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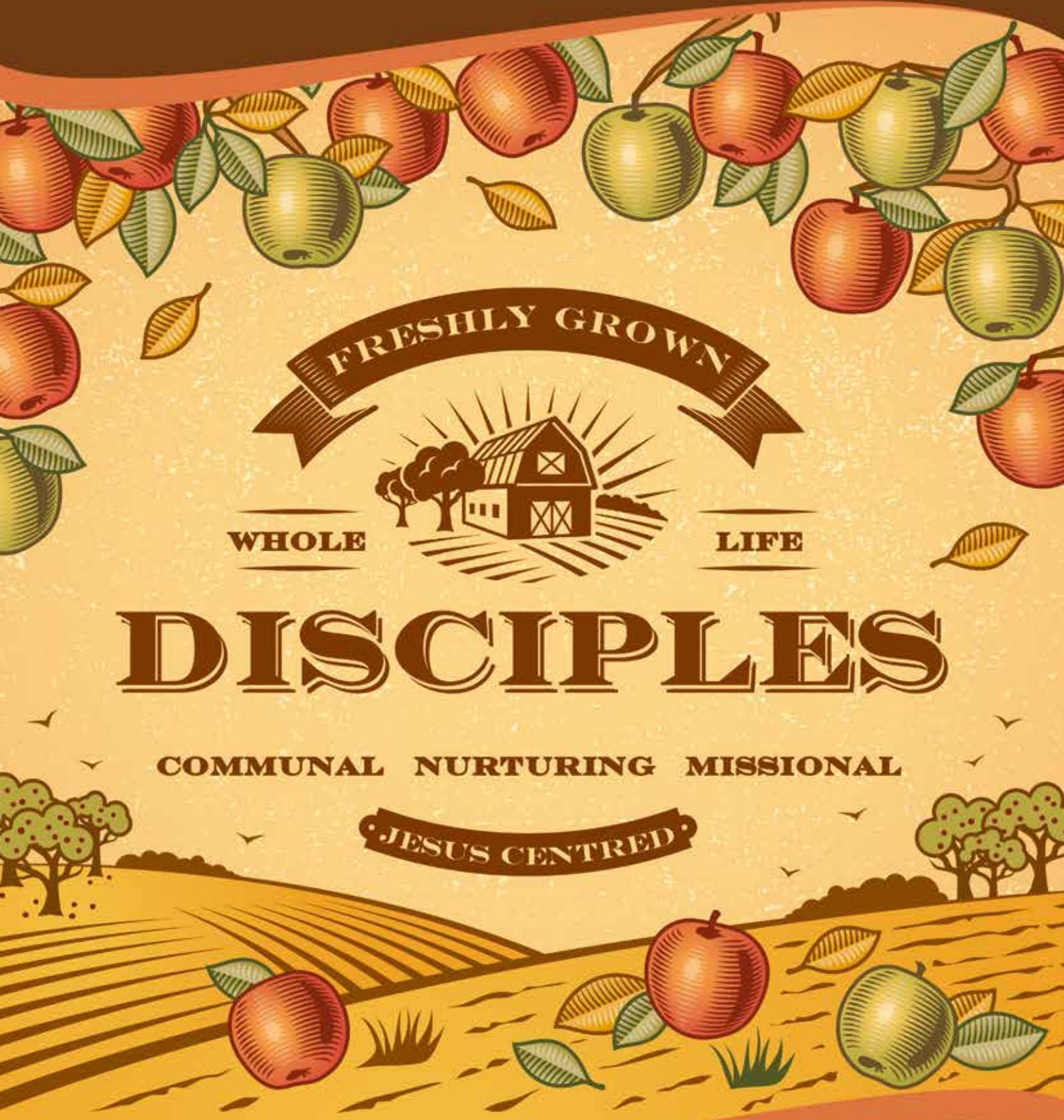


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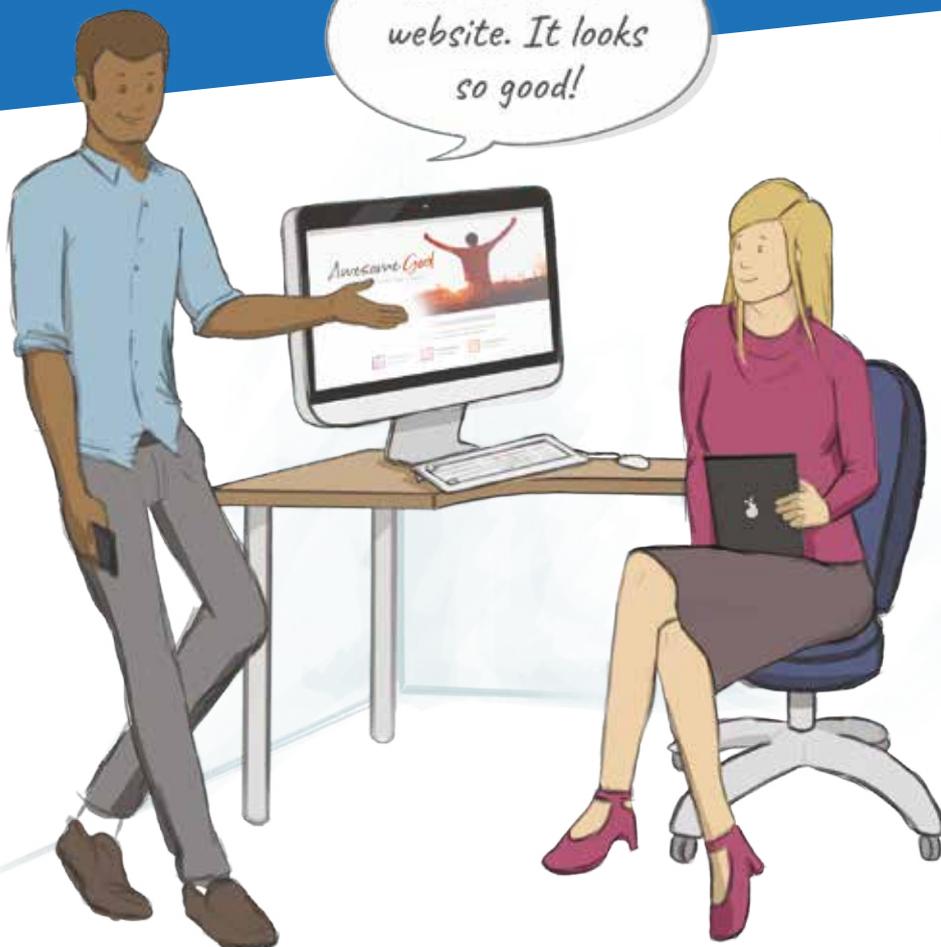
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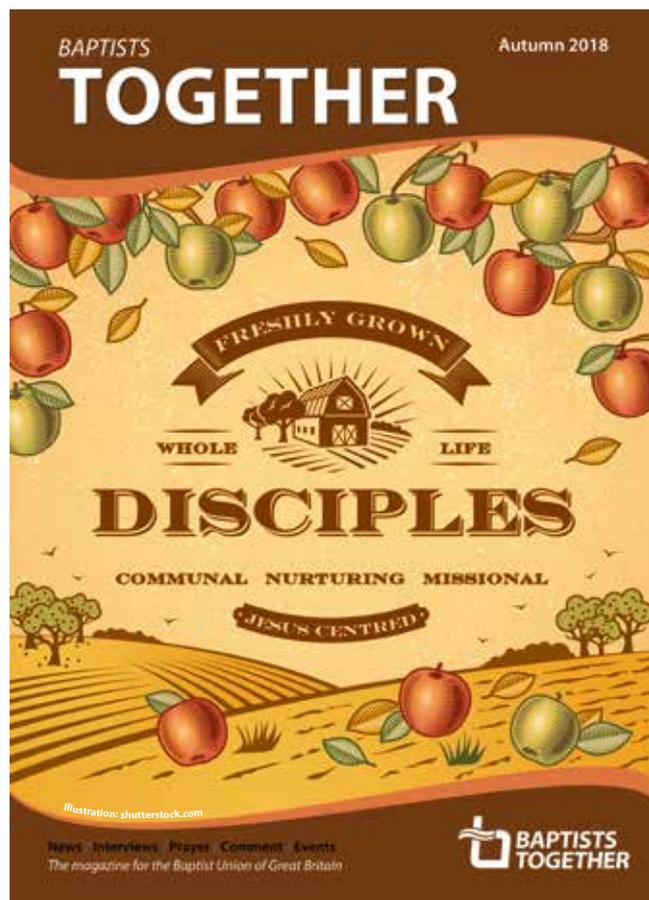
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Disciples: whole life, Jesus-centred

As Jesus' followers, we are all called to be his disciples. You'll no doubt have your own understanding of the word disciple – certainly many definitions have emerged over the years. You'll also have your own testimony of the transformation brought about by saying 'yes' to Jesus and choosing to follow him, and what this continues to look like in your daily life. While our ideas and experiences may differ, it's evident that being a disciple is Jesus' call to every believer. This edition of *Baptists Together* magazine is entirely devoted to it.

In the opening piece, Ken Benjamin explores what we mean by discipleship, suggesting its multi-faceted meanings are all part of the whole; before stories of Baptists and Baptist churches help to further develop the discipleship picture. Several common traits began to emerge: everything begins with and emanates from Jesus; being a disciple impacts all our life, not just a part; discipleship is not an individual pursuit but something that happens alongside others and in community; there's both a nurturing and missional element where through our words and actions Jesus becomes known. It's an organic process that's not easy and requires ongoing attention – but one from which encouraging fruit grows. Such thinking led to our cover, and the related images weaving throughout the stories.



Being a disciple is not just a call to adhere to Christian principles, but to walk by faith with Jesus, who promises to share the experience/journey with us. It's our prayer that you'll be encouraged, challenged and informed in your walk as you explore what it

means to be a freshly grown disciple of Jesus in the latest *Baptists Together* magazine.

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Whole-life discipleship

Discipleship is described and interpreted in many ways, but Ken Benjamin suggests the term carries a multi-faceted meaning that applies to ALL aspects of our lives as Jesus followers

Which one of the following words is the odd one out and why?

- a) Leadership
- b) Friendship
- c) Discipleship

Odd-one-out questions are often impossible to answer with confidence, aren't they? We could sensibly make a case for each of these being the right answer.

However, for today, the correct answer is..., and well done if you got it at home,

- c) Discipleship

Because, it is the only one of the three words you won't find in the Bible!

Admittedly, not every available English translation of the Bible has been checked in compiling this single question quiz, but the answer is true for all the main translations being used in our churches.

Perhaps the biblical absence of the actual word discipleship helps to explain why people often mean slightly different things when they use the word.

The term *discipleship* is either *illusive* or *inclusive*.

It is *illusive*, when we think we have pinned down a specific meaning and others seem to be using the word quite differently.

When some speak of *discipleship* it is clear that they are emphasising regular patterns and 'disciplines' needed for being a follower of Jesus.

Others refer to *discipleship*, almost as a follow-on stage after conversion.

Still others, when they say *discipleship*, are referring to a specific course or they are thinking specifically of going out to make new disciples.

Surely, we are best to think of discipleship, *inclusively*, as something of a 'catch-all' phrase for our journey of faith as Christians for the whole of our lives?

Discipleship can be thought of as including all the elements involved in being and helping to make disciples of Jesus

If *leadership* includes all the things involved in being a *leader* and learning to lead well; if *friendship* includes all the things involved in having and being *friends*; then *discipleship* can be thought of as including all the elements involved in being and helping to make *disciples* of Jesus.

Discipleship is therefore a whole-life thing.

So, the absence of the word *discipleship* does not at all indicate the absence of the theme in our bibles. The principles of discipleship are very much present throughout because the words *disciple* or *disciples* are so common in scripture.

There is, arguably no better place to go to explore this subject than the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 in which Jesus specifically calls us to 'go and make *disciples* of all nations.' If we think of discipleship *inclusively*, applying it to all of our lives, it is not just this phrase in the middle of the Great Commission that is relevant to discipleship, it is the whole of this great passage.

In our denomination our Declaration of Principle is rooted in Jesus' Great Commission and emphasises a number of key and unifying elements for us all. It contains three key statements:

- 1 That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer his laws.
- 2 That Christian baptism is the immersion in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day'.
- 3 That 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.

If we remove any of these elements we would have something weaker as a definition of our unity.

Similarly, taking our starting point lessons on discipleship from the Great Commission, we'll find that:

If we don't start firstly with accepting Jesus as the one with authority we will have missed out a key element in discipleship because Jesus himself begins the Great Commission in this way.

