



22 February, 2017

News:

"Dismay" at suspension of Dubs policy

The Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, has joined leaders of four churches to express concern at the intention to suspend a programme for the safe re-settlement of unaccompanied minors seeking refuge in the United Kingdom

In what has come to be known as the "Dubs" amendment, Parliament committed, in May 2016, to an ongoing programme of resettlement for lone children. While exact figures were not given in final legislation, the number envisaged was considerably more than the limit that has now been imposed. The intention to suspend the programme was made in a written ministerial statement earlier this week.

In a joint statement and a letter to the Home Secretary Amber Rudd, the leaders urged the Government to reconsider and to adopt a policy that places the wellbeing of children above any other consideration.

Their statement points out the potentially damaging effect of signalling to already vulnerable minors that they are unlikely to find safe passage and re-settlement if they make themselves known to relevant authorities. There is compelling evidence that many such children have simply "disappeared" from the temporary refugee camps.

It also highlights work already done by churches and community groups to provide welcome and support for refugee children and families, and encourages an approach that actively seeks to engage with such agencies, rather than limiting provision to the capacity of Local Authorities.

Signing the letter and statement alongside Mrs Green were Right Rev Dr Russell Barr, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Kevin Watson, General Assembly Moderator of the United Reformed Church, and the Revd Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard, President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference.

Mrs Green said, 'I have visited some of the temporary camps for myself and have been deeply moved both by the humanity of those who live there, and the

vulnerability of unaccompanied children and young people who seek shelter within those communities.

'Many have already been robbed of much of their childhood and we have a moral responsibility to do all that we can to protect them and provide places of refuge and support.'

Dr Barr said, 'We urge UK Government ministers to reconsider and we remain willing to work with the Home Office to find creative ways to deliver on the widespread expectation on the part of the general public to achieve the goal of 3,000 children as soon as possible.

'As Christians we believe that there is a moral imperative to 'love our neighbour', illustrated in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, that defines anyone in need as our neighbour regardless of race, nationality, religion, language or culture.'

Mr Watson added, 'We lament this decision made by the Government, which must do all that is within its power to recognise and uphold the rights of children fleeing conflict.'

On Thursday Home Secretary Amber Rudd stated that the Dubs had acted as a draw for children and people traffickers, a view shared by the French authorities. 'We don't want to incentivise journeys to Europe,' she said.

'It acts as a pull. It encourages the people traffickers.'

The charity Help Refugees is challenging the Government's "failure to properly implement the Dubs Amendment" in a judicial review. The closure of the Dubs Scheme is set to be debated in the House of Commons on Thursday (23 February).

Injustice, Luther and Luther King

Want to challenge injustice? There is much to learn from Martin Luther and Martin Luther King, say the organisers of a new event exploring the theologies and prophetic contributions of the two revolutionaries

Luther led the Protestant Reformation, which took place 500 years ago, while Luther King, a Baptist minister, was a key figure in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s.

While they were two very different men from different ages, both challenged injustice. The movements they spearheaded had a 'significant impact on the Church and its place in the public square,' explained Wale Hudson Roberts, Justice Enabler at the Baptist Union.

'Both Martins inspired their movements to transform Christian dogma and praxis.

'They encouraged the restoration of an internal order, a new sense of community, one in which the flourishing of the 'other', regardless of difference, is protected, appreciated and respected as normative. Theological and social liberation were central to the revolutions they led.

'It is important these life changing movements are not locked in the histories past, but influence and inform the future.'

The Justification and Justice Symposium will investigate the histories of both Martins and apply them to our churches. It will also explore the Baptist Union Apology for Slavery 10 years on, and aims to provide tools to equip Baptist leaders and churches to build a justice-centred church.

It takes place at Spurgeon's College on 8 April. Speakers include Devon Dick (President of the Jamaica Baptist Union), Lynn Green (General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain) and David Muir (Tutor at Roehampton University).

'Justice - morally right behaviour and treatment of people - is massively important to God,' said Mr Hudson-Roberts. 'How the church can live justly and speak truth to power are consistent themes throughout the Bible.

'The Symposium will challenge the 21st Century Church not to relegate following Christ to the private realm, but to be the justice conscience of our society - by building just churches that speak and act like Christ.'

Anti-poverty charities team up

The UK's largest provider of foodbanks the Trussell Trust has formally joined forces with debt charity Christians Against Poverty (CAP), it has been announced

The Trussell Trust already works with debt advice agency Community Money Advice (CMA), and this agreement with CAP provides "further opportunity to seek long-term solutions for families', the organisations said in a statement.

Debt and low income are among the most common causes of hunger in the UK, according to the Trussell Trust.

