



22 April 2015

**News:**

### **A fair price for fashion**

A deadly factory collapse in Bangladesh shocked a member of Headington Baptist Church so much he decided to take radical action

It's 8am on a densely-crowded Bangladesh street. Thousands of workers are refusing to enter their place of work, a multi-storey factory housing five textile businesses. Alarming cracks have appeared in the walls and people are scared for their safety.

The owner, ignoring the fears of the workers, hires men with sticks to beat the crowd and force them into the building. The labourers, mainly female, are told that if they do not work today they will not be paid for the whole month. How will they feed their children? Reluctantly, the crowd give up their protest and go to work. Forty five minutes later the building disintegrates with thousands of workers trapped inside.

This is the tragic story behind the collapse of the Rana Plaza. On 24 April two years ago, hundreds of textile workers died and over 2,500 were injured. Some 1,137 were confirmed dead, many more are still missing. Nearly one third of those who had tried in vain to voice their rights that day, to secure something that we take for granted – the right to a safe working environment – died.

The name Rana Plaza has gone down in history as the deadliest disaster, to date, of the garment industry worldwide.

Many of us watched the news that day, saddened at the lives lost, angry at the Western brands who contracted the making of our clothes to business owners who cut corners and made their workers endure 100 hour weeks. Surely the fashion industry must have known.

Andy Showell-Rogers who attends Headington Baptist church in Oxford was one of those who sat, shocked and perplexed, watching the tragedy unfold on TV. But for him, the story didn't stop there. It prompted a remarkable course of action that has brought fairness and security to the lives of many textile workers in developing countries.

"On TV we can see so much suffering, we can feel 'what can I do?'" says Andy. "This leads to inaction because one person can't solve everything. But when I saw the collapse of Rana Plaza I felt enough was enough – this can't carry on."

That day he and two friends made a decision to find out how easy it would be to only wear clothes that reflected their values. So Andy liberated his wardrobe of its contents, including underwear and socks, and set out on a mission to only buy and wear ethically-sourced products.

“We didn’t know how difficult it would be,” says Andy. “We wondered if it would even be possible to find one complete outfit.”

They charted their clothing challenge on a blog – whomademywardrobe. They reviewed products and promoted brands who are transparent.

“We wanted fairness to be part of their DNA,” explains Andy. “We wanted to be confident that the people making the decisions in these businesses know that the people making their clothes are being treated fairly. But it was really difficult to find many companies like this.”

Not only was it hard to find ethically-produced clothes but the items they did find were often expensive. “We found a lot of high-end fashion stuff. We were willing to pay a bit more but there just wasn’t much to find so we ended up with a very limited wardrobe!”

This frustration led to the realisation that there was a gap in the market for affordable, ethically-sourced clothes that people would want to wear. So the guys set out to change people’s expectations – could they sell t-shirts or shirts that looked good, that were quality products, made by skilled tailors in developing countries who were paid a fair price for their work, tailors they had met and knew the names of?

A crowdfunding campaign enabled Andy to embark on making this dream a reality. Several overseas trips later, Visible Clothing was launched.

“I went to India and visited a number of factories,” says Andy, who now works full-time as CEO of Visible. “The one we selected has fairness at its core. I sat down with the owner. She wants to have a positive impact in the community. This factory makes the t-shirts.”

Along with T-shirts, Visible Clothing sells ties and shirts made in Vietnam where they work with Fashion and Freedom, a company that provides training to individual tailors on how to build up their contacts and develop their business.

I asked people in the factories what they wanted people to know about them. Many of them said they are really proud of their work

What stands out about Visible Clothing is its goal of bringing the buyer much closer to the maker. Andy knows the people who labour over their sewing machines day after day, with such skill and attention to detail. On Visible’s website these master tailors have a face and a name, hopes and dreams, a life story.

“I asked some of the people in the factories I visited what they wanted people to know about them,” says Andy. “Many of them said they wanted people to know that they are really proud of their work. These people have opportunities for promotion, they have regular and secure income – this allows people to change their own lives.”

One of those who’s experienced transformation is Quan in Vietnam. When his wife became ill he had to sell his shop to pay for medical bills. Sadly, his wife died, and now he and his son share one room. They’re trying to rebuild their lives. But because he makes shirts for Visible he gets paid what he should get paid for a quality product. It is giving him and his son hope for the future.

Most people would agree that yes, we want people to be paid fairly for the work they do. But walk down any high street and there’s a plethora of faceless corporations selling cheap, fashionable clothing, offering bargains that can be too tempting to resist. Perhaps the hardest thing about

wanting to buy in-line with our values is that it can cost us. And, for many of us, monthly budgets are already stretched.

