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News:

'Protect vulnerable children in Calais'

Lynn Green calls for urgent action as she writes to Home Secretary Amber Rudd and all churches ahead of the planned dismantling of the Calais jungle

The Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, has issued an urgent call for local churches to act to protect vulnerable children whose safety and wellbeing is at serious risk if plans to dismantle what has come to be known as the "Calais Jungle" go ahead.

She has also written to the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, to express her concerns and call for urgent action to expedite their asylum claims.

In an email on Friday afternoon, she invited minister to pray about the situation and consider writing to their MPs.

Lynn explained how she had asked the Home Secretary to expediate the asylum claims of the unaccompanied children in the Calais Jungle. Around 400 have a legal right to be in the UK.

She said, 'Today I have written to the Home Secretary in response to the news that the French Government intends to dismantle the Calais camps, with the intent of relocating their inhabitants. This means that once again children will be placed at risk, and indeed there is evidence that some are already fleeing the camps in fear of these consequences.

'Children who will become more vulnerable and at risk of harm than they already are. I have urged her to expedite the processing and relocation of these children in the UK, many of whom already have relatives living here.

'I want to invite you to join me in this action, by praying for a positive response to my letter, by praying for all those affected by this ongoing crisis, and by contacting your own MP to give strength to the campaign to protect these children from further harm.'

On Monday, Ms Rudd had a two hour meeting with her French counterpart. She later told MPs that the French authorities had agreed to verify by the end of this week a list of 387 child refugees with a legal right to come to the UK drawn up by the campaign group Citizens UK. 'Once we have that official list we will move quickly within days and remove very quickly those children,' she said. A dedicated Home Office team has been set up to process the transfers.

She refused to put a figure on the numbers, but in an interview with the Daily Mail had suggested that if 300 child refugees came to the UK that would be 'a really good result'.

Baptist churches in both the UK and throughout Europe have been working together to provide practical support in the face of the current migrant crisis as well as campaigning for a fair, just and effective response from governments. Several UK Baptists have visited the camp at Calais or offered humanitarian aid to those who live there. The concerns expressed on behalf of the Baptist community arise from this on-the-ground experience.

Spurgeon's link for new LST Principal

A former Spurgeon's College lecturer will be the next Principal of the London School of Theology

The Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel will take up his new post in January 2017.

Dr Samuel was a New Testament Lecturer at Spurgeon's from 2003 - 2010, and remains a governor at the college. He is currently Director of the Wesley Study Centre, Durham, and Academic Dean of St John's College within the University of Durham.

'This is a significant appointment and we are very pleased to announce that, following an extensive search process over the past six months, the LST Trustees have invited Calvin to join and lead the School forward,' said Grant Masom, Chair of the LST Board.

'For almost 80 years LST has been the leading and largest interdenominational evangelical theological college in Europe, and we look forward to this new chapter in delivering first choice theological education with Calvin at the helm.'

Born in Barbados and raised in Antigua before coming to Britain to study for a BA in Theology and Pastoral Studies at Nazarene Theological College in Manchester, Dr Samuel went on to complete an MBA at Manchester Business School before pursuing PhD research at King's College London.

Previous roles include Assistant Director of Research and Faculty Administration at London Business School, Visiting Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Nazarene Theological College in Manchester and Chaplain to Farrington's School in Kent.

He is a Methodist minister and is married to Ramona, also an ordained Methodist. His interests outside of work include blogging and Formula 1. He has research interests in holiness in Scripture and in Wesleyan tradition.

Dr Samuel said, 'I am excited to take the role of Principal at one of the world's leading centres of theological study and training within a global city. I look forward to further developing the excellent work being done there, especially as LST grows its international reach through cutting edge online study options in addition to its life changing on--campus theological education.

'These are challenging as well as exciting times for the Church and LST is uniquely placed to resource and inspire those who will lead, guide and shape not just the church of today but the next generation also.'