Adrian Curtis, Foodbank Network Director for The Trussell Trust said, 'We know that thousands of families are going hungry every year because of issues like debt – that's why foodbanks in our network offer support beyond emergency food, signposting to local agencies to help people tackle the roots of their crisis.

'We know that people who visit foodbanks often have a range of complex needs and we're delighted to now be formally linked with CAP, as well as CMA, to ensure these most vulnerable people get the invaluable support these charities can offer.

'This new agreement means it will be even more easy for people with debt, unemployment, or budgeting problems to find a more positive future.'

Matt Barlow, Chief Executive of CAP said, 'Every person crippled by grinding poverty deserves us to be working together to find solutions and that is why today marks a huge step forward for the most vulnerable in the UK.'

'Many of our partner churches are already helping their communities by running a Trussell Trust foodbank alongside a CAP centre so there's a natural crossover and makes total sense for our organisations to now be formally linked.'

'We are looking forward to seeing foodbanks and CAP centres around the UK working together to provide hope and solutions to help people stay out of crisis.'

Around 1 in 12 referrals are due to debt, but this does not take into account debts arising as a result of benefits issues, which continue to be the most likely reason a person is referred to a Trussell Trust foodbank. From April 2015 to March 2016, Trussell Trust foodbanks provided 1,109,309 three day emergency food supplies to people in crisis.

A CAP survey of 1,200 debt clients showed 93 per cent were able to feed their family following debt counselling advice from the charity. In recent years CAP has focused on the causes of poverty, providing not just 306 debt centres but 169 job clubs, hundreds of money management courses, CAP Release Groups for people to break addictive behaviours and the latest addition, CAP Life Skills, to help people live well on a budget. CAP helped more than 21,000 people during 2016.

Showing God's love to mums and their babies

How a Yorkshire church met a need among new mothers in its community

Eighteen months ago South Ossett Baptist Church in West Yorkshire employed a family and children's worker to support the families in the surrounding area - Tracy Shields.

Tracy takes up the story: 'The first thing we did was open a community cafe to try to establish what was needed. The Early Years Hub contacted us at the same time looking for a venue to run their baby-weighing service.'

'We quickly married the two together and what a joy it is to show God's love to mums and their babies at such an important stage in their lives.'

'We have a regular attendance of over 20 parents/carers and their babies and older children. Some call in only when they want to weigh their babies but we have seen many come every week and form much needed networks with other mums.'

'We are always on hand to nurse babies to give mum a break but the most wonderful thing is seeing a sleep-deprived mum walk in and be given an individual tray, teapot or cafetiere and watch her face as she is offered this small luxury. This one act of extravagance alone allows us to share the love of God and recognise what an amazing job she is doing raising a new life.

'Because the group had a meeting just two days before Christmas Day we held a mini Christingle service within the cafe which was attended by over 20 families. What a great morning it was!

'Recently we have started to run monthly on a Saturday morning predominantly for working families as we realised how much of an impact returning to work had on staying connected with other families. We will keep you posted as to how this venture works.

'Above this we continue to seek God for His plans for our small fellowship and to share His love with those we get the pleasure of serving.'

Home Mission story: Northfleet North

- **Bringing God's love to the community in an underprivileged area, in practical and spiritual ways**
- **Developing trust within the community, and being welcomed as friends instead of with suspicion**

Northfleet North is situated on the North of Kent on the River Thames very close to Bluewater shopping centre. It is a small forgotten village on the outskirts of Gravesend with little Christian influence as the local C of E church is a 10 min walk away.

It is an underprivileged area with all the problems associated with a poor, deprived and forgotten population, crime, drugs, violence etc. The area is divided into three zones which the residents are very territorial about and it is very unusual for a resident from one zone to venture into another. This means that this area is split, to some extent.

I have been working in this community for the past five years with a small team of people. We bring God's love to this community in practical as well as spiritual ways, building good relationships as we go. Currently we run a kids' church that is attended by between 15-20 kids every fortnight, an adults' church which has a solid core group of eight, a youth group of between six to eight young people, a men's group of four men and we also run CAP courses on a one to one basis in conjunction with the

local food bank. I also am well known in the community and spend time visiting many locals for coffee and chat.

Since this work started in the area there have been many changes as to how we are perceived. We are no longer looked at with suspicion as another group of do-gooders who will leave after a few months, but we are welcomed as friends and members of this community. People who can be trusted and will try and help, whatever the problems are, even if that is only being a listening ear. As a result this area, that when I first started my ministry had a feeling of depression and hopelessness, now feels more optimistic and lighter, although it does still have many problems.

Things to thank God for:

- The team of volunteers who selflessly give up their time to advance God's kingdom in Northfleet
- His faithfulness in creating opportunities and building bridges in this community
- Having the free use of halls and the location of my residence which is in neutral territory.