The percentage of salary that we spend on clothes compared to 50 years ago is tiny but we've got loads more clothes

"I have way fewer clothes now," Andy says. "It's a mind-set shift. I don't need to buy them regularly. The percentage of salary that we spend on clothes now compared to 50 years ago is tiny but we've got loads more clothes. I love a bargain and I understand that the reality of financial pressure is significant. I think we need to look at this in a different way. We need to think 'maybe I need less'. The pressure on factories to keep up with the volume of clothes we demand and the ever-changing fashions is huge."

Aside from seeking out fairly-made clothes, it's possible to effect change using the clothes we already have. There's a growing community of people who are determined to take on the big brands, to challenge them about their ethics and business practices. On 24 April 2015 a Fashion Revolution day will commemorate the lives and livelihoods lost in the Rana Plaza disaster by encouraging people to ask the big high street names – who made my clothes? Joining in the action is fairly simple – take a selfie showing the label on your clothes, tag the brand and ask #whomademyclothes?

For Andy, change, or at the very least challenging big business, is essential: "We can give money to charity in one hand and then take it back again by causing suffering in another way," he says. "And clothes are such a part of our identity; it can be challenging to change in this way."

But change we must, before Rana Plaza is forgotten and another building collapse takes the title of 'biggest textile industry disaster in the world'.

To buy Visible clothing visit <http://visible.clothing/>

To find out more about the Fashion Revolution day visit <http://fashionrevolution.org/>

## **Baptist Minister's beach art creates intrigue**

You've probably heard of the urban artist Banksy. But did you know that a Baptist Minister in Southend has become known as the local Sandbanksy?

In March 2014, a Baptist Minister began creating artwork on the beach in Westcliff, sparking speculation from passers by and the local press about who was responsible for the etchings in the sand, with someone coining the name 'Sandbanksy'. On Good Friday a labyrinth emerged on the beach. Visitors walked its pathway while members of Avenue Baptist Church handed out hot cross buns and hot drinks.

"Whilst walking a labyrinth it seems the connection between ourselves and God becomes closer for a moment, as we choose to walk to a different path from the one we're used to," explains Sandbanksy. "I just felt that if those moments are only ever confined to church halls or cathedrals or monasteries, then too many people might never experience them."

The chosen location for the sand art meant that the labyrinth could easily be seen by walkers on the cliffs above. "It piqued people's interest as they walked by," he says. "There are those who stepped down and gave the labyrinth a go, and the response was always amazing. When I talked to those who had just come out of the labyrinth, the overwhelming reaction was positive, and many talked of experiencing something spiritual having walked the path."

This year, Sandbanksy returned. Over the Easter weekend he etched an image of the empty tomb on the beach. The local press covered the story naming him 'Southend's infamous Sandbanksy'.

And the Minister's schedule for his much-talked-about sand art is beginning to fill up.

"I have a two or three more labyrinth dates planned here in Southend. One is for a local art exhibition in June. And I've been asked to provide a labyrinth for use as a memorial service for parents who have lost children. I can also do them spontaneously now and again, where only the passers by get to know about them. Of course, if people have access to a beach and are wishing to have their church experience something similar, I'm open to invites further afield!"

Sandbanksy's creations have engaged the imagination of local people. They've opened up conversations about God and faith and brought a reflective, spiritual exercise much closer to people who may not ordinarily step inside a church.

"In Southend the beach is such an integral part of local people's way of life; it just made perfect sense to use the beach in this way," says Sandbanksy. "It seemed to perfectly tap into the 'culture of a place', whereby an encounter with God could be naturally created, in a way that was perfectly accessible to people. For me, the labyrinth on Westcliff Beach offers local people a space to reflect, and to recognise that God is always with us, at every turn of our path."

And if you're wondering who 'Sandbanksy' is, try unravelling this anagram: 'Drink Jive Limp'.

You can view more examples of the artwork at [www.facebook.com/sandbanksysandart](http://www.facebook.com/sandbanksysandart)

## **BMS and Ascension Trust to work together**

BMS World Mission and the Ascension Trust, which formed Street Pastors, have entered what is being described as a "strategic relationship".

The two organisations recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding, an agreement of co-operation that could provide training and enable Street Pastors to do even more effective outreach on the streets of the UK, and in countries where BMS works.

Eustace Constance, Operations Manager for Ascension Trust, and Peter Dunn, BMS Director of Mission signing the Memorandum of Understanding

The relationship is new and the potential for future collaboration "is vast", said a statement.

While plans are very much in the early stages, but BMS is hoping to help the Ascension Trust with training Street Pastors in cultural contexts for both the UK and overseas. BMS also hopes to assist with making introductions for Street Pastors in countries where it has links.

On the home front, this relationship with the Ascension Trust could enable BMS to do more outreach here in the UK. More than that, continued the statement, 'it could provide an opportunity for Christians all over the country to tackle the challenges that confront them every day'.

'It is exciting for BMS and Street Pastors to be entering into a strategic relationship,' said BMS Director of Mission Peter Dunn.

