

# TOGETHER



## Everyday Evangelism

Some good news about  
Goodnewsing

Glen Marshall

Confidence in  
the Gospel

Lynn Green



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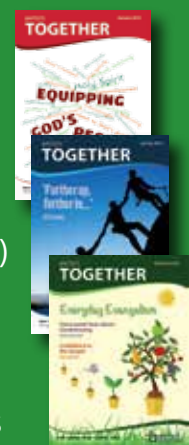
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# MORSHEDA NEEDS YOU

to pass  
a bucket  
around

Floods have destroyed Morsheda's home again and again, forcing the family to flee. Once, as the rushing waters rose, she had to put one of her children in a cooking pot and cling to it as it floated down the river.

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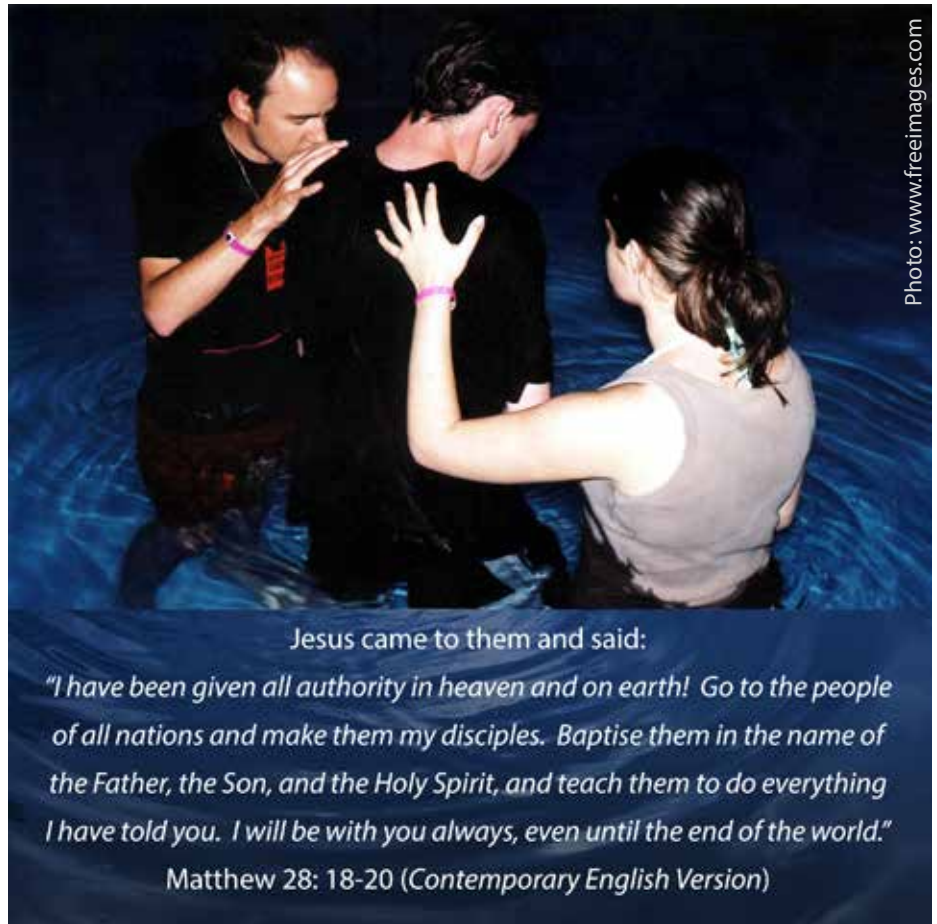
# Everyday Evangelism

Should evangelism be left to the gifted, anointed few? You probably know the answer. Certainly the third clause in our Union's Declaration of Principle (DoP) makes it clear, stating:

*'It is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.'*

Such language, even the word evangelism itself, can seem daunting, especially when we know that so many in the UK are yet to know Jesus. However, context is key. It helps to look more closely at the DoP, which is rooted in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and its three-fold pattern of authority, baptism and mission. The document *Something to Declare* (still a rewarding and relevant read) unpacked the DoP 20 years ago to explain how mission is a natural outcome of our lives as disciples 'baptised into the Trinitarian dynamic of the life of God'. Our discipleship is not 'a response of duty', more 'a participation in the energy and life of the missionary God'.

This means we are not meant to strike out on our own – mission is interactive, in partnership with the God who calls, equips and sends us. Mission is also responsive to different needs and contexts, and should not be 'narrowly focused in evangelism as proclamation'.



Jesus came to them and said:

*"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world."*

Matthew 28: 18-20 (Contemporary English Version)

This edition of *Baptists Together* magazine aims to highlight evangelism's wide scope, through a mix of articles examining what evangelism looks like, examples of it happening in our churches, and news and resources pointing to tools designed to equip us some more.

We must not shy away from lamenting that so many in the UK do not yet know Jesus; equally let's continue to explore the invitation God gives to *each and everyone of us* to be his partners in the here and now.

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# Evangelism:

## Some good news about goodnewsing by Glen Marshall

Jesus seemed to think that evangelism was an important part of being a disciple. He told Simon and Andrew that to follow him would mean fishing for people. He told those of his friends who stuck with him in Jerusalem that when he sent the Holy Spirit they would end up being his witnesses. According to Matthew, his parting words make it clear that to be a disciple is to make other disciples. It all seems pretty straightforward. If we call ourselves Christians we are meant to evangelise.

The same is true if we call ourselves Baptists. The official basis of our union only has three principles, one of those is that every disciple is to bear personal witness to the good news and take part in the evangelisation of the world.

So, how's that going?

Ah, thought as much, sorry to hear that.

More and more of us seem to have a problem with evangelism. On the one hand we know we are supposed to, but quite frankly much of the evangelism we have seen puts us off. "If that's what

evangelism looks like I wouldn't do it to my worst enemies." Evangelism can so easily become intrusive, arrogant, pushy, manipulative, forced, artificial, dishonest - anything but good news. However, it doesn't have to be that way.

If you are not a fan of some of the evangelism that you've seen, here's some good news - not *the* good news, but *some* good news *about* the good news.

- » You don't have to stand on street corners shouting at people.
- » You don't have to pretend that you want people to be your friends, just so you can evangelise them.
- » You don't have to devise a cunning strategy to get your friends to come to church even though you are pretty sure they don't want to.
- » You don't have to invite them to hear some minor celebrity who's pretending to talk

about being celebrity when really that's just an excuse to preach the gospel.

- » You don't have to wear a wrist band and explain what the heart, the X, the cross and the question mark stand for, or be able to draw *The Bridge to Life*, or memorise *The Four Spiritual Laws*, or any other formula for that matter.

Those things aren't what evangelism *is*. They are just some of the ways that people have *gone about* evangelism.

OK, then, so what *is* evangelism?

To put it simply, evangelism is the communication of the gospel. It's all about helping people to find out about and understand the good news of Jesus in the hope that they too will want to follow him. Evangelism is *goodnewsing* - getting on with life in such a way that people have a chance to discover Jesus for themselves.

evangelism is  
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for themselves

If I'm right, and this is what evangelism *is*, another bit of good news is that it's best not to limit evangelism to verbal proclamation.

We can communicate the good news as individuals or as churches by the way we *are*, and the stuff we *do* as well as the things we *say*. Being, doing and speaking are all important modes of evangelism. When we are the kind of church that is welcoming, friendly, outward-looking, generous and forgiving, we communicate the good news by *embodying* it. When we work to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry and campaign for the oppressed, we communicate the good news by *enacting* it. When we explain to our friends why we pray, how we came to follow Jesus or what God means to us, we communicate the good news by *articulating* it.

Of course these three modes of communication work best when they work together. That way they make for a richer expression of the gospel. Being on its own is too *passive*. Doing on its own is too *ambiguous*. Speaking on its own is too *facile*. Get it all together though and our message is more likely to ring true.

The next piece of good news is evangelism doesn't always have to be the thing at the front of our mind, the thing we are consciously aiming at. In fact it often happens best when it happens obliquely. Ironically, if evangelism is always the primary motivator for everything we are, do and say we will end up actually

undermining our evangelism because we will make it inauthentic, twisted, less than genuine.

So, for example, when the way we *are* bespeaks Christ, when our churches are hospitable, honouring the least and including the outsider, this is indeed evangelistic, it communicates the good news, but our primary *intent* here is not to communicate but rather, together as a church, to live a Christ-like life. Evangelism in this mode is more often than not a blessed by-product of trying to be faithful, Jesus-type communities.

Similarly, if we only ever care for the needy or work for peace and reconciliation *so that* we can let everyone see what the way of Christ looks like, there's something about our motivation that is not true to the Jesus we hope to communicate. Again, gospel communication in this mode happens best when we are focussed on something else, such as loving people, irrespective of whether or not they are interested in our message.

This also applies when we *speak* of our faith. When we explain to friends why we pray, when we offer a Christ-informed perspective to colleagues at

work chatting about an event in the news, even on occasions such as these it is not that we think, "OK, now I am going to evangelise." No, we just do it because part of what it means to live as a Christian is to speak as a Christian and therefore to speak of Christ.

Now don't get me wrong here. I'm not against intentional proclamation of the gospel as one means of communicating good news. There will, of course, always be those times when our primary purpose is indeed to get the good news across. But these are evangelism's special occasions, just get on with

not its everyday way of being. This is evangelism in its Sunday best not the kind of 'come as you are and take us as you find us' evangelism which is the staple of ordinary goodnewsing. This matters, because when we allow disciples to believe that the exceptional is what defines evangelism we run the risk of putting them off.

Nor am I suggesting that we don't have to speak about our faith. I don't think St Francis ever actually said, "Preach the good news and if you must, use words" but I wish it hadn't got round that he did. Piping up about Jesus is a crucial part of evangelism. But it's a *part* not the whole. And it's at its best when it's not contrived but rather when we just tell our friends about Jesus, when we say what we say because that's who we are, not because we are targeting someone, seeking to assuage our guilt or trying to get the pastor off our back.

I don't know if these thoughts will help. Some might think I'm watering down evangelism. In which case I've not made myself clear. I think I'm trying to beef it up. I'm also trying to help people see that it can be a commonplace part of ordinary Christian living; something everyday for everyday disciples; something that everyday disciples just get on with; something for which the Baptist flavour of disciple becomes known – in life and not just on paper. If that were to happen, that *would* be good news.

Glen Marshall is the Co-Principal of Northern Baptist College



## Declaration of Principle

A three-part 'Declaration of Principle' forms the basis of understanding for all who belong to the Baptist Union. It was introduced in 1873 with the intent of holding in union Baptists with widely different theological understandings, and progressively refined (1904, 1906 and 1938).

It is rooted in Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) with its threefold pattern of authority, baptism and mission. The first clause of the Declaration focuses on the absolute authority of Jesus Christ, with clause two on baptism into the life of God. Clause three of the Declaration is all about mission.

In 1996 the then principals of the four England-based Baptist colleges produced a study guide called *Something to Declare* in an attempt to make the Declaration better known and understood.

They concluded that the Declaration 'still has a great deal to offer', describing it as 'notably theological... an authentic expression of Baptist ecclesiology... much more than a statement of organisational policy pragmatically to achieve certain ends'.

'Something important is here for our present and future life', they continued. 'By Christ, in the Spirit, we come to the Father. We are baptised into the life of the triune God and live to share God's mission.'

