

Night Shelter impact

CHURCH volunteers are responding to rising homelessness in their communities and people are being helped off the streets as a result.

These are the findings of the Night Shelter Impact Report for 2013/14, which has gathered the most comprehensive data yet on the impact of Housing Justice Church and Community night shelters.

The report, released ahead of the start of the winter shelter season in November, documents activities from 21 night shelters in London and a further three beyond, in Wycombe, Southend and Swansea.

Through this sample it discovered that 1,577 guests were offered overnight shelter, and 112,300 volunteer hours were mobilised, valued at almost £1.5 million.

Nine hundred and thirty four guests had some form of case management support (60 per cent of the total) and 491 were helped to move on to more secure accommodation, (a 34 per cent 'move on rate').

Housing Justice CEO Alison Gelder said the report busts some of the "outdated myths" about Night Shelters, such as "they sustain people in their lives on the street, and that they undermine the



work of statutory agencies".

The report also shows "a massive mobilisation of churches, community groups, and volunteers, which is definitely something to celebrate." However Ms Gelder said the question must be asked as to why more and more people are becoming homeless.

'Night Shelters are part of the answer,' she said, 'but not a substitute for safe, secure and affordable accommodation which is no longer available to an increasing proportion of the poorest in our society.'

Their findings were reflected in Newham, where a new inter-church winter night shelter and support service was launched last year in response to the rising levels of poverty and rough-

sleeping there. The congregations of Royal Docks Community Church, Memorial Community Church and Bonny Downs Baptist Church signed up as host venues. The night shelter was open for 84 nights and accommodated 61 guests, of which 23 moved into permanent accommodation.

The experience highlighted "a real need to continue strengthening the support services available for homeless people in Newham", said Sally Mann of the Royal Docks Community Church.

This year the group has launched a befriending service and meaningful day time activities, including: volunteering opportunities, community gardening, and a warehouse training programme.

Faith in politics but no faith in politicians, say young people

YOUNG Christians care about politics and their faith has a major impact on how they vote – but they don't think their voices are heard or have faith that politicians can deliver positive change.

These are the findings of an online survey conducted by The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) of our Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church asking Christian young people about their attitudes to voting and politics.

The respondents said they would be more likely to vote if politicians engage directly with them.

They also said that they are not given sufficient information with regards to policies and key issues, and that one way of overcoming this could also be through better political education in schools.

The survey was conducted in preparation for the JPIT conference, 'Love Your Neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote',



Houses of Parliament by vegadsl/freedigitalphotos

where Archbishop Justin Welby will be the keynote speaker. The aim of the conference is to enthuse and equip Christians to be active in the run up to the General Election in May.

'It is vitally important that young people take the opportunity to have their say next May,' said Andrew Weston, Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth Moderator Elect. 'I'm really looking forward to the upcoming JPIT

conference... To have a space for young Christians to engage with key issues, including poverty, climate change and international affairs, in the context of their faith and the upcoming General Election, is so valuable.'

A limited number of tickets are available for Under 25s to attend the JPIT conference on 21 February.

Visit bit.ly/1wuyQBQ

Spreading hope in Milton Keynes

DURING the half-term break next week more than 130 young people aged 11-17 will be out across Milton Keynes challenging the negative stereotypes which are usually associated with them.

By giving up their school holiday to run a variety of community building and social action projects, they will demonstrate that young people "are not lazy, apathetic and good

for nothing," says Hope MK, the Christian initiative behind the week.

A small army of 130 young people will spend their mornings with the Hope MK team being trained and equipped, before heading out to projects taking place in communities across Milton Keynes each afternoon.

Projects include children's work, drop-in cafes, a social

media project, Messy Church, community clean-up/gardening, and play sessions.

'We hear so much about young people leaving the Church, so it's great to know that these guys are leaving for the right reason: in order to go and serve others and share the hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ,' said Ricky Rew of the Hope MK Team and Surgeon Baptist Church.

“Let no one be a stranger”

THE BAPTIST minister who leads the church which hosted three services marking the 200 years of relationship between Jamaican and British Baptists said not even a major BBC hitch could spoil the day.

A technical problem prevented BBC Radio 4 from broadcasting the 8.10am service at Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham on Sunday as planned.

While this was an understandable disappointment to the 300 strong congregation who had gathered, it was nevertheless a ‘fantastic day’ said the Revd Bryan Scott, the team leader at Cannon Street.

‘Obviously the one downside was the BBC equipment broke down, which was a shame as everybody had put so much effort in,’ he said.