'We both share a passion and a vision for mission. My hope and prayer is that we will be able to help equip Street Pastors for mission in the UK as they meet people of many different cultures on the streets, and that we will be able to contribute to this mission tool being used where appropriate overseas.'

'Street Pastors help churches to see beyond their four walls and give them the tools to be able to actively do something about the issues they're so concerned about on our streets at night,' added BMS' UK Field Leader Graham Doel.

'This relationship has the potential to see churches in all kinds of contexts released in mission.'

## **Oldest Baptist chapel in UK gets restoration grant**

A 15th century Baptist chapel in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, will be restored to its former glory thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery fund, it was announced on Monday.

The John Moore Museum in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire has received £189,500 to refurbish the Grade II\* listed building which is believed to be the earliest Baptist meeting house in the UK. The project, which will cost £250,000 in total, starts in April and is due to run until May 2018.

Simon Lawton, curator, said: "The Chapel is such a beautiful building and in its way as vital to our local heritage as Tewkesbury Abbey. The Heritage Lottery Fund grant will enable us to give the building a facelift and make it much more user friendly. We'll also be opening it up for hire to local groups so that the town gets full use of this important, yet hidden, architectural gem."

The project has taken over two years of planning and consultation with the local community, including the Tewkesbury Baptist Church who own the building and Tewkesbury Borough Council who were the former lease holders. The aim is to repair and restore the building for future generations so that everyone can explore this fascinating part of our national heritage.

The Chapel will have new interpretation, including an exciting computer generated reconstruction of a coded minute book, as well as a bespoke kitchen and toilet. New heating and lighting will be installed too. Later in the year a full programme of educational events will begin.

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "We're delighted to support the John Moore Museum as they bring their historic chapel back into use for the community and visitors to enjoy. We're particularly impressed by the volunteering and educational opportunities the project offers and the heritage attraction and community space promises to benefit even more people."

The museum and the chapel are run by The Abbey Lawn Trust, a registered charity with 70 years' experience of preserving historic buildings in Tewkesbury.

## **Get a taste of The Esther Collective**

There will be a taster day in Birmingham for The Esther Collective - a new discipleship and leadership opportunity for young women aged 18-30s, run by Girls' Brigade Ministries.

Over the course of nine months, The Esther Collective aims to foster a community of women, both in person and online, that disciple, encourage and mentor one another - equipping this generation of women leaders to serve God in the world.

The Esther Collective Project Leader Charlotte Hendy says 'We want to raise up a generation of women who are discovering who they are, how they can make a difference, and what God is calling them to do. If you want to develop your leadership gifts while being part of a community that grows in faith together, then The Esther Collective is just for you.'

The taster day, at St Luke's Church, Birmingham, on Saturday 23 May, is a chance to experience what it's like to be part of an Esther Collective gathering - sharing food together, hearing the story of a

Christian woman leader, and drawing close to God. The Esther Collective will be running in Birmingham from September 2015 and in Derbyshire from October 2015.

At the taster day, there will also be the opportunity to hear about the other elements of The Esther Collective, and Girls' Brigade Ministries' commitment to helping women fulfil their potential.

Kirsty Mabbott, 32, from Manchester, is one of the women taking part in The Esther Collective this year. She says, 'I'm really enjoying the sessions and the chance to work with such an amazing and diverse group of women. I'm really loving it and I feel safe to be fully me and fully accepted... it's probably the best thing I can be doing in my final year at college.'

Another participant, Milly Heaford, 27, from London, says 'I've gone from having little clue of my vision and placing obstacles in the way of having one, such as uncertainty over my living location, to beginning to formulate a mission statement for my life.'

The taster day is free of charge, open to all women aged 18-30s, and will include lunch, coffee and refreshments.

Charlotte adds 'We'd love for you to come and experience The Esther Collective, and discover what God is calling you to do "for such a time as this".'

To find out more, email Charlotte at [charlotte.hendy@gb-ministries.org](mailto:charlotte.hendy@gb-ministries.org) or book via the website: <http://theesthercollective.jimdo.com/taster-day/>

## **Crowdfunding success for Tom**

A Christian comedian has succeeded in reaching an ambitious crowdfunding target to bring his DVD to more than 1,000 young people this summer

Tom Elliott began his 30-day Kickstarter campaign when he launched his debut DVD *When Life Hands You Lemons* last month. The campaign, in partnership with national Christian ministry Urban Saints, aimed to raise £5,000 to give away 1375 free copies of the DVD to young people attending Spree Weekends across the UK later this summer.

Kickstarter rules dictate that only the full amount pledged will enable the project to be moved forward, but as of Sunday (12 April) Tom had exceeded the target with the help of 50 supporters.

*When Life Hands You Lemons*, is a 45 minute show recorded in front of a live theatre audience which blend of comedy and illusion mixed with a challenging message about how to live life to the full.

Tom, youth minister at Minichampton Baptist Church in Gloucestershire, was delighted.

