



11 July, 2018

News:

'...and your daughters shall prophesy'

In response to this Celebrating, Surviving and Thriving - Women in Baptist Ministry conference, the participants published the following statement for our Baptist family:

In June 2018, the Gender Justice Hub and the BME Women Ministers' Network presented a conference at IMC in Birmingham for Baptist women ministers, non-ordained women in a qualifying office, MiTs and those exploring a call to ministry.

In response to this Celebrating, Surviving and Thriving - Women in Baptist Ministry conference, the participants published the following statement for our Baptist family:

In celebration of the centenary of the recognition of women to be Baptist ministers, we commit ourselves into our shared life and take courage to step forward in living out our call. This conference calls on our Baptist family to support women, of all ages and ethnic and social backgrounds, in the following ways:

By joining with us to celebrate and support the ministry of women, sharing and teaching with vigour the biblical and theological foundations for their affirmation by successive Baptist Union Councils, and reporting the many ways in which women in ministry at all levels are growing our churches and advancing the mission of God.

By making it a priority to identify and utilise women who will mentor, accompany and be role models to women at all stages of exploring a call and of ministry, recognising that all women are different and their experiences vary widely.

By providing frequent opportunities for experience such as apprenticeships, placements, shadowing, preaching opportunities, and by intentionally equipping and calling emerging women ministers and leaders.

By challenging ourselves to be more aware of questions of justice, to reflect on our assumptions and biases, to ensure fairness within our structures, processes and

behaviour, such as exploring a call and National Settlement, and commit together to equity of opportunity and expectation.

Chaplain's staff support service recognised

A Baptist hospital chaplain who developed a staff support programme has been featured in a national Care Quality Commission publication highlighting people who have made a difference in NHS Trusts

The Revd Sarah Crane is team chaplain at Milton Keynes University Hospital, where in 2016 she launched a peer-to-peer staff listening service.

The Care Quality Commission is the independent regulator of all health and social care services in England. Its recent publication Driving Improvements highlighted individuals who have made a difference in NHS trusts around the country. The peer-to-peer staff listening service, and Sarah's role in developing it, is featured alongside stories of surgeons, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and managers.

The listening service was devised to make sure that staff who need a listening ear can stop anyone in the trust wearing an easily identifiable badge. To date the trust has trained 51 volunteers, who in the first 19 months of the service talked to 1,045 staff. Of the conversations around 40 per cent were work related, and 60 per cent were not.

Sarah explained that the service came about after a staff survey highlighted a need for more staff support. A colleague had heard about a similar peer-to-peer service the East Midlands Ambulance Service which aimed to tackle an increase in long term sickness and mental health problems.

'We felt that it would be really good to try and do something similar here,' Sarah said. 'The rationale was very simple – patient experience and staff experience are very closely linked. We can't expect staff to weather all storms, at home and at work and just keep going without being able to talk about the things which are bothering them.'

Staff were invited to be supportive listening volunteers. They were given half a day training on listening skills and basic techniques.

The service doesn't offer advice or counselling but signposts people to more specific support and information where the volunteer feels that would be helpful. Sarah's hope is that no one feels they have to go home from work carrying a burden they could have talked to someone about.

'I think all of us know the benefit of talking to someone when you're feeling a bit cross, tired or grumpy, but it's also about the bigger things of life that can easily get any of us down,' she said.

'From my perspective, our staff are our greatest resource in every sense and it's a total privilege to be at the heart of trying to care for the people who offer our wider community such kindness and compassion.'

Sarah also spoke of her delight at the way volunteers, staff and board have responded to the service.

'I am really proud of the support our volunteers are offering. It is humbling the way staff want to support each other and make sure that both friends and strangers are able to have a shoulder to cry on.

'For me, one of the benefits of formalising things a bit is that it gives permission on both sides – both to the person giving the support and to the person in need of a listening ear – that the hospital board see the value of caring for our staff.

'Having launched in September 2016 I am delighted that the service has continued to grow and receive support from the hospital board here. Each one of our volunteers is an ambassador for the hope that each member of the hospital team will feel that they matter and are worthy of kindness and a listening ear.

