



9 December, 2015

News:

Paris climate change hopes

Baptist minister cites Joshua after walking from London to Paris

A Baptist minister who walked from London to Paris ahead of the crucial COP21 climate summit has spoken of his hopes that a fair and binding climate change deal may be reached. The Revd Kevin Durrant and wife Ros (have just returned home after taking part in a two-week, 200-mile pilgrimage from the British to the French capital.

In Paris they joined others who have trekked from around the world for the start of the COP21 gathering on 30 November, which aims to thrash out a legally binding and universal agreement on climate.

It was calculated that the pilgrims had collectively travelled a total of 280,000 miles, the equivalent of seven times around the world. 'There are echoes of Joshua here,' said Kevin, minister of Matson Baptist Church in Gloucestershire, 'and it's our hope that some walls come crashing down.

'We continue to pray that delegates at the conference will think about this seriously and reach an agreement that is both tough enough, and will be implemented.

'At the moment there are some encouraging, and discouraging signs.'

Kevin and Ros were part of the "[Pilgrimage to Paris](#)" organised by the

Church of England, Christian Aid, Cafod and Tearfund in an act of solidarity with those most affected by climate change. The pilgrimage was [supported](#) by Baptists Together.

The couple have long been concerned about the environment and see creation care as part of God's salvation, not a distraction from it. Their church is aiming to become an [A Rocha-accredited ecochurch congregation](#), and Kevin is the author of *The Earth Will Teach You*, a book based around a sermon series on climate change. At the Hay Festival earlier this year Ros was challenged by a talk from Nicholas Stern – author of [the Stern report](#) – who argued that faith communities should be doing more in terms of lobbying governments.

When Kevin saw the pilgrimage highlighted in the Joint Public Issues Team's newsletter, he realised it was time "to put our feet where our hearts have been".

The walk took the party from London to Newhaven, and once in France they followed a disused railway line from Dieppe to Paris that has been converted into a cycle route. They stayed mostly in church halls, which provided an evening meal and breakfast.

On a number of occasions in France a host family took them in. The group consisted of around 30 walkers, drawn from several denominations and faiths (there was one Buddhist). 'I was unsure how we'd cope with the walking,' said Kevin, 'we're normally Sunday afternoon walkers doing three or four miles in the Cotswolds. 'But it went better than anticipated. Some days were undeniably tough – 20 miles in bad weather – but others were better and we were able to enjoy God's creation. The group got on really well – we all shared the same bond. I learnt a lot about generous hospitality, and while I thought we lived frugal lives, we can live fulfilling lives on a lot less.'

They had been due to take part in a significant march in the capital, but

this was cancelled following the recent terrorist attacks.

Nevertheless, they were able to join the hundreds of other pilgrims in the 'Faith in Climate Justice' event in Saint-Denis, northern Paris, [to witness the delivery of a collection of faith-based petitions signed by 1,780,528 million people worldwide](#) who want to see decisive climate action at the COP21 summit.

The petitions were received in person by the executive secretary of the UNFCCC (United Nations Frameworks for the Convention on Climate Change), Christiana Figueres and Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet, Nicolas Hulot.

Ms Figueres was moved to tears by the occasion. She thanked the thousands of people who had walked, cycled and marched worldwide to express solidarity with communities hit by climate-related impacts and to urge leaders to seal a fair, ambitious and binding deal that curbs global warming and helps poor countries adapt to their changing climate.

She said, 'I would like to thank you for your messages, for almost 2 million signatures, for your walking, for your praying, for your singing, for being who you are... There were people walking in every continent, making a total of 280,000km: that is the equivalent of having walked seven times around the world. I want to thank you for every single step, because with every step you have shown that it is possible to tread lightly in this our beautiful planet.'

Caring for a loved one with dementia

Baptist church member writes candidly of his experiences of caring for his mother - and receives endorsement from the Prime Minister

Dementia is something that more and more each of us are encountering, whether that be in our church congregations; our family or friends that we know. It is a journey with others that we take and a journey that sometimes leads us to places we never expected to be, or never thought

of the implications of what was happening. This has been the case for a member of a Baptist church, who has written of his experiences in caring for his mum as she lived with dementia.

