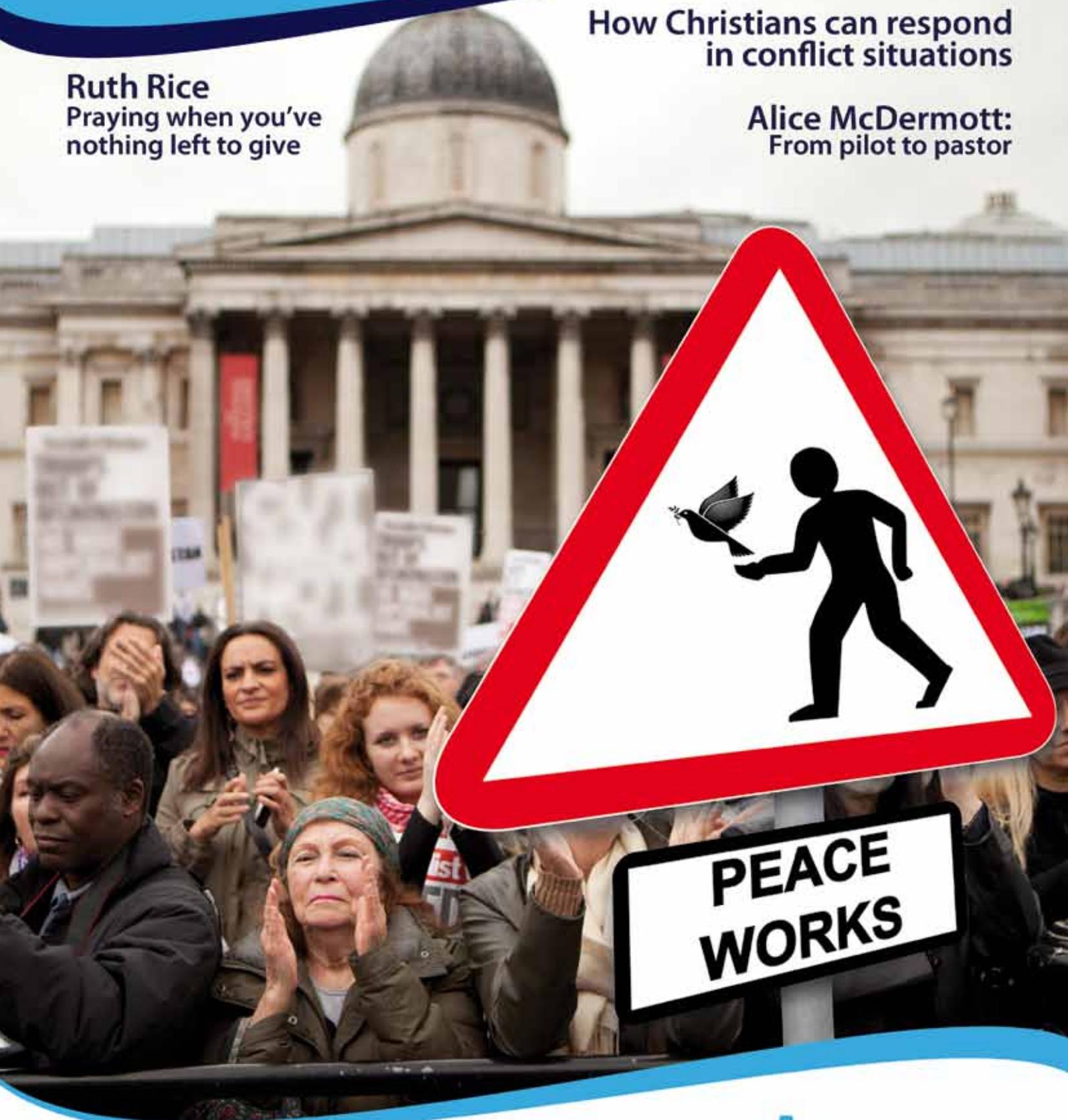


TOGETHER

How Christians can respond
in conflict situations

Ruth Rice
Praying when you've
nothing left to give

Alice McDermott:
From pilot to pastor





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Please visit our website at www.baptistbuildingfund.org.uk where you can view more pictures from some of the projects which the Fund has been able to assist.

If you require further information or have any questions that you would like answered please feel free to contact our Secretary:- David Leverett FCA

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Peace works . . .

Peace works is a simple phrase which can mean several things.

Peace works are those things we do as individuals, or as the Christian community, to bring around calm in the midst of a world, environment or life engulfed in a storm. It is the work of bringing a word of hope, a gift of love, water to the thirsty, food to the hungry, clothes to the naked. Works that are the hug to the lonely, the protection to the fearful and rescue to those who are abused. They may be across the UK (p5), Syria (p8-10), Uganda (p21), or how we encourage our young people (p26-27) - these are peace works, our personal actions.

Peace works are the direct actions we make to turn around a conflict situation. They could be the march of protest, the travelling to the frontline in rescue or bringing the listening ear to parties who have long since stopped communicating. It is carrying the vision of reconciliation, as Nelson Mandela so effectively gave to South Africa and beyond. How do we do this? (p6-7 and p18-19).

Peace works when we stop talking, stop asking, stop demanding and open ourselves up to being in God's presence; when we exchange our own thoughts and words for a deep listening to the still, small whisper, that calms, values and makes us whole. Psalm 46:10 says: 'Be still, and know that I am God.' What happens when we meditate on the Psalms? (p14-15). Peace works, and we can be still.

Peace works are the actions of the brave, the pioneering; the works of those who put self last, to engage proactively in a confusing world. Jesus said 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33). Together we work for the coming kingdom; that is peace works. It may be moving into a tough neighbourhood (p4), a commitment to those who are different (p22-24) or pioneering discoveries about the human mind a century ago (p12-13).

Peace works, and we spend our lives enjoying it. We so often take it for granted. But it works only if nurtured and cared for. It is a careless act, lazy words or unconscious action that can bring chaos and rob the peace from our lives. As Christians, we proclaim that we live in joy, but often that is not so because the wings of peace have been broken. Let us not take it for granted. Peace works, but we need to guard and commit to it (p11).

2014 is the anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. As preparations for the commemorations of that centenary begin, in this edition of *Baptists Together* we explore some different ways of being engaged in works of peace.

May you discover, in God's presence, fresh meaning to that small phrase: peace works.

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Bringing peace in Andover

High levels of drug use, underage pregnancy and unemployment - King Arthur's Way in Andover is a neighbourhood with many problems. It also happens to be home to a Baptist church plant inspired by Celtic Christians.

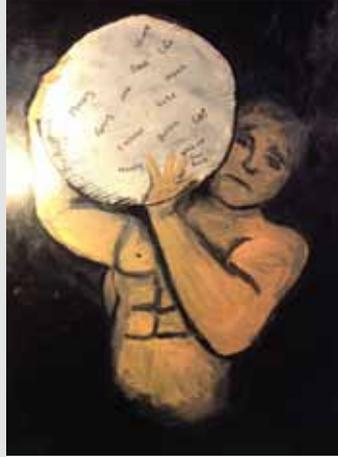
Thin Place is a church planting ministry of Andover Baptist Church led by minister-in-training Andy Fitchet and his wife Zoe, offering hope and love in an area with high indicators of social deprivation.

"After we were married we felt our calling to move to this estate and be a safe place, where we could offer hope and love," said Andy, explaining that the concept of a 'thin place' comes from ancient

Celtic Christians, used to describe places where the divide between heaven and earth feels narrower.

The couple moved into a flat in early 2012 and set up a youth group, opening up their home to disaffected youngsters for a warm meal and Bible study on a Sunday afternoon.

This happened for the first 10 months of Andy and Zoe being in King Arthur's Way, and their influence prompted the leader of the group to seek reconciliation with his father. This reconciliation proved so successful he decided to move back with his dad, in Nottingham. Following this move the rest of the group tailed off and stopped coming on a Sunday.



"It's a case of finding someone with whom we can engage, and we've always found it to be a person of influence. If someone like that comes to Christ, others follow. This is what happened with this guy, he brought others to us, and when he left, that had an impact.

"But we're still in contact with many of them. Some have made commitments, others moved away. The important thing is they are getting out of their apathetic culture."

Andy, who became the youngest town councillor in the country when elected to Whitchurch aged 20 in 2010, and Zoe still feel a strong call to the estate. Andy is now helping run a youth club on a Saturday night, 'the most problematic night', in partnership with the local Anglican church. They are moving out of their rented flat and buying a house - and are now wondering what God has next in store for them.

"Is this going to be a new phase?"

Pioneer Collective Launches

An initiative which seeks to identify and support 400 new Baptist pioneers over the next five years has launched.

The *Pioneer Collective* aims to encourage, equip and release pioneers - those who are called beyond the fringe of church to share the good news of Jesus in fresh and creative ways.

The Collective will provide mentors for pioneers, signpost training and enable pioneers to access *Equipped to Pioneer*, the training framework for national recognition within our Baptist Union of Great Britain.

To find out more visit www.pioneercollective.org.uk

The Baptist Assembly gets a new look

A new, one-day format for the Baptist Assembly for the years 2015-2017 has been agreed. During this period the Assembly as a whole will be reconsidered in terms of its format and purpose.

The decision to reduce it from a four-day gathering has been taken in light of a combination of factors, such as falling

numbers, differing expectations and staffing issues - given the reduced size of teams now in Didcot.

There is hope that the new format for 2015-2017 will be much more intergenerational. A Baptist presence at festivals such as Spring Harvest, New Wine and Greenbelt, is being explored.

'We are ready for Mission'

There is a greater readiness for mission among Baptist churches in the UK - that's according to the current President of our Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Now more than two thirds of the way through his year as President, Ernie Whalley has travelled to, and preached at, churches across the country.

We interviewed Ernie about his background in peacemaking and reconciliation for this issue of *Baptists Together*, but also took the opportunity to ask him for his reflections on the Baptist community. There was a realism concerning the challenges they face, he said.

"In the churches, I am sensing a greater acknowledgement of the challenges of post-Christendom and the need to 'turn the tanker', he said.

"I detect more openness to exploring fresh ways of being church and the need for pioneers.

"I also see a greater readiness for mission across our denomination - in some of our smaller churches, too, with diminishing financial and human resources."

Despite these diminishing resources, he has been seeing some 'amazing projects'.