'Hospital chaplaincy is an immense privilege and I feel very fortunate to be working here at Milton Keynes.'

'God laid this fellowship firmly on my heart'

The congregation's desire to reach out to more families led the Revd Vanessa Rye to Princes Risborough Baptist Church in Buckinghamshire, where she becomes the first female minister in the church's 311 year history

Vanessa had served as associate minister of Didcot Baptist Church for six years, where among other aspects of her ministry she had played a key role in developing prayer spaces in schools in the town.

'After many years of serving God and the church in Didcot, I felt the nudge of the spirit of God, prompting me to explore what new adventure God might be calling me to next. So, the unsettling process of settlement began,' she said.

'Meeting the deacons of Princes Risborough Baptist Church one September evening I posed the question, "What are your hopes and dreams for this church?"

'The answer came back a quick as a flash, "To see it filled with children and families." Those who know me well will understand that is a passion of mine.

'God laid this fellowship firmly on my heart and although I was sad to leave Didcot and all we had achieved together, now was the time to move on and go where God was leading.'

Vanessa Rye is now the 29th minister of PRBC and the first female minister in the church's 311-year history. More than 160 people attended her induction service, which took on Saturday, 30 June, 2018, including more than 70 members of the fellowship of Didcot Baptist Church. There were also representatives from Union Baptist Church, High Wycombe, where Vanessa grew up and was baptised.

Paul Gabbott, PRBC Treasurer, gave a warm welcome to everyone and the service was then led by the Revd Geoff Colmer, Regional Minister of the Central Baptist Association.

Geoff opened with the words from Psalm 145: "The Lord is gracious and compassionate . . ." A time of worship followed, including prayer and the singing of: To God be the glory, Bless the Lord, O my Soul and Jesus, be the Centre.

The induction was introduced by Geoff, who commented that no two induction services were the same. God doesn't do the same thing twice but he brings together a church and a minister who covenant to walk together.

Paul Gobbott gave a statement for PRBC, in which he first thanked the Revd David Nash, who had acted as moderator during the church's pastoral vacancy and Geoff for his wisdom and guidance to the Church during this time. He then went on, with humour and sincerity, to recount the steps taken to bring church and minister together under God's guidance. The vote by the church membership to invite Vanessa to the ministry of the church had been a unanimous one, which confirmed the belief that this was God's choice too.

Vanessa in turn spoke of her call to Princes Risborough, adding, 'This is the beginning of a new adventure with God for me and the church.

'I pray that as we step forward in faith, that God will reveal the plans he has for us, to prosper us and to give hope to us and the community we are part of. To develop us into a church that welcomes children and families and helps them to come to a saving faith in Jesus.'

The words of the covenant were spoken by Vanessa and the church, before the words of recognition of the covenant made were spoken by friends and representatives of the wider church.

A prayer and blessing was given by Geoff, the Revd Tim O'Brien (minister of Didcot Baptist Church), the Revd Malcolm Hazell (Minister of Union Baptist Church, High Wycombe) and the deacons of PRBC.

The Revd David Kerrigan, former General Director BMS World Mission and an elder at Didcot Baptist Church, gave the address. Speaking from the story of those walking the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 28-32), David preached that we were all in the business of helping those who won't make it on their own and it was all about transformation that comes from recognising God. It is love that transforms. We have the potential to transform the community around us. Transformation comes from the ordinary things (such as a loaf of bread).

He continued: Vanessa Rye and this church are ordinary but if we encourage and respect each other, then this is a new day and the church is unique. If we "Be ourselves" we will not stay ordinary but we will be blessed. By faith God takes us in his hands, just as he took the bread in his hands, and we will then be agents of transformation. That may not be easy – so be creative – pray – believe it will happen - and then lives will be transformed. This is God's message.

Greetings were brought by the Revd Marcus Pawsey, on behalf of Churches Together in Risborough. Further Greetings were brought by Councillor Andy Ball, Deputy Mayor, on behalf of the Town Council and Community of Princes Risborough.