If we ever take the call to evangelism and mission out of our definition of discipleship, perhaps thinking of discipleship as somehow more inward disciplines in contrast to evangelism's more outward actions and words, then we have created a different definition to Jesus himself who calls his disciples to go and make more disciples.

If we remove the practices and regular patterns for learning and following Jesus' teaching out of our definition of discipleship then we haven't been faithful to Jesus' call to teach disciples to obey everything he taught them.





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If we ever take out personal prayer and devotion, as well as individual belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from our definition – then we have done something less than Jesus taught and so we have no longer fully captured *discipleship*.

And, if we ever make discipleship just an individual activity and take the mutual 'family' aspect out then we will have missed the fact that in Matthew 28, Jesus calls us to this journey together.

Discipleship is truly best understood as an inclusive catch-all word and if we miss out key elements, we will have watered down the definition to something less than its most powerful and helpful meaning.

For sure, it is useful to teach about different elements of discipleship one at a time, so long as we remember that discipleship in practice should include all of the aspects together, as we seek to commit to and become more like Jesus as whole-life disciples.

When we learn to drive it is often useful to learn and consider the different elements of driving one by one: theory, observation, gear changing, acceleration, brakes, steering and more. But to truly drive safely we need to combine all of them and not miss one out!

Discipleship is a whole-life thing

So it follows that some of the pieces within this issue of *Baptists Together* magazine helpfully cover a range of quite diverse subjects. Within this diversity, look out for some common themes.

The contributors that follow have found innovative and creative ways to form discipling communities that meaningfully fit their culture and mission. Many are, rightly, looking at the contemporary issues involved in reaching out specifically to today's young adults, young people and children. Additionally, some helpfully remind us of our primary calling to be disciples who seek to introduce people to Jesus and help them to find him as their friend and saviour.

Tucked away at the end of the Great Commission, after all the key teaching that we hold dear and value so much in our churches, there is an inclusive Whole-life Discipleship Message for every day for all of us which could be missed.

When Jesus says that he is with us 'always, to the very end of the age', how do we understand the word 'always'?

We perhaps most naturally think of the idea that Jesus promises to be with us both now and then to be with us ultimately, when he returns or in eternity. There is great comfort and truth in this.

There is an additional meaning though. The Greek texts have three words for our one word 'always'. Specifically, Jesus promises to be with us 'all' 'the' 'days'. This is the fourth *all* in Greek that these brief commissioning words of Jesus contain. He refers to his status, 'all authority', his mission to 'all nations', he calls us to follow his teaching, 'all I have commanded' and now offers his presence 'all the days'.

Surely, 'all the days', is inclusive of all of our lives? It means Jesus is with us as we try to follow him every day, as we bring all of the elements of discipleship together, wherever we find ourselves, at work, leisure, and with family and friends, on good days, bad days and a large number of average days.

Discipleship then is the multi-faceted adventure of following the master - all - the - days.

Ken Benjamin is minister of **Chichester Baptist Church**, and the current Baptists Together Vice President.



Find him on Twitter: @kenlenben



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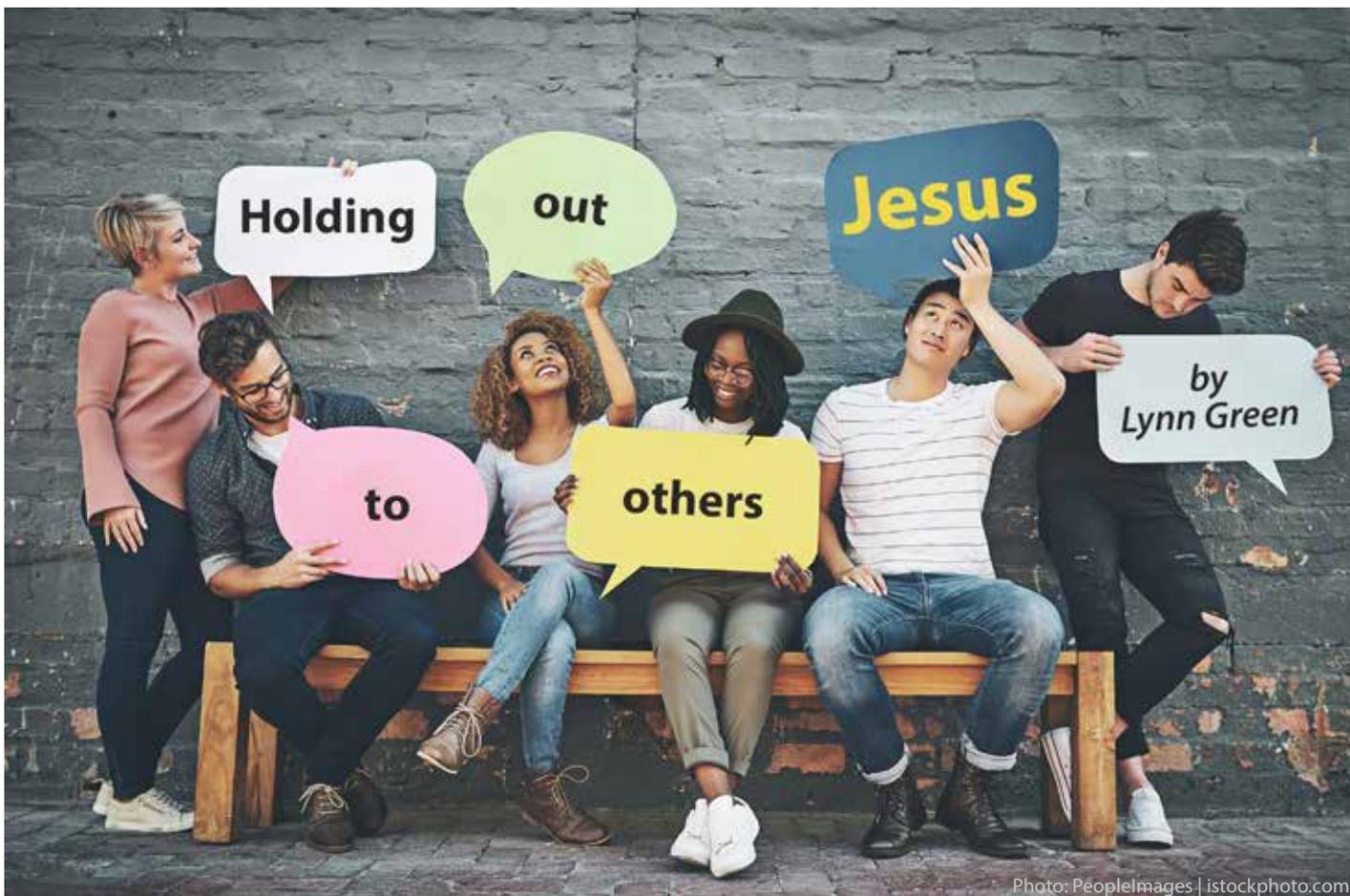


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Lynn Green reflects on the challenges of discipling a generation (18-25 year olds) who see the world in a very different way – and begins to offer a framework for how any discipleship might be approached

We probably all have our examples of mismatched assumptions. Making the wrong choice of clothes for an event we believed to be far more formal than it actually was. Assuming an invitation to a meal or a coffee came with (or without) an expectation of contributing to the bill. Or, more seriously, thinking that all is well with the person smiling in front of you, when in fact they're putting on a brave face in the midst of some major struggles.

I am sure that we can all identify with these examples in some way or other.

Perhaps we are a little more aware of the dangers of assumptions when we are inter-acting cross-culturally. What I am coming to realise, however, is how critical this is inter-generationally; most particularly with 18-25-year-olds, dubbed by some as the Emerging Adult generation. There is a tendency for older generations to look at the Emerging Adult generation and roll their eyes whilst claiming that they are simply facing the same challenges

that everyone else faced at the same age. But this is simply not the case. Not only is their way of seeing the world significantly different; the speed of change is also accelerating. We experience this at a micro level in my own family. The issues, pressures and cultural assumptions that my 12-year-old is facing are now even more intense than those experienced by my 19-year-old just seven years earlier.

But what has this got to do with discipleship? My point is simply this, we mustn't assume that exploring discipleship with Emerging Adults is based on the same cultural assumptions and worldview as those from older generations. We can no longer take it for granted that Emerging Adults attach the same meaning and understanding to discipleship as I do. If we want to avoid awkward and embarrassing misunderstandings, we would do well to listen carefully to the underlying assumptions of different generations when it comes to discipleship.

How can we enable each other to encounter Jesus as the living Lord as we follow Jesus together?

During my recent sabbatical I read *Lost in Transition* by Christian Smith, Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson and Patricia Snell Herzog. This book aims to identify some of the challenging features of Emerging Adult culture. Based on extensive and robust research, this book explores five themes; morality, consumerism, intoxication, sexual liberation, and finally civic and political engagement.

Some of what we can read in this book will not surprise many of us. A highly individualistic and experiential approach to life and morality and the lack of objective moral reference points certainly impacts understandings of discipleship. When I think about discipleship I understand that to be an exclusive commitment to following Jesus Christ and I learn what that means through reading the Bible. For me, discipleship is inextricably bound up with Lordship. We cannot assume that this is the case for Emerging Adults though, where to follow something means to be interested in a multiplicity of people and themes and where what is right is determined by what feels right for me and how that will be perceived by my peers.

And what are we to make of nurturing a lifestyle of discipleship in the midst of an almost universal acceptance of the economic necessity of consumerism? Where the development of character and social justice is drowned out by the culture of material gain? And there are also the challenges of being a disciple in a culture where alcohol, drugs and sexual activity are all pervasive and part of the norm. Where the assumption of what a good life looks like is, '...endless novelty, change and excitement, as the titillation of the senses by every available stimulant, as unlimited possibility'. Lasch

Together will we have the grace, generosity and love to hold out Jesus to others, and not merely our ways of connecting with him?



You, like me, however, may have come to believe that the Emerging Adult generation is poised to rise up and shake the political and civic structures of our day. Isn't this what we saw in recent political history in the UK? The statistics tell another story, however. Although based on survey data from the US, the conclusions are stark. The authors write, 'The vast majority of EAs remain highly civically and politically disengaged, uninformed and distrustful. Most feel disempowered, apathetic, and sometimes even despairing when it comes to the world beyond their own private lives.' And can we be surprised? In a world where Emerging Adults are overwhelmed by globalisation, pluralism, communications technology and information overload, is it any wonder that they find meaning in the world that they can experience and test for themselves. For many the bottom line is that you can only really trust yourself and what you experience to be good. It is easy to see, then, that individualism brings welcome meaning and scale to a huge, complex world.

But just before some of us throw our hands up in horror and despair at the Emerging Adult generation, please stop and pause to consider a very hard hitting and prophetic point that this book makes. These Emerging Adults have been socialised and nurtured by us; our society and our churches.



Seeing discipleship as a mutual accompanying journey rather than primarily a teacher / pupil relationship is also key

Perhaps it is not so much that they have not listened to their elders; maybe they have learned all too well...

Of course, it is not that we just give up on discipleship then. Rather, what I want to suggest is that those who are older use their listening, cross-cultural skills and awareness to understand the world that Emerging Adults live in; prayerfully and thoughtfully reflecting on how they describe, invite and accompany Emerging Adults on their discipleship journeys. Can some demonstrate maturity in realising that what worked for you is not being devalued, but that others may need something different? Together will we have the grace, generosity and love to hold out Jesus to others, and not merely our ways of connecting with him?

In the light of this, some things that would seem to be important for discipleship now and in the future, would be enabling others to experience faith and have moments of awe and wonder. Seeing discipleship as a mutual accompanying journey rather than primarily a teacher / pupil relationship is also key. As I reflect on Scripture, it strikes me that the first disciples often began their journey following a rabbi yet there came points where they encountered Jesus as Lord (Mark 4:41, Luke 5:8, 9:20, 24:30-31, John 1:48-49, 20:28). These things and more are explored in other articles in this edition and the practical examples offered can help us to see new patterns emerging.

My hope is that this edition of our magazine will stimulate a lively conversation about discipleship with Emerging Adults. I am very aware that many others have written much more deeply and profoundly on this topic and so my prayer is that, together, we will pool our spiritual gifts of insight, wisdom and discernment to encourage each other on this journey.

