



24 February 2016

News

An extraordinary dip in the sea

Day-trippers to the South Wales resort of Barry Island were bemused to see an extraordinary event one Friday morning in February. As they sat drinking coffee in the seafront cafes more than 40 young men and women walked into the sea - for another baptism organised by a Baptist church in Cardiff

Tredegarville Baptist Church is a city-centre church built in 1863, in an area which includes the South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff.

Over the last thirteen years the church has become engaged with refugees and asylum seekers in addition to students and other internationals with a specific ministry seeking to reach Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not unusual to hear the pastor's message being translated into a number of languages as groups huddle around a translator. The largest language group is Farsi.

Two mid week Bible studies on Wednesday and Friday at the church have now divided into two sittings, with an average attendance of 70 people.

The first session is a rolling programme to introduce people to the basic beliefs and behaviours of Christians, followed by specific preparation for baptism.

The second sitting is a Bible study for those who are endeavouring to live the disciplined Christian life. All baptismal candidates are interviewed by the deacons to determine the sincerity of their faith as church pastor, the Revd Phylip Henry Rees, has now relinquished this aspect of his ministry to the wider leadership while he concentrates on preaching and teaching.

The baptism of more than 40 young adults, primarily from Iran and Afghanistan, in the February seas off Barry Island was the second such baptism in less than a month.

Pastor Phyl preached to the waiting candidates reminding them of the vows they were taking to follow Jesus.

Each candidate made their personal baptismal vows on the beach before the whole group ventured into the waters. Trusted leaders of the church formed three pairs to baptise the candidates who had arrived.

As they were coming out of the water another group arrived and the pastor preached again to remind the new-comers of the vows they were making, before this group made their way into the sea and were baptised by two pairs of leaders.

As the group boiled kettles on a beach campfire and served hot drinks, they were joined by the curious bystanders who were asking what all this meant. The newly baptised and their friends were able to share their faith with a range of curious Brits who had watched this strange event from a distance.

Pastor Phyl said, 'They love the Word of God and it is not uncommon for people who have been baptised to come to the next course of baptismal classes and of course everything is translated into Farsi.'

'Those who are in Christ are expected to evangelise in the city centre (of Cardiff) every week and this and personal witnessing brings a steady flow of new people to the church.'

Baptist church among first churches to gain new eco award

Lyme Regis Baptist Church, which had a front-row view of England's violent storms, has scooped one of the first Eco Church awards

Lyme Regis Baptist Church – in the town that saw gigantic waves smash into its seafront – is among the initial round of winners for A Rocha UK's Eco Church award. The award scheme has attracted more than 100 registrations since being launched at St Paul's Cathedral in London last month (January). St Paul's was the first award winner.

The Lyme Regis Baptist Church building is near The Cobb – the town's ancient harbour that was highlighted in recent news coverage of extreme weather. Iconic images of angry seas led to dramatic headlines. This visual aid had already swamped

church members' minds when minister's daughter Izzy Woodman urged them to respond to environmental crises.

Twenty-one-year-old geography student Izzy rallied people into a 'creation care' group. That group swept through the church like a much gentler tide – turning teas and coffees into Fairtrade versions, switching to a green energy supplier, buying eco-cleaning products and running a sermon series on their environmental journey.

'We were able to use what we'd done as evidence to get the Eco Church Bronze Award,' said Izzy. 'The Eco Church site was brilliant, the measuring gauge design was really helpful and the online resources were fantastic!'

Nervous about being seen as a young person telling her elders how to behave, Izzy found church members embraced her environmental message. 'The storms helped bring it closer to home,' she said.

Among her supporters is renowned ecologist Sir Ghillean Prance, who attends the congregation in Silver Street. 'I'm delighted our church has started on the road of Eco Church,' he said. 'The bronze award will do a lot to encourage our members to do more – and our goal now is a silver award.'

A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world. They run Eco Church (<http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk>) to help congregations become more environmentally-friendly. The scheme is supported by Christian Aid, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and Tearfund.

Baptist Assembly tops gender balance report

For the second year running, the Baptist Assembly has topped the rankings of Christian events and conferences based on how well they achieved gender parity among speakers

Project 3:28's third annual analysis of gender parity at Christian events in the UK, released on Tuesday, ranks 21 different conferences and festivals and assesses year on year improvement.

Last year's Baptist Assembly took place in Peterborough. It featured equal numbers of women and men speaking on stage at various points during the main sessions. Two more men than women were involved in leading the afternoon's Market Place

sessions, meaning the event recorded a 52/48 per cent male/female gender split. A feature of the 2015 Assembly was the induction of Jenni Entrican as Baptist Union President.

