



8 February 2017

News:

Criticism over Dubs closure

Charities speak out over the Government's decision to scrap the Dubs scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children to Britain

The Dubs amendment was passed in May 2016 at the height of the European refugee crisis to ensure that 3,000 lone children were given protection in the UK. However on Wednesday the Government announced the scheme will close after relocating 350 children.

Christian Aid issued a statement 'condemning' the decision to close.

Tom Viita, Head of Advocacy, said, 'Protecting people fleeing their homes is no one country's responsibility - it demands global cooperation. Today's announcement is not only a broken promise to vulnerable children, but a rejection of our international responsibilities.'

'After Trump's refugee ban in recent weeks, it is shocking to see the UK sending out another deeply worrying message to the rest of the world. Theresa May and her government need to be pulling Trump up, rather than following him downwards.'

'The international community, the UK included, needs to find a fair way of sharing responsibility for people forcibly displaced from their homes. We are experiencing global displacement on a level not seen since the Second World War. Poor countries are hosting most people in dire need and here we are once again, one of the richest countries in the world, attempting to shirk responsibility.'

Citizens UK quickly set up a petition in an attempt to keep the scheme alive. It stated, 'Our country has a proud tradition of welcoming those most in need. We stepped up to rescue 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi persecution.'

'Lord Alf Dubs himself arrived in the UK by the Kindertransport. Now more than ever we must stand by our values. Thousands of children we promised to help are still in danger.'

'Britain is better than this. Sign to keep the Dubs Scheme alive.'

Sign the petition here: http://www.citizensuk.org/dubs_petition

Baptist minister to open micropub

St Canna's will be a meeting point for people in the community and the "diametric opposite" of "plastic" chain pubs

A Baptist minister is to open a new micropub in the heart of his community.

James Karran has received planning permission to convert a former hair salon in Canton, Cardiff.

James, who leads Llan, said the pub will aim to promote real ale and be a meeting point for people in the community.

'There are two main elements that I see,' he told Wales Online, 'One is promoting local real ales and craft beers in a place for connoisseurs, where people can enjoy the ales rather than simply downing drinks as quickly as possible.

'It will also be a place where people can build relationships – creating, literally, a public house space.

'For me it's all part of my vocation and calling, to create the space where people can get to know each other. But instead of in a church it is in a pub – and it is not a religious thing at all.'

Speaking to The Baptist Times, James explained it's an idea he's had for around four years.

'Only in this last year have circumstances permitted me to explore it seriously. There have been lots of potential hurdles along the way, such as securing the funding, finding premises etc. But one by one I've somehow jumped them!'

Cardiff micro pub James, who once ran church services in a night club on Sunday evenings, has always felt that the Church should be demonstrating God's love to people in real and tangible ways.

'I don't believe we should sit inside purpose built ecclesiastical buildings expecting people to come in,' he said. 'I think those who have experienced God's love need to be where people already are and look for ways to serve, build relationships, practise hospitality and try to show it is possible to live out of this transformational experience of love.'

'The ale house will be one expression of this vision, but I'm sure there could be hundreds of different expressions where there is a willingness to take risks and step outside the box.'

The plan is to open the pub in early March. It will be called St Canna's Alehouse, after the saint who lends her name to both the Canton and Pontcanna districts of Cardiff. Its opening hours will be Wednesday to Friday 4pm-11pm, Saturday 12pm-11pm and Sunday 12pm-10.30pm.

St Canna's will not sell commercial lagers, spirits, shots, or food, only simple bar snacks. James told Wales Online it will be the "diametric opposite" of "plastic" chain pubs.

Cirencester Baptist Church opens brand new building But though the new facility is the talk of the town, it's not the main focus of the church

But though the new facility is the talk of the town, it's not the main focus of the church, said senior minister the Revd Matt Frost.

'Yes, it's fantastic and we're really pleased with it. It's new and a novelty, there is no other spacious facility like it in the town and we are all chatting about it.

'But it's secondary. The heart of life is the church and its mission, not the building. Our aim is to be a loving community of disciples of Jesus, following him, growing in him and witnessing to him through words, works and wonders.

'The building is giving us better facilities to do what we do, and already we are benefitting.'

The church was previously based in the centre of Cirencester, and had had a space problem for several years as its activities grew. It has a thriving toddlers group and youth club, and had already moved its main Sunday service to a school.

In September 2014 it bought the Chesterton Suite building from Cotswold District Council at auction, a 1960s building that had been a sports and social club.

Initially the plan was to refurbish, but it was soon discovered there was little difference between doing this and knocking down and starting again.

Following detailed design work, construction began and the new building was completed by December 2016. It has a 500-seat auditorium, a café space and many rooms available for use by the local community. It also has plenty of parking space, in contrast to its former home.

The £3.8m facility has been funded by a combination congregation giving, grants and a loan from the Baptist Union Loan fund.

'All along the vision has been about having a space that serves as a church and community building, a place that's really flexible for everything we do, and for all sorts of community groups,' explained Matt.