Adam Sibley, from Saltash Baptist Church in Cornwall, has chronicled the time he cared for his mum, June, and the things he went through in looking after her, in a new book called *Unbreakable Bond*. It is an honest account that shares both the joy and the pain experienced over those years, and the way in which society sometimes understood and sometimes was oblivious to the daily struggle. At its heart is the desire to encourage and help those who are going through similar experiences and to help them know that they are not alone.

Unbreakable Bond has received a number of [glowing endorsements](#), including one from the Prime Minister, who was given a copy by a local Conservative MP. 'I found Adam's account of his experiences in caring for his mum very moving,' said David Cameron. 'I spent four years caring for my mum when she developed dementia (aged 51),' Adam explains. 'This book is about my journey with my mum, what we learnt, what we experienced, our ups and downs and how it made us feel. 'In the book I candidly share my thoughts, my opinions and my advice for anyone out there who is dealing with caring for a loved one. 'My mum lost her battle but I hope this book in some way will play a part in helping us win the war on defeating this terrible illness.'

On top of this [a study guide](#) has been written by Tim Parkman, the Minister of Saltash Baptist Church, to help think through the implications this book has for churches and those who follow Jesus. It aims to not give answers, but encourage discussion and thoughts about how churches can be more aware of those around them walking with dementia and how as churches we can respond.

More details can be found at <http://www.unbreakablebond.co.uk/> where you can purchase the book and also download the free study guide.

'We have to win a battle of ideas'

Major General Tim Cross argues democracies must not fall to the same level as groups such as ISIS

At a debate in Westminster, one of Britain's most senior former military leaders has criticised groups such as ISIS for carrying out 'beheadings and savage beatings as a rule of law'. 'Democracy cannot afford to do the same,' warned Major General Tim Cross. 'We cannot fall to the same level as the insurgents. 'Liberal democracy must behave differently. We have to win a battle of ideas even if we have to win with one hand tied behind our back.' This meant, he said, that Christians in the British military had to be 'rooted in a moral framework and an ethical code' which came from the Bible. Major General Cross was speaking at a debate at Portcullis House on Monday, held by Bible Society. The event posed the question, '*Is the Bible a bridge or a barrier to democracy?*'

The Major General said, 'We have a moral duty to stop people getting slaughtered. I don't think we should watch as a brutal dictator slaughters people.' Major General Cross served in the Balkan war and later briefed Tony Blair on Iraq, expressing his concerns prior to the invasion.

He added that God could not be viewed as being on one side or another in a war. His words came ahead of a Commons vote tomorrow [2 December] on whether Britain should carry out bombings on ISIS targets in Syria.

At the Bible Society event in Westminster, Dr Mike Bassous, the General Secretary of the Bible Society in Lebanon warned that Christians in the Middle East had not experienced democracy positively, since the start of the civil war in Syria.

'I agree that the alternatives to democracy are not much better,' he said. 'But my colleagues [in the region] say, "Give us back dictatorship".'

For the Christian minorities who have experienced what democracy has brought to the Middle East, they would say, "Give us back dictatorship. We were happier then. We were safer then."

According to research by the Pew Center, persecution of Christians in the Middle East has led to many fleeing the region. It reports that less than half a million Christians remain in Iraq, and nearly a third of Syria's 600,000 Christians have fled the country.

Don't bomb Syria, say growing numbers of Baptists

Baptists who oppose the bombing of Syria have mobilised on social media to form a [petition](#) expressing their doubts

The House of Commons gathers on Wednesday (2 December) [to debate and vote whether to extend air strikes against Isis in Iraq to Syria](#).

On Tuesday afternoon members of the [Baptist Collaboration Facebook Group](#) discussed whether Baptists had a common mind on this issue.

After much discussion, at 7pm, Joe Haward, minister of This Hope Baptist Church in Newton Abbot, published an agreed statement in the Group expressing opposition to the proposed air strikes.

"Dropping bombs cannot and will not destroy an ideology, it simply strengthens, fertilises and enables such beliefs to grow," the statement read.

It encouraged people to like, share and sign. By 11pm the petition had been shared more than 50 times, liked by more than 80 and signed by almost 100.

To view the petition and sign it follow the link: ow.ly/VIMym

See the comments box at the bottom of the page for early signatories.