Share your thoughts about Glen's article at [www.baptist.org.uk/goodnewsing](http://www.baptist.org.uk/goodnewsing)

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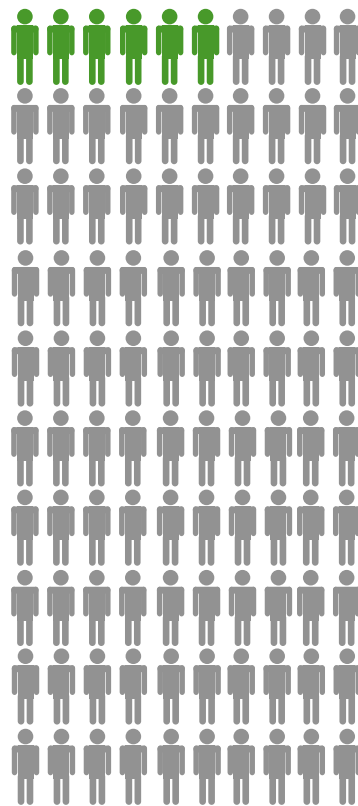


## Confidence in the Gospel

One thing that I am often asked when I am visiting local churches is, "What are the greatest challenges facing the church at the moment?" Now that is a big question and all sorts of answers spring to mind! But for me, by far and away the biggest challenge and opportunity for the church today is that something like 94 per cent of the population are not followers of Jesus. Our biggest challenge is one of mission and evangelism.

I was at a ministers' conference recently and was encouraged to hear of people being baptised through our churches. These were not isolated stories, but more examples of the faithful mission and evangelism that our churches engage in all year round. Yet while there is much to encourage us happening in our churches, we also need to take seriously the enormity of the task and seek the resources of heaven to witness to Christ in our generation.

Our calling from Christ to go and make disciples must begin and continue in prayer. One minister from one of our larger churches shared with me his concern that the church was not seeing growth through conversion.



94 per cent  
are not followers of  
**Jesus**

His conclusion was that programmes can only do so much; what the church really needed was to seriously seek God in prayer and have a hunger for him that would flow out in authentic daily witness. We live in the midst of an era where we are seeing huge changes and I believe that God is shaking the nations. As other generations before us have done, we need to cry out to the Lord in prayer, and sacrificially align ourselves with his Kingdom purposes. Our response to the challenges and opportunities we face must always be the prayerful pursuit of Christlikeness.

As we pray, we would do well to heed the instruction of Jesus in Matthew 9:37-38:

*'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'*

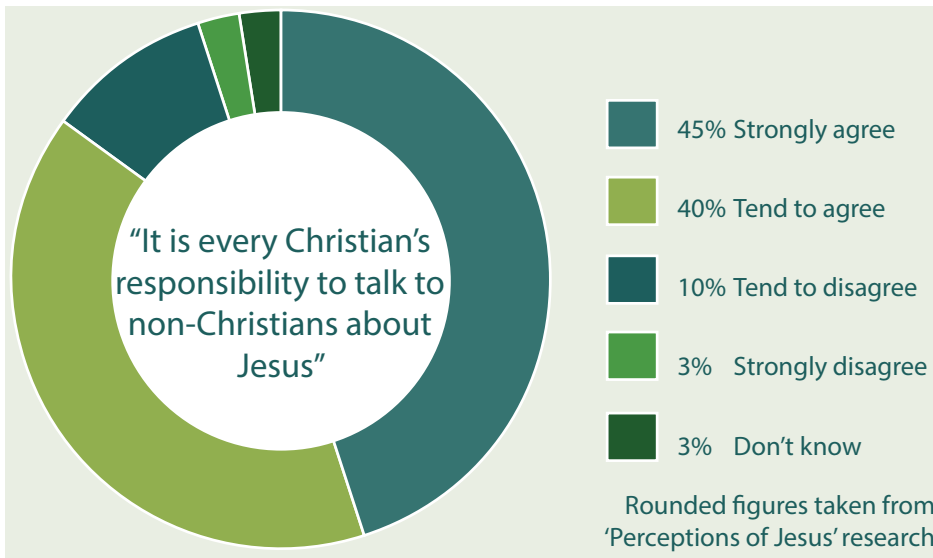
In the face of our mission and evangelism challenge we can and do trust that God is at work, by his Holy Spirit, convicting people and bringing them to faith. But there is also a vital connection here to people like us! God can work directly and amazingly to transform lives, but he often works through you and me. As already



highlighted earlier in this magazine, this is seen clearly in our Declaration of Principle. As Baptists Together, we need to mobilise everyone to be living as authentic disciples in the places we find ourselves. We need apostles and pioneers, prophets and preachers, evangelists and witnesses, pastors and teachers; all working together to bring in this vast harvest.

And so I believe that we need to re-discover (or discover!) a sense of confidence in the gospel. In 2015 Baptists Together shared in the funding of a major piece of research which was led by The Evangelical Alliance, The Church of England and Hope called 'Perceptions of Jesus'. Visit [www.talkingjesus.org](http://www.talkingjesus.org) to see what was discovered, including a summary booklet of the key findings of the research to enable local churches begin to engage with the issues.

A couple of things stood out for me. **Firstly**, a significant proportion of the population don't believe that Jesus was a historical person or are not sure if he was. Our first step is so often simply the task to tell people about Jesus!



**Secondly**, I was encouraged by the openness of the millennial generation (18-35s) to exploring Jesus and faith. What I have found though is that this needs us to learn new language. Sharing the Good News in terms of love, forgiveness, hope, peace, life, sacrifice and so on engages people in themes that are of universal concern.

I shall be attending a baptismal service myself next week and celebrating God's grace and salvation with new followers of Jesus. My prayer is that there will be many, many more like this up and down our country; for the glory of Christ's name.

Lynn Green is General Secretary of our Baptist Union



How do you respond to Lynn's message?  
Share your thoughts at [www.baptist.org.uk/confidence](http://www.baptist.org.uk/confidence)

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# Sowing Seeds

**Sarah Fegredo explores an expression much used by Christians**

As Christians we want to be 'The One' ...the one to whom a person turns and says "What you said makes sense and I want to give my life to Jesus." But the reality is it doesn't often happen, and in our disappointment we console ourselves with the thought that we were sowing seeds.

I found myself doing this in my work with a young woman called Hayley. I first met Hayley when I was her youth worker. She came along to the group because a friend invited her and she stayed for a number of years. I became close to her through various ups and downs and we've now become adult friends. At some point in her post-school journey, through university, volunteering at a Summer Camp in the US, helping with holiday clubs, and other Christian activities, she became a Christian. She's now a fully paid-up, Jesus loving, church going, house group attending, Christian disciple.

My question is "Who led her to the Lord?" It wasn't me. So was it the people she worked with in the US? The peers who were Christians, the Soul Survivor visits? The on-going friendship with me and other adults in my church? Hayley tells me that she realised one day that she was praying to a God she thought she didn't believe in and then realised that meant that she must do, so she'd better sort things out with him. Arguably no one led her to the Lord!

As I potter in my garden I'm inspired at how often Jesus talks about growing things. Pondering the questions that evangelism raises, it occurs to me that there are answers to be found amongst the soil and greenery.

When I garden, I don't just plant seeds; before that I have to prepare the ground. This involves choosing the right ground for the right plant; it's no good putting a heather in alkaline soil - it will die. Having chosen the right plant, I loosen the earth, add fertilizer, get rid of stones and rake it level. Then I plant the seed, at the right depth. I might put some netting over the bed to keep the birds off. And then I wait... and watch. Part of gardening is keeping an eye out for what needs doing for particular plants; weeds might appear, water might be needed, some shelter on a frosty night. It's straight out of a parable! Later on in the plant's life it might need tying in to some support, or training to grow in a certain shape; it might need pruning or feeding. In a big garden there would be a whole team of gardeners to do these jobs.

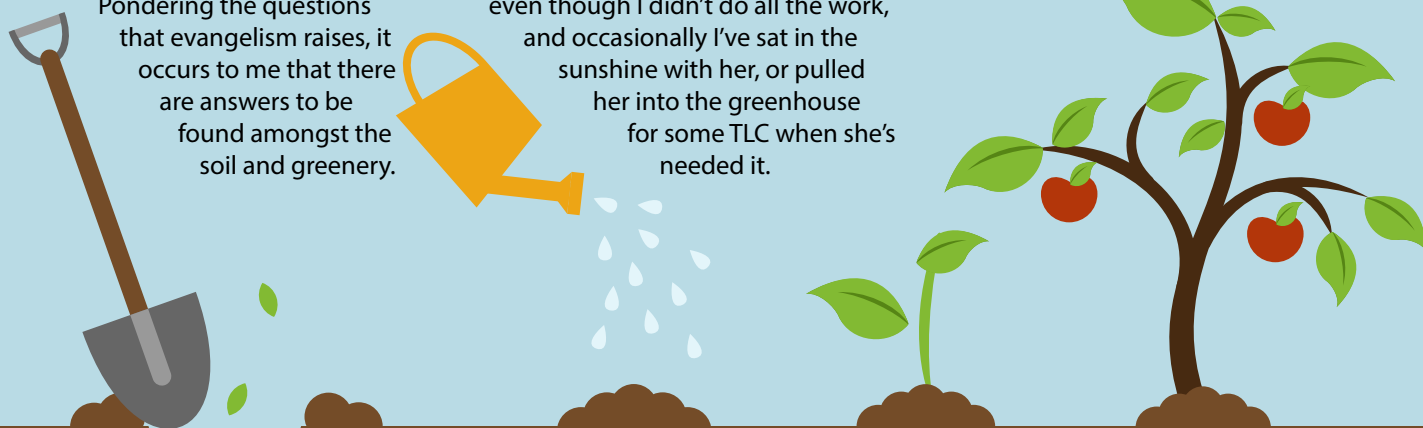
After a while, the everyday miracle occurs, and the plant flowers or fruits. But who made it do that? Was it me, the one who sowed the seed? The gardeners after me, who fed or pruned, who trained or sprayed for pests? You could say that none of us made the fruit happen; the plant just did it all by itself. True, but it wouldn't have done it so well, in that place if the team of gardeners hadn't all done their bit. Hayley's story tells me that all those who 'gardened' her played a part, but that ultimately the flower that she has blossomed into is because of God's work in her life (See 1 Cor. 3:5-9). I have been delighted to see the flowers even though I didn't do all the work, and occasionally I've sat in the sunshine with her, or pulled her into the greenhouse for some TLC when she's needed it.

So what are you doing in your part of the garden? Are you seed sowing? Watering? Adding some well-rotted compost, or tying a plant to some support? Maybe you have had the joy of a plant blossoming right before your eyes. Maybe you haven't and you wonder whether you're doing any evangelism at all. Maybe you're having to do the hard work of digging the plot over to clear it. If your garden is looking a bit thin, maybe you're putting the wrong plants in the wrong places and they can't thrive? Are you planting at the right depth? Some seeds take a long time to germinate; are you getting impatient and digging them up to have a look? Whatever you are

doing at the moment, as an individual and in your church, if you are playing your part, in the passage mentioned above, Paul assures us we are promised a reward. If you aren't doing any gardening, get your wellies on and get

out here, there's plenty to be done. It's winter as I write this and gardens look empty and dead, but we gardeners know, if we wait patiently and tend carefully, that in July we'll have more courgettes than we know what to do with.

**Sarah Fegredo** is an Accredited Youth Specialist living in Nottingham



What are you doing in your part of the garden?  
Join the conversation at [www.baptist.org.uk/sowingseeds](http://www.baptist.org.uk/sowingseeds)

# Everyday Evangelism

Photo: Vibe Images | Shutterstock.com



As we have been hearing, evangelism can happen in many ways. The following pages feature stories of Baptists getting on with life in such a way that people are getting a chance to discover Jesus for themselves

## ‘Welcoming the stranger’

### A number of Baptist churches are experiencing significant growth through their ministry to refugees and asylum seekers

Since opening an asylum drop-in in November 2014, **Stockton Baptist Tabernacle** in Teesside has witnessed close to 100 baptisms. **Tredegarville Baptist Church** in Cardiff has conducted more than 50 baptisms in the first four months of 2016 alone. Forty-five people were baptised at another Baptist church in 2015. The majority are people who have, for a variety of reasons, sought refuge in the UK, while each church has reported Iranians are among the dominant group. Stockton now translates its services, or at least part of them, into Farsi. “Although we have converts from Afghanistan and other nations as well,” notes Philip Henry Rees, minister of Tredegarville Baptist Church, “God is moving in a miraculous way amongst the Iranians.”