"Many of our smaller churches are punching well above their own weight and it's a special joy to see how many of them are deeply engaged as hubs in their own communities."

He says he has a particular burden about leadership in some of these smaller churches, which are often 'in our toughest neighbourhoods'.

"I urge our whole Baptist community to look at how we can 'associate' and 'accompany' more effectively to enable and equip missional congregations."

For an interview with Ernie, in which he shares his insights for churches in conflict situations, see pages 6-7.

The decision has been taken jointly by BMS World Mission and our Union, the latter at its Council meeting in November. The composition of the new Baptist Steering Group, which begins in January, was among the items discussed.

For an in-depth report of Council, visit www.baptist.org.uk/council



Photo: Ascension Trust

Street Pastors celebrates 10 years

An initiative which began in response to rising crime among black communities, and spread across the UK and beyond, has celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Street Pastors began in 2003, co-founded by Les Isaac OBE (pictured) of the Ascension Trust and David Shosanya, now regional minister with the London Baptist Association. The first teams patrolled the London Boroughs of Hackney and Lambeth.

Over the years it has grown markedly, and there are now around 11,000 trained *Street Pastors* in 280 towns and cities each weekend.

A Challenge from the Baptist Peace Fellowship

The Baptist Peace Fellowship (BPF) is supporting a petition against the recruitment of under-18s by the Armed Forces.

The current Government policy allows for 15 year olds to apply and 16 and 17 year olds to be recruited into the Armed Forces.

The recruitment and targeting of young people and vulnerable groups has been criticised by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The UK is the only country in Europe - and the only country among the permanent members of the UN Security Council - to recruit 16 year olds into its armed forces.

The petition was initiated by the Christian peace organisation Pax Christi.

All volunteers, and of all ages, *Street Pastors* engage people where they are, providing a listening ear, even flip-flops, helping revellers get home and praying with people if needed.

A 10th anniversary service took place at Southwark Cathedral towards the end of 2013.

The Baptist Peace Fellowship, which aims to provide a fellowship for Baptists who find that the use of military force cannot be reconciled with the teaching of Jesus, is encouraging others to sign.

Its secretary, the Revd Paul Henstock, said that this was one way of the BPF marking the centenary of the First World War, and that the organisation is working on a number of other centenary plans.

The petition will be handed to the Ministry of Defence in April 2014.

The petition can be found at:

<http://you.38degrees.org.uk/p/stop-recruiting-16s>

For more information about the Baptist Peace Fellowship, visit:

www.baptist-peace.org.uk

Mr Isaac said, "I was really taken aback by the amount of take up and how it spread. The growth is the God factor.

"*Street Pastors* has helped to bring the church outside of its four walls. The streets are calmer, and it has changed people's lives in the church by making their faith a reality."

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PEOPLE OF PEACE: The Gospel Challenge



Photo: Ian Britton

Anyone who has met **Ernie Whalley** will have encountered a down-to-earth and humble person. But not only does he hold one of the most senior roles in our Union, he has spearheaded a growing commitment to reconciliation and unity within our own Baptist community and beyond.

His experiences as a child growing up amidst the deeply divided communities of Northern Ireland have no doubt fuelled his unstinting commitment to the cause of peace and peacemaking . . . so we asked the current President of our Union to share his insights for churches in conflict situations.

Q Can you describe your background in peacemaking/reconciliation?

A Although born in England, I spent some of my formative years in Northern Ireland, my mother's homeland. I was soon aware of 'living with difference'. Indeed, I have a strong memory of my 7-year old self being asked: "Are you a Protestant or a Catholic?" and not knowing the answer! I still recall the look that passed between my parents when I related this to them that tea time. I look back and feel blessed to have been brought up in a tolerant home.

I think my early life experience has meant I was interested from a young age in how we promote peace and reconciliation globally, in our communities and in the church. Some years ago, I benefited greatly from training with *BridgeBuilders* who offer courses based on Mennonite insights. Shortly afterwards, Vivienne O'Brien (Ministries Adviser) and I were asked to lead a seminar at the Baptist Assembly on 'Hurting Churches'.

We expected 50 people and 500 turned up – a quarter of those attending the Assembly! We wrote up our notes as the BUGB publication *Journeying Through Conflict* (which is still available from www.baptist.org.uk/onlineshop)

From my own experience as Regional Minister in the Yorkshire Baptist Association, and as I now travel round the different Associations this year, I continue to hear stories of 'conflict' in our churches and am pleased that our Baptist Colleges now include this theme in the curriculum for ministerial training. There ARE encouraging signs of building healthy relationships in our churches but we must always be vigilant and ready to seek help. Unresolved conflict situations sap energy for mission and weaken our witness to a hurting world.

The call to peace and peacemaking is at the core of the Gospel

Q What's the toughest situation you've been involved in? How did this resolve?

A That's a tough question! Not perhaps the hardest, but I do recall a church situation where the pastor was being challenged by a couple of people in the church and it was beginning to affect wider relationships. As a Regional Minister, I was invited in. After a preliminary meeting, I was able to draft in a couple of Baptists who had done mediation training and who, alongside myself, gave a great deal of time to the church – listening, reflecting and writing up a report for the church members' meeting. This was received well by the church. Sadly, a couple of people did leave the church but the pastor is still there and the church is flourishing.

I believe there was 'deep learning' through this, often painful situation, for the whole church, leadership and minister. My hope is that each Association can establish a pool of folks who have done some training in this area and who will be available to work with Regional Ministers. Ecumenical teams can be really helpful in such situations as they can bring greater objectivity. The giftings of lay people are vital.

Q A church is in a conflict situation. What five things should it do?

A **1 Gain perspective**
We need to understand what's really going on. Imagine climbing a hill and rising above the fog. What are the causes of the conflict? Get beyond the immediate emotion. Have I contributed to this?

2 Have the will
If our reaction is to 'blame the other', we will not get anywhere.

3 Take initiative
Sensitive application of Matthew 18: 15-17 is relevant here. Act quickly before things get stuck. Email is dangerous here as hasty words can be sent without due consideration and too many email trails can cause further confusion. Telephone conversations are better but face-to-face is best.

4 Invite companions
This can help in stages 1, 2 and 3. A good listener and/or a trained mediator can challenge and it is important to be mature enough to receive it.

5 Pray
As we are open, God can widen our vision to gain perspective. We can be given strength to confess and take initiatives towards healing. We need that Christ-like blend of truth and grace, honesty and compassion. 'The closer we come to the Cross, the closer we come to each other' (Jurgen Moltmann).

Keep in mind: All I can do is stretch out my hand, I can't force the other person to do the same. They, too, have to will reconciliation but my positive attitude can sometimes help.

Q Like Stars in the Universe – your invitation to the Baptist family to discover fresh truth from Paul's letter to the Philippians - has been the top seller in our online shop. One of the studies explores the Church's calling to be peacemakers – can you explain a little more about this calling?

A Paul writes about the 'God of peace' (Philippians 4) and notes the sadness of the situation where two women in the church at Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, have fallen out. He pleads with 'companions' to help bring peace into this fractured relationship.

So the call to peace and peace-making is at the core of the Gospel. It is not an optional 'add-on'. Biblical peace is rooted in a relationship of peace with God.

In Scripture, it also includes 'welfare' – both personal and community – and integrity in wholesome human relationships. There is the temptation in church life to narrow this down to a personal relationship with God. This is, of course, fundamental, but not exclusively so according to Scripture. So, the teaching in the Beatitudes: 'Blessed are the peacemakers' is a calling to all disciples of Jesus Christ. We are called to pray for peace and peacemakers in the international sphere, and sadly I don't always experience intercessory prayer in our churches.

I long for our churches to be seen as stars for peacemaking in our local communities and have seen some great examples of this already this year. And we are called to model 'peace' in healthy ways with our own church communities. This is an ongoing challenge for ALL of us!

Ernie Whalley is President of our Baptist Union of Great Britain until May 2014.



To accompany his year of office, Ernie has created a Bible study on Philippians, *Like Stars in the Universe* available from www.baptist.org.uk/onlineshop. Visit <http://likestars.org.uk> for more.

We'd love to hear your insights - join the conversation at:
www.baptist.org.uk/peopleofpeace

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BAPTISTS AND SYRIA responding to needs

Photo: Lebanese Baptist Society (LSESD)

Troubles in Syria regularly bring another stream of refugees across the border to Lebanon. In the midst of these incredibly challenging circumstances **Nabil Costa** relates how God is at work through local Baptists reaching out to their neighbour

Not long ago USA considered Iran as one of the 'axis of evil' countries, while the latter referred to USA as the 'great satan'. Now we see leaders of both countries hugging each other in what appears like the start of a new love story as they sign an agreement over Iran's nuclear power together with five other countries. In parallel, we see Iran's Hassan Rouhani re-tweeting UK's David Cameron's praise of the deal.

Upon the election of Mohamed Morsi as president of Egypt in June 2012, relations grew strong between Egypt and Turkey's Tayyip Erdogan. In November Egypt's General Abdel Fatah Said El Sissy issues a red card against Turkey and expels its ambassador.

There are no constants or guarantees where politics is concerned. More the reason why we as Christians should remain focused on our biblical mission, and not put our trust in political agendas. As Christians, the value we

add to our community is in being able to discern God's agenda and seek to do his will if we are to make a difference.

Syria and Lebanon

The war in Syria and the Syrian refugee crisis have been on the forefront of the news worldwide for a while now. However, it is never more real than for the Lebanese people who are dealing with the difficult realities of it each and every day. It is projected that the number of registered [with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)] and unregistered Syrian refugees in Lebanon alone will exceed one million by end of December 2013, at a time when the overall population of Lebanon is in the whereabouts of four million.

Many towns are not big enough to host the numbers of Syrians who are coming to reside in them. In some towns the number of Syrians entering outnumber the Lebanese.

Needless to say, this incredible influx creates a burden on the Lebanese economy while Syrian refugees themselves are day by day drowning in poverty in the absence of work opportunities, proper housing, health care ... The winter season poses yet another challenge for the refugees as a considerable number reside in make-shift homes – tents, unfinished buildings, rented unfurnished apartments...

As Christians, the value we add to our community is in being able to discern God's agenda and seek to do his will if we are to make a difference.