'This Kickstarter campaign was a step of faith to see how I could share the amazing message of Jesus which encourages us to live life in all its fullness,' he said.

'I am personally so grateful to everyone who has stood with me over these last 30 days and we can now together make this project a reality as we seek to see lives changed.

'I am looking forward to working with Urban Saints to make sure I can visit Spree Weekends this summer to hand deliver these gift DVDs to young people and their families across the UK.'

Matt Summerfield, Chief Executive of Urban Saints this morning added, 'We're really chuffed that Tom has been successful with his Kickstarter campaign and that loads of young people will get to enjoy, and be inspired by, his brilliant DVD.'

## Opinions/Features

### Parish Nursing: walking with people in crisis

An overstretched NHS can't always offer the personal, holistic care many people crave – but a parish Nurse can, providing an essential connection between church and community as the first UK book documenting this important ministry shows

As Julie Barry stood in the high street chatting to a friend she noticed a mum with two small children on the other side of the road. As she watched the mum walk by she felt she needed to talk to her. Crossing the road, Julie caught the mum's attention and introduced herself. "I'm Julie, the parish nurse," she said.

The woman's mouth dropped open. Without saying a word she fished an envelope out of her bag. Inside, was Julie's name and contact details – she'd just come from the Citizen's Advice Bureau and they had suggested she contact Julie. This God-ordained meeting enabled Julie to build up a relationship with a minority community that she'd been wanting to connect with.

Julie has been a parish nurse for five years, based at Eden Baptist Church in Edenbridge, Kent. Her background in A&E gave her a good grounding in working with people in crisis, the mainstay of Parish Nursing.

There are currently 90 parish nurses in the UK appointed or employed by a local church, with around one third based in Baptist churches. Many parish nurses combine their work in the NHS with Parish Nursing hours.

"I visit people a lot," says Julie. "I do a lot of listening. It's about walking with them in their crisis. I'm their advocate. I make sure they get the help they need. Eighty per cent of the people I work with don't have a church background.

"There isn't a typical day. This morning, I posted an encouraging message through someone's letterbox to get them out of the house and to an appointment. Then I went to the Food Bank to sort out a delivery for a young mum. Later I have a MIND group in church. After that I'm taking someone who's agoraphobic to an appointment."

Last year saw Parish Nursing celebrate its 10th anniversary; the ministry came to the UK, via the United States, in 2004.

The Revd Dr Helen Wordsworth, a Baptist Minister and registered nurse, is CEO of Parish Nursing Ministries UK. "Jesus sent 72 followers out to address people's health concerns and to tell people that the kingdom of God was near them," says Helen. "We want to help people do this."

Helen is the author of the first UK book on Parish Nursing – Rediscovering a Ministry of Health. She hopes it will encourage churches to recognise just how beneficial having a Parish Nurse on the staff team can be.

“The research shows a significant difference between those churches that have parish nurses and those that don’t,” Helen explains. “Not so much in terms of numbers on seats or increase in membership but in integral mission: in time spent with people who don’t attend church; in connection with the local community; in volunteer co-ordination and support; and in raising the profile of the church and working with other agencies. It seems to work really well where the church has other community activities such as a playgroup or drop-in coffee shop, which the nurse can work alongside.”

Helen is keen to emphasise that Parish Nursing is about whole person healthcare, something that an overstretched NHS cannot always deliver. With more churches than health centres in the UK, the church is uniquely placed to offer services that reach people’s less apparent needs – a listening ear, help with understanding medication, someone to act as a mediator with other health care providers, someone to reassure a nervous patient awaiting surgery.

“The motivating factor that got me involved was borne from a deep conviction that the gospel we preach has a foundation in wholeness,” says Helen. “Our mission should not separate out the spiritual elements from the mental, physical and community health aspects of life, and our engagement with health should not exclude spiritual care.”

Because Parish Nursing is church based, there is a greater freedom to talk about faith. In fact it’s made clear in brochures given to prospective patients that the parish nurse may offer to pray with them.

According to Helen, “most of the parish nurses pray and discuss spiritual care with at least half of their patients. Many of those are not church goers but appreciate the offer of prayer. It is always done in an appropriate way and with the client’s agreement. The nurses really appreciate the opportunity to integrate their nursing skills with spiritual care.”

A parish nurse can, very effectively, connect a church to its local community. Church members can offer the nurse’s services to friends and neighbours. And many nurses have become regular and very useful additions to toddler groups, lunch clubs, and other church-based groups. According to Helen, one of the first jobs a new parish nurse will do is get to know local GPs and other health care professionals so that the door is open for referrals from the community as well as from within the church.

“Parish nursing is relatively easy for a church to incorporate alongside the activities it already offers,” says Helen. There are some minimal set up costs plus costs for training but Parish Nursing Ministries UK “would walk with a church through the whole set up process,” she explains. And the charity provides training, resources, advice and regional co-ordination. It is then up to the church whether they offer paid or voluntary hours.