Some Iranians are fleeing because have converted to Christianity in Iran, like Ehsan\*, a teacher who has found refuge in a UK Baptist church.

“the one common denominator is that they are all attracted by the love they see in Jesus Christ”

Ehsan turned to Christ through the example of a colleague. “I was interested to know where her tranquillity came from,” he says. “We built up enough trust and she told me. She invited me to read the Bible. I realised it wasn’t just a book, the words touched my heart.”

His subsequent involvement with the underground church brought him to the attention of the authorities, who raided his house. Fortunately Ehsan was in another part of the country at the time, but he realised he had to leave. “I knew if I stayed, I would be hanged immediately.”



Photo: abcd2000 | freeimages.com

"It's a familiar story," says Ehsan's minister. "They see a peace about someone, they sense something different about them and want to know where it comes from." Others convert in Iran after meeting Jesus in dreams or visions.

But many more have converted after reaching the UK, and this is due in no small part to the welcome they receive and the opportunities they're given to explore faith. They may have fled for varying reasons - falling foul of the ruling regime, their sexuality - but Ehsan's minister is not alone in noticing a general openness to Christianity.

"Growing up in a Muslim culture, it's a radical different ethic to what they have been told - they feel they have been lied too. Then they also experience that love through the hospitality of the members here. Though they have many questions, they are quite open to Christian conversion."

This is echoed both at Stockton and Tredgarville.

"The one common denominator is that they are all attracted by the love they see in Jesus Christ, not least because it stands in contrast to Islam and sharia," Phylip explains.

Stockton secretary Peter Chapman adds, "They arrive here with a disillusionment with Islam, and hear about a God who loves them; they discover at an *Alpha Course* they can discuss this, and experience the friendship we have offered, which is quite simply an expression of God's love. It's a contrast to their vengeful experience of Islam."

The welcome they receive encourages them to invite others and literally spread the Good News. Ehsan has been instrumental in encouraging people to meet Jesus at his church, offering his language skills so services can be translated. "I thank God and Jesus that he has given me this opportunity to share."

In Cardiff, the converts are bold in sharing their new found faith. "If you go into the city centre here and find people evangelising, they are more than likely to be converts themselves from Islam, and they are likely to be members of this church," says Phylip.



This concern for the dispossessed has led the churches coming into contact with people from many countries, not just Iran. The churches all have Syrians in their congregations. Christians from Eritrea have sought refuge after experiencing persecution for their faith. One Albanian has reached Stockton having fled an abusive husband. Sometimes the evidence of why they have fled their home country is all too visible. "You baptise, and it's humbling to see evidence of torture on their back," James says.

Peter says that in total Stockton has responded to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers from 34 different nations.

"We began by simply offering friendship, food and drink," explains Peter. "There was no defined objective other than friendship. And one of the real joys when we said we wanted to offer friendship has been the response of the congregation. We have had 40/50 people, in their 60s and 70s, for whom this is the thing they have been waiting for."

"Now the nature and character of our church is changing. On any Sunday there are between 50-70 from an international background. It has overtaken us and it has been extraordinary".

**"you baptise, and it's humbling to see evidence of torture on their back."**

There is a dedicated refugee section on the Baptists Together website, featuring stories, statements and study and prayer resources. [www.baptist.org.uk/refugees](http://www.baptist.org.uk/refugees)

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## Fancy coming to Alpha?

The *Alpha Course* continues to play a role in many conversions at Whetstone Baptist Church



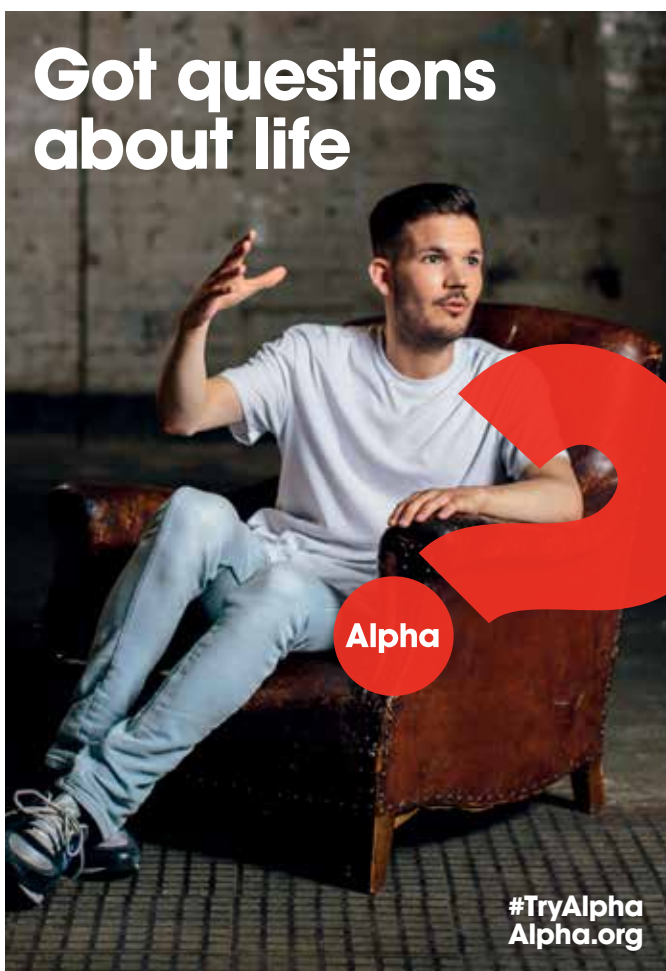
Running an *Alpha Course* has been a key component to the steady membership growth at Whetstone Baptist Church in Leicestershire.

The church has been running *Alpha* for more than 20 years, and has celebrated more than 100 baptisms from those doing the course. Around 25-30 people participate each year, and there is a 30-40 per cent conversion rate.

There are several reasons why the course has borne (and continues to bear) so much fruit, according to senior pastor Mark Clay.

"We have invested in it," says Mark. "It has whatever budget it needs to be done well. We have a great behind the scenes organising team. We serve a good two-course meal and set up the hall as nicely as we can and we choose a quality venue for the away day. The way we do it is appealing, there's a really good feel about it. People enjoy it!"

One of Mark's gifts, recognised by the leadership team, is the ability to deliver a relevant message in an approachable way. It means he does the talks himself, rather than use the *Alpha* video. "I prioritise it," he explains, "so I know that one night a week through autumn is an *Alpha* night."



Angela and Susan run the course at Whetstone, doing everything but the teaching. "They are one of the reasons our course is so successful," says Mark, "attention to detail!"

Through doing it I get to know new people and if they start to come to church they already know who I am and what kind of teaching style to expect. This really helps to link everything together. For me, making this engagement with new people makes a huge difference."

Once a course finishes, a new small group is created. The number of small groups has gone from 10 to around 20-22 over the years.

"It just carries on from *Alpha*, and it's where discipleship happens," says Mark.

"In general the way the church does evangelism is by trying to create a safe, welcoming environment into which people can belong", Mark continues. "We don't try to pressure people into becoming Christians, but 'invite them to join us'. That means those who come for *Alpha* have generally had some form of contact with the church.

"Usually someone has come for a carol service, or their children are part of the youth group, or they attend the playgroup," Mark continues. "And we ask people not to just invite and send them, but to come on the course with them. Because a lot of people have come through the *Alpha Course*, they know it's a good place to bring people and belong. It becomes a natural thing to say to that friend "Fancy coming to *Alpha*?"

"We try to create belonging – belonging to a church community. Through that belonging we hope they believe. *Alpha* is a tool, but for us it still works really well. We have had sustained growth through conversion." ■



Mark Clay (right) with Lee, a young guy who became a Christian on *Alpha* a couple of years ago.

Photos: Whetstone Baptist Church

## Releasing the prisoners

**Christians Against Poverty weaves social action with unforced evangelism, and nowhere is this more evident than at Gillingham Baptist Church in Kent**



Ruth Millard manages the Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre established at **Gillingham Baptist Church** almost three years ago. She has seen more than 30 adults released from crippling debt, a similar number find Jesus, and the confidence of church members grow.

“If Jesus was on earth he would be reaching out to the poor, releasing the prisoners, giving sight to the blind,” she says. “It feels like we are doing this. People are trapped in their own homes. Their curtains are shut. They’re afraid to open the door. They feel ashamed.

“It is demanding, but it’s what Jesus would have done. Because of all the little things that have happened, I just know God is absolutely in this. It’s a privilege to join in God’s mission.”

The Medway area ranks one of the highest in the country in terms of loans taken out, and the CAP Debt Centre opened in May 2013 when the church realised people had the kind of deeper-rooted problems that the CAP Money course wasn’t enough to solve. Sure enough, there was an instant demand for the service. By the end of June that year they had to turn people away. The situation has subsequently eased with the addition of another debt coach at another Cap Centre in Medway, but there has been a steady stream of clients ever since opening.

A combination of bad luck and low income are the main causes of debt, Ruth says. Very rarely is it because someone has overspent. “It’s often an illness that has caused them to lose their job, or a change in circumstance, or some unexpected bill. They’ve made choices trying to keep going that are, in hindsight, not always the best. And they just don’t know who to turn to.”



Photos: Christians Against Poverty



No period is typical, but Ruth aims to see four new clients each month. She visits clients three times, with the visits focused on gathering detailed information about their circumstances, and then agreeing to a debt management plan drawn up by the CAP head office based on this information. The idea is the client will stick to this plan until they are debt free.

Ruth is always accompanied by a befriender, who is typically a member of the congregation at Gillingham Baptist Church. The befriender will then provide practical and emotional support once the initial three visits are completed and the plan has started.

Ruth says a number of potential clients drop out after the first meeting, but the majority who sign up stick to their plan become and then stay debt free. The impact is noticeable.

“When I see people debt free they change physically,” she says. “They stand up taller, their shoulders aren’t hunched. And so many people keep coming back to me at the anniversary celebrations of our CAP Debt Centre.”

And for many, the change isn’t just a physical one. For all involved with CAP, the desire to help stems directly from their faith. As such, talking about Jesus and praying for clients is all part of the service. This suits Ruth just fine for she’s always had a heart for evangelism. Having previously worked in the health service, and worked as Volunteer Manager for Age Concern (now Age UK), the role brings together a number of areas of her life.

“I was attracted to CAP by the combination of reaching people’s needs, and evangelism,” says Ruth. “CAP makes it very easy to talk about your faith.”

Whenever she first meets a new client, Ruth will tell them that God loves them and she and the befriender are there because of their faith. She says the vast majority have no problem with that, even if they are non-believers they are just grateful that someone cares for them. At the end of each session, they will offer prayer. Again, it’s very unlikely they will refuse. (“Hardly anyone says no, even atheists.”) She adds that the general relationship building leads to natural conversations about faith. Some people have skewed perceptions of Christians which are changed by meeting Ruth, the befrienders and the wider Gillingham congregation (the church hosts several events for CAP





clients throughout the year). Through these friendships, having hope restored and the weight of debt lifted, some consciously recognise God moving in their lives for the first time: since the CAP centre at Gillingham opened around 30 people have come to faith.

"I love being able to tell people about Jesus openly and honestly," Ruth says. "I love the fact we are reaching people's needs. I absolutely love what I do. Everything I've done in my life has led to this.

"And even if they don't come to faith, we are still helping to transform their lives by helping them out of debt."