Since the summer of 2011, the Lebanese Baptist Society (LSESD) has been directly involved in reaching out to vulnerable Syrian families affected by the crisis. We do so in partnership with local churches and church-based organisations. It is in fulfilment of our mission to serve the Church in Lebanon and the Arab world through spiritual, social and educational development.

There are around 30 partner churches and community-based organisations through which LSESD is currently working with vulnerable Syrian families, both in Lebanon and Syria, as follows:

In Lebanon:

- » Providing monthly food aid to at least 2,500 families (12,500 individuals) through 18 local churches and one Christian Non-governmental organisation (NGO);
- » Providing medical assistance to at least 200 individuals a month through local Christian NGO
- » Providing winterisation items (blankets, mattresses, stoves, etc) to 2,000 families
- » Started a school for 147 Syrian refugee children in one of the churches
- » Have conducted day camps for over 1,000 Syrian refugee children.

In Syria:

- » Providing monthly food rations for over 2,600 families (15,600 individuals)
- » Providing medical assistance to those in need
- » Providing winterisation items to over 2,000 families and monthly rent to 600.

Besides this LSESD, along with some partners, has provided training for the churches on responding effectively to the refugee crisis, and started a process of helping the churches deal with trauma.

The response

In the midst of all this, God is very much at work, and there are amazing stories of incredible answers to prayers, of visions and of healing. God is transforming the Church, and the communities through the Church.

Indeed, one partner church leader in Syria shared how their church in his country too is being transformed today: “prior to the crisis, there was only a handful of people in each church who were involved in ministry. The others were mostly observers.

“You are Christians, why are you helping us?!”

“Today, almost every single member is involved, and in creative ways, in reaching out to their fellow internally-displaced Syrians. In addition to food distribution and health care, our church visits homes and communities that we never dreamt we could engage with; we started remedial classes at the church for children who have lost their previous school year; we hold programmes for the children of internally-displaced families... Our hands are full like never before. We now fully understand the ministry of Jesus, and are experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit within and through the Church.”

God works in mysterious ways. In 2006, when the war on Lebanon took place, and after years of separation between Christians and Muslims, all of a sudden our fellow Lebanese – mostly Muslim Shiites, had to flee their homes and seek shelter in the predominantly Christian areas.



what we are witnessing today is God changing, cleansing and transforming hearts



Photo: Lebanese Baptist Society (LSESD)



At the time, as LSESD, we prayed and sought God's guidance about what we can do with the influx of internally-displaced Lebanese. And we clearly felt the Lord's leading that we should be his hands and feet, addressing the needs of our fellow Lebanese in their hour of need. And we did just that. And, before we knew it we found ourselves involved in a multi-track relief ministry that covered children, youth, women, food distribution, health-care... God opened our eyes as to who is our neighbour!

And that is when we realised that we have so much in common with our fellow Lebanese from whom we have been separated for years. And that is when the families we were serving started asking us: "You are Christians, why are you helping us?!" Bridges were built as the walls of separation were torn down.

Today, and as a result of the Syria crisis, we see Lebanese people put aside their grievances, and come to the aid of Syrians. This is simply incredible! God is using challenging circumstances to prompt the Church to wake up, join hands together, and fulfill its mission. We see today an increasing number of churches capture the vision and look for the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus amidst an utterly challenging situation. And the blessings are tremendous!

As difficult and painful as they are, the challenging circumstances that our region is going through – our country

almost every single member is involved in creative ways in reaching out to their fellow internally displaced Syrians

too – are opportunities to translate the message of the Gospel in practical and meaningful ways that reflect the love and peace of Christ. If we disregard these opportunities we will be failing our calling as his disciples. In parallel,

we can best bless others and be blessed in the process, when we turn a deaf ear to political agendas and focus on being salt and light, taking our cue at all times from the Lord, and so follow in his footsteps.

Only then can we preserve the Church from any bias that can negatively affect its witness; and only then can we remain true to the mission at hand and positively influence the community for Christ.



Photo: Lebanese Baptist Society (LSESD)

And we ask the same of the global body of Christ too. Your prayers and support have brought us thus far. The journey is a long one yet. Help us focus on the mission at hand by continuously praying that the Arab Church break out of all prejudices and reach out to its neighbour.

Nabil Costa is the Executive Director of the Lebanese Baptist Society (LSESD), and a BMS World Mission trustee.



Nabil is also the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelical Schools in Lebanon. He serves on the Executive Committee of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) and is a Vice President for the Baptist World Alliance

For a fuller version of this article, and to leave your comments, see: www.baptist.org.uk/syria

Are you aware that having served the Baptist family over many years, some ministers find themselves unable to buy their own home in retirement?

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General Secretary Lynn Green:



In October 2002, we went on holiday as a family to Kosovo. Our children were four and six, UN forces were still present and it seemed everyone else on the plane to Pristina was working for an NGO.

People thought we were mad, but it was a wonderful and profound trip for us all. Our friends took us to many beautiful places during our stay and yet, as we travelled, we saw first-hand the impact of the war. On one visit, as I stood looking at the graves of an extended family, what hit me was that this had not happened years ago, 'in history', but only a year or two before. Here were real people like me killing each other. I was deeply shocked and had to face up to the reality of war in new and deeper ways.

Many of you will have had even more direct experiences of the horror of violent conflict and bear the physical and emotional scars yourselves and in your families.

The temptation is to allow ourselves to become bitter and vengeful, yet such experiences can also stir in us a deep yearning for peace.

In the Bible this yearning for peace is expressed in the rich and beautiful word, shalom. The vision of God's shalom for individuals and communities is not only to be at peace but also to experience the fullness and goodness that peace brings – a broader sense of yearning for restoration and wholeness, for harmony; a place where we can be truly safe and thrive, and where truth and justice have 'room to breathe'. This is not just a yearning, it is also an inspiration for us to nurture hearts, homes and communities where God's shalom is lived and offered as a gift to others.

Because of this, we pray and work for shalom in the midst of a broken world. Whilst we rightly have this global yearning for shalom, I also want to bring our attention closer to home. Our vision as a Union of churches, associations and colleges is to be growing healthy churches in relationship for mission. Healthy ... to be a healthy church (or association or college for that matter) is to be able to handle conflict and difference in a way that promotes God's shalom. This is important because if we want to offer shalom to a broken world we need to experience it and model it too.

if we want to offer shalom to a broken world we need to experience it and model it too

But it is also important because conflict in Christian communities causes a great deal of stress and damage to people; it hinders faith and destroys trust, and it nearly always puts mission on hold or, at the very least, undermines it. Surely we want to experience God's shalom ourselves and also be places of peace and wholeness for our communities? Surely the call to participate with God in his mission to the world will focus our attention on the need to be healthy communities ourselves?

The good news is that there are lots of great resources available to help churches to be healthy and handle conflict in a way that promotes shalom. Your Association team would be really delighted to help you find the right approach for you. And just generally I would encourage ordinary Christians to seek to participate in the life of their local churches as loving, peacemaking, unity-seeking followers of Jesus. Please don't see this as something to engage in as a last resort!

Commit to becoming a healthier church this year; a church which is positively growing in God's shalom and enjoying and sharing more of God's goodness.

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The First World War and reconciling the inner world



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This terrible event led to great advances in understanding the workings of the mind and responding to trauma. Some Christians greeted these developments enthusiastically, others less so. There are lessons to be learnt today, writes **Alistair Ross**

Downton Abbey offers a dramatic and romantic vision of a family in a place and a time that is no more. Picturesque as it is, even this idyll is not unscathed by the trauma, terror and slaughter of the First World War whose anniversary is upon us. What happened? How did this event change us?

A new word entered our vocabulary as casualties experienced 'shell-shock', an emotional rather than a physical disturbance, which blighted their lives, and which we now recognise as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The psychiatric profession struggled to treat such patients until they discovered Freud. Bernard Hart suggested that external physical disturbance reflected an internal psychological disturbance.

His book *The Psychology of Insanity* (1912) proved so successful it was reprinted and revised as Hart notes how successful treatment of shell-shock underpinned the usefulness of Freud's ideas. My personal copy was previously owned by the Bishop of Manchester, William Temple (later an Archbishop of Canterbury influential in pressing for a welfare state) who saw reconciliation as a personal and social event spanning religion, class and culture. There emerged a wider movement called 'New Psychology' that applied Freud and Jung's ideas to everyday life. How did the Church respond to these developments?

Firstly, there were important figures that allied Christian faith to their psychiatric and psychoanalytic thinking and practice. In 1920 the Tavistock Clinic was founded by Hugh Crichton-Miller to treat shell-shocked soldiers and offer a free psychological clinic to the public (1924). Crichton-Miller helped Harry Guntrip develop his pastoral ministry in a therapeutic direction for a new generation (Ross 2012). The clinic has developed into an NHS Foundation Trust called the Tavistock and Portman, leaders in mental health care and education. Where are such figures now?

Secondly, there were ministers that saw the 'new psychology' as offering a way of understanding the modern world and useful for illuminating the Christian faith. Many were influenced by their experience as chaplains coping with the traumas of the War and struggling to find answers. Pym's *Psychology and the Christian Life* (1921) is an early example and there were also an increasing number of references to 'new psychology' in the widely read *Expository Times* from 1915 onwards. Counselling and psychotherapy are not to be feared but embraced as helping us to understand who and what we are, which then helps us, through the Church, engage with the traumas of our contemporary society.

Thirdly, there were ministers who advocated the wholesale adoption of therapeutic ideas, especially Freud, as an aid to reconciling the struggles of the soul, seen in the work of Leslie Weatherhead. During the 1920s he developed his ideas in print, including the controversial *The Mastery of Sex through Psychology and Religion* (1931). He later developed 'psychological interviewing' using the skills of Christian psychotherapists based at City Temple, London where after WW2

he established a psychological clinic as part of the Church's role. Weatherhead's ideas were theologically liberal and rejected by some sections of the Church, seeing him as selling out the Gospel to psychology.

So what can we learn 100 years on from the anniversary of the start of WW1 that will benefit our future?

Firstly, every War, just or unjust, produces casualties who have to live with physical and psychological wounds. Our souls should cry out for the people of Syria caught up in a terrible struggle that will result in a shattered society and so many shattered lives. This will take decades to repair. Yet so many homeless on the streets of our major cities are ex-military with nowhere to belong, no comrades

to support, and no battles to fight. The challenge for the Church to be a community of care to wounded people in body and spirit is as great today as ever before. Yet many people today are 'wounded' not by 'shell-shock' or PTSD but by the changes to society WW1 introduced, seen in the psychological disturbance of the soul.

