



23 March 2016

Baptist Union Council: March 2016

A report from Baptist Union Council, which took place at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire (15-16 March)

Large parts of this Council were devoted to discerning our Union's response to The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and specifically about churches wishing to register their buildings for the solemnisation of same sex marriage. The following statement was released and sent to churches on Friday; the process by which it was arrived at is detailed here.

The report below gives details of the other matters discussed at this Council.

Opening

Worship was led by Geoff Colmer (Regional Minister Team Leader of the Central Baptist Association), who also gave the opening message. Taking Philippians 3:4-11 as his text, he highlighted one of his favourite authors Michael Mayne, whose final book was written in the knowledge of incurable cancer. Reflecting on his life, Mayne was able to trace the 'enduring melody' which has sung through him. In musical terms this is referred to as the 'cantus firmus', Geoff said, a ground base, the fixed melody around which others were sung.

He asked Council members: 'Will the enduring melody of our unity in Jesus Christ still be heard? Or will other noises drown out the melody? Will Jesus Christ be at the heart?'

Nominations committee

Rupert Lazar, minister of East Barnet Baptist Church and our Union's Vice-President, gave news of the Nominations Committee, appointed by Council to seek and discern candidates for a variety of roles in Union life.

He brought the nomination of John Levick (pictured) as next treasurer of our Baptist Union. John spent 33 years in banking and is currently treasurer of the Heart of England Baptist Association and a Baptist Union trustee. 'We had an excellent day with John Levick – exploring with him, praying with him – we were unanimous in our heart, that this was the man from God for this time.' John's appointment to treasurer needs to be confirmed by delegates at the Baptist Assembly in May.

Elsewhere the nominations committee also felt able to bring 'two excellent people' as new trustees: Andrew Caplen a solicitor and the President of the Law Society of England and Wales 2014-15, and Andrew Cowley, minister of Tring Baptist Church. They, and Marion Fiddes (continuing on the Trustee Board for a second term) were unanimously approved by Council.

Rupert also mentioned there has not yet been 'a huge amount of names' put forward for this discerning process into the various roles in our Union's life. 'We believe it's the right way, we believe it's of the spirit, but it's not quite embedded,' he said. Nevertheless, the Committee 'strongly believes this will change.'

New churches

The four newest churches in our Union were welcomed and affirmed by Council. They are Church 1v23, Harold Hill, London (Eastern Baptist Association); Emmaus Church, Birmingham (Heart of England Baptist Association); Wymondley Baptist Church, Little Wymondley (Central Baptist Association) and St Philip's Church, a Baptist/Anglican Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) in Sheffield. Each church had been accepted into membership by their respective Associations.

The churches represented 'something of a snapshot of our Union,' noted Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader, as they included a pioneering/fresh expressions church (Church 1v23), a Romanian church (Emmaus), a small Baptist church that has been independent (Wymondley) and an LEP (St Philip's).

Collaborate

There was an introduction to Collaborate, the name of the project and team working towards one Baptists Together database to be shared by our Union's three specialist teams and Associations. Collaborate consists of Association representatives and a member from each of the specialist teams. Tim Presswood, transitional minister in the North Western Baptist Association, said Collaborate is not about a database, but 'a new way of working together to support mission and ministry in our churches.'

The new database will free up time because information is currently held in different parts of Baptists Together and data entry is duplicated. It will also bring enhanced reporting capabilities that will help churches. The improvements are not just about technology – 'psychologically a shared database will enable us to feel more like one team,' said Hayley Beckett, administrator at the Eastern Baptist Association. There is a phased launch planned from November.

Malcolm Broad

The final part of the Tuesday evening session was given to saying goodbye to outgoing treasurer Malcolm Broad, whose term will end at Assembly. Lynn Green thanked him not

only for his financial expertise over the past eight years, but also the way he has 'always looked at finance through the missional lens.' She added that Malcolm had 'done all this as a volunteer.'