In terms of gender parity the Assembly was closely followed by the Church and Media Conference (14 men and 16 women speaking; 47/53 per cent) and youth festival Soul Survivor (36 men and 29 women; 55/45 per cent).

The project's analysis is based on the assumption that conferences should aim to achieve equal representation of men and women speaking. Two conferences - the Church and Media Conference and Youthwork Summit - demonstrated a clear commitment to highlighting the gifts and expertise of women, each with a higher number of female speakers than men.

The events held in 2015 with the fewest women speaking were the Northern Ireland-based New Horizon (36 men and 4 women; 90/10 per cent), then each with an 80/20 per cent split of male/female speakers, Westpoint, Keswick and Word Alive. Twelve events demonstrated an improvement in gender parity between 2014 and 2015.

Project 3:28 was set up in 2013 to provide an insight into the gendered dynamics of Christian events, where women speakers are often a minority despite the fact that in many churches, women are a majority. Its name is taken from Galatians 3:28, *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Its creation has prompted conversations on how to create platforms that better reflect the diversity of Christian experience. It says that some conference organisers have underlined a commitment to amplifying the voices of women, conducting gender audits and being proactive in finding more women speakers and making their events more accessible.

'It's great to see Christian events committed to increasing gender parity on their platforms; that the statistics show a slight rise from 2014 is positive,' said Natalie Collins, part of the Project 3:28 collective.

'For events that have a theological commitment to the equal gifting and calling of women to leadership positions there's still a long way to go, but hopefully these statistics, as with previous years, will inspire event organisers to be intentional in inviting, including and equipping women.'

The 2016 Baptist Assembly is taking place in Oxford on 14 May. Visit the website for more details.

The answer to radicalisation is... radicalisation

Christian charity Oasis wants to “radicalise every young person” – with a positive story of belonging, identity, self-worth and purpose

Society needs to fundamentally rethink its approach to radicalisation, counter-extremism and counter-terrorism, says the founder of one of the UK’s biggest charities.

Steve Chalke, the founder of youth and community charity Oasis, has argued that strategies and initiatives to ‘prevent’ young people from being exposed to negative and dangerous radicalisation can only go so far. Human beings, he says, need to live a life driven by a narrative that is just as radical as those peddled by Islamic extremists, cult leaders or gang bosses.

He has launched a book to explain these ideas, alongside a new peacemaking programme for young people named ‘INSPIRE’, which aims to help schools embed these principles into curriculum. He hopes the programme will help youth and other community groups give young people real and practical opportunities to make peace.

‘You can’t kill an evil ideology by taking down a person, a thousand people, or even ten thousand people,’ explained Mr Chalke, a Baptist minister. ‘If we are going to overcome the escalating problem of extremism and terrorism that our world faces, we need a different answer. We need to find a narrative that is radical enough to turn the tide.’

‘The problem is that our suggested counter-extremism and counter-terrorism solutions just don’t make this connection at the moment. As a result, they fail to get to the heart of things. Instead of tackling the roots – the fundamentals – of the issue, they attempt to deal with the symptoms of its growth. In a phrase, they are just not radical enough.’

He explained that when he became a Christian aged 14, and pledged to one day open a school, a hospital and a hostel, “In a very real sense, I was radicalised, just as Gandhi, Emmeline Pankhurst and Martin Luther-King were all once radicalised.” As

part of the INSPIRE initiative, Oasis, which is also responsible for 47 primary and secondary Academies across the country, will help nurture a range of peacemaking activities over the 1000 days leading up to 9 November 2018, the 100 year anniversary of the end of World War I.

Mr Chalke said INSPIRE will aim to support young people in finding a positive narrative for their lives; a sense of worth, direction and belonging which will enable them to live fulfilling, peaceful lives immune to the lure of gangs, violence, extremism and terror.

'Rather than simply attempting to build a defence against the threat of radicalisation through anti-radicalisation strategies – such as that prescribed here in the UK by the Government's 'Prevent' initiative for schools and universities – it is vital that we also prioritise the task of articulating a deeper, and more powerful, sense of purpose, identity, meaning and belonging for vulnerable young people in our schools and communities.'