Secondly, pioneers are always going to find themselves in liminal or unorthodox places, then and now. We don't like uncomfortable questions that threaten our view of the world. Our challenge is to embrace them rather than reject them. It is easier to exclude or exile those whose voices we need to hear. We do not need to agree but we begin by listening and in doing so dare to believe we may discern the voice of God.

Thirdly, the desire to engage with culture is commendable but often lacks a critical depth or appears too late in the process to be of any great value. The cavalry horses of WW1, portrayed in the film *War Horse*, were really no match for barbed wire, trenches, tanks, and machine guns. The Church fights yesterday's battle when the world has moved on, for example the case of woman bishops, making the Church seem at best, irrelevant and at worst patriarchal and patronising. Many in the Church after WW1 tried to turn the clock back, not realising the clock was broken. In a frenetic world of an instant dissemination of ideas and overwhelming volumes of data the challenges are formidable, but it is essential they are tackled; critically drawing from the depths of our theological understanding.

Fourthly, William Temple's vision of reconciliation at personal and societal levels spanning religion, class and culture is still relevant today. We are in the same business of reconciling our inner world, our outer world, living in a community of grace for the benefits of others as an essential aspect of being fully human. Freud, Jung, and multiple forms of counselling and psychotherapy are an asset we can use in this task. Yet we must also bring our neglected theological resources to engage in a reconciling dialogue.

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Alistair Ross initially trained as a Baptist minister and worked in South London, Kent and Birmingham. He subsequently did an experiential therapeutic training

course at Claybury Psychiatric Hospital in Essex and worked as a pastoral counsellor and pastoral theologian. He is now Director of Psychodynamic Studies, University Lecturer in Psychotherapy and Dean of Kellogg College at Oxford University



Image: Heather McGrath istockphoto.com



Be Still and Know

You want to pray, but have nothing left to give.

Simply focusing on God's word is one response - and it has had a profound impact at an East Midlands church, writes **Ruth Rice**

I remember vividly the moment when I knew there was something missing in my prayer life and in our church's teaching on prayer. I was sitting with a good friend who had recently lost her husband, very suddenly, and had turned from her Christian faith towards Buddhism. "Christianity just doesn't have enough practices to hold me when I have nothing in me to give", she said. Something in me rose up at this. Surely all the practices that would do us good in times of loss and pain should be found in the One who suffered for us and is always with us. But I knew what she meant.

So often people feel that church offers just enough to get us from Sunday to midweek meeting, a booster shot for the week ahead, some songs, a word, a sermon. Just enough.

But I was aware that we were not teaching people how to live in and practise that beautiful presence of God every day, even in the worst of days. Or if we thought we were, that message was not getting through.

I began to explore practices of contemplation and meditation that my Brethren-rooted, Word-based, Spirit-filled charismatic sensibilities had largely dismissed as a bit woolly!

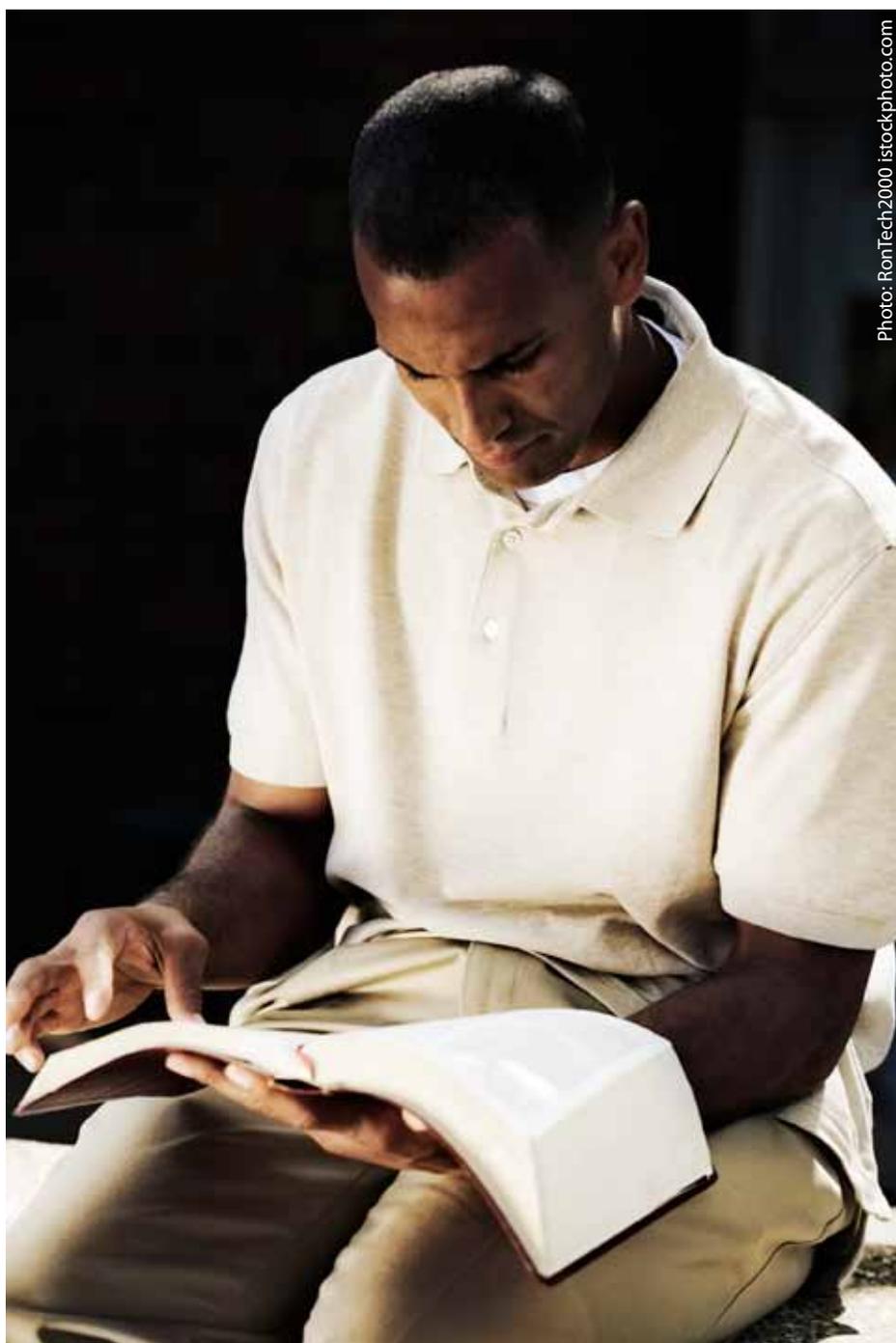


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Many of you are way ahead of me here in knowing the riches to be mined in these ancient practices that the church at large is reclaiming for its own.

Our journey together as a church began when I asked if anyone wanted to do a short course to help them deepen their prayer life. I had been using a lovely book by Joyce Rupp, *The Cup of Our Life*, a six-week course in contemplative prayer. This was to meet a direct need in me after a long period of self-induced exhaustion and voice loss caused by me as a wife, Mum, full-time teacher and church leader forgetting that I was not God and that I was more fragile than I thought. After discovering that busyness is NOT next to godliness I devoured the practices Joyce Rupp

taught. Centring prayer, breath prayer, lectio divina (the spiritual reading of the word), journaling, stillness, silence ... a daily rhythm of time spent just practising the presence of God.

We now have several groups meeting at different times in the week helping folk develop holy habits based on meditating on the Psalms. What has amazed and delighted me is the impact these simple times of shared stillness and silence around the word have on those who are unchurched and the great source of help and comfort they are to those in pain. I am a deeply missional sort of leader but I had not anticipated at all the hunger in people to meet God in this way.

A dear lady joined one of our groups with her church friend and found that the practices of breath prayer and centring on a phrase from the Psalms took her right into the presence of Jesus as she battled with cancer. She taught us things she had practised when in the MRI tunnel; ways to deepen the sense of peace. And although we prayed constantly for healing it was still an amazing privilege to sit with her in the hospice on her last day on earth and see her using breath prayer and meditation one last time to help her take that last deep breath and emerge face to face with Jesus.

Another lady who had lost one daughter and was about to lose a second to cancer found the meditation on 'He is my Stronghold' enough to restore her faith and carry her through some of the darkest months of her life. The practices we were rediscovering as we sat together in quietness, 'taking our thoughts captive' and choosing to breathe in the truths in his word, became a lifeline to folk with mental health issues, those who were struggling with being house-bound, the over-busy, the dechurched (those who had left church but not really wanted to lose their faith).

Be still and know that He is indeed God.

Our groups are still expanding: neighbours, friends, family members, some groups of two or three where church comes to them in the simplicity of the habits shared, some groups outgrowing the front rooms in which they started ... a hunger for space in a mad, busy world. A desire to have some practices so that our 'resting thought rate' is full of grace and truth.

To my friend who lost her husband I can now say, "Please give us another chance. We have dug deeper and think we've found some practices that are richer and more sustaining than anything else you have tried."

Be still and know that he is indeed God.

Ruth Rice is the pastor of New Life Baptist Church in West Bridgford and is on the leadership team of Fresh Streams, a Baptist Word and Spirit network



Suggested further reading:

- » *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism and Justice* by Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling
- » *Present Perfect: Finding God in the Now* by Gregory A Boyd

The Psalms provide words for every human emotion. One way of connecting deeply with them is through Lectio Divina, a way of reading the scriptures which has been around since AD 300.

Choose a psalm or a portion of a psalm to meditate on and:

- Step 1:** Read the passage slowly, until you hear a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you.
- Step 2:** Ponder this word or phrase for a few minutes. Listen for what the word or phrase is saying to you at this moment in your life, what it may be offering to you, what it may be demanding of you.
- Step 3:** Openly and honestly express to God the prayers that arise spontaneously within you from your experience of this word or phrase.
- Step 4:** Allow yourself to simply rest silently for a time in the stillness of your heart remaining open to the quiet fullness of God's love and peace.

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From Pilot to Pastor

Photo: Colin McDermott

As an RAF Hercules captain, Flight Lieutenant **Alice McDermott** flew to warzones ... all part of her journey to becoming a Baptist minister.