Lynn Green is
General Secretary of our
Baptist Union



'Everyone you meet is a potential disciple of Jesus'



Photo: The Light Project

Here are four phrases that help me lift up my eyes and see that everyone can become a disciple of Jesus, writes Chris Duffett

Everyone you meet is a potential disciple of Jesus. Everyone. The first friends of Jesus were plucked from one way of life and work and plonked into a new role of heralding and showing the coming Kingdom of God.

Fishermen to fishers of men.
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I don't mean that we should, when gathered at the school gate or local shop, recite chunks of the gospel before we've said our good mornings or that we should ask people to follow Jesus before paying for our groceries. Rather, I do believe that the way we perceive people desperately needs to carry a sanctified simple childlike expectancy that the people whom we look at are sacred and potential followers of Jesus. Everyone. These are the people we see day in day out. They are the image bearers of the Divine and as Christians we believe that the pinnacle of all consecration is to be made into a new creation, to be found in Christ. To become a disciple.

Jesus calls the most unlikely people to himself. Even beer swigging lonely blokes in Wetherspoons

To become a Jesus follower is an absurd gift. On the one hand no one deserves to become a friend of the most beautiful and kind man who has ever lived. But on the other hand surely everyone warrants the right to know and experience how they too can be a Jesus follower and be made whole. Right. Saved.

Who are we to disallow people that can have the opportunity to engage with the most outrageous gift that this world has been graced with?

Despite enjoying such a radical call to follow Jesus, the disciples struggled to understand that it was also for others.

Teaching them around a Samaritan watering hole in the heat of the noonday sun Jesus asked them to lift up their eyes and look at the harvest, that it was ripe for people to also become disciples.

There are four phrases that help me lift up my eyes and see that everyone can become a disciple of Jesus. I hope they may help you too:

1 People need what I've got

I have a cheeky confidence that what I have is good. So good. Others around me need the purpose and hope that I enjoy. What is it that you have that others need? What have you been graced with in your life from Jesus? Peace, despite the storms? Hope, despite the hardships? Joy, even when there's heartache?

Do you know that people need what you've got? People need Jesus and if you're a Christian reading this, well you've got him.

2 Strangers to friends to disciples

It's OK to meet strangers and let them know your faith. Many years ago, before becoming a Christian, my fellow co-worker Glyn who leads The Light Project with me was confronted by a stranger on her way to work in a park who told him two things: 1) There is a God. 2) This God loves you.

As he stood there weeping, little did the stranger know that Glyn had made a careful plan to end his life unless he heard from God that he was real and that he loved him. Glyn's life was saved. Literally.

In my role as a chaplain in Peterborough city centre I often spend time in pubs painting prayers for people. I meet many strangers. Some have become very good friends and a few have become disciples of Jesus. This has taken over five years of patiently believing that Jesus calls the most unlikely people to himself. Even beer swigging lonely blokes in Wetherspoons.



3 Where are the 'it was meant to be' meetings for the day?

Recently I have heard this phrase over and over. You and I may describe these meetings as divine appointments or God-incidences or even the Missio Dei.

But for people without the lingo of Christianese they simply say 'it was meant to be.' After seven months of being housebound, a lady walking with crutches dared to venture into the pub for a coffee. One of my team saw her and as bold as brass simply said,



Photo: The Light Project

"Hello, you look like you're in pain, can I pray for you?" The lady didn't tell my volunteer where to go or tell her she was mad: she simply stood there and with tears declared "It was meant to be."

At that precise moment I had painted a prayer stating 'Stay strong.' This phrase meant a great deal to the lady as it was a mantra she had spoken over herself for months.

4 Make disciples by doing mission with people who are not Christians

Granted it's messy and it can all go wrong, but doing mission with people who are not yet Christians seems to fast track discipleship. It's when people who are curious about the Christian faith actually get to 'do' the Christian faith that they 'get it.' Our wonderful popular refrain 'belong before you believe' in practice has become for many of our churches 'attend before you believe.' It has become way too passive and non-participatory. People need to see what it means to change this world for Jesus and to take part in this cosmic redemption!

Recently I was asked by a man who is homeless if I would marry him and his dog. Instead of choking on my cuppa or laughing out loud I simply asked if we could meet the following week to talk about it over breakfast. Another man who is also homeless heard about the man's question to me and asked if he could join us for breakfast and talk too – and it was he who gently and lovingly explained why I couldn't perform such a ceremony. Furthermore it was he who offered to pray for the man. I felt like a bit of a bystander in the process, watching a man, who wouldn't in any way describe himself as a Christian, act like a disciple, albeit with a few choice 'f sharps' in his prayer.

How can you lift up your eyes and see people as potential disciples of Jesus?

Evangelist **Chris Duffett** is a former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Chris's new novel *Philip* is available from Gilead Books (www.gileadbooksublishing.com) You can follow his adventures at www.chrisduffett.com



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Church stories

What does discipleship look like in local churches? A selection of stories

Formation Groups: Transforming Disciples

Minister Andrew Goldsmith explains how a new type of group has enabled many of his congregation, not connected with a traditional house group, to experience a greater sense of being supported, of seeing God at work, and of deeper engagement with faith and with church

When Jesus said, 'Go and make disciples', he's very clear it's a priority, not an optional side dish on the menu of church life. But it can be hard, and I'm not just referring to the spiritual challenge. Some aspects of being a Christian can feel impossible. I'm not thinking of the 'mountain moving' activity of reaching the world around us with the gospel, of releasing people from guilt and fear or loneliness or depression. There are massive challenges in helping our children navigate life with a confident Christian perspective, or keeping churches outward-focused and gospel-rooted, and working at applying discipleship at the desk, on the ward, in the classroom. All of these can seem demanding enough.

Then there are elements of being Christians together, connecting as a church body of believers, which to some can seem impossible because they are inaccessible. The small group that meets every Tuesday night, but Jenny has two small kids. The other house group which meets on Thursday evenings but Ed works shifts and usually can't make it. The Saturday morning men's group... but that clashes with football, the grandchildren visiting, worship group practice. Small groups are awesome but it doesn't mean everyone can connect to them.

For others the issue is not the flexibility of the diary but the nature of the groups themselves. We've probably all had experience of a small group which is 12 or more people (not so small), with diverse ages, Christian background, life experience, with men and women, and these can be wonderful. My best 'small' group had 28 members! But this is not an easy or practical setting to share life's deepest challenges, nor a forum where personal accountability to one another can always feel safe or even appropriate on some matters, and with so many people that all takes time. Perhaps we've also had other small group experiences where the Bible study is so deep we need a miner's lamp; heart and mind are nourished but the practical everyday application for tomorrow morning has yet to be unearthed.

Amphill Baptist Church family outside their building



Photo: Ken Argent

It was with these common and clear needs in mind that Formation groups were brought into being. **Amphill Baptist Church** has a range of small groups already – house groups, prayer triplets, prayer breakfast, a men’s ministry and women’s groups, too. It has a thriving seniors’ ministry and people engaged in mission and ministry across the life of the church. Sunday’s preaching, worship and fellowship are central to our discipleship. But there clearly isn’t the time or scope there for exploring what Christ is doing and saying for everyone (1 Thessalonians 5:11), to spurring each other on in detailed, challenging ways (Hebrews 10:24-25), for opening up all our needs, hopes and hurts (Galatians 6:1-2).

Despite the range of groups and opportunities for connection, perhaps half of our regular Sunday congregation were not in any kind of small group, getting alongside others as disciples. For some it was the diary challenge (work, family, hobbies, shifts, etc). For others it was a need for something smaller. For many they needed something more intentional, more focused on growing in Christ in the everyday.

So we developed Formation groups. The idea is far from new, arguably it is ancient. Formation groups are small – just four people, of the same gender – and intentional about discipleship – getting to the honest challenges of growing in Christ in our everyday life. They are flexible enough to accommodate busy lives as each group arranges its own pattern of meeting, typically once a month for a couple of hours.

What do they do? Each session has guided material and includes a short Bible study (we’ve offered materials on Philippians, Psalms, John’s Gospel, and mission). Then there are clear and practical materials to help us intentionally share aspects of everyday Christian discipleship, including relationships and family, character, money, work and time, godly goals and more. The aim is to simply encourage one another to apply scripture to our spiritual growth in Christ and to the hopes and concerns we face. We can help one another to be transformed. Finally, each group spends time in prayer together. Simple but effective! (And they do add into this mix some coffee, meals, social times, and very varied venues and styles.)

Having developed the idea, approached and trained some leaders, we started these groups alongside our regular house groups. Formation groups deliberately complement our other ‘regular’ house groups; we continue to support and grow those groups as well. We currently have 11 Formation groups, some have been going for over two years despite the option of just trialling them for six months. Almost all those involved are in no other small group, some have never been in a small group before, after decades of church involvement. To put this in our context, it raised the level of involvement in small groups by 50 per cent at a stroke.

There has been a great sense of being supported, of growing together, of seeing God at work, of deeper engagement with faith and with church, of prayers answered, of friendships forged, of goals pursued, of burdens shared

Amphill Baptist Church minister
- Andrew Goldsmith

Photo: Ken Argent

But the impact of the groups is not to be measured in numbers; that’s a valid but limited measure. The more significant and joyful measure is the impact on the lives of those involved. There has been a great sense of being supported, of growing together, of seeing God at work, of deeper engagement with faith and with church, of prayers answered, of friendships forged, of goals pursued, of burdens shared. All these are eminently possible in other small groups, of course, but *not if the people can’t or won’t access those groups, or if the groups lack an intentional focus on discipleship for everyday life.*

To see faith engaged on the frontline of the workplace – perhaps in times of redundancy, change, new jobs, difficult relationships – with the mutual support of a few, has been thrilling. To hear someone become excited and engaged about how their life in Christ is changing, and wanting to put their faith into effect is thrilling. To know a group who cry together, opening up after years of hurts and hoping, in a safe space around the scriptures and praying regularly, is heavenly. To encourage one another in making disciples is not optional and this has been just one fruitful, practical and encouraging means to that Great Commission. →

Andrew Goldsmith is minister of Amphill Baptist Church in Bedfordshire.

He is the author of *Formation Groups: Transforming Disciples*, a resource aimed at equipping and nurturing people in Christian life. Available via Amazon. £4.99 paperback, £3.99 eBook. 108 pages. bit.ly/transformingdisciples

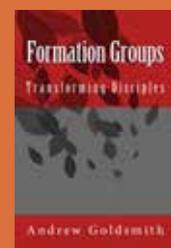




Photo: HBC Chester



“We needed to get back to the core of discipleship”

Missional communities are a key aspect of life at HBC Chester. How did they come about, and what’s been their impact?

“These communities are at the very core of how we do church,” says Andy Glover, minister of *HBC Chester*, “we are one church, but many missional communities. And our missional community story is primarily a discipleship issue.”

Missional communities are a group of people, about the size of an extended family, who are united through Christian community around a common service and witness to a particular neighbourhood or network of relationships. They have been described as a vehicle that enables us to ‘learn to live our everyday lives as extended families on mission.’¹

Andy has been minister of HBC Chester (formerly Hoole Baptist Church) since 1994. In 2012 he sensed change in the air. The church was in ‘a pretty good, healthy place’, but he and wife Sue were beginning to wonder whether now they were being called to move on.

“I’d just done my 18th Christmas, and I wasn’t sure I could keep on the same treadmill. I was becoming a little bored about doing church around a programme base. And while we were attracting Christians, which was great, we weren’t seeing conversion growth.”

Around the time, Andy attended a conference led by Baptist minister Paul Maconochie, then of *St Thomas Philadelphia Church* in Sheffield.

The church was growing significantly through missional communities based all over the city. At the conference Paul asked a question: *How was Jesus able to equip a group of uneducated men and women to be salt and light...?*

The question really struck Andy. What did Jesus do and how did he go about it?

“I knew we wanted to be more missional,” he explains. “I felt we needed to get back to the core of discipleship.”

It set HBC Chester on a journey which continues to this day. Over the next three years they began to explore how to create a discipleship culture and develop missional leaders, with a view to ultimately launching missional communities.

In May 2015 the church was asked to leave the building it was renting in the city centre – and the time had come. In October that year eight missional communities were launched.

There were three givens to each missional community: they had to have a core leadership team of 4-6 people; they had to have a missional vision; and in terms of what they did, they had to decide themselves. “We give people a lot of permission.”

The church began a pattern of gathering together for two Sundays a month, with the remaining two Sundays scattered – meeting as missional communities of around 20-30 people. “It was quite challenging not to meet every week,” admits Andy.