Malcolm recalled that when he became treasurer in 2008 the Bank of England declared a recession, and interest rates soon dropped to the historical low from which they have not yet returned. 'Perhaps my predecessor knew something I didn't!' He said that following the restructuring in 2012-13, our Union's finances are now in good shape - but it's not without its challenges. The Home Mission appeals have been disappointing, and he said there needs to be 'a fresh appeal to churches to get behind Baptists Together.' He also cited amounts held by some of our churches, Associations and colleges, adding that our Union needs to hear and observe the story of the widow who gave everything she had to Jesus. 'God has given us an abundance of resources, so we can afford to give more.'

In all he has travelled 65,000 miles, attended more than 400 meetings, worked with three moderators of trustee board, three finance directors and two general secretaries. The 'best part of the role' has been getting out to local churches through treasurer or trustee training and the more recent pension roadshows. It had been 'a huge privilege to serve you as treasurer', he said, his words being met with sustained applause.

40 Days of Good News

Stuart Davison, Regional Minister Team Leader of the South Eastern Baptist Association (SEBA), spoke about the 40 Days of Good News initiative, 'a time of deliberately engaging in mission' in the 40 days leading up to Pentecost (10 April - 15 May). It had emerged from Association Team Leaders wanting to be more intentional about mission, as fire-fighting church problems can divert attention away from the core task of mission. Associations have taken this on board in separate ways – SEBA has produced 40 ideas for churches to consider, as well as a short film featuring people's ideas.

Stuart hopes this is not a one off, but something that will happen on a regular basis. 'We've got to spend less time on our structures – and more on our mission,' he said. 'Let's be intentional in mission – expectant and daring.' Churches are encouraged to pray for the initiative on the two preceding Sundays (3 and 10 April).

Loaves and Fishes

Lynn Green gave an update on the ways our Union is responding to the Loaves and Fishes report, which looked at ways of releasing money for mission, and was discussed in some depth at the previous Council meeting.

She highlighted how Home Mission provides almost two-thirds of our Union's income, but has been falling. She reminded Council of outgoing treasurer Malcolm Broad's challenge that Baptists Together must develop a sustainable income, in order to release more money for mission.

Suggestions from the Loaves and Fishes report had included: improve legacies, rename/rebrand Home Mission, develop personal donors, introduce direct debits, and increase investment income. Some steps had already been taken, such as the updating of legacy information.

Three project teams will be set up to explore Home Mission, personal donations, and

Association funding formula.

Marks of Ministry

Council members were given the opportunity to discuss the Marks of Ministry report, before deciding whether to adopt it. Marks of Ministry was part of the Ignite Report, which looked into the future of ministry and was published earlier this year.

It offers a shift towards detecting the Christ-like qualities of someone wishing to be accredited, ('who they are as women and men who follow Jesus'), rather than measuring them against a range of core competencies. It's had broadly 'very positive' feedback, said Andy Hughes, Ministries Team Leader, and is pivotal to many aspects of the Ignite Report, which is why it's the first part of Ignite to be implemented.

There was general approval of Marks of Ministry following discussion in small groups, and council members voted unanimously to adopt it with suggested tweaks.

Other

A prayer of thanksgiving for the life of Roger Hayden was given by Nigel Coles at the start of Council. A report was given about the Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Society, which is receiving 10-15 requests each year, though this is coming down. The Society has never failed to provide a property for someone who meets its eligibility needs in 41 years.

Former Baptist Union President Chris Ellis spoke at the end of Council, which was his last after first being elected as a young minister in the 1970s.

Baptist Union Council: March 2016

Much of March 2016 Council was spent considering our Union's response to The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and specifically about churches wishing to register their buildings for the solemnisation of same sex marriage. Can we hold this tension in our Union? Could 'a settled place' be reached?

'We come to listen and seek the mind of Christ together,' said Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader (pictured), asking members to engage in 'active listening.'

'The way we aim to get to this place is as important as the place itself. It's only by hearing each other that we will hear the mind of Christ.'