Ruth also talks about the impact CAP has had on members of the church. It has always been a welcoming congregation, but being part of CAP, becoming befrienders and seeing new people come has boosted confidence. "It's demanding – I'm constantly asking for new befrienders. But through it they've found they're able to talk to visitors more."

Now the church and its CAP Centre are getting very well known in the community. "We are having people coming to us," says Ruth. "We're getting referrals from the Council, job centres, schools, housing associations and many more. Medway Churches have been asked to deliver the CAP Money course across all the libraries, on a rolling, continuing basis."

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## Trinity Baptist Church

**With more than 2000 members, Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) in West Norwood is one of the two largest churches in our Union. The other is its own plant.**

Trinity Baptist Church began in 1987 with just eight adults in a flat owned by Spurgeon's College. "My wife, mother-in-law, and five friends," remembers pastor Kingsley Appiagyei. The church quickly outgrew several premises and moved to the home it occupies today in Thornlaw Road in 1994. It continued to grow, and now has dozens of home groups all over London. It has started several church plants, including Calvary Charismatic Baptist Church (CCBC) in Poplar, East London in 1994. Under the leadership of pastor Francis Sarpong, Calvary itself has grown to more than 2000 members.

The mission statement at TBC is for a church that is 'totally committed to the Great Commission, Transforming Lives, and Fulfilling Destinies.' A passion for the family has been

a focus, with the church engaged in activities that seek to promote family values and address issues facing ethnic minority families.

Pastor Kingsley, who describes himself as one of the harvests of the seed sown by English missionaries in Ghana around 200 years ago, is known for his love for the Word of God and his deep commitment to prayer and revival. When his ministry was recognised with the sole nomination for the Baptist Union Presidency in 2009-10, praying for revival was the focus of his presidential year.

"When our personality is aflame with commitment to Christ and with a burning vision of what he purposes to do for us, our whole life and leadership comes alive with life and becomes vibrant with power," he says.

"We need another visitation from heaven – when the Holy Spirit will set our hearts aflame, and when self-centredness will be consumed by a passion for the master and the end-time harvest. Even though revivals are determined solely by God, the Church must be consumed with a fresh passion to see it happen."



Photos: Trinity Baptist Church



# Blaby: welcoming and responsive

**“We were also called to be a welcoming church and that has been key to our growth”**

Not so long ago, **Blaby Baptist Church** in Leicestershire was declining and had been advised to close. Four years on and it’s in a very different place. Its building is in use throughout the week, its membership is growing and baptisms taking place. Relationships have developed to a point where hundreds of people came through the church’s doors last Christmas.



Former headteacher Pauline Wills is the church’s pastor. She was called on a part-time basis for five years with a mandate to grow the church.

“It was an elderly congregation so we had no physical resources or expertise to organise groups,” she remembers. “But we could pray, which is what we did and continue to do. God gave us a vision for a church for all ages with authentic accessible worship.”

Within a month Blaby had two pianists who could play more modern music, and within two years a worship group as God brought more people into the church.

“We were also called to be a welcoming church and that has been key to our growth,” adds Pauline.

“Being welcoming is about meeting the community where they are at, adapting to suit them. Our focus is on the ‘outsider’ as we try to keep to the phrase: the church is the only organisation that exists for non-members.”

The result has been an explosion of community growth. It began with a drop-in session for Mums and Toddlers.

A commercial group called *Rhythm Time* stopped and the mums still wanted to meet so Blaby offered them its church lounge. After a term *Rhythm Time* restarted, this time run by the church.

“We would go in to chat, make coffee and build up relationships,” says Pauline. “We moved our drop-in sessions to a Wednesday and these have continued. Today *Rhythm Time* has grown to five groups, one of the most successful *Rhythm Time* groups nationally. They continue to stop for coffee and one group even brings packed lunch with them. Today one Mum said, ‘It’s great to be able to do this. We don’t feel as if we are being thrown out.’ From this the NHS now runs two post-natal groups at the church.



The church has had a number of baptisms



In September 2014 the local Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers moved in. Pauline says. “The initial conversation included the question, “Do you do Remembrance Day?” “Yes,” I replied, and we do Harvest. You are welcome to come to that.” About 20 girls came with their leaders and stayed to lunch. On Remembrance Sunday we had 30 girls and about eight parents. We adapted the service so that the children were fully involved and our welcome was greatly appreciated. This year we welcomed 90 children and parents. It was brilliant. We had to get extra chairs out and some of the girls had to sit on the floor!”

The church now organises a monthly service for the girls and their families on a Wednesday evening when they normally meet. All services are

interactive café-style and relate to their calendar so will include Thinking Day and St George’s Day as well as Christingle and Easter.

“We believe that it is important to meet them at times when they are available,” says Pauline. “There is no point in trying to do Sunday services for them as they are busy doing other activities and we are not yet their priority.”

Other community engagement involves Pauline taking fortnightly assemblies at the local primary school, hosting nativity, Easter and harvest sessions for a local pre-school, carol services, Christingle and bazaars, summer barbecues and holiday clubs.

“All we have done is prayed – and God has done the rest,” says Pauline. “I never cease to be amazed by God’s love and the blessings he pours out as Blaby Baptist Church continues to grow. Now 80 per cent of the congregation is new. The growth we have seen over the last few years has been beyond any expectation.”

Hundreds of people came through the church’s doors for various events and services last Christmas, including the bazaar



Photos: Blaby Baptist Church



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## Can your church connect with older people?

**Loneliness is making headlines as a threat to health but it is also a silent stigma in our streets and communities.**

**Rosalind Davies discovers how churches are responding to loneliness among older people.**

“There are thousands like me, but you feel your own sadness so much,” says 86-year-old Johanna. She talks openly about her life, losing her husband 15 months ago, and how, since then, she hasn’t wanted to go out because she is often tearful. “I sometimes feel that the whole world is against me.”

Johanna lists the reasons that she lost touch with her friends and neighbours after the death of her husband. “Friends that I had have all died off. It’s difficult to make new friends, because it’s hard to find them, we’re all in the same boat.” Like Johanna, many older people don’t have transport and may struggle with decreasing physical mobility, so there can be an unbridgeable gap between older people and the simple, life-giving friendships that make such a difference.

In the UK, 3.5 million people over the age of 65 live alone

Isolation and loneliness among older people in the UK is fast becoming a significant issue, raising concerns among politicians, health providers and the wider community

Nearly half of older people say that television or pets are their main form of company

### *The Church and social integration*

“I believe that churches provide key opportunities as intergenerational meeting places, and have the ability to reach those on the margins of our communities” says Jeremy Sharpe, director of the **Link Visiting Scheme (LVS)**, a national charity that partners with churches to develop befriending projects. “They are a vital link in the process of moving people from isolation to integration.”

Started by **Woodley Baptist Church** near Reading to offer company to lonely older people over the Christmas period in 1998, the Link Visiting Scheme is now a recognised **Cinnamon Network** project working with partner churches and Christian agencies that have a concern to support and care for older people living locally.

Thirteen churches from a variety of denominations are currently running Link Visiting schemes and reaching isolated older people in their locality, and approximately 360 volunteer befrienders are involved.

As well as regular home visits, many churches find that social activities are



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an important way to reach and support isolated older people and bring them into contact with each other as well as the church family. There is plenty of variety – some churches run courses that help older people access the internet, others have monthly ‘pie and pint’ groups for men. Singing groups and fitness classes are also popular.

**God sets the lonely in families**

As we read in Psalm 68, ‘A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families’, God’s desire is that our families – whether that is our church family or our ‘nuclear’ family – are inclusive, and intentional about restoring a sense of belonging to those who have lost their place in family and community life. As we remember the welcome we have received from God, we are called, in turn, to love the stranger and be hospitable towards our neighbours.



Social isolation is a growing problem in our country, but churches are recognising the simple missional shape of friendship and the restoration of generational links. In the words of one gentleman in his 70s, his befriender is ‘a lifeline’. Jesus described himself as the lifegiver, offering us ‘life to the full’. The challenge is for Christians to express this fullness by honouring older people and affirming the Church’s identity as a point of integration and welcome.

**Get started**

The Link Visiting Scheme has developed resources and processes which can be adapted and used in a variety of community settings. These include a comprehensive action plan, a toolkit to help with networking and gathering information, training and document templates.

**Upper Beeding Baptist Church**

Debbie Wood, coordinator of the Link Visiting project run by **Upper Beeding Baptist Church** in West Sussex, describes the huge amount of social isolation she comes across. “It can be a lack of confidence, a lack of mobility or not wishing to be a burden.”

Launched with a grant from the Cinnamon Network and Sussex Police, the befriending scheme run by the church covers three villages, Upper Beeding, Bramber and Steyning.

Debbie describes how she and her befriending volunteers respond to everything that looks like a limitation with prayer. Through prayer, befrienders have been found who are a great ‘fit’ for the lonely older people who have been referred to the project.

**A new world**

Julsie, housebound and living in Brighton, describes her home as her ‘world’. “The remarkable thing about having someone to visit you,” she says, “is the world that they bring in. The conversations that I have with my visitor put my simple world into something much bigger. I don’t feel so small.”



Photos: Link Visiting Scheme

Its website, [www.linkvisiting.org](http://www.linkvisiting.org), includes details of the Build-A-Link-Challenge, a resource to help churches take the first steps to set up a befriending project.

**Rosalind Davies** is a freelance writer who helps businesses and organisations deliver effective messages through her consultancy Ros Davies Communications.



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# Blessed to be a blessing

**Rashell Beya highlights how a church is learning to grow its confidence in the gospel**

Following a challenge in the mid 90s by the then minister to make more of their site resources, **Broadway Baptist Church** in Derby had a growing sense they ought to undertake building work to provide premises fit for purpose and a growing fellowship. Over time a plan emerged and the congregation demonstrated their commitment by making significant financial contributions and pledges. The project went ahead despite some uncertainties about the finished project and enough finances to cover it.

Such a huge undertaking gave the fellowship a focus but it also took its toll. While there was a loyal commitment to on-going ministry, it was largely 'ticking over' and by 2012 the operational budget had slipped into deficit. When I arrived in the September of that year, I found a hard-working and committed fellowship who desired to grow but had recognised numbers were slowly declining while the average age was rising. They weren't prepared to give up though!

Work began on the building in 2012. The premises were in upheaval, but each week in worship and teaching we focussed on God's faithfulness and love demonstrated through his son and our response to him. We raised the priority of prayer as we learnt to seek God more and trust for his provision. There was nothing dramatic, just persistent, small



steps, though some struggled with all the changes.

As the building work was in its final stages, almost imperceptibly initially, signs of renewal began to appear. More families started coming to Messy Church following a relaunch, a few newcomers and returnees attended other services. Enquiries for bookings came in and as people entered the building for the first time they commented on the feel, the warmth of the welcome, the spaciousness, and wanted to know more.



Opportunities to build links with the community

were explored further. We don't want to be simply a welcoming church but to be hospitable, demonstrating the love and blessing that we have received in blessing others. Participating in a local community arts trail in 2015 brought many people through the door over a weekend; in September being a

donation drop off point for the refugee crisis enabled the community to help those on the move. In fact, as the focus on mission increased, concerns about finance became less of an issue. Indeed, one or two unexpected large donations and grants increased people's faith.

More recently momentum has gathered further: we are seeing newcomers more frequently who are sensing God at work and wanting to join in, enriching the fellowship with much needed gifts and experience, an *Alpha Course*, new small groups, a toddler group bursting at the seams and new growth in the seniors'

ministry. Some are stepping out to support refugee and other families in need locally. As God is more clearly at work amongst us, so there is an increasing buzz of anticipation for the future. We're looking beyond building walls to building Kingdom.