Here's the wording of the petition: ***Statement from the Undersigned Baptist Christians in the United Kingdom in regard to proposed air strikes in Syria. Tuesday 1st December 2015*** On Wednesday 2nd December 2015 we call upon MPs to vote against air strikes on Syria. We recognise the complexity and difficulty of the situation in the Middle East and the barbarity of the acts committed by ISIS/Daesh, yet we believe that dropping bombs in Syria will do nothing to weaken their resolve or to solve the international reality of terrorism. The Western so called 'War on Terror' has increased recruitment for terrorist groups, furthered resentment amongst certain groups and further destabilised regions in the Middle East. Dropping bombs cannot and will not destroy an ideology, it simply strengthens, fertilises and enables such beliefs to grow. If war was a solution then the ideologies of those such as Tamerlane, Stalin and Hitler would have died with them. War is not the passage to peace but the seedbed for hatred and fear. In complex times such as this we need to develop robust and imaginative diplomatic, economic and international solutions to what we all agree to be incredibly painful and challenging times. As such then we need to be a people of extravagant love, unbounded imagination and fearless creativity. We need to foster this, not only within ourselves, but in our children and future generations. Dropping bombs on other countries where their own future generations are killed creates the fear and hatred we all so desperately want to eradicate. As Christians we follow the One who is called the Prince of Peace. At this time of Advent we are reminded that at the birth of Jesus some of the first words spoken were, 'Peace on earth'. Indeed, at the resurrection of Jesus some of his first words to his disciples were, 'Peace be with you.' We believe then, that peace cannot be achieved through war but, following the example of Jesus, in radical enemy love and subversive acts of nonviolence; not fight or flight, not inaction, but, as Martin Luther King Jr said, through nonviolent actions that strip the oppressor of their power. We urge MPs to vote against the Prime Minister's proposal for air strikes in Syria.

The discussion also highlighted some Baptist support for air strikes. Following Joe Haward's statement, Phil Hill, a former lecturer at the Nazareth Evangelical College, published a post in the Collaboration

Group urging Baptists to message their MPs to support military action. By 10am on Tuesday morning that discussion thread had received more than 50 comments.

Wanted: short-term justice mission workers in 2016

Do you have a heart for justice? Do you have a desire to share the good news of Jesus within the legal world?

Want to be part of sharing the good news of Jesus within the legal world? Maybe this is God's call for you to take action.

If you answered yes to either of those questions, keep reading.

Find out about some of the incredible justice work that's being done in the name of Jesus and see if an opportunity to do a short-term justice mission with BMS World Mission and the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (LCF) could be for you.

What is short-term justice mission? It's a way for people from the legal world to use their skills for God's kingdom. BMS-LCF Justice Teams aim to bring the good news of Jesus Christ within the world of law.

Justice Teams work closely with local partners in Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and other countries in East Africa on a variety of on-going legal projects, like leading training on children's rights, facilitating conferences that provide legal education and giving legal guidance to people in prison.

The good news: you don't have to be a lawyer to be part of a team! LCF offers the opportunity to anyone who is at least 18 years old and has either a legal background or a strong interest in access to justice.

Applications are open for both the summer and autumn Justice Teams in 2016.

The summer Justice Team lasts three to four weeks, doing work in Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya and the autumn Justice Team is a two week experience doing work in East Africa.

The heart of LCF's vision is to speak the good news within the legal profession, live as godly lawyers, apply justice on the ground, and promote good laws.

"We want to encourage our team members to engage with God, particularly with God's heart for justice," says Mhairi Hamilton, LCF International Projects Coordinator.

"We see it as a great opportunity to do work outside of their normal comfort zones with a like-minded team of individuals."

Sometimes stepping out of our comfort zones means changing a stranger's life for the better. In Kenya, Mhairi had the chance to see how LCF justice work made a positive impact on one prisoner's life.

Prison life can seem hopeless to Kenyans. Many prisoners are arrested, unaware of the charges and locked away for up to one year before their case is tried in court.

Prisoners feel helpless, as many don't know what is going on or how to even begin to fight for themselves.

LCF has stepped in to help by providing workshops where they teach prisoners about their rights, what documents they need and how to address a judge in court. Justice Teams give prisoners the gift of hope and a chance to advocate for themselves.