Council members were presented with all the emails from the talkingtogether@mail.com address, used to gather responses from individuals and churches as conversations around same sex relationships have taken place. This email address was first launched at Assembly 2013 and has been actively monitored since then. Conversations have occurred in many different places and contexts: Baptist Ministers' Fellowship events,

minister meetings, association gatherings, colleges, local church meetings and more.

Two representatives of churches which have wrestled with the issues were invited to share their church stories. One highlighted how the church had attempted to equip each individual in its congregation with resources to aid their deep biblical reflection, with articles, seminars, a series on grace and truth and a paper on hermeneutics.

There was a tension between working out how to lovingly respond to gay men and women, while theologically holding a traditional biblical understanding of marriage. There were missiological and ecclesiological factors too. Their journey as a church was continuing, the speaker said, their position described as 'welcoming, loving, accepting – but not affirming (of same sex marriage).'

The second church had also engaged in a 'deep and prayerful reading of scripture' - and at a church meeting reached a decision to apply to register for same sex marriage. There had been pastoral fall out – a number of members had chosen to leave, and this had happened 'largely, but not exclusively, on ethnic lines'. The church realises it could have spent more time with those who for cultural reasons found it difficult accept the decision. Many have remained in touch, however, and still help with a particular church outreach, while a deacon who doesn't support the decision has remained committed to the church.

'To our joy we have discovered in our covenantal relationship that what binds us is stronger than what divides us,' the speaker said. 'Our intent is not to harm the Union, which we love, but to be faithful to the scriptures.'

Council members were asked to reflect on the Declaration of Principle (DoP), initially forged in the 19th century, and subsequently adapted on occasions in the 20th. The DoP grew out of very 'turbulent times', but allowed two streams of Baptists (General and Particular) to come together as the basis of our Union.

'It's a way of describing who Baptists are, what we believe, and more importantly, who has authority... Christ is the absolute authority, as revealed in Scripture and discerned in the local church, through the power of the Holy Spirit.' said Stephen Keyworth. 'The question before us now is: if a church decides to register for same sex marriage, is that ok based on our Declaration of Principle?'

Encouraging Council members to engage in 'covenant listening', he continued, 'It's not unusual, and to be expected, that on this particular issue there is a wide range of views.

'As Baptists, we do need to take seriously the task of covenant listening – it's vital to discerning theological authority. This is not just about local churches hearing what is said through the shared life of Associations, Council and Assembly. It is also about Council listening carefully to the voices that come from the churches as they engage in.

'Throughout our history Baptists have always been in the process of disagreeing. Maybe it's inevitable if you bring dissenters together(!) We shouldn't avoid disagreement at all costs, but we must do it well if we are true to our calling.

'I'm not saying it must be unity at all cost, as some have suggested – but disagreement must not become personal or adversarial. It's about discerning the mind of Christ and we can only do that together.'

At various points through the gathering members broke off into small groups to discuss the issues raised. There was also extended feedback sessions, when the whole Council heard from each other.

There was gratitude for the two speakers, who had represented two churches that 'took scripture seriously and took spiritual discernment seriously'. Their stories reiterated 'our unity in diversity.'

One member spoke of his own personal journey, and how he 'desperately wanted to come to a view that I could affirm it.' The harsh reality is, 'I can't.'

While many noted their their traditional views, (some spoke of representing churches that are 'finding it difficult we are even discussing it') a smaller number spoke of being in a different place. The pain and suffering of people from the LGBT community in our churches was highlighted on a number of occasions.

There was much concern as to why this particular issue should determine a breaking of the covenant in our Union. 'All kind of differences exist among us,' noted one member. 'I'm puzzling that this one brings us to this place. Why this one? Why have we not had this discussion about churches that don't affirm women?'

'What's the next line in the sand?'

Another noted that the Declaration of Principle was 'a gift' from our predecessors that 'allows us to live with difference.'

A statement was worked on in an attempt to reflect Council's view. It was discussed at tables, with feedback offered, adapted and discussed again. Eventually a vote was taken, with a large majority agreeing to adopt the statement. Two members disagreed, alongside seven abstentions. One speaker highlighted how the minority 'will bear the cost' of its final paragraph.