**We raised the priority of prayer as we learnt to seek God more and trust for his provision. There was nothing dramatic, just persistent, small steps.**

And as we are learning to seek first the Kingdom, so financial commitments have been met: the building has been paid off and even the operational budget is in surplus.

Are we seeing people coming to faith? Only a couple (so far?), but we are seeing people being renewed in their faith, and growing in confidence to believe that as God has provided, so he has plans and purposes for us and through us if we will trust in him.



Photos: Broadway Baptist Church

Rashell Beya is the minister of Broadway Baptist Church in Derby





## Faith by Sharing Life

**The incarnational approach of pioneers – embodying the gospel in a new culture or community – will be increasingly necessary as we seek to bring good news to those who do not yet know Jesus. By Simon Goddard**

If you try and talk to pioneers about ‘evangelism’ you may well get a strange look. It’s not that they don’t do it – a desire to share the gospel with others is at the heart of who they are. The trouble is the word ‘evangelism’ can very easily conjure up in the pioneer’s mind a variety of activities that don’t fit easily with their particular shape of ministry.

### *Three ways churches fulfil the Great Commission*

It might help to think for a moment about the ways that churches seek to fulfil the Great Commission. The first way is simply by inviting people to ‘come’ to church, and initiatives like ‘Back to Church Sunday’ and the **Big Welcome** give specific opportunities for this to happen. There is a place for this, and it seems to be most effective amongst those who have been described as ‘prodigals’ or ‘dechurched’ – those who were once in the habit of going to church, but now no longer attend.

The second way, one that is very common in churches, could be described as ‘**go, and then come**’, where a ‘Crossing Place’ is created or used by the church. This is a ‘neutral’ space where relationships are formed with people from the community to whom an invitation to a church service or some evangelistic event or course can later be given. It could be a parents and toddler group, coffee morning, luncheon club or a similar ‘sowing’ activity (as understood in the process of *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping* written about by Laurence Singlehurst in his book of the same name). Whilst these categories are a helpful way to think about the activities of the church, as a regional minister I often find congregations investing a lot of time and energy in ‘sowing’, but then struggling to know what to do next.

**the confidence that pioneers have in the gospel is in its power to transform the lives of individuals and whole communities**

The third way, the one adopted by pioneers, could be described as ‘**go, and then stay**’. It’s summed up in the vision of the Pioneer Collective which longs to see people ‘**GOING to where the church isn’t, DOING what Jesus does, and SEEING what happens**’. Whereas the first two ways might be described as ‘attractational’, this approach is often referred to as ‘incarnational’ mission and ministry. Just as ‘*the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood*’ (John 1:14, *The Message*), pioneers seek not to invite people to come into an existing congregation, but rather to go and ‘embody’ the gospel in a new culture or community.

### *Show, don’t tell*

Jesus describes his followers as ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matthew 5:13, NIV). The best way to demonstrate the benefit of salt, however, is not by describing what it is, but rather by showing what it does. If you want to sell salt, you don’t invite the customer to put a few grains on their finger to taste it, instead you add a little to their fish and chips, or their curry, to see how it enhances the flavour. Sometimes those who are urging us to have ‘confidence in the gospel’ are implying that this simply means being bolder in telling people that Jesus can save them from their sins. The confidence that pioneers have in the gospel is in its power to transform the lives of individuals and whole communities.

The popular ‘Birthday Party’ story told by Tony Campolo helps us to understand what this looks like in practice (hear him tell it in his own words at <https://youtu.be/kWIMV-UmueM>). Tony finds himself in a ‘greasy spoon’ café in the middle of the night and overhears a woman, who works as a prostitute, say that it is her birthday the next day. He decides to return and help the woman celebrate, and eventually the owner of the café discovers that he is a Christian. When Tony tells the owner that he belongs to the sort of ‘church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3.30 in the morning’, the owner responds: “I would join a church like that”!

**57 West in Southend**

This type of evangelism begins not with speaking, but with listening. **57 West** is a church in Southend that meets in what used to be a barbershop. Initially leased with the intention of reaching students and young adults, it became clear that God was doing something else as the space instead became popular with those who were struggling with issues of housing and addiction. By listening to these men and women, and to God, it became possible to answer the question 'what does the good news look like here?'

As listening turns into loving service, relationships develop and a community begins to grow. Lives are shared, and soon questions are asked about the faith which has inspired the pioneers. This is when discipleship begins, and the church starts to emerge – in the case of **57 West** on a Saturday, either side of lunch. Amongst this community, there have also been opportunities for what Ann Morisy (in *Beyond the Good Samaritan*) calls 'apt liturgy' when a connection is made between the experiences of the community and the narrative of scripture. For **57 West**, sadly these occasions have been following the many premature deaths of people in



and close to the community, and Dan Pratt, the minister (pictured), has been able to talk about the hope and comfort found in God. But there is much joy too, with the church recently celebrating its

second birthday, and so far three people have been baptised.

*we get to share what the gospel is because we've been part of doing what it does.*

Photos: 57 West



This approach to sharing faith is one that is adopted by missionaries overseas, but will be increasingly necessary as we seek to bring good news to the 94 per cent in our own nation who are not currently part of church. It's how **Urban Expression** teams minister in inner city communities up and down the country, and it's the inspiration for numerous new congregations that seek to plant the gospel and see culturally relevant expressions of church emerge. When people experience the love of God, they often end up asking questions of those who have been a blessing to them. We get to share what the gospel is because we've been part of doing what it does.

**Simon Goddard** is the Co-ordinator of the Pioneer Collective, and a Regional Minister in the Eastern Baptist Association



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**To find out more about:**

**Urban Expression:** [www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk)  
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Photo: Scripture Union

## Schools worker Wayne Dixon explains why hanging around is such a key part of his ministry



"It's a Jesus pattern, it's about being there," says Wayne Dixon of **Slough Baptist Church**. Wayne has been visiting schools for 30 years, with a significant amount of that time immersed in what he terms HAM – Hanging Around Ministries.

It's a ministry that involves being an informal presence for both staff and pupils, visiting areas such as canteens and common rooms, and simply getting to know people. He says it's a very relational ministry, which complements the more formal assemblies, Religious Education lessons and lunch groups he also takes.

"My observations are that young people like to talk and appreciate you giving time to being there," Wayne says.

"But you can't really do this with just an assembly. An assembly gives you a platform to be seen – and then HAM gives you the chance to get to know people. A link is created when you hang around."

He believes such an approach is essential for schools work. His aim is not to 'Bible bash', but to be there to chat, get to know pupils in a relaxed and informal way, and show them he cares. HAM has sometimes led to staff asking Wayne to get alongside a particular student to listen, chat and be a link if there is a concern / difficulty / problem around. Encapsulating this ministry of presence, one headteacher once told him: "Wayne, you are the only person who comes into our school to see how we are."

Delving into sobering statistics highlights the importance of what Wayne does and schools ministry in general. More than 100 years ago 56 per cent of children were in church. Today there are just four per cent, meaning the vast majority of the UK's children and young people only hear about Jesus in school.

As well as being an authentic Christian presence in their lives, building relationships does allow for conversations about God if the pupils want.

"There are times when they want to talk about Jesus," says Wayne. "It works because it's their environment – they wouldn't have that conversation in our church, because they are not in our church. Some of the most significant conversations I've had have been linked with HAM."

Wayne, who now works in a number of secondary schools in Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead with the charity Christian Connections in Schools, acknowledges it's not the easiest of ministries to get started. However, he believes many can.

"Initially, it is very hard and risky as people think or say 'Why are you here? Why are you in my territory?' But if it's a ministry for you, it is worth it. I believe there is enormous value and potential in HAM for a variety of different people. Not just schools workers, youth workers or church leaders but others. If you are prepared to want to engage and chat, it's not about age. It's about calling and equipping."

To find out more about HAM and other ways Wayne is involved in schools' ministry, visit <http://ccschools.org.uk>

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# Discipling young people



Photo: Syda Productions | shutterstock.com

## Are we making long term disciples or are we simply entertaining them? A youthworker and a young person share their stories

**Sarah Dent** co-ordinates the leadership of the youth work at **Newbury Baptist Church**, (NBC) and leads *Diesel*, the youth small group on Sunday evenings. Depth of relationship is key, she explains



### How do you go about leading Diesel?

Discipleship starts with relationship - it is a slog - there is no quick fix. It takes years to develop and you have to put the time in getting to know the young people. Every year when a large group leaves there is that sense of dread of having to start all over again investing and getting to know the next generation of young people... but it is always worth it!

We run *Diesel* with a pretty standard format of refreshments, catch-up, prayer time, Bible study and prayer to finish. Over the years we have come to realise the real value and importance of

the prayer and sharing time. This, when it goes beyond surface level prayers, helps you to pick up on what's going on, what they're concerned/happy about and enables us to get to know the group, and them to know us better.

By the time our young people leave *Diesel* (generally at 18) we want them to be able to pray out loud, know their way around the Bible and lead a Bible study. So that when they integrate into 'big church' they are not surprised or don't know what to expect as we operate as most adult small groups do. However I'd also want them to feel they could pick up the phone/message/pop-in if they needed to chat things through or wanted to pray into something.

When we started our youth group, someone said it isn't all about how amazing the Bible study is and how

much they learn about Jesus, it's about relationship. Back then I disagreed, but more and more I am seeing its value. When I look back to my youth small group we had weekly prayer and Bible study (and some leaders were more in-depth/boring than others) but I couldn't tell you much about what I learnt. However I could share for hours about how welcome we were made to feel in our leaders' home, how we were part of the family, how they showed Jesus to us through their love and actions, and how that relationship didn't end when I hit 18, but continued.

### Why do it this way?

There is no magic formula for this and as someone who has had no official youth work training, isn't a Bible scholar on any level and is a real introvert, this is the way that works for me!



Photo: Ian Britton

I'm also influenced by my own experience. As a young person I was part of a big youth group which ran a lot of events and activities each week, all of which helped me in some way on my journey. Looking back, however, it is clear that the area that had the biggest, lasting impact was relationships with leaders. These began in the small group I attended as a 14 year old and the investment and care given to me over many years since.

When I fell away from church at 16 there was one person who always stayed in touch. She offered more to me than lessons in the Bible - she was my friend, and became my mentor. She stayed in touch through the bad times and the good, and when I decided to come back to church was the person who helped sort my baptism, helped me integrate into church life and challenge me too (which I would take from her because of the trust we had built up). It was a time where relationships with parents were strained, and I felt no one understood me. Chris was always willing to listen, support, pray and challenge!

#### **What's the impact of Diesel?**

I guess this is difficult to quantify and analyse... We are still in touch with the vast majority of those young people we have had in *Diesel* over the last 10 years. Many are still following God (to varying degrees). For us one of the most exciting things is when you see God at work in their lives once they have moved away/left youth - seeing them in the 'big world' with its challenges, temptations and freedoms - using their gifts, serving, leading and being strong in their relationship with Jesus.

At the moment we have a small youth group. But although small in number there is a real depth to the spiritual appetite and relationship with God, and a real love and pastoral care in the group.

For me it is helping young people to have their own faith, which helps sustain them through the bad times and the good, and be able to discern and make their own decisions and serve where they are, but also knowing we are always here to chat, listen and pray (and not judge!)



**Naomi Vallance** was a member of the *Diesel* youth group at Newbury Baptist Church before leaving for university in September

#### **What impact has Sarah had on you and your friends, both in terms of your faith and life in general?**

I am going to start with a bold sentence and say I don't know what I would have done without Sarah. In terms of faith she has helped me grow so much to the point that saying I am a Christian is one of the first things I tell people now, rather than desperately hoping they wouldn't see my crucifix under my jumper. In sixth form I missed lots of church and our youth group due to prioritising other commitments, but every week on our Facebook prayer request page there would be a post saying 'How's it going Nomes?' Or 'Add yours to the list, Nomes!'