'A momentous occasion, the fruit of four years'

How a recent baptism in Southend came about through intentional partnerships among the Baptist churches there. By Dan Pratt

'Along with deciding to follow Jesus, this is one of the most important days of my life!' Damian stated before his baptismal service.

Damian had been coming to 57 West on and off for the last couple of years. More recently he was regularly engaging in 57 West's Saturday church, which involved prayer, worship, Bible discussion and a needed coffee break.

The service started. Damian told us why he wanted to be baptised - of God's love for him and his love for God. Damian spoke of how God was regularly answering his prayers while he was homeless including his prayer for a Polish Bible.

Waving a Bible to us, he shared how the morning of his baptism he had found the Bible on the street. We could see he was thrilled at being able to read in his first language.

Damian read from Matthew 16:24-25: 'Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it"'.

Serving others had become part of Damian's routine, whether it was making a meal for some of his homeless friends, or praying for God's healing for them (and yes a

couple had been healed!). As a community we were encouraged and challenged by Damian's faith and love for God.

On the windy Southend-on-Sea beach were 15 people from the 57 West church community, as well also people from ten local churches. It was a momentous occasion. This was the fruit of four plus years. Many churches had supported and worked towards seeing the birth and nurturing of 57 West. It is now a church community of rough sleepers, addicts and low-income households.

This church plant was made possible by Church from Scratch, who although working on the margins gave their last reserves to seed-fund the start of 57 West. Without the practical support, wisdom and prayers of the many local churches, 57 West would not have developed and thrived in the way that it has.

This partnership has not been accidental. The Southend Baptist Area Network was formed in 2012 by an initial 12 churches (including 57 West) to partner together in mission and mutuality. Intentionality in nurturing positive relationships between 57 West and other churches has built trust and greater partnership. Indeed, three local church ministers and a regional minister have served as trustees.

Other local churches have prayed, cooked meals for rough sleepers, given finances and led services at Saturday church. 57 West has been able to give back through leading services in local churches and giving opportunities for mission and discipleship among the poorest and most vulnerable in Southend-on-Sea.

'I've been praying for a calm sea' Julie whispered to me. We entered the cold September Southend Sea, Julie clinging to me for her life as waves rocked us. Julie is a 71 year old ex-RAF nurse who joined us at 57 West as an urban mission worker. She had been sent out by the local Belle Vue Baptist Church to join our small team, church planting among rough sleepers and addicts.

During that time she had been an anchor in the midst of a fluctuating and challenging community. When imagining a church planting team, I had not pictured a 70 year old 'battle-axe' (her own words) to be a rock on which the church to be built. I've learned that God uses those available to serve and love, not necessarily the cool, young or mega-talented.

Turning to the beach we signalled for Damian and John (another rough sleeper) to enter the water and join us.

All present shouted, 'we baptise you Damian, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'.

Julie and I submerged him into the chilly sea.

Damian emerged beaming, grafted into a new Christ-life, rooted in the church of 57 West and wider body of Christ represented by the ten churches present.

This was not only one of the most important days in Damian's life; it was one of the most important days in the life of the new church 57 West.

Dan Pratt is the minister of 57 West in Southend

Sleep out highlights homelessness rise

A charity which provides homes for the most vulnerable in society in partnership with local churches is running its annual sleep out this Friday (14 October) - amid growing levels of homelessness

In addition Hope into Action founder and chief executive Ed Walker, a member of Bretton Baptist Church in Peterborough, has decided to jog 50 miles through some of the highest peaks in the Lake District.

The award-winning charity now has 37 homes across the country which offer longer term accommodation and support to nearly 130 homeless people. Each house is in partnership with a church who offer pastoral and spiritual support.

This is the third year it has hosted its Big Sleep Out: taking place on Friday from 7pm to 7am, people from across the city and from all walks of life will sleep rough for one night to highlight the plight of the homeless and raise money for the charity.

'This is a great chance for local people to come together and try for one night what over 3,500 people in England have to do every night,' Ed said.

'We are not pretending that one night sleeping out is anything like what homeless people have to face.