The initial pattern of two weeks gathered / two weeks scattered ran as planned for six months before it was reviewed. Though that pattern has changed slightly (one of the scattered



Andy Glover (left) and Dirk baptise Andy, whose involvement in a missional community helped his faith journey and decision to be baptised

¹ 3dmeurope.com/lmc/

Sundays is now Messy Church) three years on, six missional communities are thriving.

These communities form around a common focus, 'desiring to be like and love like Jesus in different and relevant ways to the people or interest groups, geographies, schools or work places they serve'. Each has an element of food, faith and fun. The church is now starting to see people become Christians through missional communities.

Andy says they have effected a culture change – changing how people see themselves and their lives, "living our whole lives as ambassadors for Christ". They have encouraged people to be prophetic, and recognise that hearing God is possible for anyone. They provide community – people are cared for in them – but they're also missional. In the groups that are thriving, people are feeling "a level of missional responsibility."

"Small enough to care; large enough to do," is how Andy sums them up. HBC Chester is now beginning to



experience a steady trickle of baptisms of people new to faith through the missional communities.

Though he says that leading the church on its missional community has been "the most rewarding and fulfilling five years of ministry," he is keen to stress that missional communities are not the answer for every church.

"There is a danger of trying to find a silver bullet in our church growth. If one existed, we would have found it!

"I would say that most church leaders grappling with discipleship are making the connection about the sacred /secular divide, and the influential work Mark Greene and others have done at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity over the last decade. The language has broken things down.

"How do you equip people to be missional across their *whole lives*? Missional communities are but one vehicle a church can use to help people on the journey of discipleship." →



Blacon missional community

Photo: HBC Chester





Photo: The Well, Sheffield



“We expect people to be like, and to be becoming like Jesus”

Discipleship at The Well, Sheffield

The Well is a Baptist church planted in an old Methodist building in 2015, which aims to reach the unchurched of the city. Many have encountered God there and have joined the church family - and discipleship is a key aspect of life.

“We put a really high value on discipleship,” explains Marjorie Allan, who leads the church with husband Nick, a Baptist minister. “We say we have a discipleship culture.”

The focus on discipleship is rooted in an understanding that, as Christians, we are called to be Christ’s apprentices. In biblical times apprentices spent time with their rabbis, walked in their footsteps and learnt to do what they did. Marjorie says little has changed in terms of this approach.

“As well as a discipleship culture, we say we have an apprenticeship culture. We explain this by encouraging three things. We:

- » encourage people to be with Jesus;
- » to become like Jesus;
- » and to do what Jesus does.

“It’s based on Matthew 10. We aim to lead people to the radical life of Jesus. We expect people to be like, and to be becoming like, Jesus.

“We expect that people will be being changed, and put a huge emphasis on transformation, on his grace to transform lives. We are a people being changed like Jesus.”

In practical terms the church is organised around community groups. A high percentage of the congregation belongs to one, each numbering about 10 to 25 people. A number are based around a cause or a geographical location. They meet together and eat together. They meet once a week, but generally there is a lot of communication in between. Social media and services like whatsapp, all helps them to keep in touch.

“Church happens as much away from Sunday as it does on a Sunday,” says Marjorie. “It happens in people’s homes and around the tables.

“I’d say most of my discipleship happens in the kitchen, around the table. Eating, laughing and crying. Life on life.”

Together they use the Discovery Bible Study material. It’s a form of Bible study where facilitators (not ‘leaders’) let the scripture lead the discussion and everyone joins in, rather than providing answers.



“We have learnt that the Holy Spirit is the best discipler. It’s really good to let people ask questions. But we are looking for our community leaders to lead with a faith perspective.”

While each community helps support people pastorally (a culture of pastoral share not pastoral care) and at times financially, each is also missional. Every community is encouraged to think and reach beyond themselves. For example, two of the communities began this year to welcome new and unchurched people. Others are supporting those engaged in kingdom activity in their workplaces. The Well is also currently in the process of building community around a prison ministry.

“As we planted the church, we established that we are missionaries, and we see that we are raising everybody as missionaries.

“We have a picture of two circles – supernatural is one; mission is the other, family is in the middle. We believe in Acts 2 in its fullness. We’ve been blown away by people sharing resources; but also fervent prayer which leads to the supernatural, leads to signs and miracles. So we expect discipleship to lead to signs, wonders and miracles.”



Alongside these communities, Nick and Marjorie each run smaller ‘huddle groups’, where they intentionally disciple young leaders, people “we believe God is calling us to pour into for a season.”



The church also runs courses throughout the year on Thursday evenings, such as Bible Basics, and Naturally Supernatural. Training is important. It means when someone joins the church, they have the opportunity to join a community, as well as receive teaching throughout the year.



Photo: The Well, Sheffield

Millennials

The Well has a specific focus on the millennial generation. “We are really passionate about this generation,” says Marjorie. “The generation can be spoken about negatively, with a focus on their traits, or their absence from the church.

“The millennial generation is very spiritually hungry.”

She explains that many have lived without a faith framework in their lives, but remember something of their grandparents’ faith, and are open to exploring that (“a lot more than the secular media would have us believe,” notes Marjorie).

She says millennials prize authenticity and vulnerability. They don’t have the same idea of hierarchy, and love to get alongside people. Once at church they want to dig into Jesus, and come with “a whole heap of questions”.

Many find themselves in the aforementioned communities, attracted by the sense of belonging and family feel at the heart of the church. The Well has used Freedom in Christ’s disciple course with them, as it helpfully focuses on identity.

“We have learned in our culture there is nobody beyond Jesus. People’s backgrounds are often very broken, but there’s a deep longing to be loved and for wholeness; people longing for belonging.”

At the centre of the communities, the huddles, the courses and Sunday gatherings, is a hunger for Jesus.

“We believe there is much more to come. We will be getting it right sometimes, wrong sometimes. We rely on God; our hearts are humble. We are all apprentices of Jesus, we are very hungry for him.

“We have learnt from others. God is blessing and leading our church plant and we are following him. We are just hoping to lead other people into that.”



Urban Expression (UE) is a mission agency formed in 1997 to explore new ways of planting churches in inner city communities. It is made up of teams around the country, and values courage, creativity and diversity as its people discover relevant ways of being church in different contexts.

What does discipleship look like in this setting? We spoke to the UE team in Cobridge, Stoke-on-Trent.

The *Cobridge Urban Expression team* started in 2009 and consists of five people: Howard and Iona Jones, Rich and Cat Wakefield and Carmel Murphy. Rich and Cat have two small boys and a baby daughter, who are very much part of their little community. 'We aim to be a blessing to the area,' they say on the UE website, 'working in partnership with others to build up 'social capital' in the community and sharing our faith in imaginative, respectful and non-coercive ways through our lifestyle, actions and words.

'We love Cobridge and love living here, and are excited at what God is doing here.'

The team explains that UE is more incarnational than invitational and what it looks like on the ground varies from team to team. In Cobridge, there is no formal Sunday service. People sometimes join the team for a small gathering around lunch, but they're primarily about being a low-key, long-term presence in their area. They try to get involved in things that are already happening locally, like the community group, as well as setting up a few things themselves. They run a toddler group and a community garden and help organise local events like 'pop-up parties'. They regularly have an open house community meal, where people bring and share food and 'everybody mucks in'. More recently they have been transforming an empty shop on the high street into a community hub.



Photo: Iona Jones



The Cobridge Urban Expression Team

"We encourage one another to celebrate what's good, try to change what's not, so that together, we can build a stronger, more vibrant community," says Carmel. "We really want to be rooted and connected. Everything we do has grown organically, and everything we do, we do as residents and members of the local community."

The team has developed relationships across the breadth of the community. Fellow team member Iona Jones explains that some have grown to be very significant – "but we are holding onto them lightly." She explained the approach is in contrast to what has gone before.

"There was more of an evangelistic model in the 70s/80s, with people as 'projects to be won'. Our relationships are hopefully more honest and relaxed – we don't see everyone as potential converts, but people in whom God is already working."

She tells a story to highlight the value of simply being there. "We were doing a prayer walk once and met a man sweeping the road. I thanked him for his work, and asked if there was anything I could pray for. He opened up about his life, his heart.

"We haven't seen him since, but that doesn't matter. *In that moment we were there.*

"We are not here because we have all the answers – we are here as fragile and vulnerable people who hopefully have something to give but also who have lots to learn."



Team member Howard Jones

“For me, it’s not worrying about bringing people back to something; it’s seeing who we are called to be. God is already at work in people’s lives; our interactions are a blessing for them and us.”

Their work on developing the community shop - the Angel - is an example of this. Living in the area they noticed how community spaces were disappearing. In 2016 they carried out a survey of residents and discovered that 85 per cent felt there should be more community space. In a recent flyer they outline a vision of creating a warm community hub with values such as warmth, service, honesty, aiming high, interaction and respect. They explain they are a small Christian community - and then invite the wider community to be part of what happens at the Angel. ‘Our vision is for a community hub created and run by Cobridge people, for Cobridge people. For that to happen we need everybody to get involved. Will you help us please?’

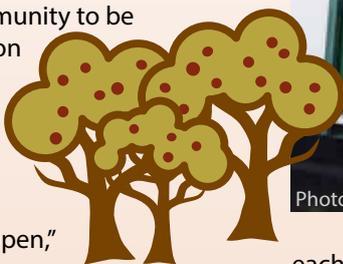


Photo: Iona Jones

“We just thought that something had to happen,” says Howard.

“It’s a terrific way of meeting members of the community. People stop by and see us working on it (the hub), and they’re interested in what we’re doing and how we’re going to be using it.”

Such activities and the group’s commitment to staying in Cobridge has led to a deepening of trust. The team was often asked how long it was staying, particularly in its early years.

“They assumed we were coming in to help, and then going back,” explains Iona, “so staying in the area has probably been one of the things people have been most curious about. ‘Why would you want to live here?!’ they ask. For us it’s about being present and consistently doing what we said we would, trying hard not to let people down.”

The team is very reliant on each other (“we are like a family,” says Iona, “but hopefully not an exclusive one”). They meet regularly: to pray; reflect; ponder on something that’s happened; plan; party together and just hang out. These gatherings make a difference in terms of supporting each other and giving each other strength and energy. Both the way they interact with



Photo: Iona Jones

each other, and the wider community in Cobridge, point to “a more holistic and less programmatic way of living,” Howard says.

“In terms of disciples, I worked for many years in a more traditional church. It always spoke to me more of programmes, courses, information to impart, stuff to learn, new behaviours to inculcate, old ones to re-establish. It all felt very programmatic.

“It feels like what we do is less driven by that. Not programmatic at all. We live life, we live as Christian people and work as a team to try to work out what that means in Cobridge. We just hope and trust that it makes a difference. Doing life this way is whole, wholesome. It’s real, more freeing than any experience I’ve had.”

He adds that it’s enabled him to better take away the sacred/secular distinctions, and “just live – live with Jesus.”

“That’s been one of the most wonderful things. I’m just as aware of God’s presence as I am mowing the lawn, or reading a story to school children, as I am during a time of prayer or performing Mark’s Gospel (another recent adventure!).”

Carmel has a similar experience. “I feel I understand my faith in a more holistic way. I have a bigger vision of God. A wider understanding of who God is, largely through having new experiences and encountering people with entirely different backgrounds and stories to my own.”

She continues, “A lot of things in Cobridge are not great, so we understand the question, ‘why here?’ But our hope is to work with local people to bring change and challenge that perspective as we seek the Kingdom here.”



Photo: Iona Jones



Photo: Corin Lawfull



“It just feels like the Kingdom of God - and it’s happening in our kitchen.”

Sarah and Vaughn thought – why not just come for dinner each week? The couple had prayed about using their house in the service of God.

Kitchen table discipleship

Each Thursday evening a group of young people in their 20s and 30s gather around the kitchen table in a home in Didcot to share a meal, life and prayer. It’s a welcoming and non-judgmental space where different opinions are aired, triumphs celebrated and difficulties shared. It only began in September 2016, but within a month the participants had already swelled to 20. The friendships “have been incredible,” says Sarah Lawfull, who hosts the weekly gathering alongside husband Vaughn.

“To be honest, we’ve been blown away by it,” she continues. “It’s like being family - God’s family.”

Sarah and Vaughn are members of *The Ladygrove Church*, a Baptist/Anglican Local Ecumenical Partnership in Didcot.