And when I reached the lowest point in my faith I received a message from Sarah with a simple hello. Immediately I knew that was a sign from God that she wanted to help and I should tell her everything. So I took the opportunity and I poured my heart out to Sarah about my life and how lost I felt from God, and I'm so glad I did. Straight away Sarah was amazing by supporting me, encouraging me, praying with me over a Facebook message, anything just to make me feel loved and supported. It was my saving grace. Sarah kept messaging me throughout the week, even if she was having a crazy day with

her beautiful family, asking how I was and if I needed prayer for anything in particular etc.

In terms of life in general Sarah was great when I moved to Uni. She was the first person who organised a care package to be sent to me with letters from all the youth group, and it made me feel like I was missed which is a lovely feeling even if I was crying at the time. When I'm back home and I give her a text she'll always make time to see me and provide lunch - so even better!

#### **What's been important to you about being part of the group at NBC?**

I think the most important thing has been the elements of trust and honesty. So there were only four of us at our Sunday evening youth meetings, but I have never felt closer to a group of people. Sarah and her husband Keith have created such a safe environment in their home that the whole group feel comfortable enough to share everything; from the funny times to the not funny times, and its comforting having friends surrounding you who have been with you through both your ups and downs.

#### **In what ways do you feel you share your faith now?**

I believe that Sarah has helped me be more confident in my faith and proud in proclaiming it. She did this by relating to us that she had her struggles too at our age, and knows exactly what we are going through. Since leaving NBC and going to University I have grown more confident in my faith so much so that I am now one of the outreach coordinators for my University Christian Union.



An interview with

# Rupert Lazar

Rupert Lazar is set to be President of our Baptist Union 2016-17.

Born in Trinidad, he came to England as a teenager, trained at Spurgeon's College and served at West Croydon Baptist Church for 17 years before moving to pastor East Barnet Baptist Church in 2010.

His presidential theme '*Anointed to do good*' draws from Acts 10:38.

He passionately believes in recognising people's gifts and reminding them who they are in Christ, as he explains to Baptists Together...



## Can you talk about your journey to faith?

It started in the Caribbean, growing up in the country, open to different spiritualities, different religions, different faiths. People came into the village to bring the Good News. Predominately the family I grew up in were Anglicans, and I was confirmed in my early teens. Then I came to the UK around 14. My mother was here before I was, and was established in **Edmonton Baptist Church**. While I was there, teaching Sunday School, teaching the young people about Jesus and baptism, I came under conviction about baptism as a believer, and I realised the nominal nature of what I had done before.

## So what happened next?

Following baptism I had a new-found enthusiasm and passion and zest for the Lord, and got involved in all manner of stuff. There was prison ministry – I got involved in a number of those up and down the country. I was very involved in church life, enabling the young people.

I worked with some people who I would like to pay homage to: Keith and Gill Woolgar, who simply took risks with me. I think they saw something in me. They took the risk with this young man and his impetuous ways, and nurtured me.

## How did they nurture you? What kind of risks did they take?

They gave me space, they accepted me for who I am. I think there was a light touch to their leadership style. They recognised my gifts and abilities. And gave me space to clumsily and awkwardly run with it. Always there providing a wonderful protective hedge around me. These guys are marvellous.

## How did training for the ministry happen?

I went to work in insurance because it seemed the right thing to do. That's what my mother insisted. She brought me to this country to go and get a decent job.

I was there for 11 years, but after just two years I knew God was calling me to something more. I had no idea what. I explored a number of avenues: the police – 'they do a good work in the community, and God can use me in that', I thought. My minister encouraged me, because they were looking for ethnic people even in those days. I thought about becoming a social worker: 'they do good work and Jesus can use me there!'

But none of those things transpired into what was right. It was one morning on the way to work – nine years on – I was listening to something on the radio, or cassette, driving through Tottenham in Broadwater Farm, and being overcome with the sense of God and his presence. So much so that I was crying. I was crying so heavily I had to pull aside. All I know is by the time I got to work I knew I had to go to theological training (or Bible college).

Part of my struggle was that the only Bible college I had heard of was Spurgeon's. I also knew that it was an academic hothouse. That's the language people used. I did not think I was academically able. For years I fought against that. That morning was the morning of surrender.

## So it had crossed your mind to go to Bible College?

People had said I should. I was doing youth work and preaching and going to prisons, and people were saying: we see something in this man. But for me, the academic hothouse was a 'no no'. Why would I want to go there?

## How did you find the period at Spurgeon's?

They were tough days. I cried all my way through the four years. The crying was all to do with academic expectations, and about perception of oneself. It's got me thinking I'm not surprised I want to go around the country reminding people of who they are in Christ. That they are princes and princesses, brothers and sisters of Jesus. With a wonderful God and father.

I want them to know that, because it's the truth that God has declared us to be. I want them to know that, so they may live in light of that truth. This message is just within me. Everything within me just wants to speak this message out.

... it's about facilitating a space where you enable each person to know who they are in Christ, to be who they are in Christ, and using their gifts and all that God has given them, that we may be the church together.



Rupert with his wife and children



Rupert at Baptist Assembly 2015 - responding to Jenni Entrican's *Daring Greatly* challenge

## How would you talk about your time in West Cropton? You were there 17 years?

It was a great adventure, doing good ministry with an excellent mentor in Roger Standing. He gave me space. I thank God for these people he sent on my path, who accept me for who I am and give me space to explore.

It was a wonderful period for growth, exploration, seeing great things happen in the name of Jesus, of building community. Of developing multicultural church. Of exploring building healthy church, which is about building a space where each is accepted for who they are, which is the heart of multiculturalism anyway, as we seek to honour our Lord and Saviour Jesus.

## Can you talk a little bit more about a multicultural church?

It's about facilitating a space where different cultures can work and live and worship.

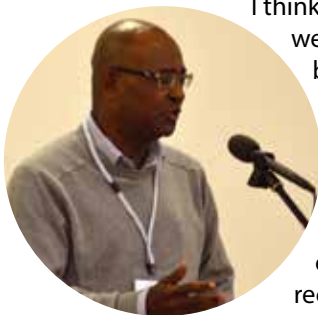
Lots of people think multiculturalism is about ethnicity, but it's not entirely about that. It's about integration of different cultures. For instance, every church has this with their own young people.

At its simplest, it's about facilitating a space where you enable each person to know who they are in Christ, to be who they are in Christ, and using their gifts and all that God has given them, that we may be the church together.

It's about being intentional about that, for there can be patterns and ways of being, which don't necessarily facilitate that.

... exploring building healthy church, which is about building a space where each is accepted for who they are... as we seek to honour our Lord and Saviour Jesus

**Recognising people's gifts is clearly a massive thing for you?**



I think it's crucial and central to who we are. I think it's a tragedy – to be somewhat negative for a moment – that churches don't do this as well as they could do. For me, as a pastor, Ephesians 4 shapes my thinking. I see my role as one of enabling. And that is recognising the gifts of each member of the body.

I believe when Jesus says you can do even more than I do - I think what he's trying to say is that the Holy Spirit gives us more gifts than we think we have. One of the things that saddens me, and I hear it continuously "I don't have any gifts." Whoa, wake up – what are you talking about! (I don't say it nastily!) But I'm saying you are far more gifted than you think you are in this body. You have a significant part to play. Ask God to tell you what you are good at. What do you enjoy?

This whole thing about gifts I think is more fluid that we make it out to be. We say, for example, you're a singer, so your gift is singing, as if that's all you can do. No, that's a great tragedy. That's a limitation! I understand why we do it, but I honestly believe that the Spirit of God can give each and every one a gift for the particular circumstances in which they find themselves. And if I don't believe that, I have a problem with God working in signs and wonders and miracles. I believe it's the Spirit of God who comes and gives us the words to say and gives us the actions to take and the strength in which to do it. God helps us in the moment.

**In a nutshell, what are your hopes for the presidency?**

My hope is, by the grace of God, that God's people know who they are in Christ. Jesus knew who he was. And from this he went around doing good.

When we know Jesus as a brother, when we know that we're children of God, and have the Holy Spirit within, when we know I have been set apart, we can move forward and live radiant lives, using all our gifts. We can move forward doing good.



Rupert will be our Baptist Union President from May 2016 - May 2017

Rupert engages in group discussion at Baptist Union Council - March 2016



# Evangelism in Europe

Photos: ProjektGemeinde (Project:Church), Austria



## Church planters in Europe are seeing people coming to faith in Jesus – and they share six characteristics that are transferable. By Ian Bunce

Looking back, evangelism was so much easier then and nostalgia was better too. The days of the Billy Graham crusades or church mission events when we would invite ‘targets’ to listen to the evangelist or preacher and, because we had been praying together in a triplet, the ‘target’ would become a Christian simply because they had walked up to the altar. If only it still happened today...

This is perhaps a rather simplistic view of the past and I have repeatedly heard the plea that we need to do evangelism differently, but where has that left us? Many churches seem to have moved away from specific opportunities to proclaim the Gospel, or ceased calling people to a conversion point, because this seems too hard or risky; we may put people off.

In its place have been events or conversations taking place over a longer time where relationships are being built but where, so often, there has been no opportunity for someone to come to a point of faith. Why?

try telling an evangelist in eastern Europe that evangelism is hard: they know, but they seek still to make Jesus known at all times



as I talk with Baptist Christians across Europe, their passion for prayer is great, and they expect God to answer

Perhaps it’s just felt a safer way to do evangelism where people can feel less threatened and Christians more comfortable.

During the past decade a lot has been said and written about the Christian loss of confidence in the Gospel and the ability of God to transform lives, but if this is true, it is not a universal truth. Across Europe and the Middle East, Christian church planters and evangelists are passionately telling others about Jesus and striving to see people come to a personal faith. In the centre of Vienna, **ProjektGemeinde** (Project:Church), a church which is working closely with refugees and migrants from many countries, are seeing significant numbers of people coming to faith. Church planters from across Europe, from countries such as Armenia and Moldova to Israel and Turkey, are seeing people coming to faith in Jesus, often in hostile situations for such conversion. From such situations I would like to suggest a few characteristics which I believe are transferable.

## 1 Intention

Churches that see conversions do so because they have set out on an intentional path to make Jesus known. John Wimber, when reflecting on why they did not see healing in the church said, "When we prayed for no one, no one was healed. Now we pray for lots of people, not everyone's healed, but some are". The same is true for evangelism and proclamation. We need to give as many opportunities as possible for people to respond. If we give none, we should not be surprised by the fruit which is yielded. Ecclesiastes 11:6 *'Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.'*

## 2 Prayer

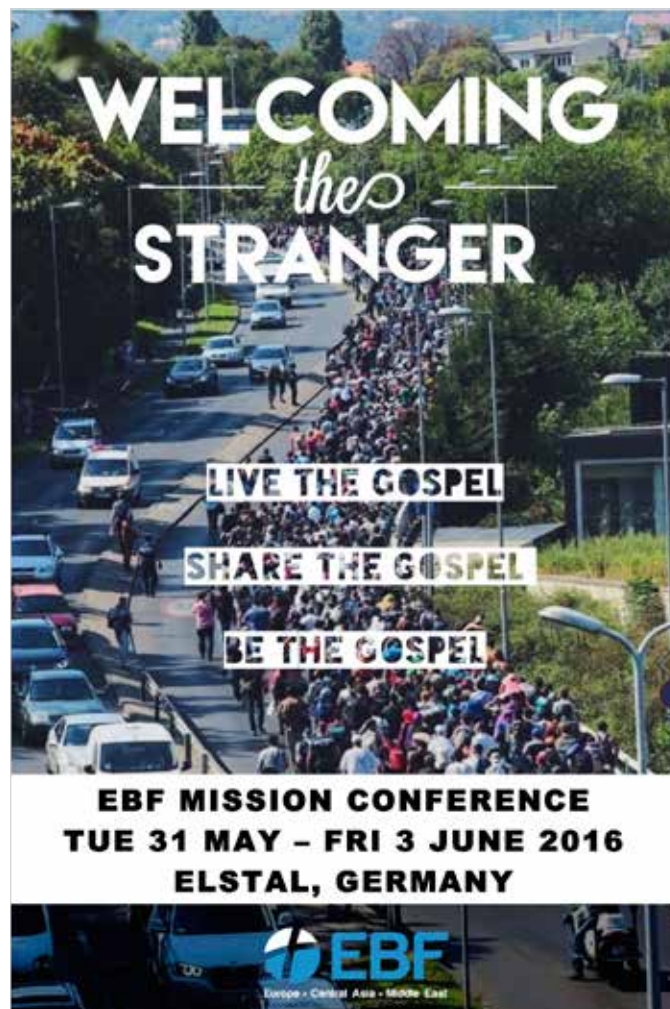
This almost seems too obvious to state but ask any growing churches which are seeing new converts, and prayer features greatly in their plans. I am sure that prayer triplets really did make a difference. The Scripture is full of the call to pray for one another and the lost. As I talk with Baptist Christians across Europe, their passion for prayer is great, and they expect God to answer.