The INSPIRE programme will be creating resources that will be made available to schools and youth groups across the country. Visit <http://www.oasisuk.org/inspire> for more

To find out more about Radical, visit www.oasisuk.org/Radical

Mission priority for new pastor

The new Senior Pastor of Lighthouse Community Church in Sheringham, Norfolk has explained the importance of engaging with the community

Ian Savory has taken up the post at Lighthouse following the retirement of Bryan Pickard, who was pastor at the church for six years. Bryan steered the congregation through a major building project, resulting in the establishment of Lighthouse Community Church in 2013.

As he settles into the town with wife Sue, Ian explained he is very keen to build on the excellent work that has already been achieved by Lighthouse in building links with the community.

'Lighthouse seems to be held in high regard in the town,' he said, 'and I am grateful

to God for that – our first priority has to be mission.

'The building is amazing, and I would encourage anyone who hasn't been there to come along and sample the coffee, but it is not WHO we are. We must get involved with our community as people – it is not enough just to expect them to come into our lovely building.'

Ian was senior pastor at Kingsgate Community Church in Great Yarmouth, and for many years before that pastor at Oak Grove Chapel in Norwich. He has memories of coming to Sheringham as a child, and also camping with his family at nearby Kelling Heath.

'We are thrilled to be here,' he said, 'And I'm committed to seeing what God wants to do in North Norfolk. Even our kids, who are now grown up and married, still come back to Sheringham for their fish and chips!'

The links with the Sheringham church go back at least ten years, and he has returned on many occasions to lead meetings, services and training events. Ian and Sue have many friends in the town, including Lighthouse youth pastor, Peter Skivington, who was youth worker at Oak Grove while Ian was there.

Ian said that the church enjoys strong links with the other churches in Sheringham, and this has been helped by the BeachLife youth outreach, where folk from different churches have worked together in a climate of mutual respect.

He is also Police Chaplain for North Norfolk, a role which he finds rewarding, and very useful for forming bonds with the local community.

'Churches have a vital role to play in modern society where there is a huge amount of loneliness,' Ian said, 'We can help to build community, drawing different ages together, which is really important.' Ian's induction service will be at 3pm on Saturday March 5.

Hope in Nepal: opened ears... and borders

Catastrophic earthquakes and months of a border blockade... yet God has shown he hasn't forgotten this country

There's a six-year-old boy named Unique who races around his preschool with

reckless abandon and a big grin on his face. BMS World Mission worker Wendy Hall knows the reason for that smile and sees his story as a symbol of hope.

Wendy volunteers at a local preschool for children of migrant labourers in Kathmandu. This is where she was first introduced to Unique and told about his situation.

From early on, Unique's parents noticed he wasn't communicating like other children and they worried about him. As he grew, his parents didn't quite know how to help him, but thankfully a concerned volunteer at the preschool reached out to support them. The volunteer introduced Unique's mother to hearing clinics. They took him in for testing and fears were confirmed: Unique couldn't hear. In some frequencies, Unique's hearing dipped below the chart's ability to record.

Eventually, the volunteer's time working at the preschool ended and Unique's parents were in disagreement on how to best proceed. Shortly after this time, Wendy began working at the preschool and saw the need to continue to help in whatever way she could.

Wendy began encouraging Unique's parents to get their son hearing aids and even offered to go with them to the hospital. Although they were reluctant, they decided to follow Wendy's advice.

The day they got Unique fitted for his hearing aids is one Wendy will never forget. "His eyes widened and his mouth fell open. He started to sing and laugh," says Wendy. "His mother's eyes were teary and every eye in the room was fixed on him."

A whole new world opened up to Unique in that moment. He's got a long road ahead as he'll have to go through speech and language therapy, learning the importance of different sounds and how to produce them on his own. But this was a hopeful first step on Unique's journey in learning to communicate. In the same way, Nepal as a country is experiencing a similar sensation of hope. After almost five months of a problematic blockade along the border with India that led to fuel and medicine shortages and the loss of jobs, the border is finally open.

"It's been a hard, grey, cold, miserable winter where many people have lost their jobs and many factories have been closed," says Simon Hall, Wendy's husband. "So it's good news. It means things will get back to normal."

Simon knows it will take time, but the end of the blockade means there is hope for Nepal. As Simon travels to schools in Nepal doing ICT work he's already seen signs of more gas and oil on the road. He also thinks that this will benefit Nepal's continued earthquake recovery, as during the blockade, focus was taken off of this important task. "It's just been one thing after another in Nepal with the earthquakes, issues over the constitution and the fuel crisis," says Simon. "But I think we have to give thanks that a prayer was answered when the blockade was lifted."

The road to hearing for Unique and healing for Nepal may be a long a one, but thankfully God's granted them hope for the journey.

