have seen some fruit. It's been exciting and humbling.'

Matthew Van Duyvenbode, Head of Campaigns, Advocacy and Media said, 'One of the key themes running through the Bible is transformation.

'The Christian Scriptures are full of stories about individuals, communities and whole societies being transformed by encountering God - sometimes in very surprising ways.

'The New Hanbury Project and many others like it show that the Bible continues to inspire positive transformation in every area of our society.'

the Bible doesn't specify a day and time for being church. Church was happening each Wednesday.

<http://bit.ly/13qo5on>

> The Revd Jonathan Edwards reflects on his seven years as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

<http://bit.ly/13PNd2s>

> What Christianity can teach cricket - cricket has a strong Christian heritage, writes Zaki Cooper, and having a faith has helped players deal with its ups and downs

<http://bit.ly/19mTAPr>

> Why churches should engage with student ministry

<http://bit.ly/16QdArF>

Church celebrates

A NORWICH church has celebrated completing a long wished for redevelopment.

Witard Road Baptist Church began life in 1954 on land bought by the Baptist Union of Great Britain as the Heartsease Estate was being built.

However the membership has always had the dream of developing the whole site into a suite of premises that could be used to extend God's Kingdom.

Thanks to the generous giving of its growing congregation that dream has become a reality.

In 2010 the church was able to hold its first service in the new 250-seater worship and conference centre. Now the next stage of the work is complete, and special events took place last month to mark it.

Guest the Revd Richard Lewis, Regional Minister for Eastern Baptist Association cut the red ribbon and dedicated the buildings for the Lord's work in the community. Luke Hamlyn led worship, and there were performances from Saltmine Theatre.

Pastor the Revd David Adams said the opening was, in one sense, 'the end of one stage of development and the beginning of a new phase.'

'God's Kingdom does not rest in bricks and mortar,' he said.

'The challenge continues for the church to build the spiritual house in continuing to see lives transformed and ministries released.'

Getting in on the act

MEMBERS of a Baptist church in Devon dressed up as nuns and danced to the music from *Sister Act* as they took part in the town's carnival procession.

Teignmouth Baptist Church, under the guidance of youth minister Glenda Down, performed lively routines to music from the hit film which starred Whoopi Goldberg. As well as the eye catching dancing, they had cards printed onto their backs stating

'Make Church A Habit' and 'Make Prayer A Habit'.

The church has been involved with the local summer carnival for many years. It held the Carnival Church Service on the Sunday morning in the beer tent. This year's talk was the parable of turning water into wine, for a standing room-only crowd in the marquee.

Members also helped with the stewarding through the week.

DEATH

MARSHALL, the Revd Geoffrey Edward Sadly, following an illness, Geoffrey Marshall died peacefully in his sleep during the early hours of Tuesday 30 July 2013 at home, aged 74. His pastorates and other roles were Stoneygate, Leicester (associate); Young Peoples' Secretary, Baptist Missionary Society; an Educational Appointment; Denmark Place, Camberwell; Abbey Missionary School for the English Language and Abbey Road, St John's Wood, London; and Victoria Street, Windsor from whence he retired. His cremation has taken place but a Thanksgiving Service to celebrate Geoffrey's life and mission, to which his many friends are invited, will be held on Friday 27 September 2013 at 2.00pm at Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE where he was a member. The family have requested that any donations in his memory should be made to BMS World Mission. Enquiries may be addressed to Geoffrey's niece, Mrs Caroline Ball, 8, Crabtree Avenue, Hollingbury, Brighton BN1 8DL.

WALKER John Edward, aged 87, active member of Amphill Baptist Church, Bedfordshire for nearly 60 years, enthusiastic lay preacher, and one time president of Beds Baptist Association. Died peacefully in Bedford Hospital on 8 August. Beloved and ever loving husband of Vida, father of 9, grandfather of 12, great granddad of Benjamin and friend to so many. All welcome at a Service of Thanksgiving for his life 2.30pm, Friday 23 August at Amphill Baptist Church. Family flowers only. Donations, to be divided between Scripture Union and Amphill Baptist Church, can be made via www.memorygiving.com.

BAPTISMS

- Attleborough Baptist Church, Norfolk:** Pat Amos 1
- Broadmead Baptist Church, Woodford:** Joan Joseph, Catherine Ayiro, Shehlah Battore, Alastair Lachman and Curtis McCollin 5
- Melbourne Baptist Church, Derbyshire:** Anne Dando and Andrew Woodward 2
- Potter Street Baptist Church, Harlow:** Roger Battelley, Maddie Daniels, Helen Sulutan 3
- Pudsey Baptist Church, Yorkshire:** Val Beaumont, Charlotte Abram 2
- Streatham Baptist Church, London:** Belinda Amoanyame 1

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