'We've moved from a building that was very central but hidden – it was a back street in the town centre. Now we're less central, but much more visible, and accessible, on the edge of housing area. It's a more pleasant and welcoming environment.

'And of course the parking is so, so useful, making it much more inclusive.'

Already new relationships are beginning to form. Cirencester and Tetbury Foodbank will be moving its warehouse to the basement of the building.

Cirencester²And with more than 1,000 people there for the official opening, which featured craft sessions, bouncy castles and lots of cake, many more contacts were made.

'People just kept coming in and getting involved and asking questions – we had lots of conversations and opportunities to share. It was a great day,' said Matt.

He added, 'One thing we said from the outset was that we didn't want this project to take over. There was a danger that that's all you talk about.'

'The building is great – but it's a bridge, and I'm really pleased it hasn't taken over the church life of prayer, evangelism and mission.'

BWA responds to immigration moves

The Baptist World Alliance has issued a statement 'decrying' the US Government's recent immigration tightening

The Baptist World Alliance reaffirms its biblical stance concerning refugees, vulnerable people who are oftentimes victimised for their faith.

In a resolution approved by its General Council in Vancouver, Canada, in July 2016, the BWA calls upon its "member bodies, affiliated churches, and individual believers to actively embrace opportunities for Christian ministry and witness that exemplify the biblical teaching to love the stranger (Lev. 19:18b) and Jesus' teaching to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40), being salt and light in ways that bring the values of our Lord into our culture."

The resolution further encourages Christian believers "to personally engage with all refugees and displaced persons, generously showing God's love and care as we demonstrate the sufficiency of God made known through Jesus Christ."

In light of this resolution passed a little more than six months ago and previous resolutions in 2011 and 2013, the BWA decries recent actions by the United States Government to issue a blanket travel ban on seven countries that specifically targets refugees and that seems to especially affect Muslims.

These actions are already having a negative impact on the lives of families. It has adversely affected service providers who work directly with refugees and has created unexpected difficulties for Baptist institutions in the United States, such as universities and seminaries, with students enrolled from the seven named countries.

While the BWA recognizes that a government has a right to create and maintain conditions that provide for the safety of its citizens, there is a temptation to give in to fear and to hastily pursue misguided policies that will have deleterious long-term effects and that undermine freedom of religion.

We accept this is not a situation that has emerged quickly and is in part a response to longstanding problems in these seven countries. We decry unjust actions that are too often left unaddressed and conditions that are allowed to deteriorate.

We note that in Iraq, Christians, Yazidis and others face genocide at the hands of the Islamic State. Over the last decade, the Christian population in Iraq has shrunk from 1.5 million to less than 200,000.

In Yemen, a Global Alert from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network indicates that Yemen is at risk of the highest level of food insecurity.

Syria is one of the most complex conflicts and humanitarian situations in our world that has devastated the country, which faces a future of trauma and rebuilding.

Baptists, fellow Christians and all people of goodwill should work to reverse conditions that lead to displacement in these and other countries and for peace, harmony and justice to prevail.

The BWA commends Baptists in countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Germany, Sweden, Croatia, Serbia and elsewhere, who have embodied the biblical mandate to stand with the vulnerable and to extend Christian hospitality. We support Baptists in the United States who offer welcome and provide assistance.

The Baptist World Alliance, founded in 1905, is a fellowship of 235 conventions and unions in 122 countries and territories comprising 40 million members in 177,000 churches.

'Stand together for peace'

A Baptist church in London invites faith and community leaders to “stand together for peace” in response to President Donald Trump’s immigration curbs and the attack on a mosque in Canada

Yiewsley Baptist Church in Hillingdon has encouraged imams, rabbis, priests, pastors, chaplains and other faith and community leaders to gather at the church this Thursday (2 Feb).

‘We hope to demonstrate that although we hold to different faiths we are united in our striving for peace and opposition to tyranny and discrimination,’ said minister the Revd Rich Blake-Lobb.

In a controversial executive order over the weekend, the US President imposed a temporary travel ban on citizens from seven Muslim majority countries.

On Sunday night, six people were killed by a gunman at a mosque in Quebec City. Elsewhere, a mosque in Texas was destroyed by fire just hours after the executive order - prompting Americans to donate \$800,000 to rebuild it.

In his invitation letter, Rich explained: ‘I believe we should come together to highlight our unity... As a symbol of solidarity with our Muslim neighbours, to build relationships with one another and create bridges between our different faiths.’

His hopes for the gathering on Thursday are threefold:

- We show that we are a welcoming and caring community
- We would have a public demonstration of unity
- We will be able to issue a joint public statement of our unity

Referring to Mr Trump’s ‘discriminatory’ executive orders, Rich said he was ‘embarrassed and ashamed of the things that are being said in the name of the religion that I care for deeply.’

‘I and many of my fellow evangelical Christian's do not agree with President Trump or with those who support him.’