After the service tea was served in the adjacent hall, during which a letter of greeting was read out from the Revd Richard Allwood, former Minister of PRBC, now retired. Greetings were also brought by Tim, on behalf of the fellowship of Didcot Baptist Church.

'Ancient ideas all revved up'

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A community chaplain and pioneer church planter has created a suite of resources with a modern twist to help churches and schools better understand the timeless story of Jesus

The Revd Joe Haward, an ordained Baptist minister who founded This Hope in Newton Abbot in Devon, has developed the material to meet the needs of churches seeking to help their children better understand and grow in the Christian faith, and teachers tasked with delivering RE lessons.

Joe believes the use of modern analogy and characters can help point to deeper truths, which is why his new website revdjoel.com carries the quote: 'Ancient ideas all revved up.'

'I've realised that by listening to the modern story, we can somehow understand the old story,' he explains. 'The ideas of Jesus are part of our DNA. The stories of Jesus are embedded within many of our modern stories.'

'I thought there must be a way of developing resources for churches, schools and businesses.'

Joe has developed lesson plans and worksheets for churches, and for schools at Key Stage 1-3. The titles are peppered with modern culture references and language (Jesus the Superhero? Jesus as Batman; Junk World; #Filtered Life) – but all are designed to point to Jesus and help people understand Christian ideas.

Joe has a number of teacher friends, and learnt from them how they were struggling to teach RE. 'They tell me they just don't have the time to dedicate to it in way that does it justice.'

'I did a lot of research and felt there was a gap in the materials available to help them. So I wanted to create something that gives a really in-depth insight into the Christian story, and the stories of Jesus, using language and references that people would instantly understand.'

'Some teachers have told me, if these resources deliver, I'm a life saver. People have said the resources look vibrant and different.'

Alongside the resources geared for RE and church, Joe has also created material that explores mental health and wellbeing. 'I hear from my own daughter, who tells me some children are just going through awful stuff.'

'Also in churches, we are beginning to talk about mental health, but I don't know if we are talking about it well. I'm using real studies from real people.'

There's also a business element - Joe is a chaplain in an accountancy firm – to help businesses better understand human relationships and what makes people tick. 'Focusing on human dynamics and relationships helps us work better.'

Joe (pictured) is available to come and deliver workshops, seminars, and teaching that will help schools, churches, and businesses in understanding human relationship

dynamics, and how these ancient ideas are as important today as they have ever been. There are details of the topics he can come and speak on, as well as offering your own ideas, at revdjoe.com.

Joe is a church planter in Newton Abbot, and with funding set to end next year he hopes the creation of these resources will need to a sustainable income.

'This Hope is really strong on relationships. We've built relationships across the community, with people who don't go to church, which is great.

'But in terms of sustainability we have to look at other ways of funding.'

Joe is also looking for ambassadors, for those who could use the resources for free and promote them to others within their own context and circles. You can contact him via his website to find out more.

There are currently 52 lessons, with more to be added as the website develops. They can be purchased individually, or via a monthly or annual subscription.

Visit revdjoe.com for more.

'We know that such atrocities bring communities together and people turn to God'

The Revd Barry Davis, minister of Amesbury Baptist Church, reflects on the events which placed the church in the world spotlight last week

'Once the word Novichok was mentioned, my phone went crazy'

Amesbury Baptist Church
It was 5am on Wednesday and my wife awoke to hear my mobile ringing downstairs. She went downstairs, picked it up and glanced at the display "six missed calls". By this time, I had joined her, and I listened attentively: "This is a message for Revd Barry Davis would he please contact officer Z on this number."

Nervously I rang back and was informed that five people who had attended our community fun day had become ill and taken to Salisbury hospital, and that my church had now been cordoned off. Had we poisoned them with our hog roast being undercooked? Could it have been the food donations we give to local families in our area?