February 2002. RAF pilot Alice McDermott fires up the Hercules aircraft she has captained around the world and departs her base in Oman. She travels north, up the Pakistan border before turning west to her destination, Kabul. It's just five months since 9/11 and the early stages of what would become a decade-long occupation of Afghanistan.

The night is calm, but thoughts are whirring. Alice has been in the RAF for 10 years, yet this is the first time she has flown into a conflict zone. Both her crew's and her own safety are more at risk than they have ever been. She begins to speak to the God she had left in her youth, promising that if she returns alive, she would give him another chance.

"It was the first time I had reached out to the Lord in prayer," she recalls. "For it was the first time I was in a place of real danger."

That moment would become a significant marker on a journey from RAF pilot to Baptist minister. Alice is now in her final year at Scottish Baptist College and in the process of discerning where her first pastorate will be.

But it began so differently: growing up she had wanted to be an astronaut. Studying electrical engineering at university, she turned to the RAF as a potential passport to NASA. However, the first time she stepped into an aircraft, space flew out of the window. "I immediately thought 'I want to be a pilot!'"

She was 'the wrong gender', but in the right place at the right time. Whilst at university, RAF policy changed and women were allowed to train as pilots. Being among the first, she was selected and would spend the majority of her career flying transport aircraft. Pre 9/11 this meant flying people and equipment into benign places, such as Canada, USA, Germany, Saudi Arabia

and Kuwait. Post 9/11 the whole emphasis changed, and the focus was on conflict zones. She has been to Afghanistan and Iraq on countless occasions.

She didn't turn to God immediately on her return from Kabul, but remembered the promise she had made a few years later after a breast cancer scare. She began attending her local church: Newbury Baptist Church. Initially 'it felt like ticking a box', but she found an 'amazing welcome with warm people'. When the minister suggested she did an *Alpha* Course, she began to look at faith through adult eyes for the first time. "I started looking at everything – and had a growing, compelling feeling to give my life back to Christ."



Photo: Alice McDermott

On Remembrance Sunday 2006 she couldn't hold back any longer, and in spring 2007 Alice was baptised. A new life had begun, for then, even as she stood in the baptismal pool, she had her first thoughts about being a minister.

"They were praying for me and my future ministry – and I could just hear the words 'full-time ministry'. I did think it was a little bizarre, and I locked it away for a while."



Photo: Graeme Clark



Photo: Colin McDermott

But it kept returning, and she tested it, being invited to preach and becoming a deacon. The calling to ministry grew and despite having a secure future in the RAF and an offer to fly for British Airways, she realised that God's call required a response. Receiving affirmation from the ministerial recognition committee and settling into college so well was added confirmation. "I find it so humbling that God just reaches into our lives sometimes. It's exciting but scary - people are looking to me to lead them. But God doesn't call the equipped - he equips the called.

And if God wants you to do this, he will equip you."

Alice's experiences have led to a changing stance on war. "Ten years ago I would have had no doubt that at times military intervention is required. I still hold the view that the First Gulf War was necessary." However, not everything is clear cut: "I was uneasy about the Second Gulf War. I still am. Being at college has changed me. Can we give God space and bring about peace in other ways?"

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Living it out: keeping the faith when there's conflict at work

We asked a number of people how Christians can respond when there are issues of conflict in the workplace

Press the pause button!

When people are in conflict the quality of their communication goes down.

Shouting happens, or an unpleasant tone enters someone's voice; an issue which was seemingly about work, becomes personal; some people stop talking altogether, and dirty looks fly about the room. Trust, friendship and openness disappear and suspicion, misunderstanding and dislike take their place. We've all been there – either as on-lookers or participants, and it is hard. So what can we do about it?

One of the most helpful things we can do is to watch our communication and help others to communicate better. One simple way to improve the quality of communication is to 'Press the pause button!' This is more than remembering the oft-given parental advice of 'Think before you speak.'

This is slowing the conversation down, trying to take some of the heat out of it so that real communication can happen. It means **stopping before you respond, and checking that you really understand.**

A really helpful way of doing this is to summarise what the other person has said, not interpret it, not argue

against, but summarise, checking that you have done so correctly. This may sound contrived but believe me, this simple tool can be transforming. The person feels heard and understood, and their manner often changes too, making them more prepared to hear what others want to say.

Then when you speak, try to speak for yourself, and in a way that the other can hear, so avoid blaming and accusation, but speak about the impact of the situation or behaviour on you.

We cannot always agree, but we do have to disagree well. As Christians we need to remember that each person is a beloved child of God (yes, even that awkward colleague or bullying boss) and if God cared enough to come and live and die for them, the least we can do is try to understand them!

Jo Williams is co-minister of Sion Baptist Church, Burnley, and works as a mediator and trainer for churches, colleges, communities and families. She is a member of the College of Mediators.



A sensible Christian presence can make for a happier workplace

Responding to conflict in the workplace? Hold their coats while they fight it out? More likely we would help avoid any situation getting to that. On a personal level, if you follow the model of a chaplain, they are there to be in touch with people, and to listen. Questions of confidentiality and trust arise, so immediately you are limited because if someone tells you about a problem with someone else in the workplace, you can't act on it unless you have permission to do so.

But you can listen. Just by talking through a problem, maybe they will see how to sort it out, a different way to approach it, may realise they have blown it out of all proportion. And if they allow you to, perhaps you can intercede, talk to the other party, support a complaint about bullying if that's the issue. It depends on the nature of the conflict. **You can't provide instant answers or sort it out yourself, but you may be able to support others towards a solution.**

But you can listen. Just by talking through a problem, maybe they will see how to sort it out, a different way to approach it, may realise they have blown it out of all proportion. And if they allow you to, perhaps you can intercede, talk to the other party, support a complaint about bullying if that's the issue. It depends on the nature of the conflict. **You can't provide instant answers or sort it out yourself, but you may be able to support others towards a solution.**

If it's an organisational matter – an industrial dispute – you again are limited because one of the first rules of chaplaincy is neutrality. But it is precisely that neutrality, the trust a good chaplain develops with all parties, which could make a difference. If one side is 'bang out of order', tell them, thereby possibly compromising your neutrality, so don't do this lightly. But be honest and 'prophetic'. They may be more likely to take it from you.

If there is a breakdown in communication, **a chaplain can help build bridges**, get people talking again, help people realise the differences aren't that great, get the one side to appreciate the other's standpoint, open up channels of communication.

Listen, get people talking to each other, be neutral, don't take sides. A sensible Christian presence can make for a happier workplace.

David Wrighton is a Methodist layman who works for IBEX - a Home Mission supported charity seeking to relate Christian faith to economy and workplace



Addressing conflict via emails does not usually lead to constructive outcomes

situations. Prayer is the most important. This may appear pretty obvious, but it can be easily ignored. Seeking the mind of Christ is imperative. This will help us to reach Godly outcomes.

Alongside this is the recognition that **the person we are in conversation with is, like us, created in the image of God.** As a bearer of the image of God they too must be treated with respect and dignity. Humility too must surely be a vital principle. A realisation that we too have fallen short of the glory of God - we too are sinners in need of the constant reassurance of Christ.

Preparation is important and should not be underestimated. When I say preparation I refer to mental, as well as spiritual. Listening is another principle. Often we can be defensive in these situations, preventing others

Addressing situations of conflict is never easy. However there are some principles that might be worth considering when having to address such

from expressing their valid perspectives, imposing our 'rightful' opinion throughout the conversation.

However, what listening does is help us to appreciate the complexity of the situation, the differing perspectives and sometimes our part in the unfortunate situation. Addressing conflict via emails does not usually lead to constructive outcomes. **As painful as they might be, constructive face to face conversations, if conducted well, can lead to healthier relationships.**

Finally, we often think avoidance of conflict is the better solution - though I agree there are times when we need to say and do nothing - but there are also times when the absence of 'confrontation' demonstrates a lack of leadership and respect for those directly and indirectly caught up in the concerns.



Wale Hudson-Roberts is the Racial Justice Networker for the Baptist Union of Great Britain

The decisive moment was when the door was opened that little bit - by the humility of one of the parties

One way we can bring peace to the world of work is by mediating between those whose relationship has broken down. In recent years I found that mediating at work to be enormously rewarding.

Two of my colleagues had badly fallen out over the approach to be taken to a major consultancy assignment. They had just won it but almost immediately strains had grown as they brought their very different approaches on how to deliver it.

They had to go to the client inception meeting but preparations were going badly. They had stopped talking and reduced communication to increasingly caustic and acrimonious emails. I was asked to see if my mediation skills - honed in a different environment - could help resolve the impasse.

The older of the two was a slightly domineering man. He had much relevant experience and knew the project background. The younger was bright and had more initiative. He had just completed a similar project and brought new ideas. A good combination - so what was the blockage?

I suggested that we meet in a neutral venue - a hotel. I sat between them and sensed that we had to start with their emotions. They were just so charged; we were not

"Blessed are the peacemakers" said Jesus. But how do we become one in the workplace?

going to make progress until we had cleared the air. As it turned out, we spent most of the two hours together exploring their feelings. It was a revelation.

The younger began to explain how he had worked for a domineering man whom he could not respect. So he had decided to keep himself to himself and not share anything. He realised, as he said it, that he had taken this same attitude into his present job.

This display of vulnerability was the start of a series of exchanges that became more and more positive. Quite soon the older man apologised; the younger responded with more openness. And so the dialogue progressed.

I left them sitting side by side, pulling the presentation together. They had found a way of blending their individual insights into a single message - a whole. But they had of course done so much more than that; **they had found a way of working together that was wholesome.** They had repaired what had been broken.

For me I felt very blessed to see this reconciliation happen before my very eyes. While they had been hurting and talking I had been praying madly! **I saw God come into the situation to heal;** and the decisive moment was when the door was opened that little bit - by the humility of one of the parties. Just as Jesus had to humble himself to open the door to us.



John Parmiter is partner in a development and infrastructure consultancy. He is a London Institute for Contemporary Christianity Associate Speaker on workplace issues.

What do you think? Share your experience at: www.baptist.org.uk/conflictatwork

Do you have any 'Big Questions' you'd like us to consider in future editions of *Baptists Together*? Please email media@baptist.org.uk and let us know your ideas and suggestions.