General Secretary Lynn Green (pictured) spoke of her sadness that complete consensus had not been reached. She spoke of her own grappling with this issue – her awareness of what she describes as a 'profound Biblical truth'; alongside hearing from and being genuinely welcoming to those on the margins. 'I'm caught between those two stories,' she said.

She commended Council members for their 'mature listening,' and her hope that the way members have discerned could be told alongside the statement that has arisen.

'What's been demonstrated here is that we're listening to one another,' she said. 'It's difficult, but it's part of our tension.'

'It's not perfect - but it's where we are.'

At the end of the debate Council was informed that the statement would first be communicated direct to ministers and churches before it was made more widely available on the Baptists Together website.

Council Statement on the Registration of Buildings for Same-Sex Marriage

Since the Government introduced the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act in 2013, we have been listening to each other in order to discern our response as Baptists Together.

Our Baptist Union Council has met recently to engage in this discernment through a time of intense prayer, listening and discussion. Many of you will have contributed to that process through our 'talkingtogether' email address.

Council clearly discerned that we should offer to our Union, in humility, the statement that is set out below:

Baptists Together and Registration of Buildings for Same-Sex Marriage

Biblical Marriage Re-affirmed

Council positively re-affirms and commends to our churches our Union's historic Biblical understanding of marriage as a union between one man and one woman, and calls them to live in the light of it.

This is a response to the introduction of The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and churches seeking clarification of the BUGB response to the matter of registering buildings for the solemnisation of same-sex marriage.

This understanding has shaped the rules for accredited Baptist ministers regarding sexuality and the ministry and our rules continue to remain unchanged (see www.baptist.org.uk/minrecales).

Baptist Ecclesiology

The Declaration of Principle, which is the basis of our Union, states:

'That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His Laws.'

This way of being church stresses our unity as disciples of our 'Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' and acknowledges the potential for some diversity in pastoral and missional practice. As disciples covenanting together in humility we seek God's help to live with

the tension of our independence and interdependence as Baptist churches.

Called to Mission

The Declaration of Principle also states:

'That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.'

Therefore, as a gospel people we renew our commitment to engaging in sharing the Good News with all people and encourage our churches to reach out to every part of their communities with imagination and compassion.

Walking together in Unity

Reflecting on the issue of churches registering their buildings for same sex marriage, Council recognises areas of genuine and deep disagreement. We believe that these are dimensions of the tension of living with unity and diversity. We continue to seek God's grace as we 'walk together and watch over one another' under the authority of Christ.

In the light of this, recognising the costs involved and after careful and prayerful reflection and listening, we humbly urge churches who are considering conducting same-sex marriages to refrain from doing so out of mutual respect. At the same time, we also humbly urge all churches to remain committed to our Union out of mutual respect; trusting that the one who unites us is stronger than what divides us.

The Good Samaritan in modern Britain?

A Baptist minister was secretly filmed in a busy town centre as part of study into the role of the Good Samaritan in modern Britain

Sam King, of Calne Baptist Church, was initially filmed by Bible Society wearing a dog collar asking to borrow people's phones.

With the help of make-up artist he later he dressed as a rough sleeper. Not surprisingly he discovered that many more people disregarded him.

The filming took place as part of Bible Society's "The Good Samaritan in Modern Britain" report.

Bible Society's Rachel Rounds, a member of Sam's church in Wiltshire, told Premier, 'It was amazing the change in people - people wouldn't look him in the eye.

'Because he's been a vicar most of his life, people have always treated him with respect.

'But he said the minute he got changed into the rough-sleeper disguise, if you like, he said his whole opinion about himself changed, he said he felt different.

'And it's not just about face-value, it's about issues like time - often if someone approaches us it's like I haven't got time I'm too busy.'

The report reveals "a call for a kinder Britain" by adults and children, according to the organisation.

"Everything had been made ready"

Ingebjorg Tozer was recently baptised at Burwell Baptist Church in Cambridge - aged 88. Her pastor Chris Johnson explains more

Ingebjorg was christened as a baby in 1927 in a small white wooden Lutheran Church in Norway. In her words "that was my parents' decision and what they thought best for them and for me. Today I am making this decision for myself."