However, start-up grants are available through Cinnamon Network and churches may be able to access local grants.

Helen hopes that her book, published last month, will be a catalyst for igniting a fresh vision to see holistic health care provision as one of the church’s most prized missional activities.

“We want to have 160 projects by the end of 2017,” says Helen. “Beyond that, we want to get to a point where nearly every church in the UK has a parish nurse.”



For more info visit <http://parishnursing.org.uk/>

Revd Dr Helen Wordsworth is a Baptist minister with 16 years' experience in mission enabling at regional level, alongside other denominations. She is also a Registered Nurse, Health Visitor, and Nurse Educator, and an Associate Fellow of Durham University Department of -Theology. She is CEO of Parish Nursing Ministries UK.

'Rediscovering a Ministry of Health: Parish Nursing as a Mission of the Local Church' by Revd Dr Helen Anne Wordsworth is published by WIPF and STOCK (978-1-4982-0595-5/ £16) and can be ordered through your local bookshop or purchased from Amazon

## **The Church has left the building**

Reflecting on when an area learns to live without a church. By Michael Shaw

Devonport used to have so many Baptist churches that in 1921 one of them felt it was time to leave to a new area of the city. Come 1939 there were three thriving Baptist churches, several Methodist churches and a number of working Anglican parishes. World War Two changed all that.

Devonport was one of the key dockyards and an obvious target for German bombing. The area was decimated, and after the war the Navy extended the dockyard.

Within 15 years, there were no Baptist or Methodist churches, and only one solitary Anglican church. The Church had left the area!

There remained one or two independent churches for a number of years.

However, by the time Devonport Community Baptist Church was planted in 1999, only the Anglican church of St Aubyn's remained, with its small and dwindling population (St Aubyn's is now a library with a small worship space hidden away on a mezzanine floor)

What impact does that have on an area? I have been reflecting a lot on this recently, and I've realised one of the key points is that people learn to live without the church.

Now this may be a good thing... perhaps a post-Christendom reading would say that the church is now in a place to truly connect with the community through the removal of its source of power (buildings)?

Maybe that is true. But an area that has lost its connection with the church is also a hard place to minister in. They have discovered that they do not need the church, the church has done nothing for them, and they have no connection with it.

You are not a stakeholder in the community. When I arrived the local head teacher, when I asked what how the church could help the school, simply replied "not really". The conversation moved on and I am now a governor at the school, but that response is not untypical: this is an area that has learnt to live without the church. The answer to the question "How can we help?" is "No thanks".

The problem is that Devonport is not alone in being an un-churched area of a city; there are many places in our cities and rural areas where the church does not exist, and may not ever exist again.

My real fear is that in 20 years' time areas like Devonport will not have a Baptist church again, and many areas of the UK will be the same. Baptist churches will only exist in middle class or suburban areas, and will be large churches which can afford a minister (or two – or sometimes three).

If you want to engage with a Baptist church, you will have to travel. More and more areas will find that the church has nothing to offer them, because they have discovered they can live without them.

How can this bleak picture change? The answer is that we need a movement of the Spirit, but not in a revival whereby we all gather in church buildings or warehouses and sing songs and fall over, but a revival in the idea of incarnation.

In being sent, in joining with the sending God, seeing people start to live, work and worship in areas where they are uncomfortable, where the worship is not a show, where life is real, where people are real, where they have to live sacrificially, where their lives are not dominated by school catchment areas.

We need a revival in incarnation. Only then will people see that the church is for them, and not distant and disinterested in them.

The Revd Michael Shaw is minister of Devonport Community Baptist Church, Plymouth

## Rare Breeds and Endangered Species in Church

Young people are not in church in the numbers they used to be, and atheism is growing. What can we do? By Paul Poulton

We are told that “lesser-spotted woodpeckers” reside in the UK all year round, but they have declined in numbers and are becoming quite rare in certain places. We are also told that “people under the age of 30” reside in the UK all year round but they too are becoming lesser-spotted and quite rare in certain places.

There are two ways of looking at the phrase “lesser-spotted”:

1 Not seen very often.

2 Having spots of a small dimension.

When I minister in churches around the UK I have not noticed that young people’s problems with acne have lessened to any great degree, but I have noticed a shortage of young people themselves. I’ve heard that there are statistics confirming the fact that young people are not in church in the numbers they used to be some years ago.

The lack of people under 30 in church may not be so easy for us to recognise as we think. We can liken it to a person suffering from glaucoma where peripheral vision is slowly lost. The person living with the condition doesn’t necessarily notice that the edges of their vision have started to disappear because they get use to accommodating the narrowing visual field in their demanding and encompassing daily life.

Church itself can become a little demanding at times and a few people may find themselves engrossed in the affairs of church. People assigned to the task of some sort of leadership within the body of Christ have to apply themselves to organising and coordinating the multi-faceted mechanisms of what we know as the local church. And may God bless them all, because we need those people.

