

Pedal power for debt advice

PEDAL power will help cyclists fundraise for a new debt advice service in Portsmouth.

Around 13 cyclists are currently signed up to complete either a 30 mile or 100 mile challenge on Saturday 7 June 2014.

All money raised by the sponsored event will go towards a new debt advice service being set up by North End Baptist Church, Portsmouth.

A quiz at the Lord Chichester pub kick-started the fundraising campaign in February.

Minister Tracey Ansell, who will be cycling the 30 mile route, said, 'Debt continues to be the greatest need for families in our postcode area and the free debt advice service will be invaluable by providing somewhere people can go for help.'

Event organiser Pete Plowman, added, 'It's not just people from the church who are participating; everyone is welcome. By signing up for this ride you can make a difference to the financial state of others in our community.'

It's a busy time for the church. Last month it launched Messy Church sessions, with around 20 families attending the first one, themed around creation. Tracey said, 'It was great to see so many families laughing, young and old interacting, and to all share in a meal.'

Euro elections resource

A NEW resource to help those in our churches prepare for the European Parliament elections next month has been prepared by the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT).

Voters in the United Kingdom will be going to the polls on 22 May in elections which have often attracted a low turnout. Opinion may be divided about the benefits of being part of the European Union (EU), but our daily lives are affected by the decisions taken there.

The short, eight page JPIT resource is designed to help people think about why the elections are important to us and what we can do.

Looking at six key issues, from immigration and tax to the environment and human rights, the resource offers some questions to reflect on, as well as some that people may wish to ask their candidates in the run up to the election.

For more visit <http://bit.ly/1LKquzT>

UPDATED Easter worship and prayers have been added to the resources library of the Baptists Together website. They include an Easter Carol service - an ecumenical act of worship for use on the Evening of Easter Day or the following Sunday, prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group.

Visit <http://bit.ly/1g7kiNs>

NOTICE

There will be no **Baptist Times Weekly Round-up** next week (17 April). The Round-up will return the following week (24 April)

JOBS

Finance Officer, Yorkshire Baptist Association
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BAPTISMS

Battle Baptist Church, East Sussex: Brian and Rosemary Cornner 2
Dorchester Baptist Church, Dorset: Rebecca Guppy, Matthew Green and Jenna White 3
Howlands Baptist Church, Welwyn Garden City, Herts: John Smith 1
London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft, Suffolk: Felicity Chapman 1
Potters Bar Baptist Church, Herts: Sharon Abouzarrah and Davie Davidson 2
Streatham Baptist Church, London: Sara Sobreira and Alice Paniken . . . 2
Trinity Community Church (B-URC), Moss Side Manchester: Iman Rafatmah and Mohammed Armoun 2

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THE BAPTIST TIMES weekly NEWS ROUND-UP

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Soup kitchen victory

THE organisers of a soup kitchen threatened with eviction have spoken of their relief after a High Court judge ruled they must stay in their town centre location.

The Christian Kitchen sees 30 churches team up to provide more than 50 meals each night to vulnerable people in Walthamstow, east London. Its chair of trustees is Norman Coe, an elder at Blackhorse Road Baptist Church.

Last year its licence was revoked by Waltham Forest Council due to concerns about anti-social behaviour, with the Council suggesting an out-of-town site in a lay-by off the busy North Circular Road as an alternative.

The Christian Kitchen argued that this site, some 40-50 minutes away, was unsafe and so unsuitable that it would in effect lead to its closure.

On Monday High Court judge Mrs Justice Simler DBE ruled in the kitchen's favour and said that the Council's decision to revoke the licence was unlawful, because it did not properly take into account the likely negative impact on vulnerable service users. (A recent survey showed that over 70 per cent of users were homeless.) Its position that there was no evidence to suggest

the relocation will affect users' ability to access the soup kitchen 'fails to accord with reality or common sense'. She quashed the decision and ordered the Council



to reconsider its proposals.

'We are delighted and relieved that we are able to carry on,' said Norman.

'We feel vindicated, because we thought the allegation of anti-social behaviour was unjustified. On the contrary, rather than contributing to anti-social behaviour, we take the view the kitchen alleviates anti-social behaviour.'

Norman cited research carried out by his minister Malcolm Patten, who found that Walthamstow had lower indicators of anti-social behaviour compared with similar places without a soup kitchen such as Hackney.

'If the service had closed, it would have been catastrophic for

the users,' continued Norman. 'They would not have had a meal each evening. They would have resorted to going through bins, unsavoury as that sounds, and stealing. Crime rates would have gone up.'

In a statement deputy leader Clyde Loakes said the council was disappointed with the decision, but would 'continue to talk with Christian Kitchen to find a way forward for both users of the kitchen and residents nearby'.

The Christian Kitchen is a well-known local institution attracting praise from politicians and is strongly supported locally. It began 25 years ago and is now supported predominately, but not exclusively, by the area's 30 churches, whose members take it in turns one night a month to make and distribute the food.

Norman, a support worker at a local hostel, said they are looking at ways to expand what they offer beyond food and signposting. 'These guys need befriending,' he explained.