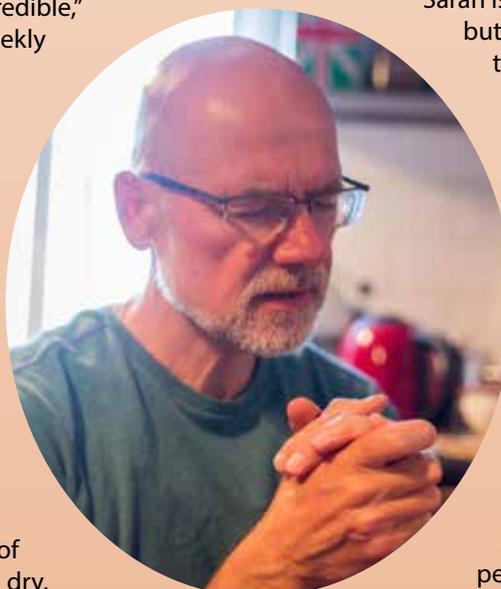
Kitchen Table began when they felt called by God to stop the youth group they were running. A number of those involved had grown up and moved on. However, a couple of people were going to be left high and dry.

At first just three or four came along, but it soon became clear a shared meal and fellowship was meeting a need for those in this age group. Within a month around 20 people had turned up, and two years on, there are 36 in the Kitchen Table Facebook group. Some have joined for a season as they’ve passed through Didcot before moving elsewhere, but each week a sizeable gathering has continued to meet.

Sarah is clear that she and Vaughn don’t lead, but facilitate. “We just provide the kitchen table.” Every Thursday the group chooses a theme for the food: it’s sometimes themed around a country or an event, at other times something very simple, like bangers and mash.

The table always looks good, with tablecloth and candles, enamel plates and vintage cutlery. “It’s celebratory – like a feast. It’s saying to people – they matter,” says Sarah.

She says the act of gathering and eating together has led to an honest sharing of opinions and what’s going on in each other’s lives. Several young people struggling with mental health issues



have been able to talk about it and pray about it. "Some of the prayer requests have been remarkable," says Sarah. "We've had lots of prayers answered."

The talk can quickly move from Love Island to football – and then something deep and existential.

This has spilled into their everyday lives. The group looks out for and helps each other. They now have a pool of people to hang out with, for example, at the cinema. As they are being disciplined and discipling each other, so several people involved in Kitchen Table have become more heavily involved in church life.

"We are learning we are all different and looking after each other's needs," says Sarah.

"We've learnt to be honest. We're learning to share the good bits and the tricky bits. Everyone feels loved.

"It just feels like the Kingdom of God - and it's happening in our kitchen."

She adds, "It's not terribly convenient, but God is challenging us to be inconvenienced. And God has blessed us with it, without any shadow of a doubt. They are looking after each other, and they are looking after us as well."



Amy, from the Kitchen Table group tells us:

"I've had quite a chequered relationship with church and church groups but was recommended this group by a trusted friend. With some hesitance decided to try it, and I'm so very glad I did!

"I've only been going for a few weeks but have already found it to be a community that not only embraces every person who attends, but meets them where they are in different life and faith stages.

"There is a distinct feeling of peace and acceptance that permeates the group, and allows each vibrant character to truly express themselves in the most organic way.

"Sarah and Vaughn's openness and interest in who you are from the moment you meet them, sets the tone for the rest of the group who follow suit and are exceptionally welcoming with genuine interest in your story.

"The conversations had there are easy, uncensored and fast becoming the highlight of my week. I couldn't recommend coming along to this wonderful group highly enough."



Photo: Corin Lawfull



Photo: Corin Lawfull



Padre Gary Birch (left) with fellow chaplain and Baptist minister Padre Luis Marques on deployment in Canada



Photo: Royal Army Chaplain's Department

Combat discipleship: Chaplain Gary Birch on ministering to the Armed Forces

Baptist minister Gary Birch explains how his approach to discipleship has adapted since becoming an army chaplain

It was hot and sunny, and the breeze was kicking up clouds of dust, but at least it was keeping the mosquitos away for once. They had been biting with vigour over the past few weeks on the Canadian Prairie where The King's Royal Hussars (KRH) Battlegroup were exercising for a month. With my insect repellent and factor 50 duly applied, I was there with the troops as one of three chaplains on the exercise, offering pastoral, spiritual and moral support. As a full time (regular) member of the Royal Army Chaplain's Department, and attached to the KRH, I travelled with them from the charms of Salisbury Plain to the vast nothing-ness of the Alberta prairie. Along with various attached units of infantry, artillery, medics and engineers, to name but a few, there were well over 2000 servicemen and women being trained and tested in a sometimes very arduous and demanding environment.

as a chaplain to the Forces I find myself having to re-adjust my traditional understanding of discipleship and be much more fluid in my approach to encouraging folk

But on this particular day in May, things were a bit more relaxed as the battlegroup undertook a maintenance day, where, while vehicles that needed fixing got attention, so too the soldiers, washing clothes and themselves, stocking up on rations, even getting a haircut if needed. And then, during the afternoon, a group gathered to watch three young men be baptised in a JCB bucket full of cold water. Definitely the most unusual setting for a baptism that I've ever been part of! It all came about after numerous conversations over the previous weeks, particularly during the times we shared communion together on the prairie. Three guys who already confessed a faith in Jesus Christ, but not yet baptised, wanting to fulfil their desire to follow Christ's example and witness to their mates and colleagues in a very real and practical way. (Little did they know the witness they would actually be making: the video went viral on Facebook, attracting more than five million views in a few weeks!)

For me, this is one of many examples of how discipleship of Christians in the armed forces might not quite fit a traditional church-shaped mould. There was no five-week course preceding or following it, nor a plethora of rotas to get them to sign up to, and what some might really struggle with, they may not even be able to enter into church membership and attend two services on Sunday and a midweek



Bible study! The often quoted 'Believe, Belong, Behave' (a much discussed concept in church life about a person's discipleship journey), whichever way you think it should be now, is certainly mixed around in this scenario.

And so as a chaplain to the Forces I find myself having to re-adjust my traditional understanding of discipleship and be much more fluid in my approach to encouraging folk to '... continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel' (Colossians 1:23NIV). A fellow chaplain told me that he sees discipleship as being all about direction, and he plays a part in guiding people in the right direction, with any movement that way being positive discipleship.

The realities of being a service person often mean that stability of life can be quite reduced, or even non-existent at times, even when you're not away on exercise or operations and working 'at home' in the UK. With large proportions of the military being unmarried young men and women, or others living 'married-unaccompanied', often families and friends are miles away from where they are posted and working midweek. So in many places near military barracks, the weekend sees a diaspora of personnel going home, leaving many of the garrison churches struggling for congregations.

But how many then attend church services in their home towns and villages? And perhaps more importantly is the question, how many churches are ready to welcome them and offer a way of being church together that scratches where they are itching?

discipleship of Christians in the armed forces doesn't quite fit a traditional church-shaped mould



In considering the 'Call to Discipleship', using Jesus' invitation to Levi in Mark 2, Dietrich Bonhoeffer asks, 'And what does the text inform us about the content of discipleship? Follow me, run along behind me! That is all. To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after.'¹ So maybe completing a 12 week discipleship course isn't the goal after all?

Interestingly, another colleague spoke of a soldier who said he believed he received much more spiritual input because of the chaplain in the unit than he would if he were in a civilian job. With input into teaching morality, ethics, values and standards, as well as parades, services throughout the year (and not just Christmas and Remembrance), grace being said at dinner nights and various prayer groups and 'chance' conversations with the Padre wandering round camp... I think he may probably be right! But it's certainly a different style of discipleship to any that I saw in local church ministry, although it is one that surely is as vital as any other.



Photo: Royal Army Chaplains' Department

Gary Birch served as a minister at **Creech St Michael Baptist Church**, Taunton, for 11 years before being commissioned as a Regular Chaplain with the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. Currently serving with The King's Royal Hussars in Tidworth, Gary is married to Michelle and they have two young children, Louis and Emma.



¹ Bonhoeffer, D *The Cost of Discipleship*, SCM Press Ltd, 1959. P58

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“Family and relationship”



Discipleship at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Norfolk

“You can baptise as many adults as you like, but if you don’t show them the way, it won’t make any difference,” says Linda Turner. “You are wasting your time. You need to encourage them on their walk.”



Linda leads *Cornerstone Baptist Church* in Norfolk and is passionate about discipleship. At Cornerstone she says this takes place in a context of teaching, role modelling and close family support.

“It’s all about having good relationships with Jesus and with each other. Christians in the first century were all about relationships, and we seek to be like that too. Relationships and family are so important to us.”

At Cornerstone every person is connected and disciplined by someone. Linda says the church has tried to assign people to others, but found it has worked best when relationships happen naturally and organically.

“We have people aged from 11 to 83, so it’s quite a range!” she says.

In terms of teaching, the church does not run discipleship courses, but instead offers three different Bible studies throughout the week in addition to its Sunday evening

gathering. The studies aim to cater for different needs. One is for people who are new to faith or only have a basic grasp of the Bible. Another takes place on the radio programme run by the team: this is for the leadership team and is a verse by verse, in depth look at the Bible. The third study is for those who want to ask difficult questions about a particular passage. They explore the Word together.

Linda says the approach had some amazing results. One lady – a member of another denomination for 40 years – has been welcomed into the church. “Through talking about Jesus, learning about Jesus, doing the Bible studies, she said to me how she hadn’t realised she could have a personal relationship with Jesus.

“It’s transformed her understanding – and life.”

Away from the gatherings people are in close contact, which gives the church a family feel.

“There are very open relationships. People are regularly in contact. We call ourselves family with all the support, reassurance and help that suggests.

“We are a very tight knit church, and newcomers receive such a warm welcome. One couple in Essex came while they were on holiday, and now they’ve decided to come every week because of the family feel. One of them has just been baptised.”

She adds, “You have to develop the culture – and it starts with you. You have to have that passion. It’s all about family and relationship.”

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Everyone's become a Christian

Photo: Sarah Stone/BMS World Mission

Women's discipleship is having an incredible impact in villages in northern Thailand

In one village, about an hour north of Chiang Mai (on a painfully winding road through the mountains), 25 years of women's discipleship has had an amazing effect.

In 1988, BMS World Mission sent Jacqui Wells to work with the Karen hill tribe in Chiang Mai, Thailand. When she arrived, some of the women told her that they had been praying for 12 years for someone to come and support their work amongst the Karen women. They saw Jacqui as an answer to these prayers.

Working alongside women from the Thai Karen Baptist Convention (TKBC), Jacqui helped to develop women's leadership training to enable Karen women living in remote villages, with little opportunity for teaching and encouragement, to grow in their faith. Thirty years on, BMS continues to support the discipleship of Karen women across northern Thailand, helping to fund salaries for ten Karen evangelists – one for each of TKBC's associations – as well as the women's regional leader.



Plerka

"Before they started the women's ministry, only six families were Christian," says Plerka, who was one of the few Christians in her village 25 years ago. "Because all of the Christians joined hands together and prayed, there are now 50 or 60 families that are Christian."

"Everyone here has become a Christian now."

Bringing Christian women together in the village to pray, study the Bible, receive teaching and encouragement and worship the Lord resulted in a tenfold increase in church attendance. The six Christian families became close to 60. And, while it took years and years of prayer, Plerka says things are much better in the village now.

"Before, there was a very strong evil spirit working here, and many people did not dare to stay in the village," she says. "But now, because of the Christians, the evil spirits walked away. They don't live here anymore."

Supa is one of ten BMS-supported evangelists who visit remote villages to encourage the Church. She's responsible for supporting 24 churches, as well as a number of church plants, and tries to make visits of two or three days to each, so that she can really invest in the lives of her sisters in Christ there. The men and children are welcome to the meetings too, and often come along.

"Sometimes we call the women to come together," says Supa. "Other times I go to the women's houses and encourage them and disciple them."

"Many, many churches respond very well. They're hungry for the Word of the Lord, so they want to know more. They need us to visit very often."

Supa tells stories of praying for women who are sick, and seeing God heal them. One woman in particular has become a great evangelist herself because of witnessing God's transformative power in her own life. Now, she goes around



Supa encouraging others to stay strong in their faith, because God has the power to heal and save.

As well as increasing the number of Christians in Plerka's village, the discipleship has also made these believers strong in their faith. All of the women in Plerka's church are now active members, attending multiple times on a Sunday to pray, worship and grow, and visiting those who are sick and struggling in the community. Plerka says that having this Christian community has helped to give her peace.

"I am not worrying anymore," she says. "I am thinking about my personal growth in the Lord. I never doubt."



