



14 June, 2017

News:

General Election 2017

A statement from General Secretary Lynn Green to Baptists following the General Election

Dear Sisters and brothers in Christ,

After weeks of campaigning, argument and counter-argument, the General Election is over, though the reality that has emerged is one of uncertainty. This will no doubt have an unsettling effect on our national life, and perhaps more than ever, as God's people, we can draw strength from the words of the Psalmist:

*Nations are in an uproar . . . kingdoms totter;
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge
. . . . Be still and know that I am God!* [from Psalm 46]

Let us pray in the days ahead for everyone involved in the various discussions and negotiations that will seek to form a Government. Our vision of the Kingdom of God has much to say about the political issues of our day, but it also points us to higher realities that transcend earthly politics. Our calling to be beacons of hope has particular significance at this time.

As a Baptist community, our hopes and expectations for the discussions that are now underway are likely to be varied. But whatever our individual perspectives, we might all recognise that no political party, manifesto or ideology is entirely wrong or right. Whoever eventually forms our Government will face a significant and demanding task, and irrespective of our political allegiances, will need our prayers as they seek to lead our nations forward.

Our calling as a Gospel people is to proclaim those messages of justice and righteousness that are central to the Kingdom of God. Whatever the eventual outcome, much will depend not only on the perspectives and actions of the Government that is formed but how we, as Christians along with other citizens, engage in the life of our communities and nation as things go forward.

Uncertainty may well prevail in the earthly realm, but we can draw strength and encourage others to do the same, by recognising the eternal and unassailable realities of our faith. As we gather for worship in the coming days, I encourage Baptist congregations to pray for our United Kingdom and all who hold responsibility and office in public life. But as we do so, let us also not become so pre-occupied with our own situation, that we lose sight of the needs and challenges of the wider world.

'Let us continue our journey to justice'

The first comprehensive appraisal of the journey towards equity and reconciliation among British and Jamaican Baptists has been released.

Journeying to Justice is a new book featuring contributions from a variety of scholars and practitioners who together explore Black Baptist relations between England and the Caribbean.

It comes as our Union nears the 10th anniversary of its Apology for Slavery.

Journeying to Justice has been edited by scholar Dr Anthony Reddie alongside the Revd Gale Richards, minister of Zion Baptist Church in Cambridge, and the Revd Wale Hudson-Roberts, justice advisor to the Baptist Union.

All three editors and a number of contributors were present for the official launch at Regent's Park College, Oxford on Tuesday, 6 June.

Opening the launch, the Revd Dr Nick Wood, tutorial fellow in Religion and Culture, commented that the book was a 'landmark' on our Union's road to justice. The fact that the word *journeying* was used, instead of *journey*, showed the process was ongoing despite progress being made, he noted.

Anthony, who grew up in the Methodist tradition, said the very existence of the book was an affirmation of the wider Baptist denomination. 'No comparable denomination has apologised, and is on a journey to justice,' he said.

The most important people, however, were all those who have struggled towards justice, 'who never got to write, whose names were not recorded in history, who were just seen as human chattel.'

'There is something in the human spirit that tells us to resist.' Anthony continued. Though the book offers diverse voices, all speak to the enduring truth of the gospel of Christ as a means of effecting social, political and spiritual transformation.

Gale authored a chapter which focused on the implementation of *The Journey*, the strategic recommendations which followed the Apology. She spoke of the changing context: the very structure which had brought about the Apology and *The Journey* changed as part of the Futures process.

She highlighted the need for joined up thinking and strategic partnerships in tackling justice issues. Resources are often few, she said, and the reality is that 'hearts and minds are difficult to penetrate'.

Nevertheless, she spoke of her hopes that the book would help to make others more aware of these realities, which in turn would inspire more people to work towards justice.

Another contributor, Rhaea Russell-Cartwright of John Bunyan Baptist Church in Oxford, gave a brief testimony documenting marginalisation she had experienced as someone with dual nationality. What shocked her during her time at university was people's unwillingness to empathise. 'These weren't racists or bigots,' Rhaea said, 'but friends and colleagues.'

A service took place as part of the launch, which included the reading of an extract from *Journeying to Justice*. Before preaching Wale thanked Regent's Park College for being a friend on *The Journey*, and for its 'wrestling and grappling with these very difficult issues'.

Taking Galatians 3 as his text, he said that Paul's words of absolute equality under Christ's rule were comforting.

However, sadly, 'this is not played out in society or church.' People of colour still experience racism.

Among the factors that underpin this reality is white privilege. White represents beauty, power, honour and intellect, Wale said. This didn't make him jealous, but angry when this privilege is misused. And even people of colour have inculcated white theology.

He concluded: 'Let us continue our journey to justice. We have made strides, but post-Apology we have many strides to make.'