"On my last visit, one man shared how he used what LCF taught him to argue that his bail was too high," says Mhairi, "The judge listened and cut his bail in half."

While the teams are short-term, it's easy to see that their impact can be long-lasting. It's through these kinds of experiences that people can

strengthen their relationship with God and gain a better understanding of how justice plays out in different parts of the world.

“Our prayer would be that the experience plants something deep in them that holds them firm to Christ,” says Mhairi, “And ultimately has an outward impact on wherever they are called to be.”

Want to be part of sharing the good news of Jesus within the legal world? Maybe this is God’s call for you to take action.

Do you feel called to be part of a summer or autumn Justice Team in 2016? If so, why not [find out more about Justice Teams](#).

This article first appeared on the website of [BMS World Mission](#) and is used with permission.

Yorkshire's response to the refugee crisis

As part of a Yorkshire-wide response to the refugee crisis the [Yorkshire Baptist Association](#) is encouraging its churches to financially and prayerfully support Baptists working in Lebanon

In a letter to all the Association's churches, regional ministers Graham Ensor and Mary Taylor and the YBA staff team highlighted the work of the [Lebanese Baptist Society \(LSESD\)](#), which has been helping refugees since the outset of the conflict in 2011.

They recognised that many in the YBA churches have prayed for the thousands of refugees displaced by the war and raised money for charities which are supporting them. Some in the churches are also involved in supporting asylum seekers in the UK and offering accommodation such as City of Sanctuary and Citizens UK. ‘If you have already found a way as a church to respond to this refugee crisis that is great,’ Mary and Graham wrote. ‘If you are seeking a way to make a substantial difference where the need is greatest we’d like to offer a

Yorkshire Baptist response.'

LSESD's [humanitarian response to the current crisis](#) currently extends to food aid to nearly 6,000 displaced families in Syria, and more than 2,000 Syrian refugee families in Lebanon, as well as providing education, health care and distribution of basic provisions such as milk, nappies, hygiene kits, blankets and mattresses.

The work is "24/7" according to Nabil Costa, LSESD Executive Director, and as such there are lots of ways to help, he told the YBA.

'Sure we need every prayer, for protection, for strength, for resources, and we welcome any visit - you can come our way, you can join us in the blessing of ministry. Also we will be happy to receive any donations. 'We are working a lot with refugee kids, and working on their special needs and education in general.'

In their letter to YBA churches, Graham and Mary explained how the focus on LSESD would work. 'So we'd like to do this. We'd like to share news, needs for prayer and also encourage you in your giving. 'As we come towards Christmas, many churches organise or get involved with events that fund-raise for a whole range of charities. Would your church consider this year specifically praying, caring and giving as partners alongside our Lebanese brothers and sisters? 'Maybe you could donate your Christmas Day offering to this relief work?' 'We'll link our participation to [an Advent series of reflections](#) and stories with a daily tweet and hopefully be able to share together how our compassionate God is active through us as His people.' There is an initial focus over Advent, but this could move into a longer-term commitment of support.

Baptist community leader wins award

Jo Hassoun, Leader of the Melling Baptist Community Project, located on the outskirts of Liverpool, has been awarded the 2015 Melling

Council Civic Award.

In [a statement](#) on its website, Melling Parish Council announced 'The award was presented to Jo Hassoun for the difference she makes to the lives of the people who she comes into contact with through her work with the Melling Baptist Community Project.

Described as being an inspirational pillar of the community, her caring demeanour and willingness to do anything for anyone, makes her a true part of the community'. The Project which began about seven years ago can be described as 'church without walls', or '24/7 church'.

Melling village has grown enormously in recent years as new estates have been formed, so the project began as a result of the increased need and opportunity. The purpose is to reach people where they are. Many in our nation have no experience of church culture.

For Christians to connect with the individuals and families who surround them, we need to be prepared to go outside our comfort zone, and engage with people in ways that they are comfortable with.

At the beginning, the Project ran a toddler group called POPS and a weekly assembly in the local school. Since then it has added a gospel choir which brings life and joy to a variety of events both formal and informal. 'Hub' is a weekly coffee morning, which meets in the local scout hall. With the help of a wonderful local gardener, 'Flower Power' provides beautiful planters twice a year to elderly and sick around the neighbourhood.