Update:

Multi-faith event at church condemns 'prejudice and intolerance' in wake of US visa ban

People from all faiths joined Yiewsley Baptist Church pastor Rich Blake-Lobb and signed a Standing Together pledge (Getwest London)

The seven countries affected by the ban are Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. They were not specifically named in the executive order, but were referenced by their inclusion in 2015 legislation highlighting nations of particular concern.

The order also explicitly bans refugees from Syria. Persecuted religious minorities will be prioritised when the admission of refugees commences.

There has been much UK opposition. A petition calling on Prime Minister Theresa May to cancel Mr Trump's planned state visit to the UK had gathered more than 1.5million signatures. There were also protests in dozens of towns and cities on Monday night (30 January). In the US the Interfaith Immigration Coalition released a letter supporting refugee resettlement, signed by more than 2,000 faith leaders.

A number of Christian charities have issued statements commenting on Mr Trump's immigration crackdown.

Lisa Pearce, CEO Open Doors UK and Ireland said,

'President Trump rightly recognises the incredible rise in persecution of Christians. Appointing key religious freedom positions in the State Department within the first 100 days of the administration, and working toward religious freedom accountability with key trading partners such as India, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam, all on the Open Doors World Watch List of top persecutors, would be a great start.

'Expediting refugee entry for those intentionally targeted by ISIS, like the Yazidis and Christians and some Muslim groups, seems appropriate.

'However, prioritising one religion over another only exacerbates the already severe worldwide trend of religious persecution. We encourage a need-based approach that treats all faiths equally and works toward the comprehensive strengthening of religious freedom around the world.'

Christian Aid warned that a rejection of refugees, whatever their faith, is 'a rejection of Christian values'. Tom Viita, Head of Advocacy, said,

'Six decades ago we came together to establish international laws to avoid repeating the horrors experienced by millions of people during the first two world wars. President Trump is now effectively ripping up the principle that every person, irrespective of their faith or nationality, has the right to seek protection and sanctuary.

'World leaders and ordinary people need to take a stand against Trump's attempts to destroy hard won freedoms and human rights.

'President Trump is not alone in his abhorrent attitude towards refugees. We are seeing the normalisation of an increasingly hostile rhetoric towards people whose suffering is, frankly, beyond what most of us can imagine.

'More than eleven million people from Syria alone have been displaced from their homes, owing to the bloodshed of the six-year civil war in the country. The reality is that most Syrian refugees are hosted in, and by, developing countries. Rich nations, including the UK and the US, must not turn a blind eye to people in desperate need. Resettlement of refugees is part of the path to peace.'

Eco Church celebrates first year

A scheme to help churches undertake positive environmental steps resulted in hundreds of actions taken

Around 450 churches signed up to the Eco Church scheme after its launch at the beginning of 2016.

The scheme encourages a range of actions, from using a renewable energy supplier and improving energy efficiency to teaching about creation care and ensuring its land is sustainably managed. Bronze, silver and gold awards are given accordingly.

Lyme Regis Baptist Church was among the first to sign up to be an Eco Church.

Its Eco Church Rep Izzy Woodman explained how it has impacted all areas of church life. 'What I have particularly enjoyed about Eco Church is how accessible and easy to use it is.

'It gets churches thinking about the environment on a practical, spiritual and missional level in a way that I don't think the church has ever been challenged to before. It provokes you to think about areas you had never thought of having an impact on the environment.'

The scheme is led by A Rocha UK, with support from the Church of England, the Methodist Church, Christian Aid and Tearfund.

Its Churches and Theology Director Dr Ruth Valerio, said, 'Looking after our common home is an essential part of living out the Gospel, and Eco Church can inspire and equip us to do that well.

'I'm thrilled with how Eco Church has taken off this year, and it has been exciting watching churches of all shapes and sizes getting involved. I've particularly loved visiting churches that have gained awards and seeing the impact that taking part in Eco Church has had on them as a church and in their communities.'

To mark the first anniversary of the Eco Church initiative 'green communions' took place across the UK from Canterbury Cathedral to York Minster.

A special order of service was written by the Precentor of Canterbury Cathedral, Matthew Rushton, containing bible verses, liturgies, and prayers and there was even an earth-friendly bread recipe on the Eco Church website.

Baptisms

Ashurst Drive Baptist Church, Ilford, Essex: 1

Bedworth Baptist Church, Warwickshire: Justin Tidmarsh, Mirjam Ridout

Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield: Akbar, Amin, Sherko, Hamidreza, Jevad, Ali Reza, Meisam, Sadegh, Hamid, Keywan, Mahdi, Zahra

Christ Church, Ramsbottom: Rosie Barnes

Desborough Baptist Church, Kettering: David Hutchinson

Upton Vale Baptist Church, Torquay: Mike Loveridge, Mike Edney, Debbie Mountford, Karl Quirk, Geoff Ennals, Roisin Payne

Obituary

The Revd Margaret Piper (née Phillips): 1925-2016 ['A pioneer among Baptist women'](#)