Those of us who work (in some capacity) with church, do need to take care that the church doesn’t become all-consuming—our relationship is with God, not with church affairs. Church members who may not hold a particular office but are faithful attendants at services and house-groups etc. can also

find themselves pre-occupied with the life of their church. This situation can, if we're not alert, affect our peripheral vision leading us to becoming slightly blinkered and failing to notice the slow haemorrhaging of young people from the body.

But thankfully, where we may fail, the members of the British Humanist Association are happy to help us out. They write on their website that,

“Religiosity is particularly on the wane amongst young people. A 2013 YouGov poll found that only 25 per cent of 16-24 year olds believe in God, whilst 38 per cent do not believe in either God or a greater spiritual power. The same study found that only 12 per cent of young people pronounced themselves as being influenced by religious leaders.”

Why young people are happy to proclaim their atheism may have a number of answers, and one of them is probably that some influential atheists are funny, witty, knowledgeable, excellent communicators and enjoy celebrity status. They are also not shy in proclaiming their philosophy; being able to make the church look like a heavy leaden weight, whilst portraying atheism as having the capability to set its adherents free.

Atheism is in fact, quite cool at the moment, so why not join in the fun? Perhaps it's a bit like smoking: Young people sometimes meet together outside school for a cigarette. They may not, at first, particularly enjoy the sensation of smoking, but because it gives them a sense of independence whilst looking smart among their peers, they continue to smoke. Some young people get through that stage and make changes before smoking becomes an ingrained pattern in their lives, other young people will develop a life-long habit that may have serious consequences.

Some young people who now call themselves unbelievers will, by God's grace, change their stance. But there will be other young people for whom unbelief is a life-long journey.

What can we do to stem the flow of youth leaving the church? Happily we don't have to do anything that God hasn't already called us to do. However, if we are caught up with church politics, in-fighting, personal advancement within the church, proving theological positions or arguing about points of doctrine, we find the job we are actually called to do is left undone.

But if we communicate the message of Jesus well, and reach-out to the people around us, faith will ensue. “Faith comes by hearing!” Jesus put some thought into communicating his message to the people in front of him and he told them interesting stories that would engender faith in his hearers. We cannot conjure faith up within people but we can all do something to encourage the seed of faith that the Holy Spirit has placed in someone's heart.

"Faith" is like music. Technically speaking, music is a series of repetitious noise. But put a human soul on the receiving end of that noise and it makes perfect sense. God's love and heaven's music will continue to touch people, as it always has done. People's lives will continue to be changed by the touch of God. Taking an interest in young people, making friends with them, showing love and bearing with them through their problems and waywardness will help stimulate faith within them.

Atheism is trending at the moment, but that will pass, as all trends pass. But while it is here with our generation, and taking place on our watch, we are called to stand fast and proclaim in word and deed the good news that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son and that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Paul Poulton is a writer, speaker and singer-songwriter. He talks about life, human idiosyncrasies, his Christian faith and philosophy, sometimes seasoning his discourses with humour. Paul is a member of his local Baptist church in Staffordshire.

## Chaplaincy - to what extent is it pioneering mission?

Andrea Campanale reflects on a recent study of chaplaincy in the UK

Last month the think-tank Theos and The Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies launched a report entitled 'A Very Modern Ministry: Chaplaincy in the UK'.

Chaplaincy<sup>250</sup>In the introduction, author Ben Ryan outlines the apparent contradiction the research explores: "The fascination of chaplaincy is that it seems to be thriving in the paradoxical situation of being a faith and belief phenomenon which is growing in a public square which often seems increasingly secular. (p.9)"

I have developed an interest in this area of ministry as a result of working with the Chaplain at the YMCA in South West London, and Kingston University's Faith Advisor. I have been constantly challenged and inspired by the opportunity afforded them to help people find hope and meaning for the day-to-day struggles of life, outside the bounds of organised religion.

On Valentine's Day in the restaurant of the YMCA in Surbiton, for example, we gave away chocolates and put handmade cards on the tables celebrating God's love. We also helped people make their own Valentine cards and one of the children living at the Y made a card for her Mum to say how much she loved her!

These opportunities to listen and find creative ways to bless others has led me to set up a Town Centre Chaplaincy Service in Kingston-upon-Thames as part of my missional activity as a Church Mission Society Lay Pioneer. I have done this with the Local Ecumenical Partnership and I see it as a means by which one of the members of my missional community, a retired social worker, outworks her vocation.

It also fulfills my intention to create different vehicles for Christians to be good news in their locality. It is by doing and reflecting on practice in community that I believe discipleship happens.

However, to what extent is chaplaincy mission? The report clearly picks up on the tensions around the concern not to be seen as 'proselytising'. In some sectors such as healthcare and education it is very much a "no-go area". But in sports chaplaincy and town centre chaplaincies, the report identifies a greater openness in talking about evangelism. One sports chaplain quoted the Sports Chaplaincy UK maxim that they should be "pastorally proactive and spiritually reactive (p.42)."