## 3 Love

In this day of many needs, the ability to love in word and action is essential for the Gospel to flourish as Christ planned it. In the commands of Scripture we are obliged, in a free will sense, to show unconditional love. Matthew 25 has got to be seen alongside Matthew 28 – clothe and disciple, feed and proclaim, free and baptise.

## 4 Opportunity

Opportunity is not about just going when there is an open goal, it is recognising that our everyday lives, our whole beings are opportunities that Christ can use. Try telling an evangelist in eastern Europe that evangelism is hard: they know, but they seek still to make Jesus known at all times. In the western world we have opportunities to offer to people the greatest message of all time but at times we are reluctant to do so because it can mean losing respect. I know which approach Jesus would favour.



## 5 Expectation

Sadly, with our loss of confidence in the Gospel, we have largely lost our expectation that God will move. Yet time and time again, when I hear of someone stepping out in faith, giving a blessing, sharing their story, telling the message, I hear about how blessed they were as God had gone before. Have we stopped calling people to repentance and salvation because we no longer expect to see people come to faith? Churches that are seeing transformation expect to see it!

## 6 Celebration

And when God moves, churches celebrate, through baptism and as a community. The Bible has many stories of celebration such as Luke 15 when the lost son returns to the father. Oh for our Union to see many celebrations as we step out in confidence to intentionally make Jesus known.

**Ian Bunce** is Minister Team Leader at Romford Baptist Church and Chair of the Division of Mission and Evangelism at the European Baptist Federation





Photo: Alex Baker Photography



# Top Ten Tips for Evangelism

Having planted more than 10,000 churches, BMS Associate Team Leader for India Benjamin Francis shares his evangelism tips

## 1 Pray

First, before you do anything: pray.

## 2 Make contact

You have to get people's attention before you present them with hope; we call this an 'entry strategy'. In the villages we do sports, or set up a medical camp, or tell stories. In the UK you may do something different – like asking people if their kids would like to do some arts and crafts, or hosting a neighbourhood BBQ.

It could be as simple as saying, "hi, how are you?" to your neighbours, so they are no longer strangers to you.

## 3 Deepen relationships

Use the relationships you already have with people whose paths you regularly cross. That is your circle of influence. Slowly sow in the truth and show that that truth is applied in your life – because if you tell them something that is not showing in your life, people won't listen to you.

## 4 Share the simple gospel message

Once we have made a connection we ask, if people are interested, "will you open your home so we can come in and tell you more about Jesus?" We go to their houses, where they are comfortable, and start sharing the gospel: who Jesus is: the Son of God; what Jesus did: the miracles of Jesus that people really love to listen to; and what Jesus taught: the parables of Jesus.

## 5 Renew your confidence in the gospel

I think that UK Christians, with all due respect, have to renew their confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel still has the power to save, to heal, to restore and to give hope for eternity. Sometimes we forget that. I think, as believers, we have lost confidence in the gospel and that's why we don't share it with anyone else.

## 6 Share your story

Start gossiping Jesus wherever you go. Start sharing your story and there will be a change; and the best bit about it is that it is your story, no one can refute it.

Some days you won't feel like sharing. It sounds crazy - a guy whose job is church planting sometimes gets up and doesn't want to talk to anybody! But then I think, oh my goodness, every time my heart beats two people die and go into a Christ-less eternity in my part of the world. How can I keep quiet?

## 7 Practise

Our story has three parts – life before knowing Jesus, when we came to know Jesus and how we are living today. Practise. Write it down. No one wants to hear a long story. You just need a minute for each section. It's very simple actually. When I started practising I thought, oh, this is not that tough.

## 8 Wait for God to show up

No evangelism is complete without a supernatural element: there may be a dream, there may be an answer to prayer. You and I can be blue in the face talking about this, but if God doesn't show up that deal is not complete.

## 9 Expect miracles

Seven to eight out of every ten village churches we start come out of a miracle – God starts doing things and people say wow, this is a real God. Miracles are not only for India, but for everywhere God's people are called. Miracles don't happen where they are needed, they happen where they are expected.

## 10 KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid

Keep sharing your story and keep it simple. If something's working, keep at it!

Benjamin Francis is Associate Team Leader with oversight of BMS work in Kolkata and heads up the work of Big Life Ministries in West Bengal, which has a vision to reach people for Jesus through planting churches in villages around the region.

This piece originally appeared in the Autumn 2013 edition of the BMS magazine *Engage*, and is republished with permission.



Look out for a conversation with Ben and British evangelist Chris Duffett about evangelism in the Spring 2016 edition of *Engage*.

[www.bmsworldmission.org/engage](http://www.bmsworldmission.org/engage)

# Events



## Baptist Assembly Saturday 14 May

Join us with a group from your church at the 2016 Baptist Assembly in Oxford  
[www.baptistassembly.org.uk](http://www.baptistassembly.org.uk)



## Christian Aid Week 15 - 21 May

Support and pray for the work of Christian Aid  
<http://caweek.org>



## Big Church Day Out 28-29 May, West Sussex

Contemporary Christian music festival  
<http://bigchurchdayout.com>



## Momentum – Baptist Assembly in Wales 10-11 June

The theme this year is 'Worth Saving' with four sessions around the topics of: Worth Saving - People, Our planet, Communities, The Church  
[baptistassemblyinwales.org](http://baptistassemblyinwales.org)



## The Queen's 90th Birthday Street Party Sunday 12 June

[www.hopetogether.org.uk](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk)



## The Big Lunch Sunday 12 June

The one day get together for neighbours  
[www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com)



## Father's Day Sunday 19 June



## Refugee Week 20-26 June

A UK-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK, and encourages a better understanding between communities  
<http://refugeeweek.org.uk>



## Sea Sunday Sunday 10 July

Churches around the world remember seafarers and pray for them, their families and all who support them.  
[www.sailors-society.org/seasunday](http://www.sailors-society.org/seasunday)



## Keswick Convention 16-22 July; 23-29 July; 30 July-5 August

<https://keswickministries.org>



## Momentum

For students, 20s and 30s  
22-26 July  
Stafford Showground  
<http://momentum.org.uk>



## New Wine 23-29 July, 31-6 August Royal Bath and West Showground, Somerset

<https://www.new-wine.org>



## Soul Survivor

27 – 31 July  
Stafford Showground  
6 – 10 August  
Lendrik Muir, Kinross  
13 – 17 and 19 – 23 August  
Royal Bath and West  
Showground, Somerset  
<http://soulsurvivor.com>



Greenbelt  
26-29 August  
Boughton House,  
Northamptonshire  
[www.greenbelt.org.uk](http://www.greenbelt.org.uk)



## Education Sunday Sunday 11 September

A national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education – now at the start of the school year  
[www.educationsunday.org.uk](http://www.educationsunday.org.uk)



## The BIG Welcome Day Sunday 18 September

- or another date to suit your church  
[www.baptist.org.uk/bigwelcome](http://www.baptist.org.uk/bigwelcome)



## Fifth Annual Sam Sharpe Lecture Tuesday 18 October

This year's lecture is being delivered by Bev Thomas  
[www.baptist.org.uk/samsharpe](http://www.baptist.org.uk/samsharpe)

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# Selected Resources

## yesHEis

A powerful app from CV (formerly Christian Vision), connecting good news content on the internet with an engaging and authentic presentation of the Gospel.

<http://uk.yesheis.com>

## Sharing Jesus

A course from HOPE and Share Jesus International which focuses on how to put faith into words.

[www.hopetogether.org.uk/sharingjesus](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/sharingjesus)

## Taking Every Opportunity – Conversations About Jesus

Baptist minister Peter Thomas's sabbatical studies into helping contacts become inquirers.

[www.takingeveryopportunity.org](http://www.takingeveryopportunity.org)

## European referendum

The Joint Public Issues Team will be publishing resources to encourage reflection and debate on the EU Referendum by the end of April, with information on running hustings.

[www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)

## The Servant Queen

LICC, Bible Society and HOPE have produced a book to mark the Queen's 90th birthday. *The Servant Queen and the King She Serves* looks at the Queen's personal faith and the impact it's had on her long life of service to the nation. The bulk order price (10+ copies) is just £1 per copy.

[www.licc.org.uk/thequeen](http://www.licc.org.uk/thequeen)

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# Our Day to Day Living

The centrepiece of the cloister garden at Chester Cathedral is a sculptured fountain made by Merseyside artist Stephen Broadbent. Stephen's work is quite a common sight across the North West, and in my role as Regional Minister there, I doubt if a week goes by without me passing one of his pieces of public art.



Photo: Gwafoto shutterstock.com

But Stephen's work often conveys key messages of his faith, like his re-design of Warrington's Bridge Street after the IRA bombing in 1993. He openly describes his work as inspired by images from the book of Revelation of a river of life bringing healing to the nations. A busy, bustling town centre that is nonetheless no stranger to violence and pain, yet riven through with a message of hope and healing – images of Good News quite literally carved into the pavements.

His piece in Chester Cathedral is inspired by the story from John chapter 4 of Jesus' encounter with a woman from Samaria. A woman whose identity had been carved by messages of rejection, resentment and unworthiness was suddenly confronted by the possibilities of love, hope and acceptance. The sculpture is disturbingly intimate, presenting the Gospel not through the lens of doctrine and proposition, but a living, loving relationship with an open-handed Saviour.

It is this message from the Gospels and its underlying narratives of love, hope and acceptance that has very much shaped our agenda for 2016 in NWBA. As I reflect on the story, I am struck by the fact that this episode came about not because of some carefully arranged evangelistic event, but an apparently random and unplanned everyday encounter. What made it significant was Jesus' instinctive ability to overcome negative cultural stereotypes and his unstinting belief that he had come to offer life in all its fullness.

I am excited by the possibilities and potential of **40 days of Good News**; I am passionate to see churches re-ignited with a commitment to share our Gospel message. But I do not believe that we will ever do as much through organising Gospel activity as we will by cultivating our identity as Gospel people. Will our Good News be confined to a raft of church-run activities or might it be proclaimed through our day to day living as salt and light? Like Broadbent's sculptures and statues, when we think about mission might we consider how each of us can be a living declaration of good news in the everyday places we are found?

**Phil Jump** is the Regional Minister Team Leader at the North Western Baptist Association (NWBA)



## 'New scheme to make churches green'

A new award helping churches become eco-friendly was launched earlier this year.

**Eco Church** has been developed by A Rocha UK together with Tearfund and Christian Aid. It replaces Eco-congregation, the award scheme for churches which has been running for 15 years.