Children Connecting with the First World War

August 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary since the outbreak of the First World War. Signs are that this will be the beginning of four years of commemorations and acts of remembrance. Reactions and responses will be many and varied but, whatever our view, there is no doubt that this will be one of the key narratives in our society in the years ahead.

As these events draw nearer, this raises some significant questions for churches. When stories are remembered and shared, issues of life and death, sorrow and suffering cannot be avoided. Church communities can offer themselves as natural places not only to engage with the narrative, but provide the words and context to work through the feelings and responses that emerge. Whatever our convictions about the necessity of wars in times past, as a people called to be peace-makers, there is opportunity to promote this cause by acknowledging and highlighting the devastating cost of war. This does not need to be at the expense of recognising the courage, bravery and commitment of those who lay down their lives in the service of others.

If we are to play our part well, then as local churches we need to start the conversations now about how we might respond. It could be particularly useful to research the specific events that have connections with your local community, and also engage with other local churches in considering an appropriate response. 'Seasons of Remembrance' might offer the opportunity for churches to become places where local community members can gather to reflect, pray and be still – giving expression to their own sense of loss and bereavement, even though for many it will not be in direct consequence of war.

Wigan Baptist Church has already begun to respond to this challenge, and their minister **David Hall** shares something of the story

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them". Words that we often hear once a year on Remembrance Sunday. Do we remember though? And as the events of the First World War go beyond living memory, how do we remember? As we approach the centenary of the start of WW1, how do we prepare and connect for future generations?

This question was brought into sharp focus on a recent educational visit to our church by a group of 10 and 11 year olds. One boy asked me what the war memorial was. I explained briefly about WW1, the horrors and how most



The Leather brothers

churches have similar memorials. Whilst the children politely listened, were vaguely interested, it was obvious that this distant event meant little to them nor really grabbed their attention. What do we need to do to connect?

In the weeks to come, with the help of members and internet records, we delved into some of the names on the board. The E Leather on the memorial became Edward Leather, a 35 year old gunner, killed in the 3rd battle of Passchendaele on 5 December 1917 and buried in Belgium. Edward was part of a large family having four brothers and five sisters all brought up on a local farm. He had a wife and a son back in Wigan. To make this more real, a picture came to light of all the brothers taken at the turn of the century, as well as pictures of the medals he gained.

On the next visit to church from the local school, this time with eight year olds, we highlighted the remembrance board asking the pupils what it was. As with the previous visit there was polite interest and general awareness. This, however, changed completely when we were able to tell the story of Edward and see his picture. The children immediately connected and empathised with the event. Edward could have been their father, what would they have felt hearing the news of his death? What was it like for him in those trenches? What was the

atmosphere in the church at Christmas 1917 when the news reached the community? Questions that came from the children, enabling them to go back to school to research in an age-appropriate way the emotional and spiritual consequences of war.

For older children, a brief delve into the church records brings another story, with one of the Baptist churches in the town having a minister with pacifist beliefs. The records then indicate the tensions and the discussions that this brought about within the church amongst families whose members were fighting in the conflict. Rich material for study and reflection.

Jesus taught about the kingdom of God through parables, essentially stories which conveyed deep meaning and to this day allow us to reflect, question and discuss. We can model this approach by developing meaningful stories that allow children to reflect, question and discuss the effect of war.

David Hall is the Lay Pastor, Wigan Baptist Church



For further information:

To trace names: Commonwealth War Graves Commission www.cwgc.org
To gain educational material: British Legion www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/schools-and-learning



God's Land: Why ending war does not always mean ending suffering

Countless Ugandans lost everything to Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), but though the war ended in 2006, their problems did not. It's why BMS World Mission is working to restore hope and justice to the dispossessed

Years in a squalid, makeshift house. An environment rife with disease. Unable to make a living and completely reliant on food aid to survive. Trapped.

Moses* spent much of his childhood in an Internally Displaced Person's camp (IDP), along with the 1.7 million others forced to leave their villages because of the LRA.

He knew no other way of life. So when the war that had shaped Uganda for two decades was over, Moses thought that perhaps this was his happy ending.

But it wasn't. Though the bullets had stopped flying, a different sort of hardship had just begun.

"I had been in the camp for so long," says Moses, "and since I went back things have not been easy." Returning 'home', Moses, like thousands of others, found people farming on his family's land – land wrangles and fights were everywhere. And having relied on aid, and without land or the skills to farm, the problems seemed insurmountable.

Land and law for life

"Land is everything here," says Alex Vickers, BMS worker in Gulu, northern Uganda. With land comes the possibility of growing crops to feed your family and pay for your children's education. "If you have land," he says, "you have a future for your family."

But land isn't easy to come by and there are two big problems. While it is a struggle to get hold of any land, those who do manage to get their land back find they have no security. Why bother working hard to irrigate your fields if they are just going to be taken away again? The other major problem is that people do not know how to utilise the land they have, as traditional farming methods are often inefficient.

Dealing with just one of these problems is not enough. This is why BMS is supporting the Ugandan Christian Lawyers' Fraternity (UCLF) and Alex and his team who, by targeting both land security and farming issues, are restoring hope to those who have been dispossessed.

Amos, a paralegal working with UCLF, has helped people like Moses to find out exactly where their land is and to get land security. "People came out of protected camps and went back to their homes," says Amos. "But they had lost sight of the boundaries of their land, so there are a lot of wrangles. In Gulu I help to educate people about land rights." Amos also mediates land disputes and enables people to get legal title.

Armed with land, Moses and thousands like him face their second great challenge – making something from it.



Photo: BMS World Mission

Farming God's way

This is where Alex and his team come in. They teach people to honour God in the way that they farm by using a system of cheap, natural farming techniques that enable them to increase their yield by up to three-fold. Using traditional Ugandan methods but tweaking them to make them much more efficient, the team helps farmers to get the most out of their fields whilst also protecting them.

Moses has seen his life transformed through the work of UCLF and the agricultural training, and he has come a long way from the IDP camp of his youth. He doesn't feel hopeless anymore. "Land is the source of survival," he says. "You grow your crops, you farm your animals, and you survive, even though you haven't gone to school."

By restoring land and independence to people like Moses, UCLF and Alex's team are bringing God's love and justice to those whose lives have been shaped by violence and oppression.

"It is our responsibility to guard and protect this environment, this land," says Alex.

"It's not our land. Yes, we might have a legal title to it, but, in a thousand years' time, whose land is it? It remains God's land."



This article first appeared in *Engage magazine*, the free quarterly magazine of BMS World Mission, and has been adapted



Photo: BMS World Mission

* Not his real name



There's something about the Cotswolds...

Photo: www.freefoto.com

Better together? Recent discussions about the future of Baptist life have offered a renewed vision for churches working more closely alongside each other. Certainly a network mentality among Baptist churches in the West of England is having quite an effect on Gospel witness. By **Ruth Whiter**

The idea of Baptist churches working together in small 'clusters' has been around for about 20 years. In some places, it's remained just that – an idea. In others, there's been a happy meeting of geography, friendships, and the work of the Spirit, so that networks for mission strategy have begun to emerge.

The West of England Baptist Association has been producing its own series of short videos to promote Home Mission regionally. For the fourth film in the series, we decided to focus on our **Cotswolds Cluster** and the ways in which they've worked together in recent years. As I began to talk to people from this group of lovely churches, dotted across Gloucestershire like a string of pearls, I began to see what a difference this could make.

"I don't think we could have carried on without the help from Minch' when it was needed." Joy Ramsbottom, a member of **Stonehouse Baptist Church**, is chatting to Liam Eaglestone, minister of nearby Minchinhampton Baptist Church. Cluster meetings brought the two churches together when the smaller church had reached a particularly low ebb, and resulted in a number of people offering different gifts to help out. Minchinhampton and Stonehouse worked together to enable Simon Shepherd to take leadership responsibility at Stonehouse for two years, with support from Home Mission, and

I don't think we could have carried on without the help from Minch

others came to help with areas such as finance. Liam points out that this was just as useful for the larger church, giving individuals opportunities to explore new gifts. Now, Stonehouse has grown in size and confidence to the point where it has called its own student minister. "You haven't been here for some time, Liam," says Joy. "You wouldn't get a seat, now, if you didn't come early."

A few minutes' drive away is **Kings Stanley Baptist Church**, made 'famous' by the documentary *Reverse Missionaries*. BBC2 constructed a story in which the sleepy church was transformed by a two week visit from Jamaican Pastor Franklin Small. I'm told that, although the church thoroughly enjoyed Franklin's visit, and that a few new local connections were made as a result, the church

is actually undergoing a process of transformation that is more long term, and is a result of the support of the local Baptist network.

I visited Kings Stanley during their monthly soup lunch, when 30-40 locals turn up for a wonderful selection of home made soups and puddings. Three years ago though, this church, whose history goes back before the English Civil War, reluctantly voted to close.

Matt Frost, minister of Cirencester Baptist Church, remembered hearing that this decision had been made. "My response to that, along with two other Baptist churches in the area, was to ask the question, 'is there something we can do to help?' – and that started a process." Eventually this led to Matt sitting down with one of his members, Nigel Price, for a cup of coffee, and saying "Nigel, I've got this mad idea



Liam Eaglestone with Joy Ramsbottom outside Stonehouse Baptist Church

Photo: Aaron Beale

about you taking a lead at Kings Stanley” to which Nigel replied, “I’ve got the same idea”. The church has released Nigel to act as lay pastor with an accountability group consisting of representatives from Cirencester, Stroud, and Kings Stanley Baptist Churches to support him in the role. Kings Stanley is seeing growth and focusing on mission; in addition to re-starting their popular soup lunch, the church is now going into a local school to present *Open the Book*. The Sunday congregation has grown from around 8 to around 28, and for the first time in many years, there are children taking part in family services.

This isn’t, however, simply a story about saving churches from closure.

Farmhill Baptist Church in Stroud, is for the time being no longer functioning as a worshipping, serving community. The deacons of nearby Stroud Baptist Church are acting as trustees for the now ‘empty’ building. So it’s a little surprising to hear that there have been eight baptisms in the last two years.