Things to ask God for:

- A leader for the youth group
- The men's group to really gel and take off this year
- Someone technical who could set up and maintain a website/Facebook page

Practical needs:

- More funding as we have so much we would like to do
- Somewhere to store all the stuff we have to sustain the children's work
- Free access to a Christian counsellor as many of the adults and teenagers have deep-seated problems
- A pastoral team member
- Someone to help with making a promotional film about the work in Northfleet

Specific goals, plans events:

- Solid festival for kids
- To expand kids' work to include another part of Northfleet
- Soul Survivor for the youth
- Summer kids' club
- Men's group to attend CVM's Iron Man conference
- Outings for adults
- Mum's breakfast and craft club

- Ladies' group to start
- Pub work to resume

How are things?

It is hard working in a pioneering situation; often there is little to show for all the hard work that is put into this area. So we do celebrate the little things. For example when a child asks a question about God or where the discussions in the adult church move to spiritual matters. We are a close group and generally we are very happy and motivated.

Thank you so much to everyone who supports us in the vital work, whether that is financially or spiritually - you are all awesome and God's kingdom would not be growing in this area without your loving and generous support.

100,000+ take the 40acts challenge

More than 104,000 people have already signed up to 40acts, a generosity campaign which encourages people to complete a simple act of generosity each day during Lent

On each of the 40 days of Lent, participants receive a daily challenge to complete alongside a message from one of 40 different Christian writers, thinkers and leaders. Every day people are encouraged to 'give out' rather than the traditional Lenten practise of giving something up.

40acts was created by charity Stewardship and is now in its seventh year.

Debbie Wright, Head of Content at Stewardship, recently travelled around the country, listening to lives that have been touched by stories of generosity and of the 40acts movement.

She said, 'Now that 40acts has been running for seven years, it's wonderful to hear of its far-reaching impact on the lives of people around the UK and the world! People's lives have been literally changed through the generosity of others and inspiration of 40acts.'

'It's exciting to see people embrace a new approach to Lent; reflecting God's incredible generosity on the cross through simple daily acts of generosity.'

This year there are new 40acts resources for church groups, small groups, and families. Youth groups and schools can also take part. 40acts 2017 will kick off on Wednesday 1 March 2017.

Baptisms and other notices

Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church, Herts: Sarah Barrington, Sarah McCulloch

Bromham Baptist Church, Bedford: Annabel Hale, and Amelia Davidson-Smith
Castleton Baptist Church, Gwent: Anne Child, Lynne Adams, Christine Symonds,
David Morgan, Phillip Whitwell
Lockwood Baptist Church, Huddersfield: Ahmad (Adam), Jasem (John), Ebrahim (Ebi),
and Ali (Jason)
Park Baptist Church, Great Yarmouth: Kevin Ward

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

Baptism stories

Lockwood Baptist and Elam Ministries celebrate four baptisms

Minister Brian Davison shares news of baptisms at the Huddersfield church

In June 2016 six Iranian Christians arrived in Lockwood in two houses just around the corner from us, and became regular worshippers with us. Two had been baptised elsewhere, and four asked in September 2016 to be prepared for baptism. They were prepared for Baptism by the Revd Brian Walters and John Lewis, assisted by Peter Bell of Elam ministries and an interpreter, while the Revd Brian Davison focused on supporting them in their asylum applications.

Since then there have been a number of comings and goings but in January those four, along with another who joined us later on, were all accepted for baptism and membership. Sadly one of the four, Abbas, was detained for removal to Germany, to pursue his asylum claim there, before he could be baptised with us.

However the remaining four were baptised on 5 February in a joint service with Elam ministries.

The service was jointly led by Brian Sadegh Dabiri from Elam. We worshipped in our own languages using songs that were written in English, with equivalent Farsi words written to fit the tune (not just word for word translation). We prayed the Lord's prayer in our own languages, Bible passages were displayed in both languages, and Brian and Sadegh preached together and carried out the baptism together. They were welcomed into membership, and we celebrated communion together, with members of LBC and Elam serving.

As part of the celebration of the new life expressed in 2 Cor 5:17, the candidates expressed a wish to relinquish their old Islamic names and choose new Christian names, (For now this is informal, but once their residence is established they can follow it up by deed poll). Ahmad became "Adam", Jasem, "John", Ebrahim, "Ebi" and Ali chose "Jason". Not all are biblical, but all are new and have no direct connection with Islam.

Abbas is now pursuing his asylum claim in Germany, (under the Dublin convention) and our prayers are with him.

Death

PLUMMER (nee Turner), Mary

Wife of Ex-Baptist Minister Philip J Plummer died aged 82 on Valentine's Day 2017.

"At ease" after many years of fighting through operations and various treatments, courageously borne.

Any tributes to Guide Dogs for the Blind