Ingebjorg has been a faithful attender at Burwell Baptist Church for many years and has known the Lord moving in her life in some powerful ways, but recently she felt challenged that she needed to publicly express the personal relationship she has with the Lord. She sensed that the Lord was saying to her that "everything had been made ready".

Despite some understandable anxieties and practical challenges, Ingebjorg bravely and eloquently testified to her saviour to a full church, including many of her own family who came to witness her baptism. She chose as her baptismal hymn *Morning Has Broken*, saying "This is a new day for me".

There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Using a YouGov survey, Bible Society found that:

- Only half of us (55%) would stop and approach an older lady that we saw crying in the street, to try and comfort them
- 1 in 5 of us remember a time we needed help in a public place and no-one has stopped
- 2 in 3 adults (64%) and nearly 3 in 5 (57%) of children aged 8 to 15 are worried Britain is becoming a less kind society
- Nearly a third (32%) of children said being educated about the parable of the Good Samaritan will help create a kinder Britain

Speaking about the findings, Paul Woolley, Interim Chief Executive of Bible Society said: 'Our research indicates that for many people, regardless of personal faith, the Bible's engaging and timeless stories have meaning and significance today.

'Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan operates at two levels. It is a spectacular invitation to a life of self-giving that insists we roll up our sleeves and help no matter what it takes. It also challenges us to recognise that there are no limits to our neighbourhood or

neighbourliness. It demands that even those who are hated and feared are to be seen as our neighbours.

'Cultures are shaped by the stories we tell. Our Pass it On campaign is about encouraging people to pass the Bible on to future generations. Stories like the Good Samaritan can help us build a kinder Britain. We want to see everyone value the Bible for themselves, their families and communities.'

Baptist church wins youth award

A Baptist church's youth outreach has been recognised in a new awards programme which spotlights outstanding community projects and services by churches and Christian organisations across Britain and Ireland

Level One at Stirling Baptist Church won the Youth & Children's Work section of Premier's Love Britain & Ireland Awards.

It was launched in 2014 in response to a local survey looking at the needs of young people, and is the main base for all the church's youth and young adult work. It stages events and programmes throughout the week, including drop-in cafes, acoustic nights, workshops and Bible studies.

Level One is a space that 'the young people of our church and city have come to know, trust and feel safe in,' states its website. 'This has allowed us to build relationships which has in turn given us the opportunity to help them to explore many of the issues that they are facing in today's society including topics such as faith, relationships, friendships, self-esteem and identity.'

It also won the Most Innovative Youth Work in the 2015 Christian Youth Work Awards.

Rob Fraser Binns is the church's youth pastor (pictured). He said while it was great to be able to receive these awards, 'it is all about the young people that we are working with, the young people that God is impacting, the families and backgrounds that they are coming from and the change that we are seeing God make in them, which is absolutely amazing and way beyond what we ever expected or prayed for.'

'Our heart is for Level One to be a place that the young people of Stirling know as a safe place where they can find support and direction to make healthy life choices,' he continued.

'Our desire is that they will also see and hear of the love that God has for them and we believe because of this we have seen a number of young people come to faith and which is so exciting to see them on a journey with him.'

The 'Love Britain & Ireland Awards' were conceived by Premier as part of its mission to enable people to put faith at the heart of their daily life and bring Christ to their

communities. The project has been implemented in conjunction with the Good Faith Partnership.

There were six categories, including community building, work with older people, innovation, and inclusion.

The award for best overall project - an outstanding project that expresses and enables others to experience Christian love in action - was presented to the Bedford-based Kings Arms Project, which helps people out of homelessness. Its website www.kingsarmsproject.org explains how the project focuses on accommodation, outreach and opportunity to ensure that homeless people can have a bright future.