Dave Guy, a member of Stroud Baptist Church, had been a volunteer with Mara, a charity providing street level support to people with addictions,

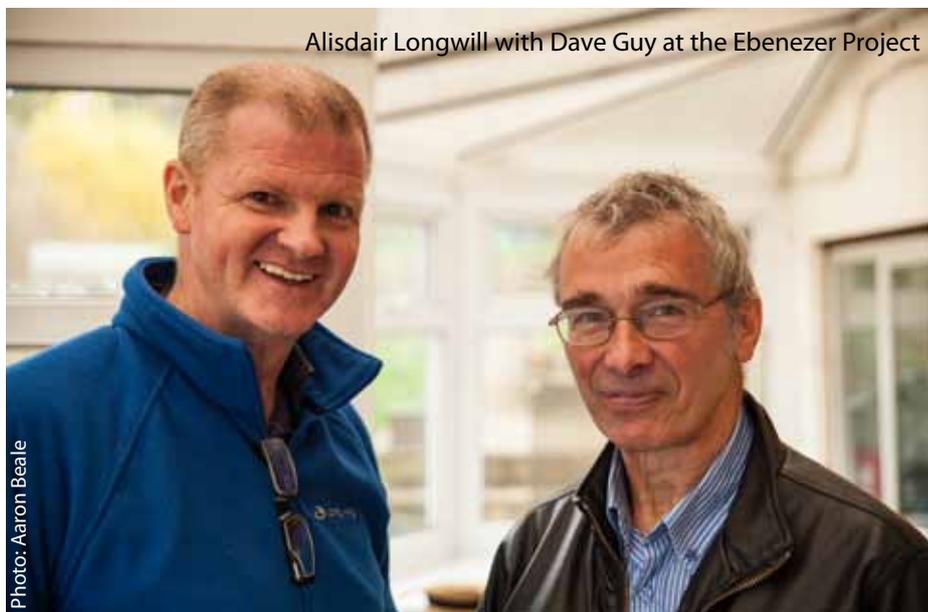


Photo: Aaron Beale

Alisdair Longwill with Dave Guy at the Ebenezer Project

for some years, but he wanted to take this further and find a way to provide community-based rehabilitation. When the church closed, WEBA acquired Woodside House, a property on the same piece of land. “I became aware that the house was available” said Dave, “so I ran my idea past Alisdair Longwill, the Regional Minister.” **The Ebenezer Project** now houses five students on a 10 module programme – studying gardening, photography, and carpentry alongside relapse prevention, occupational health, and re-integration.

The students also meet in the church on Thursday nights for a series of three courses: *J John 10*, *Alpha*, and *Freedom in Christ*. These courses are open to local churches and the community, and about 17 people have found faith in Christ, leading to the eight baptisms I mentioned. One of the students met us at the door, beaming with excitement. During her time at Ebenezer, she’s been baptised and then married, and now she and her new husband are about to move into a flat nearby. →

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Craig, one of the Ebenezer students

Photo: Aaron Beale

Like Stonehouse and Kings Stanley, the Ebenezer Project has been supported by the local network. Stroud Baptist Church provides its office; Chalford and Minchinhampton Baptist Churches have provided financial support and also volunteers. Dave Guy has also been grateful for continued support from Regional Minister Alisdair Longwill.

Those are just three of many stories of collaboration that I heard around the Cotswolds Cluster. I could have talked about Wotton-under-Edge Baptist Church, who were in a similar position to Kings Stanley 30 years ago, and are now thriving.

What is clear is the difference a shared strategic approach has made to the gospel witness in this area.

I could have mentioned the collaboration in youth work that's happening through PSALMS, and the members at Minchinhampton who are now feeling God's call to local outreach in the Farmhill area.

It's difficult to pin down how this network mentality came about; an enthusiastic volunteer who promoted cluster meetings; ministers

who developed close personal connections; perhaps the geography of this particular cluster just works well. What is clear is the difference a shared strategic approach has made to the gospel witness in this area.

I said at the beginning that we were making a video to promote **Home Mission**, the Baptist family purse which funds the three Specialist Teams, 13 Regional Associations, and grants for mission around the country. So how does a film about local churches working together promote a national fund?

Home Mission is funded by gifts from churches – and as they give, they too become partners in this network, trusting that God will work through the money they give. It's been difficult for some of our churches to maintain Home Mission giving over the last year, while others have faithfully given the recommended 5% or more, but it's this shared purse that enables mission to be strategic, making the most of local opportunities through grants and the support of regional teams. Home Mission giving empowers each local network. Paul must have been aware of something similar when he wrote to the church at Philippi, "I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil 1: 4b-5, NIV).

The WEBA Cotswolds video will be available early in 2014 at www.webassoc.org.uk. You can give to Home Mission, and also find out about what's going on in your Regional Association via the Baptist Union website, www.baptist.org.uk.

Author and illustrator **Ruth Whiter** is communications co-ordinator for the West of England Baptist Association






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An interview with

Amy Slennett

Safeguarding Officer for the Baptist Union of Great Britain / United Reformed Church

Can you talk a little about your role?

I oversee all aspects of safeguarding for both the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) and the United Reformed Church (URC). Safeguarding is not only about protecting children and young people, but also vulnerable adults too, as well as those working with them.

I'm spending a lot of time at the moment dealing with serious issues as they arise, but my role is very varied and includes looking at the training we offer, our policies and processes, our communications and so on. It's the first time it's been combined, so it's a new and busy role – I work equal time for the URC and BUGB.

How do churches get safeguarding advice?

We ask churches to contact their Associations in the first instance - every Association has a safeguarding officer, or an alternative arrangement in place. They will point them in the right direction. That may well be me, or it may be that I give advice to the Association officer. For basic queries about criminal records checks, churches can contact Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (CAS) on 0207 4675216. There is also a lot of information on our website at www.baptist.org.uk/safeguarding.

What general advice can you give to churches about safeguarding?

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – it's not just for the ministers, elders, children's workers, etc; we all have a part to play. I'd encourage everyone to do as much as possible to help make their church a safe place! All churches should be embedding good practice by having a written policy which everyone is following, a designated safeguarding person, and training and criminal records checks for the relevant workers.

Where did you work before joining our Union?

I was the Safeguarding Manager for Diabetes UK; delivering a lot of training, writing their policies and dealing with issues. It was great job, dealing with a very different context. But I have never felt so strongly about a job when I saw this one advertised. I knew I had to apply, and had lots of people praying for me.



So how generally did you get into this work?

I've always had a heart for children, and have always helped with children's and youth clubs in the churches I've been part of.

I began working for EveryChild, an international development charity working to stop children growing up vulnerable and alone. My job involved training staff overseas in countries like Russia and Romania, and a crucial part of this was delivering safeguarding training. Afterwards it was amazing to see the difference it had made, as the whole concept of safeguarding was completely groundbreaking to many of the staff involved. I found it so interesting and rewarding that my passion for this kind of work grew.

You have a busy and demanding role – how do you relax?

Friends and family are very important to me, and I love spending time with them – though I'm in a family of missionaries, so it's not that often with some of them. It does mean I get to have lots of exciting holidays though!

I love going out for dinner, the cinema, and being creative with craft and textiles.

Favourite Bible verse/any particular verse speaking to you at the moment?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Favourite worship song/hymn?

That's a tricky one, but I quite often find myself singing *Our God* by Chris Tomlin.

Who would you like to see featured here?

Send your suggestions for the *Baptist People* section of a future edition to media@baptist.org.uk



The Challenge is to Love Them ...

How local churches can best support their young people

a response by **Gavin Calver**

I was never an angel in church youth groups, and I had a partner in crime called Danny. We would do our best to disrupt anything for an easy laugh and were a youth leader's nightmare. Never really malicious or aggressive, we were certainly cheeky. Danny and I would always turn up to everything together and if possible we'd try and lead others astray. Every church has a Danny and Gavin, but very few know quite how to handle them.

I remember one Sunday morning arriving at church youth group and being greeted with great hostility. Granted, we were a little late, but the situation wasn't that bad. We were told in no uncertain terms to go back to where we'd come from and were officially banned from attending for

the greatest thing we can do is provide a committed listening ear

six months. There was some garbled justification to do with thinking about our actions, but by this point we'd closed our ears to anything the teacher had to say. What an interesting method of trying to keep young people in the church. We were being forced out! I clearly remember turning to Danny and saying, with as much meaning and authority as I could muster, "I hate church!"

I really believe that if we'd had a decent relationship with our youth leader we would have been far more reluctant to breeze in late. Without such a relationship, we couldn't have cared less. I think the best possible way for churches to support their young people is through relationship. We all know the greatest

commandment is to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength' but what comes next? 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Matt 22:37-39).

We start by loving God, then we love others better. If we build real relationships of genuine love and care, our young people will know where to come when they are struggling. They won't be thinking about 'Church' but rather about the people that give a stuff about them. If we start with rules, we might as well empty the pews now, but if you begin with love, then boundaries are introduced later on.

Young people go through so many changes in their teenage lives and the constant support of parents and adults who love them, gives them a place to call 'home.' They live in a rapidly changing nation facing constant emotional, physical and mental changes - their struggles with identity and belonging must be huge. Take, for example, the huge adjustment they face from primary to secondary education. The child who has a clear identity, some level of acceptance and a place to belong, at primary, must now venture out into the daunting new world of the secondary school. It is an enforced stepping out of one's comfort zone to enter into what can seem at the time like a den of lions.

They have to decide who they want to be. Many of the ways in which they behave in the early weeks of secondary school will set patterns that they will be unable to free themselves from for the rest of their schooldays. There were three people in my year at secondary school that behaved badly at the

the huge adjustment from primary to secondary is one area that the Church can really support their young people.



start and never quite shook off that reputation for the next seven years of education. You are desperate for people to like you, so will go to any lengths in order to achieve this. The move may require a complete change of public persona. At primary school, one lad had been perceived as one of the cool crowd where life was fun and free. When he went to secondary school it changed drastically: among a far bigger crowd of people he was no longer so good at football, and neither was he seen as cool. For him it was nearly soul destroying.

the best possible way for churches to support their young people is through relationship

This is one area that the Church can really support their young people. Firstly by being aware of all the changes

happening for them and secondly noting the issues of self esteem that can arise. I suppose the greatest thing we can do is provide a committed listening ear – that can be enough, but also pray hard for their protection, for good healthy relationships and for their families as they walk through these changes. If we can be the consistent support for our young people they will see that even if people at school don't care who they are, God does. Even if they are not accepted in the playground, there's another context outside, called the church; that will accept her wholeheartedly.