'Homelessness is more than not having a roof, it is an isolating and destructive experience and homeless people are some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society.'

Big Sleep Out 223The work is more essential than ever, with homelessness is on the increase for a variety of reasons. Cuts in direct and support services have played their role (four homeless services / charities have gone bust in Peterborough alone in the past four years, said Ed, while services such as mental health lead to a broader safety net, are also suffering from funding cuts).

Also contributing to the increase is the housing crisis, with affordable homes harder to come by, and high prison levels.

This has seen the ministry of Hope Into Action – which offers homes to people of every faith or no faith – grow. In 2015 it had 28 houses in eight cities.

'We are delighted by the number of churches stepping up and being up for serving the poorest in our communities,' Ed said, 'wanting to do it in a long-term, relational, loving, empowering, spiritual way.'

Ed completed his run in the Lake District on Saturday. He said, 'I love the outdoors and the lakes, I am not, however, a runner or fitness freak. When this chance came up however I thought it would be such fun to spend a day walking through the lakes.'

'I hadn't realized quite how tough it would be!'

The charity is hoping to beat the £10,000 it raised last year.

**Responding to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti
Baptists and other development agencies have been responding to Hurricane Matthew, the most powerful storm to hit the Caribbean for a decade, in a variety of ways**

Last Friday (7 October) BMS World Mission issued a statement to say it was 'consulting with partners on the ground in Haiti, monitoring the situation and will be making a response very soon to help those in need in the best way possible'.

Alongside it highlighted a number of prayer points for Haiti.

- Pray for partners on the ground in extremely challenging situations, that they will be effective, wise and strengthened by God
- Pray for those affected by the disaster and in need of assistance, that they will get the help they need as soon as possible, and that they would know some measure of peace
- Pray for those who mourn. Hundreds of people have lost their lives in the hurricane and will be facing grief as well as challenges most of us will find hard to imagine.

BMS will update supporters on the response it is making, in consultation and conjunction with international partners, in the coming weeks, the statement continued.

Elsewhere Christian Aid launched a Hurricane Matthew appeal, stating that all those affected will need a lot of support to recover. Thousands have lost their homes, corn and banana crops have been flattened, and livestock have been swept away, the charity stated. Hundreds of people have died and cholera is a major fear.

For more visit: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/hurricane-matthew-appeal>

The Baptist World Alliance also appealed for Baptists to aid Haiti. In a statement BWA General Secretary Neville Callam assured Haitian Baptists 'of our deep concern and our fervent prayers on your behalf. We stand in solidarity with you all and we pray that you will find God's grace sufficient for the crisis that you are passing through.'

The statement highlighted how BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean, Everton Jackson, was traveling to Haiti to do further assessment on the needs of the country. Visit www.bwanet.org/give to donate online.

Baptisms

Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church, Luton: Avril Mills

Brownhill Road Baptist Church, Catford: Oliver Robbins, Godson Egbo

Christ Church, Ipswich: Margaret Wife & Jonathan King

Cornerstone Baptist Church, Martham, Norfolk: Zak Buttifant and Ella Buttifant

Frimley Baptist Church, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey: Jordan Haslam, Phoebe Minson

Tamworth Baptist Church, Staffordshire: Marilia Danter

Upton Vale Baptist Church, Torquay: Tash Jones, Gemma McBain, Jacob Tidball

Baptismal stories

Martin Owen of Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church writes:

“In our ongoing process to form a new Local Ecumenical Partnership with St Margaret’s Methodist Church in Luton, to be known as The Olive Tree Church, we were overjoyed to hold a service of Baptist believer's baptism and Methodist confirmation combined on 02 October. It was a fabulous service, a blend of Baptist and Methodist traditions, and what better than to celebrate together over lunch.

Avril Mills was baptised and Arlene Carrick, a Methodist member, was confirmed. The leading of the service was shared by Rev. Mike Thomas (Baptist) and Rev. Julie Bradshaw (Methodist).”