‘But we didn’t let that stop us enjoying the day. The services were excellent. There were inspiring speakers and messages, and great worship.’

That early service still went ahead as planned, followed by further bicentenary services at 11am and 6.30pm.

Mr Scott (pictured) said there were members of his



To read a longer version of this story, with more quotes, pictures and a statement from the BBC, visit bit.ly/1tje47m

congregation who had arrived in Britain in the 1950 and 60s for whom the day was a particularly poignant one.

‘Our church was a suitable venue for these services, as we have some of the first wave of immigrants from the Caribbean.

‘For some it brought back bad memories of when they first arrived. They had sought refuge in the Baptist church because they knew there were Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, but it took them a while to be received and accepted.

‘So it was emotional for some. But it also showed how far we have moved on, and have contributed to the multi-cultural

society we now live in. The Apology in 2007 has been very important. It has enabled us to move forward, and build on that. It has been incredibly helpful.’

The theme of the services – and indeed the motto of the church – of *Let No One Be a Stranger*, has a resonance for today, continued Mr Scott.

‘People came over to rebuild the country after the Second World War, to do the menial jobs that others didn’t want to do,’ he said. ‘It’s happening again now, which is why it’s so important for us to welcome the stranger. We have been there, we understand more than anyone what it means not to be welcomed.’

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Jubilee economics

A NEW publication from the Jubilee Debt Campaign, compiled with the assistance of Christian Aid and All We Can: Methodist Relief and Development, is helping churches relate real world economic problems to biblical teachings.

Entitled *Jubilee economics: Biblical teaching and financial crisis*, the set of six Bible studies analyses economic issues facing people in the UK and across the world from a Biblical perspective.

Jesus’ teachings on hoarding wealth are examined in relation to inequality and financial crisis; old and new testament teaching on cancelling debts are looked at in relation to high levels of individual and government debt across the world; and the way tax policies can increase inequality and injustice are considered.

Jubilee Debt Campaign spokesman Tim Jones, a member of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, said, ‘The verb Jesus is most often quoted as using, *aphiemi*, means to ‘cancel a debt’.

‘Challenging economic injustice is central to the message of the gospels. These studies will help churches discuss how faith relates to economic decisions, and what Christians can do to help build a fairer world.’

Printed copies of the booklet are available for free by contacting the Jubilee Debt Campaign on 0207 324 4722 or info@jubileedebt.org.uk

Fairtrade egg award

A CHARITY Easter egg has come third in a national poll to find the UK’s favourite Fairtrade product.

The Real Easter Egg, launched in 2010 with the support of hundreds of churches and schools, beat leading brands such as Maltesers, Cadbury Dairy Milk and Nestle Kit Kat to win the coveted title of third most popular UK Fairtrade product. It shared the podium with Divine Sea Salt and Caramel Chocolate Bar (1st place) and Zatoun Olive Oil (2nd place).

The Meaningful Chocolate Company (MCC) was launched in 2010 and produced the first Real Easter Egg that year. MCC founder David Marshall (pictured with egg) said, ‘We would like to thank the Fairtrade Foundation for running the poll and the British public who nominated and voted for our

egg. Out of the 80 million Easter eggs sold in this part of the world, ours is the only Fairtrade charity egg explaining the story of Easter. From the moment we launched, churches across the UK welcomed the product and have played a significant part in helping us win this award.’

MCC will sell their millionth egg in 2015. By the end of the year the company expects to have given away more than £160,000 to charitable causes.

‘Our customers include ethical retailer Traidcraft and hundreds of independent retailers,’ said Marshall. ‘We sell direct to thousands of customers and our eggs are also stocked at Tesco, Morrisons and Waitrose. While we are delighted to have won third place, the biggest winners are those whose lives have been transformed through the work of the global Fairtrade movement and Fairtrade Premium – reversing the legacy of the slave trade.’



PLEASE note that this will be the last edition of *The Baptist Times Weekly Round-up* until 13 November. But please keep sending your baptisms, notifications and stories!

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Parish Nurse, Loughborough Baptist Church Chaplains, RAF

For more details visit: www.baptist.org.uk/jobs

BAPTISMS

Barton Baptist Church, Torquay: Bonnie Szewczuk Philpotts. 1
Costessey Baptist Church, Norwich: Emma and Sam 2
Streatham Baptist Church, London: Denise James 1

Send notifications of baptisms, ministerial changes, deaths and testimonies to phobson@baptist.org.uk