It saddens me that so many young people leave the Church and therefore give up on God. Surely if we want the

Church of Jesus Christ to continue 30 years from now, we have to find some way to meet in the middle? The challenge is to love young people enough that they meet Jesus and want to have a life-long relationship with a living God who loves them more than we ever could.

Gavin Calver is a Baptist minister and National Director of Youth for Christ, a charity that works with over 300,000 young people a month in places such as schools, prisons and churches.



Adapted from Gavin's first book *Disappointed with Jesus?: Why do so many young people give up on God?* Available from www.yfc.co.uk or www.amazon.co.uk

We'd love to hear your insights - join the conversation at: www.baptist.org.uk/supportyouth

Attitude

When I'm grumpy with my brother and sister my dad sometimes says:

A is for
Aeroplane,
Apple and
Attitude.

Which one do you think we are going to talk about today?

When I have got a bad attitude I feel very grumpy,
But when other people have a bad attitude I feel upset.
I want everyone to get on!

It makes my insides feel like a tree on a windy wacky day.
When I see people getting on with each other I feel like
the sea on a shimmering shining beautiful day.

Father,
I'd rather not have you to talk about:
Aeroplanes,
Apples or
Attitudes!

Help us to get on together
and help everyone to have a good attitude.
AMEN!

By **Libby Doel**



Photo: Sapphire Studio





A welcome for everyone

Photo: Torch Trust

Could your church do more to make worship and fellowship accessible to people losing their sight? After exploring the biblical basis for full inclusion in the last edition of *Baptists Together*, we invited the **Torch Trust** to offer some practical suggestions

"I decided I was never going to go out again. I was going to stay in the house... it was too terrifying." – *John*

"Sight loss affects everything... not being able to see faces when watching TV, not being able to see what's on the shelves at the supermarket..." – *Christine*

"I put on a brave face but I wasn't coping. I thought that I was a failure and that, should I go completely blind, life as I knew it would be pretty much over." – *Steve*

"It was incredibly frustrating not being able to read or drive... totally emasculating not to be able to use a microwave or kettle for myself." – *Trevor*

"The news... can be like a death sentence. Hopes and dreams destroyed... like breakers smashing in and overwhelming you. Here's a killer for me: on my girls' wedding days, I won't be able to see them." – *Mark*

Blindness is the disability the majority of people say they most fear. Yet every day in the UK, 100 people learn that they are losing their sight. As our population ages, the numbers will increase. Almost one in four of us will live with a disabling level of sight loss.

Practically speaking, the difficulties in continuing everyday activities are endless. Emotionally, sight loss can bring isolation and exclusion. Some describe the trauma of losing sight as like bereavement. Acute loneliness and clinical depression are not uncommon.



Photo: Torch Trust

Tackling the issue

Torch Trust, a long-established Christian charity working with people who are blind or partially sighted, is fully engaged in tackling these issues – offering fellowship groups, one-on-one befriending, telephone friendship groups, Christian literature in braille, large print and audio, and specialist holidays.

But *Torch Trust* needs churches to partner with them – to recognise and understand the needs of people with sight loss in their communities and adapt their church programme to be

accessible and inclusive. Churches don't have to go it alone – there's training and support available from *Torch* for churches willing to reach out to people with sight loss.

Starting with the Bible

The Bible itself is the essential starting point for thinking about disability and inclusion, with helpful themes from Genesis to Revelation – from the moment of creation to the greatest party of all at the end of time. In the creation narrative we learn that we are all made in God's image, and that God desires relationship with each of us. In the ministry of Jesus we are confronted by God's love for the marginalised and overlooked (Luke 4:18-19). The Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24) is the ultimate picture of inclusion and celebration, as the master sends his servants onto the streets to bring in poor and disabled people 'that my house may be full'. And in Revelation the unending good news is addressed to every people group (Revelation 14:6).

The local church should be all about enabling: enabling each person – regardless of ability or disability – to be part of a community of believers where what each has to give and what each needs to receive meshes beautifully like the cogs in a gearbox. The local church is about doing that over and over again with all shapes and sizes of men and women in perfect complementarity. That's the way to build the body of Christ.

Churches don't see outreach to disabled people as part of mission

Leading or lagging behind?

These are the words of a partially sighted man who contacted *Torch* recently:

"I'm very concerned with the lack across the church community of accessible means by which visually impaired people can participate in sung worship and church life generally... I'm pretty much coming to the end of my tether... by and large, churches do not have a significant visually impaired population because they are excluded."

Sadly, instead of taking a lead in reaching out to people with sight loss, the Church has often lagged behind. Churches tend to see outreach to disabled people not as part of mission, but as a do-gooder project, or an act of charity. While this is commendable, is it enough? Doesn't it fall woefully short of recognising the image of God in all disabled people and the gifting God has given each one? There's a world of difference between access and inclusion, between caring and belonging. Ultimately, it's a matter of justice.

How can we offer an invitation to belong to all – including those with sight loss? Understanding the issues is a good first step. Take a look again at the honest quotes from John, Christine, Steve, Trevor and Mark. Can you feel their pain?

Worship for All

One way of being truly welcoming is to offer people your church magazine, song sheets, home group studies, orders of service and so on in a format that works for them. That means providing them in a range of large print sizes. *Torch Trust* offers a free web-based service which converts materials for you, called *Worship for All*.

If you have blind braille readers in your church, it can also generate instructions to a braille embosser machine to enable you to produce braille versions. Can you imagine how welcoming that is to people needing them?

Braille reader Colin reports that his experience of attending church using *Worship for All* is 'transformed'. "I can join in all the worship. I really feel part of it," he says.

"It's lovely to be able to join in rather than just listen," says Pam, also a braille reader. "I feel like I'm taking part rather than just being there."

"With an ageing population experiencing sight loss problems, churches have to consider the usefulness of everything from the printed materials they use in church and home groups through to their data and video projection", says Andrew Nicholson, Chief Operating Officer for *Torch Trust*.



Photo: Torch Trust

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TORCH

One way of being truly welcoming is to offer people your church magazine or orders of service in a format that works for them'

"More materials would be suitable for people losing sight due to macular degeneration or cataracts if they were produced in a larger type size, along with consideration of the font shape and the background colours."

Torch has been pioneering software to enable some of its Christian magazines to be sent out in a variety of print sizes to suit individual needs. Now this facility is available to churches to do for themselves. You can log onto the *Torch* website (www.torchtrust.org/w4a) and follow step-by-step instructions to produce your own materials on demand.

To find out more about *Worship for All* or other ways of including people with sight loss, such as hosting a *Torch* Fellowship Group or training church members to be befrienders to people newly diagnosed with sight loss, contact *Torch Trust*: info@torchtrust.org or 01858 438260. www.torchtrust.org

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Praying for Peace

Read:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

Reflect:

The world seeks peace by destroying the enemy and in emotional and material comforts.

On what is the peace that Jesus offers us based?

How does Jesus' peace differ from the world's peace?

In what ways can you exhibit Christ's peace in your daily life?

Pray:

Pray for peace. You may like to say your own prayer or share the following.

Our peace is disturbed
O Lord, grant us your peace.

Our hearts cry out to you Lord,
 for we are surrounded by horror and pain.
 Children shriek in anguish as chemicals consume flesh.
 Helpless mothers embrace the limp bodies of the sick and
 malnourished.

Our peace is disturbed
O Lord, grant us your peace.

Our hearts cry out to you Lord,
 as refugees flood the plains – erecting makeshift shelters;
 scrambling for aid, begging for relief,
 desperately searching for life's necessities.

Our peace is disturbed
O Lord, grant us your peace.

Our hearts cry out to you Lord,
 for violence is being done to us.
 Limbs are torn, minds broken, psyche shattered,
 families thrust apart and communities devastated.

Our peace is disturbed
O Lord, grant us your peace.

Our hearts cry out to you Lord,
 against hearts that are cold and unyielding;
 where nationalism overwhelms, self-righteousness stunts,
 vengeance cripples and greed debases.

Our peace is disturbed
O Lord, grant us your peace.

Our hearts cry out to you Lord,
 yearning to be heard, longing for rest, searching for justice;
 needing compassion, mercy and love.
 Teach us to be peacemakers –
 healing, soothing, feeding.

Our peace is grounded in you
O Lord, grant us your peace.

Charmaine Howard is Minister of Northolt Park Baptist Church in West London, and is a Trustee of our Union. Prior to Ministerial formation/training at Regent's Park College, she was a teacher for seventeen years, latterly as a head teacher in Bedfordshire.

Other Prayer resources

Have a look in the Resource Library on our website for our growing range of prayer and worship resources, including our *monthly prayer diary*. Download from: www.baptist.org.uk/prayer

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Action Week: 'Standing with people
 in crisis – give, act and pray'
www.actionweek.org.uk

3 February
BMS Day of Prayer
[www.bmsworldmission.org/
 dayofprayer](http://www.bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer)

16 February
Education Sunday
www.educationsunday.org.uk

24 February – 9 March
Fairtrade Fortnight
www.fairtrade.org.uk

5 March – 19 April
Lent

7 March
Women's World Day of Prayer
www.wwdp.org.uk

30 March
Mothering Sunday

20 April
Easter Sunday

Church furniture with a futuristic feel

Fullers Finer Furniture introduces The Canterbury and York Lecterns. These lovely pieces have something about the shape of things to come as they have both been designed with a fully adjustable gas strut height control, internal wiring to take a microphone and even an LCD monitor for use during presentations, hymn singing, for sermon notes and the like. As more and more churches are using IT equipment these days, this kind of product is a must not just in the future but right now.

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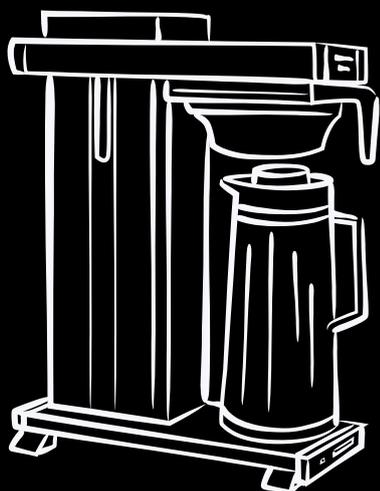
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