Photo: Sarah Stone/BMS World Mission

Transforming discipleship

My understanding of what it means to follow Jesus has developed by listening to and learning from others who are very different from me, writes David Mayne on being part of a Europe-wide Baptist leadership programme



In the autumn of 2016 I filled out an application form for Transform, a pioneering learning community of younger leaders drawn from across the member bodies of the European Baptist Federation (EBF). After conversations via Skype all the participants and facilitators met for the first time in Vienna, Austria during March 2017. Since then we have gathered in Yerevan, Armenia and Beirut, Lebanon and will finish our time together over the next year with gatherings in Lviv, Ukraine and Glasgow, Scotland.

Transform brings together young women and men from across the EBF to learn and share together about various aspects of leadership. Each session has a particular theme or angle, whether it be the importance of culture and context, or the importance of healthy discipleship for good leadership.

In all our Transform sessions we have facilitators from seminaries and churches across the EBF, and as well as listening to them and drawing on their expertise and experience, much of the learning takes place as we listen to one another. Our different experiences across our respective Unions and Conventions consistently provide us with many insights, as do our varied workplaces; whether it is from the world of German architecture, Armenian education, or Danish carpentry, there is always something to learn. Since we have been together we have shared some significant moments too, including new babies, engagements, and callings to new spheres of ministry.

'the call of Jesus is to embark on a journey with others'

There is a strong sense of walking with each other regardless of what lies ahead. I am sure this will continue long after our official time on Transform has finished.

Sitting around talking with each other – and the best conversations always seem to happen late at night in the bar long after the official timetable is over – each of us on Transform has increasingly found that having the capacity to listen to, and to learn from, people who are different from you is an essential part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. If we believe that each person is made in the image of God, and that God is at work in ways known and yet to be made known, then we must make time to listen.

In our first session in Vienna, Stuart Blythe (who was Rector at the IBTSC in Amsterdam at the time) introduced us all to the work of Australian missiologist Athol Gill and how responding to the call of Jesus is to embark on a journey with others; the call to follow Christ is a call to community. My experiences thus far on Transform have certainly shown this to be true and I have learnt so much about what it means to be a disciple by being open to the stories of my sisters and brothers from across the EBF.

We are the first group of people to progress through Transform, and no one knows quite where it will all lead. I hope it will in some way enrich the life of the EBF and enhance the relationships across our respective Unions. But I do know that I have been changed by being part of it, and that my understanding of what it means to follow Jesus has developed by being part of it.

In one of our sessions in Beirut we heard from Elie Haddad (President, Arab Baptist Theological Seminary) about the importance of being open to change and growth despite the risks this involves. "The cost of changing is much less than the cost of not changing," he told us. He was talking about institutions and organisations but I think this is also true of us. Transform only works if we engage with open minds and open hearts. It only works if we know we have more to learn, and if we're willing to journey with others.

David Mayne is lead pastor of *Shoeburyness and Thorpe Bay Baptist Church*, Essex.

Transform is a European Baptist Federation programme to invest in young Baptist leaders which launched in March 2017.

The **European Baptist Federation** is comprised of approximately 825,000 members in 61 member bodies in 52 countries, stretching from Portugal to the far reaches of Russia. It works together in four main areas: evangelism and church planting; defending religious freedom; theological education; and helping those in practical need.



Photo: EBF Transform programme

Young Baptist leaders from across Europe on the Transform programme [David Mayne - black shirt, centre back row]

Photo: St Peter's Baptist Church

Children learn from children

Peer to peer discipleship in children is a natural way for children to develop and grow in their faith. St Peter's Baptist Church in Worcester has adapted its children and youth ministry from a traditional age defined programme to something that resembled more of a family to explore it, writes Amy Wearing

A healthy sign for any church is peer discipleship. It happens when we come together, when we meet over coffee, in small groups, before playing sport, or going for a walk or attending a conference, or talking about a recent sermon, or Christian book. It is in these relationships that we lead one another deeper in relationship with Christ and with each other.

Watching the children and young people interact on a Sunday morning after church, it struck me how much time they chose to spend together - older ones taking younger ones to the nearby park, children inviting young people to be part of their game, listening and sharing stories and having a whole heap of fun. It was then that it began to dawn on me that perhaps there was something more going on here than post church niceties, and that the children and young people were actually engaging in something far more profound and life shaping.



Photo: St Peter's Baptist Church

If as adults we find our faith grows when we intentionally spend time with other Christian friends, then surely this is also true in the faith development of our children.

With that in mind we set about transforming our children and youth ministry from a traditional age-defined programme to something that resembled more of a family - where children learn from children and young people share their faith with those younger than them. Where shared interests, whether that be drama, construction or creativity, are the basis for groupings and where children lead the way with leaders accompanying them by responding to questions. The aim was to build a community where children could encourage and disciple each other and build lasting friendships that would shape their faith in to one that is robust, personal and long lasting.

At first this all seemed quite daunting, moving from the very familiar and comfortable to something completely new, so we invited Mark Arnold, Urban Saints Additional Needs Ministry Director and Co-founder of the Additional Needs Alliance, to help us begin to make the transition. He says this:

“Children learn from children; whether that’s how to do something, how to think about something, or how to help

each other. Peer to peer discipleship in children is a natural way for children to develop and grow in their faith; children who are a little further on their faith and discipleship journey helping those who are just starting out. And this works amazingly well for children with additional needs too, with older children perhaps with a more developed faith supporting them as ‘buddies’, which can be a wonderfully mutual and beneficial relationship, growing faith and understanding for both, and inclusion and acceptance.”
(Mark Arnold)

We are so excited to see how peer discipleship will impact on the faith of our younger members in the coming years. The initial signs are very positive and adapting to the new way has been made surprisingly easy, most likely because the children are having so much fun all being together. They are interested, they are engaged, and they are engaging with other children, very much mirroring the richness we see in our adult peer discipling relationships.

If you are interested in exploring this further, then I would recommend reading Mark's blog: bit.ly/2Js6HFZ

Amy Wearing is minister for Youth and Children at **St Peter's Baptist Church, Worcester**



Discipleship of young people – continuing the journey



Youth pastor Bob Morris explains how Cirencester Baptist Church discipless its young people

Saying goodbye to young people when they 'graduate' from your church's youth ministry is not always easy. As they transition from youth group member to fully fledged freshers at university or start their gap year it is a time to think and ponder the question: *'Did we do enough for them to stand on their own spiritual feet when they leave?'*

Here at **Cirencester Baptist Church** we take discipleship of our young people very seriously and afford them as many opportunities as possible to put their own faith into practice by helping them to serve, develop and grow.

Belonging and serving

Young people want something to belong to and the local church is a great grounding for those who want to develop their gifts and strengths. It is also a good environment in which to place courage within them, and help them to live out their own personal faith so they no longer simply rely upon the faith of their parents or youth leaders.

As they turn to Christ and show signs of genuine faith, young people can be involved with our children's ministry, PA, worship team, welcome team, youth club helpers, sharing testimony and preaching in services. It is not just giving them something to do to ensure that we keep them but to develop them into disciples who are grounded and rooted.



Photo: FatCamera | istockphoto.com

As they begin to own their gifts within their particular ministry they are given greater responsibility and continue to grow and develop.

Gathering in house groups and on retreats

But back to the question about 'have we done enough?' Weekly youth house groups have given our young people a real space to grow and explore their own faith and to pray in a safe haven and to fail in a safe place. Small group discipleship like this enables encounters with Jesus, a developing love for one another and opportunities to both serve and participate.

In recent years we have developed a 'University Leavers' Retreat' for those about to leave home and go into the big wide world. This has taken the form of leaving town for 36 hours together to go to a wonderful retreat home in South Wales and tackle the crunchy issues of being a Christian whilst at University where no one will get you



Photo: sturti | istockphoto.com

out of bed for church on a Sunday morning and your laptop will not be looked at to see what you've been up to.

Making use of resources

Using the excellent material produced by Fusion Movement we look at how young people can not only survive but thrive and how they can become the influencer and not the influenced. The excellent app entitled 'Student Link Up' enables students to explore and be in touch with churches in the city or town of their university before they arrive there and many of our students have been in touch with Christian Unions as well as churches before they have even left home, which has proved invaluable to their discipleship and provided some accountability.

All of our students are encouraged to ask someone in our church to be their 'Student Link'. This person will keep in touch with them whilst they are away, keep them updated with things at church and covenant to pray for and support them through their time away.

Personal visits

Once the students have left this is when you find out what they really believe! Are they thriving or merely surviving?! Visits by their link person or their youth pastor are nice touches, and taking students out for a curry after they have left and seeing them in their new settings all settled in at university and church is one of the most rewarding aspects of my ministry.

Discipleship is a lifelong activity and indeed a lifestyle choice. If young people are given a good start and it is modelled to them effectively then they stand a good chance of continuing to walk with the Lord into adulthood and being role models and mentors to those coming after them.

Bob Morris is youth minister of Cirencester Baptist Church



Wonderful Youth - a new resource for Black History Month 2018

Even though there is a vast number of resources on the Christian market to enable young people to reflect on their Christian faith, few (if any) intentionally enable Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic to see their image reflected in the resources. This new resource aims to address that imbalance and seeks to affirm, both theologically and culturally, all young people between the ages of 13-16.

This year's five sessions are designed to be used during Black History Month (October) but can be used at any time. *Wonderful Youth* explores and celebrates some of the historical and current unique contributions from our multicultural society. As this year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Baptist minister Martin Luther King, it makes reference to his contribution to Baptists and others.

Download a copy free of charge from
www.baptist.org.uk/wonderfultyouth



Titled 'The best that you can be' the sessions consider five themes from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus:

- » Blessed (Ephesians 1:3)
- » Loved (Ephesians 1:4)
- » Holy (Ephesians 1:4)
- » Chosen (Ephesians 1:5)
- » Forgiven (Ephesians 1:7)



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Photo: Susan Yin | unsplash.com

The disciple that books built

**Are we investing
in our personal
discipleship?
Andy Goodliff on the
importance of reading**

My congregation have heard me start a sentence too many times with the following words, 'I was reading a book ...' I'm a confessed bibliophile. I probably learned it from my father who has appetite for reading even greater than mine. I grew up learning to love books, mostly novels as a child and teenager, and then I discovered theology. I can remember in 2001 as a second year theology student reading everything I could by Colin Gunton, one of my teachers at King's College London. He helped me see why theology mattered. In 2003 I read John Colwell's *Living the Christian Story*, which suddenly made Christian ethics interesting and introduced me to Stanley Hauerwas, whose work I devoured through the rest of 2003 and into 2004. Elsewhere I have recounted how being taught by Douglas Campbell and his ongoing work on the apostle Paul helped me make sense of his letters. It was the work of Walter Brueggemann that transformed my reading of the Old Testament and Ched Myers's *Binding the Strong Man* which opened my eyes to gospels as political books.

Photo: Clem Onojeghuo | unsplash.com



**if being a disciple is
learning to read, it is also
a lesson in discovery that
the Bible reads us**

It was probably in 2005 that I first read *Tracks and Traces* by Paul Fiddes and suddenly I discovered I was finding a way of articulating why I was and would remain a Baptist. Footnotes are always a journey of discovery into new books to read.

My discipleship has been focused on reading. Francis Spufford, author of *Unapologetic* (if you've not read it, do!) wrote an earlier book called *The Child that Books Built*. I think I could quite easily write a book with the title 'The Disciple that Books Built'. Reading has transformed my discipleship, it has expanded my faith, it has on several occasions performed a form of open heart surgery and on a regular basis renewed my mind. In other words, there is a real sense that I have found God, or more truthfully God has found me, through the act of reading. Reading has for me been as much a spiritual exercise as an intellectual one.

At the centre of this is a reading of the one revealed in the scriptures, it is an engagement with the Word made flesh witnessed to in the words of the apostles and prophets. Christians are a people who have been given a book. Ours is to some degree a textual faith, a faith that has to work with words as they seek to bear witness to the living Word. Part of being a disciple is learning to read, or at the least being read to from that which we give the name Holy Scripture. And if being a disciple is learning to read, it is also a lesson, more often than not, of discovering that the Bible reads us. Being a disciple is not about becoming a master of the words on the page, but about the words on the page coming to draw us into an encounter with God who addresses us with words of life and death, judgement and hope, love and calling.

But discipleship, at least for this disciple, has not just been about reading the Bible, it has been about reading the Bible with those who have read it in the past and those who are reading it now. Reading is a communal exercise and not just an individual one. For to read is always to read with others, because a book is never a product of one solitary mind. To coin a phrase, it takes a village to write a book. While there is a current suspicion of experts, I'm grateful for those who have the role of theologian or biblical scholar and who make their lives a study of the Bible and the faith. In so many ways they have nourished my knowledge and love of God through their written work.