The judges were Russell Rook of Good Faith Partnership; Baroness Maeve Sherlock OBE, Labour peer and Shadow DWP Minister; Jenny Sinclair of Together for the Common Good; Bev Thomas of the Amani Consultancy and this year's Sam Sharpe lecturer; and the Revd Nims Obunge of Freedom's Ark Church, CEO of Peace Alliance.

Commenting on the outstanding quality and effectiveness of the organisations which took part, Premier's CEO, Peter Kerridge said, 'We thank all the organisations who entered the awards project and congratulate the winners in the 'Love Britain & Ireland Awards'.

"We've been blown away by the quality, variety and creativity of those who entered these awards. It's clear that the Christian community across the length and breadth of these islands is making a huge contribution to the public good.

'The awards demonstrate that faith can transform not only an individual's life, but effect the well-being of entire communities.'

'Keep on working for peace'

As the Syria conflict enters its sixth year and peace talks resume in Geneva, Christian Aid implores the international community to keep on working for peace

The conflict has devastated millions of lives; more than a quarter of a million people have been killed and over one million injured. Half the population is displaced. With more than 4.6 million Syrians having fled the country and 6.6 million internally displaced Syria is the largest displacement crisis globally. Within the country 13.5 million remain in need of humanitarian assistance – including millions of children.

UN led peace talks resumed on Monday (14 March) in Geneva between Syria's warring parties two weeks into a cessation of hostilities brokered by the US and Russia. The partial and temporary truce has seen reduced violence in Syria and more humanitarian aid getting into besieged areas; however both the opposition and the government have accused each other of violations.

Frances Guy, Christian Aid's Head of Middle East said that while the cessation of hostilities "may be fraying", we must build on this brief respite to offer Syrians hope that

their country can be rebuilt and that violence can come to an end.

'We urge all parties to the conflict to help make the peace talks a success and bring an end to the conflict in Syria, help ensure continued humanitarian aid gets to those in need and give hope to the millions of people still suffering after 5 years of war. Shattered lives deserve to hope.

'As we reach the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Syrian uprising it is easy to despair but despair is a betrayal of the positive and uplifting spirit of ordinary Syrians who continue to battle every day to help their fellow country men and women and who if given half a chance would return to rebuild their homes tomorrow.

'The cessation of hostilities is limited in effectiveness and the promises made at the donor conference in London at the beginning of February have not yet been translated into any real change on the ground. And yet it was the spirit of Syrian NGOs that shone through in London which brings hope to those living in besieged areas and should be a source of strength to us all.

'Five years on, with many warring factions and many interfering outside powers, making a peaceful solution seem ever more difficult, international NGOs must continue to give voice to those Syrians bringing succour to those in need in Syria and we must continue to do what we can to help those who have sought refuge inside Syria, in neighbouring countries and in Europe.'

She added that thanks to the generosity of the British public, Christian Aid has raised more than £3 million for its Syria Crisis appeal, which has enabled partners to provide support to communities in desperate need.

Christian Aid has been working to respond to the needs of vulnerable Syrian refugees across the region since March 2013. Now, in response to the global refugee crisis, Christian Aid also works in Europe to support refugees on the move. For more information on our work, visit the Christian Aid website.

Baptisms

Aintree Village Family Church, Merseyside: Matty and Laura Bentley

Bluntisham Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire: Carol-Ann Penfold, Lizzi Catterick, Pauline Beaumont, Rob Lemmon

Bromham Baptist Church, Bedfordshire: Steve Moynham, Alan and Chris Lake

Burwell Baptist Church, Cambridge: Ingebjorg Tozer (88) and Sarah Golding

Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield: Kanan, Reza, Mohammad, Majoud, Amir, Iman, Bitra, Mitra, Sadiq, Omid, Ali, Mohamad and Abdol

Greenfield Baptist Church, Llanelli: Steve Lawrence, Philip Morris, Yvonne Davies, Susan Morris

Gunton Baptist Church, Suffolk: Kayleigh Palmer, Melody-Grace Prestige-Briston

Mexborough Baptist Church, Yorkshire: (see below)

Seymour Road Baptist Church, Nottingham: Cheryl Tongue and Leah Oglesby,

Kat Marshall

Willesborough Baptist Church, Willesborough, Ashford: Sarah Guy, Emma Matthews

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

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

Baptism stories

The Revd June Love of **Gunton Baptist Church, Suffolk**, writes: 'On Palm Sunday we were thrilled to baptise Kayleigh Palmer who came to faith on our recent Alpha course, and Melody-Grace Prestige-Briston who is just 10 years old but has incredible faith and love for the Lord.'