A number of endorsements have been received for *Journeying to Justice*:

'This is necessary reading for all concerned with the complexities of both the colonial and postcolonial church and justice.' Michael N. Jagessar, writer, theologian and intercultural practitioner, United Reformed Church

'I cannot commend this book enough for those interested in learning about Black Baptist tradition as a unique Christian phenomenon shaped by the rich cultural exchange between the UK and the Caribbean and the activism to which it gave rise.' Stephen G. Ray Jr., President, The Society for the Study of Black Religion

Visit the Authentic website to order Journeying to Justice. Visit our dedicated page for more details: www.baptist.org.uk/j2j

Baptist churches to screen The Shack

A group of Baptist churches have arranged a special screening of The Shack, which will be followed by a question and answer session with the film's director

The Shack is the film adaption of the popular book by William P Young. It opened in British cinemas on 9 June, and is directed by Christian Stuart Hazledine, whose brother David is a Baptist minister.

Baptist churches in Berkshire have teamed up with the Showcase cinema complex in Reading to offer a special screening on 16 June.

The idea was to get a mix of Christians and those with no church background to watch the film and then discuss the issues it raises after, explained Keith Wilson, minister of Lower Earley Baptist Church, one of the participating churches.

'The idea for hosting a special screening came from my wife, Ann. Ann had read the book and been so moved by its impact that she wanted to both see the film and hear what other people thought about its portrayal of faith being found through suffering.

'As a church we realised this was an event that would work well as a joint project so we teamed up with friends at Wokingham, Shinfield, Woodley and Tyndale Baptist churches to hire out the largest screen at the Showcase complex in Reading.

'The team at Showcase headquarters have been extremely helpful and would be delighted to help other churches wishing to put on special screenings. We're also have wonderful support from Damaris.'

Hettie's hundred years at Eastleigh

Hettie Clift was first brought to Eastleigh Baptist Church as a three week old baby during the First World War. A member ever since, the church helped her celebrate turning 100 recently

Hettie Ellen Clift was born on 16 April 1917 in Eastleigh, where she has lived all her life. At three weeks old, Hettie was introduced to Eastleigh Baptist Church by her

parents who were devout Christians. She was received into membership at the communion service on 6 December 1959. At that time, the church was known as Union Baptist Church, Eastleigh and the minister was Dennis Banfield.

Due to failing health, Hettie has been unable to attend church in recent years, so it seemed appropriate for her to return on her 100th birthday which fell on Easter Sunday. She sang the traditional hymns word perfect and with gusto, and soon picked up the tunes of the more modern hymns which were unfamiliar to her.

Hettie loves singing and sang in the church choir from the age of 13 until her late 70s. She was also responsible for preparing the table for communion each month for morning and evening services, and was involved with cleaning the church and visiting church members who were sick.

Hettie was well known for making marmalade and cakes for church bazaars as well as knitting items for the shoe box appeal; she recalls being given £5 to make something and seeing what profit she could make from selling it. A group of people met once a week and they took it in turns to make a cake to have with their tea and coffee. Hettie says that this was the start of what was to become the coffee shop at Wells Place, where she also helped.

For many years Hettie served refreshments at the weekly Grandads' Club and was very involved in catering for their Anniversary Tea. Eventually the club grew so popular that the tea moved to the Town Hall and all the crockery had to be carried there from the church – quite a task! Another area of service was at the Luncheon Club where week by week Hettie would help prepare the lunch, lay tables and serve the guests.

In later years Hettie has not always enjoyed good health, but remained as independent as possible. She went to church as often as possible because her faith was so important to her. On several occasions, while in hospital, she would say that she could feel people's love in their prayers for her, and this meant a lot. The church kindly provided Hettie with a DVD player so she could watch any services she had missed.

Hettie has been in a nursing home for the past couple of years. She has been blessed with regular visitors from the church to give her communion or just to pray with her. She spends time with her niece Hilary and great-nephew Jonathon reading passages from the Bible and saying prayers as her faith has been her guide through life.

On this momentous occasion, many church members joined Hettie at the nursing home in the afternoon to share a birthday tea with her. To have been a member of the same church for so long, as well as being their first centenarian, is an achievement indeed!

Award for Aberfan radio programme

A programme presented by Baptist minister and broadcaster Roy Jenkins about the 50th anniversary of the Aberfan disaster has won a Sandford St Martin award

All Things Considered – Aberfan 50 Year Anniversary saw Roy examine how the disaster affected the lives and faith of the people in the small mining community of Aberfan. It was made by the BBC Wales, Religious Programmes Team.

On Wednesday night (7 June) it won the radio category in the 2017 Sandford St Martin Awards, which celebrate excellence in religious programmes.

On the morning of 21 October 1966, in the small mining village of Aberfan, an avalanche of colliery waste slipped down the mountainside, swept through houses, and overwhelmed Pantglas Junior School. It killed 144 people, 116 of them children.

The programme reflected on what the event did to the faith of people caught up in it. Some who found their beliefs shaken to the roots became atheists. For others, faith became more firmly rooted and it's shaped their lives ever since.

