

Going the extra mile

TWO Baptists have been churning out the miles this summer as they put their faith into action.

At the start of the month Ashley Stansfield, a minister and evangelist, set off on a 200 mile walk of prayer and witness. It began in St Bees near the Lake District and took in the Yorkshire Dales and the North Yorkshire Moors National Park before finishing last week in Robin Hood's Bay.

Ashley (pictured), who had back-up support from Pastor Glenn Scott (Edgeside Baptist Church, Waterfoot), engaged many along the way. People were able to follow and look up his progress on Facebook, and he had some 'brilliant' conversations, as well as handing out around 1,000 cards.

'It was received extremely well,' he revealed. 'The coast-to-coast aspect really caught people's imaginations. We had lots of likes and comments on Facebook, and it gave lots of opportunities to talk to people.'

'One man in Windermere said the prayer; another in North Yorkshire realised he had to go back to church, and promised that he would.'

'I'm an evangelist, I want to be out there among people and engaging them: the opportunities



that arose were fabulous. We were able to put so many cards in people's hands. It's hopefully sowing a seed and I'm asking God to water that seed. You just never know what will happen.'

Search Walk Coast to Coast - England to see more of Ashley's journey.

Hoping to rack up 1,000 miles over the next month is accountant Dave Hall.

On Monday the 50-year-old set off from John O'Groats for the first of 40 marathons in 40 days, with his journey finishing in Land's End on 26 September.

As if that wasn't arduous enough, Dave, who attends Street Baptist Church in Somerset, will be travelling alongside a replica of a slumtown shack in which he will sleep each night. His aim is to both engage with people along

the way about the reality of abject living conditions for so many in the world, and raise funds for the new charity Home Leone to build low cost houses for people in Sierra Leone.

His endurance challenge was inspired by a visit to Freetown, the capital of the afore-mentioned African country, where he walked through the slums, met local people and their community leaders, and gained an understanding of the problems they face.

'It is shocking to see the living conditions in the slums,' he said. 'I really feel God has laid these people on my heart, so I want to do something to help them.'

'I see this challenge as a very practical way of putting my Christian faith into action. The need in Africa is so vast; far beyond our comprehension. I am constantly humbled by how much luxury we enjoy in our society and I feel compelled to make even a small difference to as many people as I can.'

The land for sustainable, low-cost housing is already available; each home costs £5,000 and Dave is hoping to raise a house a day for the 40 days of the run.

Dave is also on Facebook, and you can follow his itinerary at www.maninashack.com

New pioneer role at SCBA

IN an exciting development, Ali Boulton has been officially appointed as the Pioneer Mission Enabler at the Southern Counties Baptist Association (SCBA).

The new role came about in the wake of the departure of then Regional Minister Lynn Green to General Secretary of our Baptist Union. Rather than appoint a replacement immediately, the Association resolved to take time and wait on the Holy Spirit, and from this a conviction about pioneering grew.

It has now resulted in the call of Ali, a pioneer minister at The Stowe, a growing Christian community supported by Home Mission in a new housing estate in Swindon.

'When Lynn left we wanted to wait on God and did that for about six months,' said SCBA team leader Grenville Overton, 'We became convinced that the way forward was about being missional. I understand the administrative and pastoral issues are still core for us, but the future is about reaching the unreachable.'

'Having someone like Ali who has this community way of relating to people, accepting



them as they are, will really help. We need to find new ways of connecting.'

'Not only did Ali plant a church, she re-engaged the way people see church. We need to give a new rationale about what it means to be church. It's not just singing hymns, but engaging in their lives, listening to their needs. We are putting that investment into the heart of the Association.'

Grenville said that Ali will be embedded in the Association team, giving support to contacts and projects already taking place in the region. Her insight will also be shared across in the developing Association partnership of SCBA and the West of England, South West and South Wales Baptist Associations, 'developing mutually beneficial capacity, vision, and support'.

Ali explained she will be

building on church traditions and helping people to explore what pioneer mission looks like in their context. She was formally appointed at an Association Extraordinary General Meeting in July, and there she used an expression from mountaineer George Mallory to capture something of what she will be doing.

'Mallory got up one morning and said: "Today we are stepping off the map, we are going where no cartographer has been." I like the expression because I will be helping lead people "off the map" in their context - whether it be a new expression of church, new ways of engaging with community.'

'But it also recognises that the well worn paths leading to that point had to be there - we are building on church traditions and what has gone before. Pioneering is for all of us.'

It's a "half-time" role, meaning she won't be leaving The Stowe. As the work of The Stowe has grown, new leaders have emerged to take on roles Ali will no longer be able to do. 'It's sad in one way, but very exciting in many others.'

International call for GB leader

A GIRLS' Brigade leader from Surrey has been elected as the next Girls' Brigade International President.

Vivienne Aitchison, 65, who runs 3rd Sutton group at Crown Road Baptist Church, was elected at the 11th Girls' Brigade (GB) International Conference in Perth, Australia, last month. She was previously a Vice President for GB Europe.

Girls' Brigade works in around 50 countries around the world - providing rewarding, stretching and positive opportunities through which children and young people, between the ages of four and 18, grow and develop in confidence and skills in a Christian environment.