Denise Lancaster, Pastor at **Mexborough Baptist Church** writes: 'In January we had a baptism for a young lady, on her birthday, who has been coming to our church for some while. Her circumstances don't permit her to come every week, but when she does come, she's much encouraged, and able to face the future with hope and peace. Baptism for her was another step towards wellness, and we are thrilled to support her in every way we can. This lady may be moving to live closer to her family. Whatever the future holds for her, we thank God for her ongoing discipleship and making new friends.'

A message from **Bluntisham Baptist Church**: 'The four people who were baptised all attended our Puzzling Questions course last year and wanted to take their next step on their journey with the Lord. It was a very emotional and uplifting service.'

Deaths

PIGGOTT, The Revd David Geoffrey John died peacefully on 3 March, aged 90, at Heathlands Care Home, Pershore, Worcestershire. The very much loved husband of Joyce, who pre-deceased him in 2014, and dear father of Andrew, Jane, Ruth, Stephen and Ann. A service of Thanksgiving and Celebration was held at Pershore Baptist Church on 21 March and an Obituary appears in the online columns of *The Baptist Times*. Donations in his memory to the RNLI Torbay Lifeboat Station c/o E Hill & Son, Funeral Directors, Pershore WR10 1HZ. For further details contact Jane Machin at ahmachin@gmail.com

NOLES, The Revd Anthony George. Sadly passed away on 13 March 2016.

Husband to Sylvia, much loved father of Deborah, Beverley, Jeremy and Jackie, grandad to Daniel, Fabio, Sarah, Tom, Rachel, Zack and Luke and beloved brother to Ron, Bill, Margaret and John. The funeral will be held on Thursday 31 March at All Saints Church, Walton on the Naze at 11.45am, followed by a committal at Weeley Crematorium at 1.15pm. Flowers or donations to Alzheimers Society via P.G.Oxley Funeral Directors, 43-47 High Street, Walton on the Naze, Essex, CO14 8BE, Tel 01255 675549 / email info@pgoxley.co.uk if desired.

HAYDEN, the Revd Dr Roger A service of thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Roger will take place at 2pm on 8 April at Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol. Donations to Broadmead Baptist Church and the Leprosy Mission

Jobs

Schools Counsellor, Fegans

Assistant Cellarer + Administrator, The Sheldon Community

Director of Ministry, The Nationwide Christian Trust

Children, Youth and Families Ministry Leader, Queensberry Baptist Church

Regional Minister, Heart of England Baptist Association

Public Engagement Officers, Sailors' Society

Ecumenical Accompaniers, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine + Israel (EAPPI)

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

Events/resources

Flames of Prayer

Lynn Green is encouraging all our Baptist churches to join together in creating a Beacon of Prayer – sharing the ways in which God is at work in and through our churches and communities. She would like church leaders to download and print a flame template (if possible on yellow or orange paper), and then write down where you see God at work in and through your church/community. Bring it with you to this year's Baptist Assembly in Oxford on 14 May, or send it to the Assembly office by 29 April. Full details are on the Baptists Together website.

Fire Camp - a new gathering for Baptists, around the campfire.

A captivating alternative to consumer-centric approaches.

Fired by the story of God

Organised by grass-roots baptists

- 23-26 July 2016 (arrive a day earlier for the pre-party)
- 3 nights to gather around the campfire
- In year one tickets limited to first 100 people
- A vibrant, creative, participatory camp of all ages
- You will be Fire Camp: create, relax, party, explore and meet

See the video and book at www.firecamp.org.uk (video and poster can be downloaded for use in churches)