The report concluded that very few chaplains identified conversion as a particular hope. "At most, the intention seemed on the whole to be to encourage and deepen faith of any description. (p.43)"

So how might chaplaincy be considered pioneering? Well it's certainly not new! Recognisable chaplains go back at least to the 19th century and that's in the police and acting profession, as well as more 'traditional' chaplaincy fields such as the military, hospitals and prisons. Yet Ryan still describes it as "a ministry that is innovative, fitting in with the way British society is, rather than how religious and belief groups might hope it to be." It is, "...a ministry that goes to where people actually are, rather than waiting for them to come to religion. (p.79)"

I was also struck by the role of chaplain as being a bridge between the institution they work for and the faith community they represent. This can be an uncomfortable position to hold and chaplains complain of feeling isolated and lacking in support from both. (p.67) Also chaplains were described as being a 'prophetic' figure within the organisation, willing to criticise and challenge those in authority if they felt decisions were compromising standards or discriminating against a minority group within the institution (p.46).

Certainly the scope and impact outlined in the report is encouraging. I counted 45 specific sectors where chaplains are currently operating. (p.14-16)

Yet, also like pioneering, chaplaincy is increasingly dependent upon untrained, voluntary lay people. The report ends with a note of caution, "Faith and belief groups can either act to resource, support and embrace this movement or they can let it continue organically and run the risk of losing any control they might have over a powerful resource (p.79)".

Andrea Campanale is a lay pioneer and mission partner with the Church Mission Society. She runs a Fresh Expression called Sacred Space Kingston.

## **Christ, the Cross and the Concrete Jungle**

Young people who grow up in poverty, surrounded by negative influences can face a lifetime of hardship. But a new book charts one disaffected teenager's journey from a jail cell to a Baptist college, to a life of teaching and ministry

Growing up in a deprived area of Glasgow, John Caldwell faced grim prospects. He dropped out of school with barely any qualifications. Frustration and unemployment led to a host of wrong choices, choices that led to an arrest for being drunk and disorderly, breaching the peace and vandalising several cars.

His story mirrors the lives of many young people living on impoverished housing estates, many of whom end up in prison or struggling to get a job, or battling poverty. But John's story doesn't end there – his life was completely transformed by meeting Jesus and by a loving church who didn't give up on him. Now, he is a secondary school English teacher and a ministry assistant in the Free Church of Scotland. He is also a graduate of Scottish Baptist College and before moving to Skye, where he now lives, he was a member of Kings Park Baptist church in Glasgow.

John has documented his troubled years and remarkable conversion in an autobiography: 'Christ, the Cross and the Concrete Jungle', published by Evangelical Press.

He explains: "The aim is to provide a snapshot into the communities which are tainted by unemployment, high crime-rates, and substance abuse.

"I'm very keen not to give the wrong impression. Basically, 'Christ, the Cross and the Concrete Jungle' is not the portrayal of some gangster turned guru – it's just the story of a lad growing up in the schemes, making wrong choices – choices that lead to pretty dark places.

"But it is also a story of redemption – because were it not for the grace of God then chances are, like many other lads in the schemes, I would have been just another statistic."

John continues: "So the book has a turning point – and that turning point is when I hear the gospel. I'm quite keen in the book to show how God worked. God broke into my life in some very strong ways, and I make a lot of that. I didn't find Jesus, he found me.

“After my conversion to Christ, the book outlines some of the struggles facing young guys from the schemes when they seek to follow Christ.”

Perhaps what is most remarkable is that John has gone from being a school drop out to becoming an English teacher. After becoming a Christian he returned to full-time education.

“The latter part of the book is just simply an outline of where Jesus has taken me from and where he has taken me to. It’s there to provide a contrast. It helps demonstrate something of the depth of change that Jesus can produce in our lives. Further, it ends with a challenge. I finish with a brief explanation of the gospel, and I challenge the reader to think about the direction that their own life is taking.”

As well as for individuals, it is hoped that the book will also help churches engage with communities and people who may be in similar situations.

John explained: “I stumbled into a very small, very traditional but very loving Brethren church.

“They were patient with me, helped me practically when they saw I had a need – for example, when I was unemployed – a business man in the church was continually pointing me in the direction for employment. Or when I ended up back-sliding, the overseer of the church would turn up with a bag of shopping.

“How do you reach people in the situation I was in? Preach the gospel, and live the gospel.”

John concluded: “I’d encourage Christians to get the book, read it, be encouraged by it and then give it away to a non-Christian friend.”

John lives in Skye with his wife and two children. He is currently working as a Ministry Assistant for Bracadale and Portree Free Church and teaches in local schools. In September 2015 he is hoping to begin studies at Edinburgh Theological College as a ministry candidate with the Free Church of Scotland.