'Shoot' is a camera club run by a professional photographer. This is for local people who don't want to spend a fortune on equipment but would like to improve their skills. Shoot's first exhibition was held recently and received many positive comments from the large number of people who attended. The club, appropriately, supports Mercy Vision, restoring eyesight to people around the world.

'Essence of Watercolour' is an art group due to start next month and is already creating interest locally. In addition to these weekly or monthly activities, there are Easter and Christmas events, and most years there is a Holiday Bible Club in the local school.

These are the visible and obvious activities in Melling, but much of the work is unseen, private, and deeply personal. Jo Hassoun is constantly engaging with issues which are not for publication, and often result in totally un-churched people asking for prayer from Jo's extensive prayer support team.

Phil Jump, Regional Minister for the North Western Baptist Association which oversees the Melling Project commented, 'I am delighted to see that Jo's work has been recognised by the wider community, this is a dynamic and creative project but it is also an exciting example of what can happen when local Christians start to take mission seriously.'

'Many of the community links have been built up through the sheer vulnerability of this project – having to borrow halls, enlist help and draw in the skills and resources of others, has in turn opened up many spiritual conversations and journeys. I hope it will inspire others to take similar risks.'

There are many activities that Jo dreams of starting, but additional committed Christian helpers are urgently needed to supplement the existing small band of overworked team members. We firmly believe that this work is of God, and we look forward to seeing it grow and leading to transformed lives, both young and old.

Baptisms:

Basford Road Baptist Church, Nottingham: Judy Perkins, Andy Flint, Rob Watson

Bethel Baptist Church Wattsville, South Wales: Lavinia Catherine Crabb

Clarence Park Baptist Church, Weston-super-mare: Oliver Fuller

Dereham Baptist Church, Norfolk: Christina Clark, Karen Vertigan,
Andrew Waller
Devonport Community Baptist Church, Plymouth: Peter Bloomfield
Great Missenden Baptist Church, Bucks: Jeni Henderson
Holmer Green Baptist Church, Bucks: Carol Chen
King Street Baptist Church, Thetford: Brian & Eva Jenkins
Mary Hines
Halesowen Baptist Church, West Midlands: Diane Slater
Nailsea Baptist Church, North Somerset: Kathy Thorpe
Opengate (Bognor Regis Baptist Church): Charlene Price, Ben Bambridge
Ross Baptist Church, Herefordshire: Sharon Wiggill, Carol Sobel
Swaffham Baptist Church, Norfolk: Kate Jackson
Treeton Baptist Church, Rotherham, South Yorkshire: Darren Fletcher
Vine Baptist Church, Sevenoaks: Martin and Maggie Williams

Know anyone preparing for baptism? [Check out our new range of cards](#)

Send your baptism notifications to phobson@baptist.org.uk

Death:

WELLER Rhoda Elsie (nee Dean), wife of the Revd Dennis Edgar Weller, mother to Professor Paul Weller, mother-in-law to Marie Adenau, and grandmother to David, Lisa, and Katrina Weller, died peacefully in her sleep on 1 December at St. Joseph's Convent Nursing Home, Stafford. Rhoda served part-time as a secondary school teacher and shared with Dennis in ministry at Mount Pleasant, Ponciau (Rhos); Golcar, Huddersfield; Swaythling and Kingsland, Southampton; Cecil Square, Margate; and Caversham, Reading.

A service of Committal will be held at Stafford Crematorium at 1.30pm, Wednesday 16 December, followed by Thanksgiving service at the Baptist Church, The Green, Stafford, at 2.30pm. Donations in Rhoda's

memory will be shared between Baptist World Mission and St. Joseph's Convent Nursing Home Residents' Fund.

Jobs

Opportunities to serve in Union life - Trustee and committee member roles with Baptists Together
Specialist Team Leader, Ministries, Baptist Union of Great Britain

For more information on all these positions, visit

<http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:

Enough for Advent

During the season of Advent, the Joint Public Issues Team are offering a series of four reflective readings and prayers. They are designed to be suitable for use in Sunday services as part of the lighting of advent candles, but could be used in other contexts too.

These resources are designed as part of the #ENOUGH campaign, to help churches be more aware of its key priorities and to help root our public campaigning with our Gospel faith.

Visit www.baptist.org.uk/enoughadvent