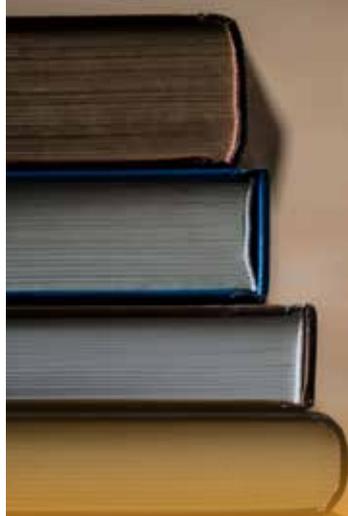
While there is more to being a disciple of Jesus, much much more, it is grounded I suggest in the two habits of prayer and reading. These two habits are an ongoing discovery that the gospel is endlessly interesting and that, more importantly, it reveals that God is endlessly interested in us.

Andy Goodliff is minister of **Belle Vue Baptist Church**, Southend-on-Sea.



He is the editor of *Regent's Reviews* - a twice yearly publication containing book reviews from major academic publishers in the areas of biblical studies, Christian doctrine, ethics, and practical and pastoral theology. Visit rpc.ox.ac.uk/regents-reviews

Photo: jcomp | freepik.com



Suggested reading

If it's been a long time since you've picked up a book. Here are ten suggestions (that do not require a theology degree) that might change your life:

- » *Being Christian* by Rowan Williams
- » *When in Romans* by Beverly Gaventa
- » *The Battle for Middle-Earth* by Fleming Rutledge
- » *A Lot Like Eve* by Joanna Jepson
- » *The Shape of Living* by David Ford
- » *The Death of Race* by Brian Bantum
- » *Ten: Why Christianity Makes Sense* by John Pritchard
- » *Stations of the Heart: Parting with a Son* by Richard Lischer
- » *Learning to Dream Again* by Sam Wells
- » *Testimony to Otherwise* by Walter Brueggemann

while there is more to being a disciple of Jesus, much much more, it is grounded I suggest in the two habits of prayer and reading

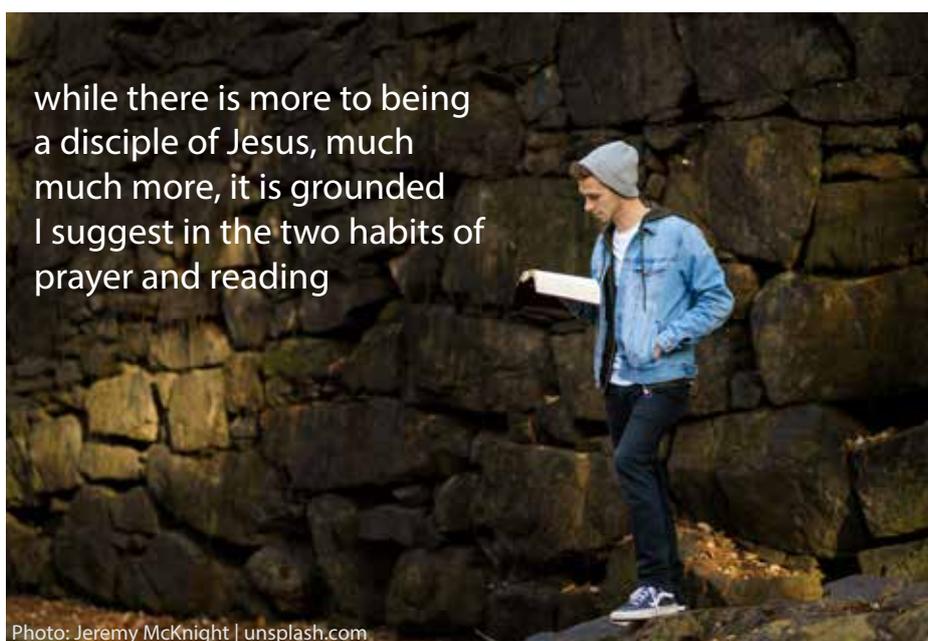


Photo: Jeremy McKnight | unsplash.com

Which books have meant a lot to you?

Share your recommendations by emailing together@baptist.org.uk



RESOURCES

Photo: www.freepik.com

Disciple Forming Communities

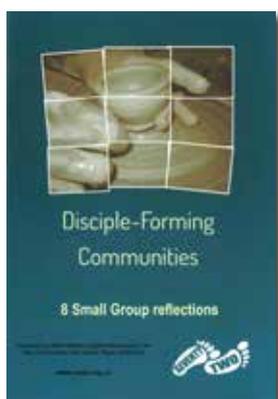
North Western Baptist Association in partnership with Seventy-Two Network

Eight reflections for small groups or individual study to inspire and equip ordinary Christians to live out their faith in the everyday world.

It states: 'Through this series of reflections, we hope you are encouraged to explore your own personal discipleship and also how together with others in your church, you can enable one another to fulfill your mission calling.'

www.nwba.org.uk/discipleship

For more, read Phil Jump's column on p40



disciple

Freedom in Christ

A discipleship course for those in their 20s and 30s. A 10-week journey to discover who you are in Christ, to take hold of the freedom he has won for you, and to walk in your God-given mandate.

www.ficm.org.uk/disciple



Freedom in Christ Discipleship Course

Freedom in Christ

Make fruitful disciples (not just converts). Involves 13 sessions and a ministry component called the Steps to Freedom in Christ. Churches normally run a session a week, with an away day.

www.ficm.org.uk/the_fic_course



Energize

Urban Saints

Web-based discipleship activities, discussions and videos for transforming young lives aged 3 to 18+. Includes training and support to help you, whatever your role. Free 30-day trial.

www.energize.uk.net

ENERGIZE

Fruitfulness on the Frontline

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

A fresh and original framework for everyday life. Combines biblical teaching from Mark Greene with real-life stories. Eight video-based sessions to explore how you can make a difference on your frontlines and support one another along the way.

www.licc.org.uk/product/fruitfulness-download



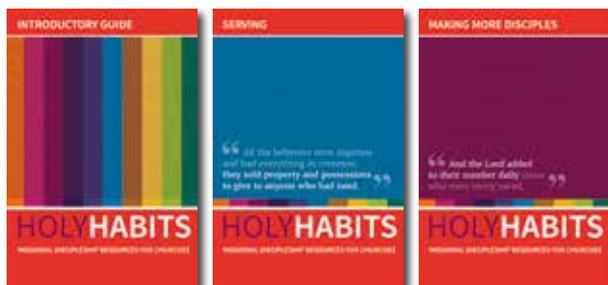
Holy Habits

BRF

A new resource to help churches engage more intentionally with discipleship.

An intergenerational approach based around Luke's model of church found in Acts 2: 42-47. Identifies ten habits and encourages the development of a way of life formed by them.

www.brfonline.org.uk/holy-habits



Crucible Course

Run by Urban Expression, the Incarnate Network and others

Three intensive training weekends each year equip Christians to follow Jesus on the margins. Baptists seeking recognition as pioneers via the 'Equipped to Pioneer' track can combine modules from the Crucible course with modules taught at the Baptist colleges, together with a supervised placement.

www.cruciblecourse.org.uk



DiscipleKit

CPAS

Do you ever find yourself looking for just the right course for your small group? A DVD that will connect with your youth group? Or maybe a book that will fit with the questions of an enquiring Christian new to your church? DiscipleKit reviews all of these types of discipleship materials, and more, to help you decide which resources are right for your church and groups.

www.disciplekit.org



Other resources

Which other resources have you found helpful?

Share your experience with us by emailing

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www.creonline.co.uk

An interview with

Beth Allison-Glenny

Beth recently joined the Faith and Society Team as our Public Issues Enabler, working with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT). She previously pastored John Bunyan Baptist Church in Oxford

What excites you about this role?

Can I say 'all of it'?!

I believe that good theology - the study of God - is worship, and therefore enables the church to be faithful in mission in a quickly changing world. So, I am passionate that part of our mission as God's people, here, in the 21st century, is that we need to be able to talk about and act upon public issues well. Evangelism can never be divorced from our engagement with our society and culture. The sociological studies of the younger generation suggest they are passionate about issues like climate change and that also they are most likely to see the church as a negative force in society. If we want to be a missional church to under thirties, then our evangelism will need to be part of carefully considered engagement with our society. My hope is that we can use some of the deep thinking that's already being done to equip ourselves for living out our call.

And what are your hopes for it?

I know from my experience of local Baptist ministry that it is essential to be well resourced and this need often arises at a moment's notice. I've been the minister of the most amazing local church, where the make up of members and the community centre in the building has meant that we have met all sorts of challenges, from the cost of housing, to benefits, to immigration, to foodbanks. This means that ministers and churches can suddenly find ourselves talking into our local public squares and I want to make sure that there are good resources and good thinking that can be quickly accessed for when those moments arise. As well as great content, I'd love to see us develop our skills and share our learning on how we engage well with our local public life.

I also think as Baptist churches we have the opportunity to gather evidence on some of the needs and trends in society; we all work intimately with our communities, and often with vulnerable people within them, so if we notice that things are happening we can pool that information with the Joint Public Issues Team and use it to try to influence our world for the better.



Photo: Rob Glenny

When did you first sense a call to deeper theological engagement and how have you pursued it?

I was the teenager in church who asked 'why?' a lot! The majority of my friends weren't Christians and couldn't understand why I would want anything to do with the church, so they asked me lots of challenging questions around the church's attitude to issues in society – everything from the concerns about Harry Potter books to Christian thought on abortion... It left me with a real desire to dig deep and understand why we interpret the Bible in certain ways.

Since my baptism in my early teens I'd been tentatively exploring a call to ministry (although I wouldn't have used those words then!) and studying theology felt like the first public part of following that call – it was the obvious first step on that journey. I did an 'MTheol' at the University of St Andrews, which felt like home from the moment I stepped foot in it. I found a community of other young people, from lots of denominations, who were academically wrestling with their faith, and also with conversations about vocation and identity and what it means for us to be the church.

I really believe that the chance to explore those big questions in essays and in the pub saved my faith. It made me realise that the church has been asking these questions for 2000 years and gave me a language for that too. It was at this point God pushed me to do something about my call to ministry, to do something with the theological education I had been given. It felt like I was meant to stand with a foot in both camps of academic theology and the church.

I applied for ministerial recognition whilst serving a gap year as a pastoral assistant to the Episcopal (Anglican) church in Dundee, and went to train at Regent's Park College in Oxford, where I did an MTh in Applied Theology alongside my ministerial formation. Again, I got a circle of friends to pray and reflect with, as well as the chance to do more thorough research about the issues which continued to perplex me. It was a huge privilege to have access to the amazing libraries there, whilst being grounded in the day to day life of pastoring a church.

As part of the JPIT team you'll be working with different denominations – you're no stranger to understanding faith from different perspectives are you?

I'm really looking forward to working ecumenically. From studying and worshipping with people from lots of different denominations at university, I've become a magpie for lots of styles and ideas from across the Church.

I worked for the Scottish Episcopal Church for a year in Dundee, in a really high Anglican church, which was a bit of

a shock in some ways, but I grew to really love the rhythms of prayer and the deep respect and care they took over the words and the movements they used in worship. For me, the defining point was that they lived out this worship in their weekly ministry of care to anyone and everyone who needed us.

I also met my husband at university, who came up to me at a fresher's event and asked in which church he could find "a decent 8am Book of Common Prayer service". I had no idea, but he does insist it's a chat up line with 100% success rate! Rob is now an Anglican priest. We've always loved debating theological ideas together, that's a big part of who we are, and it's given me a lot of respect for traditions that do things differently to us.

Living closely alongside another denomination has also enhanced my Baptist identity. As it could have been easier in some ways to become an Anglican, I really care about the things that make up our Baptist DNA: the freedom of believers' baptism, the ground-up importance of the local church for governance, our Christ-centred way of reading scripture, the role of every believer in joining in with God's mission.



The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is made up of the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, working together for peace and justice. JPIT works to equip Christians to act and pray on issues of injustice, resource churches to reflect and campaign effectively, and help our Churches to speak out with a distinctively Christian voice on injustice. Find out more at: www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

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'The one thing necessary'

The Northumbria Community is a dispersed network of people from different backgrounds, streams and edges of the Christian faith. Seeking God as 'the one thing necessary' is at the heart of Northumbria Community life, whether alone or together. It seeks to blend prayer that is quiet and contemplative with a faith that is active and contagious.

