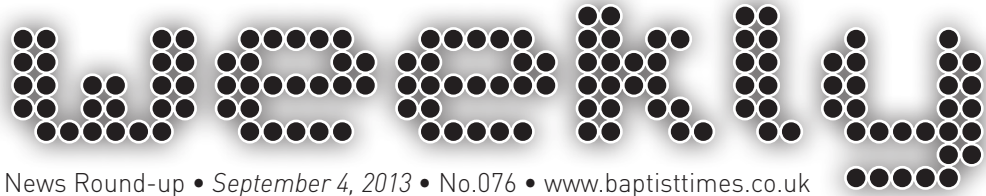


THE BAPTIST TIMES



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Feeding the 5,000

GULLS wheeled overhead and music blared from the arcades on Brighton pier as an actor playing Jesus fed the 5,000 on Brighton beach.

In the modern-day re-enactment last Sunday the five loaves and two fish were replaced by tuna, prawn and salmon sandwiches.

Actor James Burke Dunsmore, who often plays Jesus in the Wintershall Passion productions, donned first century Palestine clothes alongside his disciples and dished out sandwiches to the surprised sunbathers.

The contemporary re-telling of Jesus' famous miracle, which is told in all four Gospels (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9 and John 6), was staged by Bible Society.

Its head of media is Rachel Rounds, a member of Calne Baptist Church in Wiltshire. She explained the idea stemmed partly from the visit of Chris Duffett during his year as president of our Baptist Union.

'Our minister went out with Chris with his sofa saying 'We're here to listen'.

'I thought it was a great idea



and spoke to our media team about what we could do as Bible Society.

'And we thought if Jesus were here today, maybe he'd be on Brighton beach sharing his generous message with everyone, no matter who they are or where they are from.'

Therese Womack (46) from Borehamwood was dozing in her deck chair when she was woken by Jesus offering her a sandwich. 'It was most bizarre,' she said. 'I thought I had gone mad. But then I realised what was happening.'

John O'Brien (57) from Harrow said, 'I never thought I would see Jesus on the beach.'

And Pauline Macadam (65)

from Hailsham said, 'It was wonderful. It felt like Jesus himself was giving a sandwich to me.'

Rachel said the aim of the contemporary re-telling was to bring the Bible to people enjoying the last days of the summer holiday before the start of the autumn term.

'We think the Bible is more than a book, a wonderful, powerful, story worth exploring, living and sharing.

We want to give everyone the opportunity to encounter Scripture for themselves. Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish so we thought we'd feed people with fish sandwiches.'

James added, 'I hope that people will react to the act of giving. Being given something for nothing is disarming.

'As actors we are all moved by this story. That's the reason we are here.'

Sunbathers and holidaymakers weren't the only recipients of fish sandwiches, as Jesus and his disciples handed them out to three homeless charities in Brighton.

Beach mission

AN outreach on Sheringham sea-front attracted more than 200 children and young people in a week of glorious weather.

BeachLife is organised by the Norfolk town's churches, and co-ordinated by the Revd Pete Skivington, youth pastor of Sheringham Baptist Church. It was supported by Scripture Union.

The activities included music, games, and drama. Each day was themed around one of Jesus' miracles.

Planning for the event, which was run by an army of over 50 volunteers started last autumn.

Mr Skivington said, 'BeachLife has been another huge success, helped by the glorious weather this year.

'We had record numbers of children and young people attending, and having had loads of fun whilst finding out more about God. Feedback has been extremely positive, with many people asking when next year's BeachLife would be, so that they can plan their holidays in Sheringham. And it has also strengthened the links between the churches.'

New website

NEXT week sees the launch of the redeveloped website of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. *The Baptist Times* will also be integrated into the site.

More details will follow next week.

The launch is planned for Monday afternoon. Visit www.baptist.org.uk and www.baptisttimes.co.uk.

Welcome for Syria decision

LEADERS from the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Methodist Church in Britain have given thanks for the decision of the UK Parliament to reject military action in Syria.

The House of Commons voted against supporting in principle action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government.

Following that result leaders from the three churches issued a statement welcoming the decision, once again stressing the need for both a diplomatic solution and an effective humanitarian response.

In the statement, signed by the Revd Stephen Keyworth, BUGB Faith and Society Team Leader, the Revd Roberta Rominger, General Secretary of the URC and the Revd Ruth Gee, President of the Methodist Conference, the leaders said,

'We are thankful that our MPs carefully considered the difficult matter of military intervention in Syria - and decided to reject it.

'Our prayers now are that all diplomatic means are used to bring government and opposition leaders to the negotiating table and that divided parties are encouraged to seek a future they can inhabit together.

'We also urge that priority is given to a quick and effective humanitarian response to the thousands of Syrian people affected by the violence.'

Parliament had been recalled early to discuss the UK's response to a suspected chemical attack near Damascus on 21 August.

Prior to the vote the Free Church leaders urged caution, praying that the nation's response will be guided by the desire to achieve peace.

JOBS

Free Church Chaplain, University of Bristol (0.6 FTE)

We are seeking to appoint a Chaplain with a calling to mission-focused, pastoral and prophetic ministry. You will join a thriving Multifaith Chaplaincy and work collaboratively in supporting the pastoral and spiritual needs of the whole University community.

The post is part-time (0.6FTE) and open to all members of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed traditions (lay or ordained).

Requests for an application pack should be emailed to: rachael.fletcher@bristol.ac.uk

BAPTISMS

Dereham Baptist Church, Norfolk: Michael Rawling, Paulo dos Santos, Ana Paula Aniceto, Joel Melo	4
Dewsbury Baptist Church, West Yorkshire: Janet Price	1
Upton Vale Baptist Church Torquay: Steve and Hannalize Wall, Charlott Ryley and Laura Schubert	4

Send notifications of baptisms, ministerial changes, deaths and testimonies to editor@baptisttimes.co.uk