Thank you for praying for Nepal. The power of prayer is evident in the way the blockade ended. Please join us in continued prayer for the country as it continues to recover from the earthquakes and fuel crisis. Pray for strong leadership in Nepal throughout the recovery process and patience for the people as life gets back to normal.

Catalyst Live is back in 2016

BMS World Mission is excited to announce that tickets for Catalyst Live 2016 are now on sale

We are happy to announce that **Catalyst Live** will be taking place on Wednesday 16 November in Birmingham and on Thursday 17 November in Reading. Save the dates, or even better – buy your tickets today!

St Martin in the Bull Ring, Birmingham: Wednesday 16 November 2016
The Concert Hall, Reading: Thursday 17 November 2016

Here at BMS, we believe that Christians shouldn't be afraid of ideas. **Catalyst Live** is about inspiring discussion, informing theology and strengthening apologetics among Christian thought-leaders. It's the live manifestation of Mission Catalyst magazine.

The positive responses we had to the events in 2013 and 2014 were overwhelming, and we can't wait to see what you think of **Catalyst Live** this year.

As always, the day will bring together great minds from the worlds of theology, apologetics, science and culture.

Over the next few weeks and months we will be releasing the line-up of excellent speakers confirmed to present at this year's day-long events, so keep your eyes peeled. We can already reveal that cutting-edge theologian Vinoth Ramachandra

and renowned Christian author Os Guinness will be speaking at **Catalyst Live 2016!**

Previous Catalyst Live speakers include: Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, Lucy Berry, Stephen Holmes, Yohanna Katanacho and many more. We have also had special video contributions from legendary theologians Richard Rohr and Walter Brueggemann.

We are all set for two great days of stimulating talks and discussions – all we need is you! Buy your tickets today for Reading or for Birmingham. *Were you at **Catalyst Live 2013 or 2014?** Did you enjoy it? Share this article with your friends so they don't miss out on what we think is the smartest, most inspiring Christian conference of the year.* *According to our completely unbiased **Catalyst Live** organisers.

This article first appeared on the website of BMS World Mission and is used with permission.

Baptisms:

Abingdon Baptist Church, Oxfordshire: Judy Kent and Rosie Marshall

Rushmore Baptist Church, Ipswich: Fred Allsopp and Clare Williamson, Sheila Knock, Georgie Wade, Lisa Reed, Jason Reed, Alice Pickess, Sam Pickess, Les Downing, Fay Compton, Adam Higgins

Westward Ho! Baptist Church, Devon: Kathryn Mitchell, Daniel Jukes, Saffron Brown, Nathan Jukes and Jennifer Porter

Know anyone preparing for baptism? Check out our range of cards

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

Jobs

Tutor and coordinator of ministerial formation, Bristol Baptist College

Volunteers, Hope UK Drug Educator Training Programme

Ministerial Support Worker, Potter Street Baptist Church, Harlow, Essex

Internship Co-ordinator, Bromham Baptist Church

Regional Team Leader, East Midlands Baptist Association

For more information on all these positions, visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources: Spring Harvest - discount code for Baptists The missional aspect of the partnership 'Seventy-two' is involved at Spring Harvest week 3 this year (a seminar, an exhibition stand and a reception lunch). Baptists can use a special discount code for some money off (£15 per adult). The code can only be used for week 3 and the word to quote is BAPTIST. The code ends on 29 February <http://seventy-two.network/2016/01/why-we-go-to-spring-harvest/>

Birthday greetings for the Revd Florence Bignell, 100 years on 17 March 2016 Ruth Ledger writes: "I wanted to bring to your attention the 100th birthday celebration of Rev Florence Bignell (birthday 17 March 2016) on Saturday 19 March at Halcon Baptist Church, Taunton from 12.30 until 3.30pm. Invites have been sent out but there may be some folk who would like to send a greeting. If so this could either be sent to me before 14 March on ruthledger6@gmail.com or to the church secretary Mrs D Shelley 3 Portland Street Taunton TA1 1VY."

Reimagining Europe: website featuring Christian reflections on the EU Referendum: www.reimaginingeurope.co.uk

Intern opportunity, Joint Public Issues Team Are you a young person who wants to work as part of a team making meaningful change in the world? Are you interested in making links between faith, life and politics? The JPIT internship is a fantastic opportunity to experience all this and more <http://www.urc.org.uk/other-vacancies/1904-joint-public-issues-team-internship.html>

Incarnate Encounter A unique opportunity to spend time with pioneers from around the country 4-6 March in Bradford/Leeds. For more visit: buytickets.at/incarnatenetwork