Eco Church is designed to help churches integrate environmental care throughout their church life: in their worship and teaching, in the management of their buildings and grounds, in their local and global community engagement, and in the personal lifestyles of their members.

"We'd really love your church to take part in this exciting initiative, which will challenge and equip you to care for God's world in all areas of your life together," said Baptist minister Nigel Hopper, the A Rocha UK Churches and Resources Manager.

**Lyme Regis Baptist Church** was among the first recipients of an Eco Church Bronze Award. The work was spearheaded by geography student Izzy Woodman, who is pictured alongside renowned ecologist and church member Sir Ghillean Prance, and her father Christopher, the church's pastor. For the full story visit [www.baptist.org.uk/lymeregis](http://www.baptist.org.uk/lymeregis)



To participate in the Eco Church scheme, register your church at [ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk).

## BME Women Ministers' Network

A network that provides support and encouragement to Baptist women from black and minority ethnic groups (BME) in leadership positions is looking forward to its second year.

The **BME Women Ministers' Network** launched in November 2014 for women who are lay pastors or accredited ministers (or in the process of training to become lay pastors or accredited ministers).

The network aims to:

- » Provide a safe space where women can meet together, share experiences and encourage spiritual growth as they live out their calling.
- » Provide access to and understanding of good resources to use to identify and nurture leadership potential in women and girls.
- » Provide opportunities to make good connections and access information.

It met four times in its first year, and a further four networking events have been planned for 2016, with the first having taken place in February.

For more details visit [www.baptist.org.uk/bmenetwork](http://www.baptist.org.uk/bmenetwork)

## 40 days of Good News

In the period between Easter and Pentecost Baptists have been encouraged to proactively show and tell the Good News of Jesus.

Called *40 Days of Good News*, the initiative has been organised by our Union's Associations, which are partnering with their churches to engage in mission activity between 10 April and 15 May.

The vision emerged from a meeting of Regional Team Leaders in autumn 2015. 'Sometime earlier Baptist leaders had been challenged to be those who not only seek to enable and develop mission strategy, but to 'lead by example' – in some way or another to root their own leadership in 'front-line' mission activity,' explained the Regional Team Leaders in a statement.

'From this emerged the vision for each of us to work within our own Association to participate in one way or other in 'on the ground evangelism' with the churches that we serve.'

A number of churches in the North Western Baptist Association took part in something similar during Holy Week in 2015. They included the **People's Church** in Partington and **Greenfield**



**Church** in Urmston which teamed up to organise an acoustic evening at a local Costa coffee shop with a mutual musician friend, Paul Saxon, who performed his own songs, interspersed with a little more testimony. Regional minister Phil Jump then spoke about Jesus and the woman at the well.

"It was an easy thing to invite people to, particularly those on the edge of church life," said Partington pastor Jonathan Boyers. "It was a natural progression – come and find out more about the faith that fuels us.

"We had a relaxed evening, and were really happy with it as an event. The people who came along appreciated it. Costa is open to us doing something similar.

"We've taken confidence in inviting people, and it's challenged us to think about who we know and who we are connecting with."

## BWA announces major evangelism award

Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Neville Callam has announced a new major award, which has been made possible by **Kowloon International Baptist Church** (KIBC) of Hong Kong.



KIBC is known for its strong commitment to evangelism and is a longtime supporter of the BWA. It has made an initial grant of US\$60,000, which will be followed with additional funding each year, to a minimum total of US\$250,000.

Earnings on the fund will be applied to quinquennial (five-year) awards in evangelism. The first such award will be made at the July 2020 BWA Congress, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The award highlights the work of evangelism among Baptists around the world and aims to inspire churches in this vital ministry.

"We believe KIBC's reputation as a church recognising the priority of evangelism will raise this award to the level of other distinguished awards in the worldwide Baptist family," Dr Callam stated.

"The ministry of evangelism is at the very heart of the church's vocation and it has long been my desire to see the BWA find additional ways to signal its importance appropriately."

## Church of England, Evangelical Alliance evangelism projects

The Church of England is undertaking the largest evangelism project in the UK this millennium.

Cathedrals and churches have been urged by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Justin Welby and John Sentamu, to set aside the week leading up to Pentecost (15 May) as a week of prayer for evangelism. The entire Church is being urged to pray throughout the week for 'all Christians to deepen their relationship with Jesus' in order to have 'confidence' to share the faith. The aim is for 'all to respond to the call of Jesus Christ to follow him'. A series of beacon events are being organised in cathedrals for Pentecost weekend.

Ecumenical support is encouraged with Project Leader Emma Buchan stating: "The hope is that in many places, Christians across denominations and streams can pray together, as the unity

of the whole Body of Christ is a powerful reality and symbol to the world."

The plans were outlined in a new report on evangelism. The report, launched at the General Synod in February, calls for more paid children and youth work posts; and for evangelism and witness with younger people to be prioritised. For more information on the week of prayer, visit: <http://thykingdom.co.uk>

### 'Grasp this moment'

Gavin Calver, the Evangelical Alliance's director of mission and an accredited Baptist minister, commended the Church of England's commitment to evangelism and urged others to participate in prayer.

"Prayer is crucial as we seek to reach out to our friends and neighbours with the good news of Jesus. That's why I am excited about this new initiative," he said.

"I want to encourage Church of England members, in fact Christians across the UK, to join in with praying for boldness, courage and love to share the message of Jesus with the people around them in the week running up to Pentecost 2016."

The Evangelical Alliance is working on a new resource to equip Christians to 'grasp this moment'.

Launching later this year, the project will be spearheaded by a new website that Gavin says will give churches and Christians across the UK "all the tools they need to share the gospel with anyone and everyone."

Visit [www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org) for more details.

Gavin has blogged about evangelism on the Baptists Together website.

Visit [www.baptist.org.uk/calver](http://www.baptist.org.uk/calver)





## NINE DAYS OF PRAYER FOR PENTECOST

**This edition's worship and prayer resources have been compiled by Baptist minister Andrew Fitzgerald, who will be leading worship at this year's Baptist Assembly**

In recent years I have come to rediscover the biblical importance and value of fasting in Christian discipleship. Initially this was a personal attempt to bargain with God, pry from him my wants and desires but thankfully has become simply a way in which I show the Lord my love, hunger and dependency on him.

With this new commitment to prayer and fasting I have come to notice two periods of prayer in addition to the season of Lent in the Common Worship Church Calendar. They are eight days of prayer before Christmas Day (the Advent Antiphons) and nine days of prayer before Pentecost (Novena prayer).

As we prepare for the season of Pentecost, reflecting on Lynn's call to be *Beacons of Prayer* and the week of prayer for evangelism (p37), I have sourced some prayers that could be used throughout the nine days of prayer (and fasting) before Pentecost...

**Taken from *Food for the journey... Pocket Prayers* by Canterbury Diocese in 2015**

Each prayer is accompanied by the instructions to  
 LOOK... and be curious;  
 WAIT... with prayerful expectation;  
 READ... the text with an open mind;  
 LISTEN... for a word with a willing heart;  
 and RESPOND... with prayer and action.

### Day 1

**Reading** – Abraham's three visitors (Genesis 18:1-5)

Unexpected visitor,  
 You come to us in the heat of our day; stay with us,  
 Allow us to welcome you and wash your feet,  
 So that, feasting together with you,  
 We might find our souls nourished  
 And receive unexpected gifts for our communities,  
 In the name of Jesus Christ, our living Lord.  
 Amen.

### Day 2

**Reading** – Joseph cares for his brothers (Genesis 45:1-5)

God of reconciliation,  
 You set us in families and communities;  
 Help us to meet the challenge of our humanity  
 And from disintegration to discover places of healing.  
 When our hungers dictate to us,  
 Provide us with your bread that satisfies –  
 Food and forgiveness interwoven in the story we share with  
 you,  
 And with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.  
 Amen.

### Day 3

**Reading** – Wedding at Cana (John 2:6-11)

Generous guest,  
 With glimpses of glory you bless your world  
 Never too busy to be in the midst of joy.  
 As we place you at the centre of our lives  
 Help us, like you, to transform the everyday moment  
 So that with surprise and delight,  
 Many may believe in you, Lord Jesus,  
 Bringer of light and life.  
 Amen.

**Day 4****Reading** – Prodigal Son (Luke 15:20-24)

Forgiving Father,  
 Who runs to meet us on the road  
 With a short memory of our foolishness and a long list of  
 our assets –  
 As we come to you, dusty and disheveled and dishonoured,  
 You set a table before us and celebrate our return.  
 Silence us in the face of this overwhelming welcome  
 That we might acknowledge your magnificent love  
 Expressed most deeply in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 Amen.

**Day 5****Reading** – Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:6b-10)

Weary with waiting,  
 Nevertheless you are here  
 God of word and wells and water –  
 Help us not to hide from your searching gaze.  
 Show us new ways of understanding and encountering you  
 That our souls will know where to seek  
 When next we are thirsty for you,  
 Worshipping Jesus Christ in Spirit and in truth.  
 Amen.

**Day 6****Reading** – Jesus visits Bethany (Luke 10:38-42)

Abiding Lord,  
 You love to dwell among your friends.  
 Help us to make space for you in the present moment  
 Because you are sharing it with us;  
 May it be free from judgment or harassment.  
 May we learn how to lounge in your presence  
 And also be diligent in serving you,  
 Our friend and companion, Jesus Christ.  
 Amen.

**Day 7****Reading** – The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35)

God of journey,  
 Who are you in this story? Who are we?  
 Those bruised by life, those acting with compassion,  
 Or those running between our duties,  
 Too busy to see who needs us on the road?  
 Open our eyes, halt our feet,  
 Teach us to dig into our resources  
 So that healing and blessing may come to our world  
 Through Jesus, our Saviour and Lord.  
 Amen.

**Day 8****Reading** – Jesus washes disciples' feet (John 13:4,5,12-17)

Teacher and Master,  
 You take our feet in your hands as a servant,  
 Your touch blesses and refreshes us.  
 Teach us to offer one another what you have offered us,  
 To pick up the pattern of life that you laid down  
 And with thankfulness, to live  
 In vulnerability and community  
 With you, our servant King.  
 Amen.

**Day 9****Reading** – The road to Emmaus (Luke 24:28-32)

Most holy visitor,  
 When the days are done, you break the bread,  
 Set our hearts on fire and open up our understanding;  
 As you disappear from our sight,  
 Find lodging in our hearts,  
 That with wide eyes,  
 We may ever recognise your imprint on our world –  
 Until we see you face to face once more.  
 Amen.

*Pocket prayers for 2016* can be sourced from the Canterbury Diocese: <https://www.canterburydiocese.org/novena>

In addition to these prayers, and in preparation for the Baptist Assembly, you may want to consider these songs for the theme, *Beacons of Prayer*, some of which may be used in Oxford:

- » Breathe on us (Ed Cash and Kari Jobe)
- » Build your kingdom here (Rend Collective)
- » Can a nation be changed? (Matt Redman)
- » Consuming fire (Tim Hughes)
- » Do something beautiful (Graham Kendrick)
- » Great is the darkness (Gerald Coates and Noel Richards)
- » Here I am to worship (Tim Hughes)
- » Hope and glory (Martin Smith, Nick Herbert and Tim Hughes)
- » Light of the world (Matt Redman)
- » Mighty to save (Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan)
- » My lighthouse (Rend Collective)
- » Shine (Matt Redman)
- » Shine Jesus shine (Graham Kendrick)

May the Spirit's presence come as we worship, pray and fast so individuals and communities will be changed for the glory of God and building of his kingdom.

**Andrew Fitzgerald** is minister at **Canterbury Baptist Church** and former minister at **Central Baptist Church**, Leicester.





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