Journalist and editor Nicola Meyrick, a member of the radio jury, said, 'In the midst of so much coverage of the fiftieth anniversary, this beautifully-constructed, moving programme was all the more powerful for its thoughtful, quiet approach.'

At the time of writing, the programme was still available on the BBC:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07zdlgn>

Elsewhere, Actress Sally Phillips' moving BBC Two documentary about Down's Syndrome, *A World Without Down's Syndrome?* won not only the award for best TV but also beat an eclectic list of nominations to snap up the Radio Times Readers' Award, voted for by readers of the magazine.

The only non-BBC winner on the night was in the Children's category, where CCTV Limited's documentary for TrueTube.co.uk *Refugee* took the honours.

Chair of the Children's jury, David Almond said, 'Amongst all the delights on offer within the shortlist, the judges felt that one entry - a drama - stood out for its insightful storytelling.

'It showed a family escaping from a war zone, becoming refugees. Along with an ambitious, action-packed script and clever use of flashbacks, it really does show how it would be if it happened to us and not to a 'stranger', not to another from another place. It brings the world into our own home.'

For more on this year's winners, visit: <http://sandfordawards.org.uk/2017-award-winners/>

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/499448/Award_for_Aberfan.aspx

Strode Crescent Baptist Church, Sheerness

- A church sustained by God through the challenges affecting church members
- Continuing to support young mums and children through Nappichinos
- Developing a ministry with the survivors of sexual abuse through 'Restore the Years'
- A church grateful for Home Mission funding which has been a life-line to local mission and ministry

Hello to all the friends and prayer supporters of Strode! So, what's going on in the far-flung wilds of the Isle of Sheppey?

What are we up to?

To be brutally honest, life at Strode has been a little hard these past few months as we have many of our people with long term or acute conditions or illness. Whilst they are still able to come on Sundays, they are now reaching a point in their lives where they are not able to be practically involved in front-line mission. Sadly, this is starting to impact what we can do: there is so much we could do, but are not able to due to lack of workers.

We are still engaged in our work among young mums with Nappichinos, the children who live in the same street as us, and our monthly Family Fun nights. And, on Tuesday mornings, Ron and his team of helpers still serve breakfasts and coffee to a variety of people who drop by. 'Restore the Years', a charity set up by one of our church members and run from the church, is for survivors of sexual abuse. This is very much a ministry given to Anthea and is growing and developing at a rate of knots, such is the demand for it in this area.

Our Easter celebrations consisted of a Tenebrae service on the evening of Maundy Thursday, joining with the other churches on the Island at Bunnybank on Good Friday and celebrating the anniversary of the most amazing day in history, here in the church with an Easter baptism! Fiona has been coming along to Strode for about two months now, and has become a follower of Jesus in that time.

Points for Praise

We praise and thank God for the way he is sustaining us here, and enabling those who can, to keep working and just 'being' his people.

We thank God for the start of a new home group.

We praise God for the work of 'Restore the Years' and the work it is doing to empower the survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Practical Needs

The outside of our two storey church building needs redecorating this year. If we're to pay to have it done, it would cost about £3,500 - money we just don't have at the moment. We need to find someone able to do it for us for less than this (we can provide scaffolding!)

When I started my ministry I felt God calling me to live in a caravan in a caravan site. The church was up for this and bought a caravan and for the past year I have lived there very happily. As a single person, (never married) I thought I was destined to stay that way until the sun set, in my lovely van with the ducks outside! However, God had other thoughts, and I am now planning to marry Joe on 2 September. He is very tall, and wouldn't comfortably fit into my little home, so I am moving in with him. This leaves the church with a caravan – and the need to recoup as much of the money we spent on it as possible! If anyone is interested – please get in touch with June, our secretary.

More people to join the family who are passionate about Jesus and still active workers!!

Goals for the coming Year

- To teach the 'baby Christians' in the fellowship to help them develop into healthily, strong believers.
- To encourage those who are tired and to spur them on to deepen their lives of faith.
- To keep the work we are currently doing on top form and a good witness to Jesus.
- To see the work of 'Restore the Years' grow and develop as God leads.

Things in General

Our long-time caretaker and guitarist, Graham has been very poorly for a long time now, and last week was admitted to hospital quite severely unwell. Please pray for him, that God's best plans would be worked out in his life.

The shape of our morning services are forever changing and it is great to see how people are becoming more involved with what is going on on Sundays. Whilst we don't currently have a need for a children's work, we occasionally have a couple of children who are encouraged to take part in the service as they are able.

To some of you, giving to Home Mission may be something boring, or meaningless. To us here at Strode, there have been times when Home Mission has been our life-

line to ministry and we give you our heartfelt thanks. We are based in a very poor community, and, due to the make-up of our church family only four people are in current employment - the rest are in receipt of benefits or pensions. Like many places, we count every penny twice before we spend it, but are not scared to spend on mission. Throughout the history of the church here, God has been faithful and, though things have sometimes looked bleak, we have always come through. To him be the glory!!