Christ, the Cross and the Concrete Jungle can be purchased from [www.10ofthose.com/products/17669/christ-the-cross-and-the-concrete](http://www.10ofthose.com/products/17669/christ-the-cross-and-the-concrete)

## **Baptisms:**

Amesbury Baptist Church, Wiltshire: Kay James, Adryana Tebease, Abraham Okyere, John Ashworth

Ashurst Drive Baptist Church, Ilford: Benita Jayaseelan

Barton Baptist Church, Torquay: Shelley Doyle and Gina Hooper

Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham: Nathanael Smith, Jadon Dryden

Carters Lane Baptist Church, Halesowen: Abbie Wheeler

Chelwood Baptist Church, Stockport: Karen Wilson and Anne Jones

Cricklewood Baptist Church, London: Ian Robson

Holmer Green Baptist Church, Bucks: Stuart Horden

Hope Baptist Church, Plymouth: George Harvey and Vicky Pearson

Kingswood Baptist Church, Watford: Marilyn Hill, Jana Kopcova, Peter Kopec

London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft, Suffolk: Michelle Read, Gordon Scott, and Ricky Bolden

Margate Baptist Church, Kent: Daphne Hill, Jude Mulcahy and Nick Gore

Norbury Baptist Church, London: Sam Kebreth

Oakham Baptist Church, Leics: Neil Ingram, Stephen & Rebecca Nicholl  
Rayners Lane Baptist Church, Middlesex: Anika Donkor, Ayime Kiswamu, Ewen Geln, Italia Pina  
Slough Baptist Church, Berkshire: Diana Charlton and Joseph Fernandes, Yvonne Gibson  
South Street Baptist Church Exeter and Brampford Speke: Mark Sayers  
St James Road Baptist Church, Watford: Daniel Araujo and Michaela Kirtley  
Streatham Baptist Church, London: Elodi Aizan, Socrate Aizan, Barbara Allen, Flint Fison, Arleen Johnson, Christopher Nash, Nigel Silke and Beverley Williams  
Well Street United Church, Buckingham: Angus Butcher  
Willesborough Baptist Church, Ashford, Kent: Sam Houghton and Seona Casse  
The Beacon, Kilmington, Devon: Alix Mills  
Wallington Baptist Church, London: Christine Sethardwright  
West Kingsdown Baptist Church, Kent: Matthew Osei  
Woodley Baptist Church, Reading: Katy Lawrence

## **Baptism stories:**

### **Chelwood Baptist Church, Stockport**

We are a small church with a membership of less than 30 so we were very excited to be able to baptise two of our congregation on Easter Sunday. Karen Wilson and Anne Jones both started coming to church in the last couple of years after having to make an emergency visit to the foodbank. As a Church we are privileged to see what God has done in their lives over the last 18 months and are excited with what he is going to do through Karen and Anne in the future!

Andrew Phillips, Chelwood Baptist Church

### **The Beacon, Kilmington**

This was the first baptism to be held in the new church, rebuilt after a fire in the old Baptist Chapel in Shute Road, Kilmington, Devon

### **Hope Baptist Church, Plymouth**

I wanted to let you know that on Easter Sunday - 5 April we baptised two members of our congregation - George Harvey and Vicky Pearson. We have a covenant with a Chinese speaking fellowship which also meets in our building and they also had a baptism on the same day, baptising Jane Lai.

### **Amesbury Baptist Church**

We had an International celebration of baptisms on Easter Sunday! Kay James - Jamaica Adryana Tebease - Romania Abraham Okyere - Ghana John Ashworth - Lancashire!

## **Deaths:**

GILMORE, Enid Ruth (nee Batten), died peacefully at home on April 17 after a short illness. Former Mental Health Social Worker, Cruse Counsellor and Associate Hospital Manager with the Sussex Partnership Trust. Wife of the Revd Alec Gilmore.

GOODWIN, the Revd Frank. Peacefully on Sunday July 27, 2014, aged 99 years, after a lifetime of service in the Baptist Ministry; devoted husband of the late Eirlys, beloved father of Christine, Joanna, Rowena and the late Elizabeth, cherished grandfather and great-grandfather.

## **Jobs:**

Course Co-ordinator, Bridge Builders

General Secretary, Free Churches Group

Lecturer in Theology/Communications Officer, Scottish Baptist College

For more information on these positions, visit [www.baptist.org.uk/jobs](http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs)

## **Events**

### **Baptist Assembly 2015**

16 May, Peterborough

Less than four weeks until our annual Assembly, and tickets are going quickly. We warmly invite you to gather with us at the KingsGate Conference Centre, Peterborough, for a day which will allow us to explore and be inspired in mission and discipleship.

You can book online and find out more information at

[http://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/247895/The\\_Baptist\\_Assembly.aspx](http://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/247895/The_Baptist_Assembly.aspx)

You can also view the Assembly resolutions here: [www.baptist.org.uk/latest](http://www.baptist.org.uk/latest)