A regular cycle of daily prayers, scripture readings and meditations – The Daily Office – is at the core of the life of the Northumbria Community. The following is taken from its website and its *Celtic Daily Prayer Book 2*.

Lord, You know me completely,
even as I struggle to know myself.

You know what delights me,
what inspires me,
and what moves me to tears.

You know each dream I have,
and all the things
that I dare not dream.
And yet even they cannot compare
with the dreams You have for me.

**Help me to become the person that
You made me to be.
In daring to trust
in your dreams for my life,
may others glimpse heaven
through me.**

Charlotte Andrews

Thanks for the journey

I give thanks for the journey
that has brought me here,
for the signposts
that have guided me along the way,
for the people, memories,
stories and places I hold dear,
for my story, its place,
woven into the human story.

**Help me to have the courage
to begin to walk my own path.**

**May my footsteps
be a sign of hope to many.
May my heart find its home in You.**

When the road is not clear
and few have gone before;
when I feel unprepared
and ill equipped;

may Your voice comfort me.
Charlotte Andrews

Paradox blessing

May God bless you
with discomfort at easy answers,
half-truths, superficial relationships,
so that you will live
deep within your heart.

May God bless you
with anger at injustice, oppression
and exploitation of people,
so that you will work for justice,
equity and peace.

May God bless you
with tears to shed
for those who suffer from pain,
rejection, starvation and war,
so that you will reach out your hand
to comfort them
and change their pain to joy.

And may God bless you
with the foolishness to think that you
can make a difference in the world,
so that you will do the things
which others tell you cannot be done.
Franciscan Blessing

Night prayer - The Felgild Compline

+ (silently)

**Calm me, O Lord, as You stilled the storm.
Still me, O Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease.
Enfold me, Lord, in Your peace.**

- * Father, bless the work that is done,
and the work that is to be.
- * Father, bless the servant that I am,
and the servant that I will be.

***Thou Lord and God of power,
shield and sustain me this night.
I will lie down this night with God,
and God will lie down with me;
I will lie down this night with Christ,
and Christ will lie down with me;
I will lie down this night with the Spirit,
and the Spirit will lie down with me;
God and Christ and the Spirit,
be lying down with me.***

- * The peace of God
be over me to shelter me,
- * under me to uphold me,
- * about me to protect me,
- * behind me to direct me,
- * ever with me to save me.

**The peace of all peace be mine this night
+ in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

*Northumbria Community apart from the first stanza,
which is from **The Edge of Glory** by David Adam (c) 2011 SPCK Publishing*

**Night prayer
- The Felgild Compline**

Compline is used in the Northumbria Community as an optional extra to the Daily Office, but brings a perfect end to the day. Many use it on a regular basis, usually just before retiring to bed.

This Compline is dedicated to Felgild, who lived in the late seventh century, because he represents so many whose names we never hear who faithfully follow the example of good men and women of old, continuing their battle against the powers of evil and in their devotion to prayer.

If this Compline is being used in a group setting the * notation indicates a change of reader; words in **bold** are said all together; words in **bold italic** are said by each person in turn; and + indicates where you might make the sign of the cross.

The Daily Office can be accessed through the Northumbria Community website www.northumbriacommunity.org, or in paper form using the *Celtic Daily Prayer Book 1: The Journey Begins* and *Celtic Daily Prayer Book 2: Farther Up and Farther In*.



Disciple-forming communities

One of the most challenging and inspiring verses in the Bible for me is Acts 8:4. It's a short sentence that might easily be missed. Stephen has just been put to death and, in consequence, a wave of persecution breaks out, scattering the early believers from their base in Jerusalem across the Middle East and southern Europe. The Christian Church has become a refugee community, running for their lives, yet, we are told 'Those who had been scattered proclaimed the word wherever they went'.

These were not people who had been to some great mission conference; there was no strategic plan; they had little in the way of resources; many would have been homeless. Yet there was something about them and their new-found faith, that made them irresistible advocates of the message of God, despite their circumstances.

The Church in the UK may not be what it once was, but we cannot claim to be in anything like the same physical peril that those early believers found themselves in; but I wonder if we have anything like the same instinct and confidence to be natural proclaimers of the Gospel.

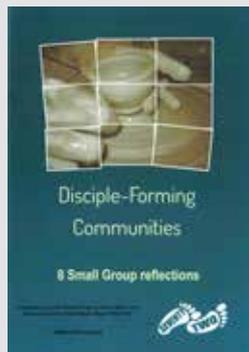
I am delighted that in recent years we have welcomed and recognised those among us that are described as Accredited Evangelists, and yet I also have to admit a sense of dis-ease with that reality. Once we describe someone else as an 'evangelist' there is a temptation to believe that this is somehow a specialist role that ordinary Christians like you and I are not called to. Nothing could be further from the truth, and the actions of those early refugee Christians is a stark reminder of that reality.

*It has been my privilege in recent months to work with the **Seventy-Two network**, originally established by the **West of England Baptist Association**, which seeks to encourage this kind of natural, faith sharing discipleship by helping people 'find their place in the mission of God'.*

Yet while Seventy-Two and similar organisations seek to nurture these instincts within Christian believers, my deeper conviction is that this should be something we develop simply by being a committed member of our local church. We need churches that see themselves as Disciple-Forming Communities, where you can't help becoming a natural faith-sharer just by being part of them. I hope that this is a vision that will be increasingly grasped across our Baptist community.

Few of us are likely to face the same measure of persecution and displacement that those early believers experienced, yet we are confronted by the same commission to proclaim Good News wherever we are scattered.

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



'Baptism must lead to discipleship'

Baptists in the US have been too focused on baptism and not enough on what follows. This was the message of the Disciple-making Task Force at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas earlier this year.

Southern Baptist churches have baptised 7.1 million people over the past 20 years, yet overall church attendance has declined over the same period. The task force's research indicated that if churches had simply retained those they had baptised, then SBC's membership would be doubled.

"Could it be that we have considered baptism to be the finish line and not the starting line?" said Robby Gallaty, a pastor who has chaired the task force for two years.

"Could it be that we have spent a lot of our time teaching people what they're saved from, and we haven't spent time teaching people what they're saved for?"

The task force made three recommendations to churches: increase efforts toward Bible engagement; examine the connection between salvation decisions and group involvement; and examine the number of groups that multiply on a regular basis.



Photo: Van Payne, Southern Baptist Press

"Bible engagement is more than just reading the Word," said Mr Gallaty, senior pastor of Longhollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee. "It is allowing the Word of God and God himself to lead us and

change our direction, our actions and our thinking." When people engage the Bible, he pointed out, they give more, serve more, go more and evangelise more.

Mr Gallaty encouraged churches to participate in an '80 by 20' challenge so that by the end of 2020, the percentage of believers who engage the Bible would increase from 45 percent to 80 percent. Resources, including links to articles, Bible reading plans and apps for smartphones or tablets are available at 80by20.org.

Adapted from original report on Southern Baptist Press by Brandon Elrod

Shining a light on hand car washes

An app that puts the spotlight on hand car washes gives the public a new tool to combat modern slavery.

Hand car washes have sprung up across the country in their thousands, and while many are legitimate businesses, some are not. Police raids in hand car washes in towns and cities up and down the country have unearthed victims living in horrendous conditions.

The Safe Car Wash app has been developed to allow the general public to engage with the problem. It asks a series of questions related to the indicators of modern slavery and if there is a high likelihood that modern slavery is occurring in the hand car wash, users will be asked to report their concerns to the Modern Slavery Helpline.

The app has been developed by the Clewer Initiative, the Church of England's response to modern slavery, and the Santa Marta Group, the Catholic Church's anti-slavery project.



Visit www.theclewerinitiative.org/safecarwash for more details, including a range of promotional materials, graphics and prayers.



Photo: Steff Wright

'... and your daughters shall prophesy'

Baptists have been called to support women ministers and women exploring a call, of all ages and social backgrounds.

The four part recommendation emerged from a conference for Baptist women ministers, non-ordained women in a qualifying office, ministers-in-training and those exploring a call to ministry.

Following the conference, held to mark the 100th anniversary of the first Baptist woman minister Edith Gates, the following statement entitled '... and your daughters shall prophesy' was released:

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

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

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

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

By challenging ourselves to be more aware of questions of justice, to reflect on our assumptions and biases, to ensure fairness within our structures, processes and behaviour, such as exploring a call and National Settlement, and commit together to equity of opportunity and expectation.

A snapshot of women in Baptist ministry shows that of fully accredited ministers, 16 per cent are women. For those in training and those who are newly-accredited the figures rise to 38 per cent and 34 per cent. The Gender Justice Group said there was a background of embedded resistance to women's ministry, 'often unconscious but sometimes overtly expressed in theological terms'.



Photo: Steff Wright

Four churches feast

Four different churches, whose congregations worship in the same Baptist building in Reading, are exploring how they can become more integrated – a move inspired by the Spring edition of *Baptists Together* magazine.

Abbey Baptist Church, Kingdom Citizens Church, Peniel Church and Zion Church of God have all worshipped in the same building every Sunday over the past decade in different spaces, at different, sometimes overlapping, times and in different languages.

Abbey Baptist Church's congregation includes English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Nepalese and Ukrainian. Kingdom Citizens Church began as a Ghanaian congregation but now includes members from other African countries mainly in West Africa. Peniel Church is a Portuguese speaking congregation mainly from Brazil, Portugal and Angola. Zion Church of God is a Tamil



Photo: Abbey Baptist Church

speaking congregation of people from Sri Lanka and South India.

Inspired by reading the Spring issue of *Baptists Together* about many churches where several cultures work together, "we began to explore how we could find ways of becoming more integrated with each other and learn more about each other's worship and witness in Reading," explained Mary Brockington, church secretary at Abbey Baptist Church.

The initial result was a 'Four Churches Feast' on a Saturday in late June, when more than sixty members and friends came together to share lunch, make new friends and tell each other something about their work, hopes and plans.

The gathering was appreciated by all, Mary said. "This was a wonderful time of fellowship in the Lord and at the end everyone agreed that we must do this again."



**Education Sunday**
9 September

A national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education on the theme 'Faith and Works'
www.cte.org.uk/educationsunday2018

**Baptists Together Mission Conference**
15 September 2018

Beacon International Centre, Stafford
Stories of what God is doing will encourage and inspire - with speaker Alan Hirsch and choice of seminars
www.baptist.org.uk/events

**Peacemaking Sunday**
23 September

Resources available from the Fellowship of Reconciliation to help churches mark Peacemaking Sunday
www.for.org.uk/peacesunday

**Prisons Week**
14-20 October

Encouraging prayer and awareness of the needs of prisoners and their families, victims and prison staff
www.prisonsworld.org

**Sam Sharpe Lecture**
18 October
University of Roehampton, Whitelands College

Speaker Rose Hudson-Wilkin will be exploring how we can build on the foundation and sacrifice of Sam Sharpe
www.baptist.org.uk/samsharpe

**Anti-slavery day**
18 October

A day to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery
www.antislaveryday.com

**Crucible Course**
20 October, 3 November (Exeter)
10 November, 8 December (London)

Training to equip Christians to follow Jesus on the margins
cruciblecourse.org.uk

Events

**One World Week**
21-28 October

People working together to build a just, peaceful and sustainable world
www.oneworldweek.org

**Special screening of King: Montgomery to Memphis**
27 October

New Road Baptist Church, Oxford
A rarely-seen documentary from 1970 tracing King's life and accomplishments from the 1955 bus boycott to his 1968 assassination
www.baptist.org.uk/events

**Bible Sunday**
28 October

A day to celebrate the continuing impact the Bible has on individuals and communities
www.biblesunday.org

**Adoption Sunday**
4 November

Share the good news of our adoption into God's family and respond to the needs of children and young people in the UK care system
www.homeforgood.org.uk/get-involved/adoption-sunday

**Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer**
5 November

Resources prepared by the Baptist Women's Union of the South West Pacific on the theme *Arise and Shine through Unity and Justice*
www.baptist.org.uk/bwwdp

**Baptist Union Council**
6-7 November
Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick**Remembrance Sunday**
11 November**Interfaith week**
11-18 November

Aims to strengthen inter-faith relations and increase understanding
www.interfaithweek.org

**International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians**
19 November

Find information about persecuted Christians, from Christian Solidarity Worldwide
csw.org.uk

**World Aids day**
1 December

www.worldaidsday.org

**Advent Sunday**
2 December**Human Rights day**
10 December

The start of a year-long campaign to mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday

**International Migrants day**
18 December

www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday

baptist assembly

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