'This is the church in action. We are meeting the needs of people in an unfortunate situation, and working together without theological disagreement: everyone knows that Jesus fed the poor.'

Health scare for Lynn Green: prayers sought

THE REVD Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, has requested prayer after being diagnosed with breast cancer.

The lump has been detected at a very early stage, and is small and slow growing. The prognosis for a full recovery is good.

She will have an operation next week, followed by radiotherapy around a month later.

All being well, Lynn is planning to participate at the

Baptist Assembly (10-11 May).

'The diagnosis came out of the blue, but as a family we are very thankful for the screening process, which has picked this up early,' Lynn said.

'As a result the prognosis is very good, but clearly we would value prayer for a speedy recovery, and for wisdom and strength as I balance commitments.'

Colleagues are helping to cover Lynn's diary as much as they can during this period.



Fair credit campaign

BAPTISTS in Swansea stepped up the fight for fair credit after hosting a meeting with a member of the Welsh Assembly

On Saturday 5 April members of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Bonymaen, teamed up with members of the Swansea Bay Fair Credit Campaign to meet Jeff Cuthbert AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty.

The meeting allowed people who have been victims of debt to payday and doorstep lenders and of illegal lending practices to give their testimonies.

Mount Zion minister the Revd Chris Lewis, who is a leader of the campaign, said the session had been 'good humoured and constructive', explaining that Mr Cuthbert had said that 'brave people coming forward to share their

experiences strengthen his hand to work against these illegal practices which are widely recognised but hard to pin down.'

Mr Cuthbert invited representatives of the campaign to the Senedd for an early meeting to decide on the next steps to be taken.

In addition Mr Lewis has also been invited to Westminster to take part in a discussion about how churches can support credit unions as an alternative, fair source of credit.

The Swansea Bay Fair Credit Campaign is supported by Bishop John Davies who was also present, as were the Revd Colin Dickson (Vicar of Glantawe) Mike Hedges AM and Sian James MP (Swansea East), plus members of the Swansea Council.

Reddie for Bristol

BRISTOL Baptist College has announced the appointment of Dr Anthony Reddie as College Tutor and Coordinator of Community Learning.

A renowned theologian, Dr Reddie is the author and editor of many books, chapters and articles including most recently *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity* (2013). Dr Reddie is a visiting research fellow at Aston University, was a speaker at Catalyst Live and Greenbelt, and gave the Martin Luther King Lecture in Oxford in October 2013. He worships at Highgate Baptist church in Birmingham.

Principal the Revd Dr Steve Finamore said everyone at the college is thrilled that Dr Reddie is joining the team.

'We feel very grateful to God that such an experienced and influential Christian educator will be working alongside us.'

'In particular we are pleased that someone with such enthusiasm for the life of the churches will have oversight of our Community Learning ministry and we hope that will develop in some exciting new directions.'

'In addition we are delighted that Anthony will be bringing his experience as an evangelical theologian into our teaching programme.'

'We are especially pleased that he will bring his insights from Black and liberation theologies into the life of our College community.'

Churches, Government and immigration

Christians have challenged the Government to not just accept the 'brightest and best' immigrants, and show greater humanity towards the most vulnerable.

The call came at the annual conference of the Churches' Refugee Network conference, which provides a collective and ecumenical voice on issues of asylum and immigration.

One of the key-note speakers at the event in Sheffield on Saturday was Ruth Grove-White, policy director of advocacy NGO Migrants' Rights Network.

She said that fast tracks for those who can pay means that ability to pay has now become 'our governing standard', and called for a more level playing-field 'not tilted towards the privileged and the brightest and best'. She added that greater humanity towards the most vulnerable would stop the UK system of indefinite detention being the harshest in Europe.

She challenged politicians to turn the debate towards economic and cultural hope for an inclusive future, and resist 'exploiting media-fed fears of immigration'. Childline has already reported increased school bullying about immigration status in the wake of



media and government publicity.

Many of these concerns were picked up in a Position Statement approved by the conference.

As well as affirming 'the biblical Christian and Jewish traditions of the importance of welcoming strangers', the statement warned that the Immigration Bill would create damaging divisions within national life, and drew attention to specific concerns about detention, destitution, cuts in access to justice, and the cruelty and inequity of family migration rules.

Christians from churches across the country attended the event, which was titled 'Under the Radar: what Room for Refugees?'. Among them were

asylum seekers from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Cameroon and Zimbabwe: some had gained leave to remain in the UK, others had waited up to ten years for a Home Office decision.

In a theological commentary on the addresses, the Revd Fleur Houston of the United Reformed Church said that Christianity called for all people to be treated the same, not singling out the privileged. She said it was not enough to welcome the stranger; we should also be ready to receive from them. Our society is wounded by stories of injustice, disconfirmation and abuse, she continued, underlining the point that statistics used by Government 'often intentionally mislead'.

From the www. baptisttimes.co.uk

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the Antioch prayer, that God sends key people, the best people

<http://bit.ly/1hv2KAK>

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