A sickness arose in my stomach. We had had such a lovely day on Saturday with over 200 joining us, enjoying the bouncy castles and assault course, and watching ferrets racing. One of our Fijian members had cooked food in their traditional style which

was a welcome addition this year to the food served. We have been holding this even for the past six years, in a community field opposite the church.

I quickly showered and went down to our local police station, entering with my Wiltshire Police Chaplain's badge. Inside I was greeted by an inspector I knew well and officer Z to whom I had just spoken. 'I'm sure it's nothing to worry about,' he said; but at that time little was known beyond sketchy information. Little did we know then and in a way, I was glad.

Throughout the day I expected to hear that others had also become ill, but there were no further developments. We did though, became aware that it was only two individuals who were critically ill in hospital rather than the original four to five that had been mooted. This brought relief that we had not caused any ill effects by the food that was provided at our event.

Later that evening with photographs that were released on the news, we realised that the male had not only attended our hog roast but had direct contact with two of our church members while there. It wasn't until the 10 o'clock news that the devastating broadcast was revealed to the world. We ensured those who had contact sought advice and cleared of any health risk. Our thoughts and prayers were focused very much on the couple that we became aware were Dawn and Charlie, and the multi agencies working tirelessly to save their lives.

Once the word Novichok was mentioned, my phone went crazy, as did that of our church secretary. In May I started the first part of my sabbatical and had left his number as a pastoral response in my absence. We had not updated our answering machine and his name and number was available to all who rang the church. Unfortunately, he had already been misquoted and criticised by his 'supposedly' remarks which made me reluctant to be interviewed.

He offered to meet with ITV and a time was agreed. I accompanied him and watched his professional response. This single crew were soon joined by every news agency in the UK as well as international colleagues such as Australia's Channel 7. It was not long before I was interviewed and filmed and in doing so it relieved some of the stress that had built up in me. Like most of us I had been subject to stressful situations in my life but never at the world's call with the spotlight on Amesbury Baptist Church - which at the time was one of only three places cordoned off.

The implications for those who use our building were a worry as many rely on an income from the use of the building and for those who attend support groups there such as AA and Spurgeons. I also felt sorry for our faithful butcher whose hog roaster sat inside our conservatory entrance awaiting collection, knowing he will be losing business.

Support

In one week I have received 118 emails (not that I am counting) of good will and praying for you all from 'my batch' at Regents Park College, my Regional Minister

(numerous times), many other Baptist churches, and many Christians in the UK and abroad and countless phone calls. I hopefully have replied to them all, albeit a simple 'bless you and thank you'. Other local Baptist ministers have phoned me offering their support and both the Anglican and Methodist ministers in Amesbury have offered their churches for our use, as well as two local schools.

I have no doubt that this will be a long haul and in the scheme of things, I realise it will be months before we get our building back. But that is all it is – a building, for the church will still gather. It is those who use our premises that will lose out financially. However I have been able to witness and share with our community all that which goes on day by day, in the life of any church. Daily I meet with the police who man the premises 24hrs informing them of the work sadly not happening. Most are not local, so I can repeat myself and share the good work happening all around the country by Christians serving in their own communities.

Church

I knew God was in this, of course. This tragic event would have happened regardless of Amesbury Baptist Church but for some reason Charlie attended our hog roast, was clearly in need and ministered to by two of the women in our church. This resulted in our church building being cordoned off, as one of the places visited by Charlie. As a result we were highlighted, in this unprecedented way, as a church, to all.

The verses Psalm 46.1-3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult spoke to me and I read out at the beginning of our Sunday service.

We are now a mobile church, all our church resources are locked in our church building. God has taken us out of our comfort zone. It is exciting and while we enjoyed the use of a local community hall last Sunday we do not plan to box ourselves into another building but rather to engage with our community and are seeking to be led to wherever God wants us and in what He wishes to do with us.

It is now over a week later and we have heard of the sad death of Dawn. Our thoughts and prayers continue for her three children, and for Charlie. We know that such atrocities bring communities together and people turn to God. We strongly believe that God will do something from this, something remarkable and that is both exciting and scary.

The Revd Barry Davis is minister of Amesbury Baptist Church