Vivienne's new volunteer leadership role, for 2014-2018, will involve leading

the President's Committee - a strategic group which leads the international movement. There will be ambassadorial responsibilities as she travels to support and encourage members around the world.

She said, 'Being elected to this role is a wonderful privilege and something which, when I joined the organisation at the age of seven, I'd never have dreamt of.'

Christians targeted in Ukraine

PRO-RUSSIAN separatists are increasingly targeting evangelical Christians in eastern Ukraine by beating, torturing and even killing them



Such has been the escalation of attacks in recent months in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, evangelical leaders have issued a statement claiming religious persecution and calling on the international community to prevent the situation worsening even more.

The attacks include the killing of four Baptists, who dragged out of their church in Slavyansk in June and whose bodies were later found in a mass grave.

The statement, signed by nine church leaders, including Valery Antonyuk, Chairman of the Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, describes the 'purposeful attacks of armed militants against Evangelicals'.

The incidents 'have occurred repeatedly', the statement continues, carried out by the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR respectively).

Calling on the international community to step in, the leaders state, 'We are convinced that

the whole world community must condemn the oppression of religious freedom in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, which reached up to the level of physical massacre... including the real threat to the life of Evangelical Christians in the east of Ukraine.'

The worrying situation was confirmed by Baptist Pavel Unguryan, who is currently Vice-Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine. He explained Christians are being targeted for several reasons, such as helping wounded Ukraine soldiers and an association with the West.

'Unfortunately the incidents are becoming systematic and create a real threat to the lives of Christians,' he said. 'The armed separatists are repeatedly

breaking into the churches or believers' homes and furiously shouting: "Our faith is Orthodox and you are traitors. You are American subjects and agents so we are going to eliminate you."

'They are intimidating Christians because they are the ones who render most of the assistance to the wounded, hungry and hurting people.'

Mr Unguryan said in many places the Christians, motivated by their faith, are actually helping the insurgents.

'They equally treat Ukrainian soldiers who need medical care and the insurgents who are bleeding or need help. This kind of love bewilders insurgents and separatists and conquers them more than any weapon.'

'The local people see the authentic love and dedication to the Lord and as a result are drawn to the church despite the threat of being prosecuted.'

Mr Unguryan, who coordinates the Prayer Group in the Ukraine Parliament, urged UK Baptists to 'pray fervently to the Lord and ask His intervention.'

'He is the only One who is capable to bring about peace and stop the bloodshed.'

Justice theme for new Law Society president

ANDREW Caplen, whose wife Lindsay is minister of the Baptist-affiliated South Woodham Evangelical Church in Essex, has taken up office as President of The Law Society of England and Wales.

The Law Society is the professional body of all solicitors subject to English/Welsh jurisdiction and has 166,000 members.

The son of Methodist market traders and Methodists, Andrew explained in an interview with *The Times* he has been heavily influenced by their passion for social justice.

'Most of us came into the law because we wanted to make a difference in society; we had ideals that we wanted to represent the poor and underprivileged, and believe in justice.'

A high street practitioner who has done everything from crime to breach of contract, Andrew added, 'There can be no access to justice when citizens, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalised, do not understand their rights or are financially unable to obtain redress.'

Access to justice will be a major theme of his presidential year, as well as a focus on gender based violence.

In the autumn BMS World Mission - where Lindsay is a trustee - launches a major initiative on the latter, and Andrew has been in close contact with BMS with a view, as far as is possible, to working alongside.

Marking Freedom Sunday

A NEW resource to enable congregations to reflect and act on the issue of human trafficking has launched.

The Freedom Sunday pack has been created by the Joint Public Issues Team of Baptists Together, the Methodist and United Reformed Churches alongside a host of other churches and organisations.

It contains prayers, sermon outlines and Bible studies for use in church services, as well as an action pack for congregations and

individuals.

Sunday 19 October 2014 is Freedom Sunday, when churches all over the world join together to raise awareness of the crime of human trafficking and show the world our compassion for men, women and children who are trafficked and exploited.

Visit the Joint Public Issues website to download the resource <http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/freedomsunday/>

JOBS

Team Leader and Regional Minister, Heart of England Baptist Association

For more details visit: www.baptist.org.uk/jobs

DEATH

THOMPSON - the Revd Arthur passed away peacefully at home on 11 August. He was Minister at the Baptist Churches at Brondesbury, Mitcham Lane, Ruislip, Kings Cross and Greenford. He was also the Metropolitan Area Superintendent for London for five years. He was 90 years old and had preached the Gospel for over 50 years and helped in the Billy Graham Crusades and Luis Palau Crusades. He will be sadly missed by so many people including his wife Eileen and his children John and Margaret and his grand children Claire, Emma, Daniel, Emily, Christian and Daisy as well as John's wife Sue and Margaret's husband Andy.

DEBNEY - David John passed peacefully to be with his Lord on Wednesday 6 August 2014 aged 85. He was brought up in Didsbury Manchester where he attended Beaver Park (now Didsbury) Baptist Church and met and married his wife Barbara. Barbara sadly died in July 2008. David frequently attended the BMS summer school at Cilgwyn in Wales in the 1940s and 50s making many friends. Latterly he was a member at Anderson Baptist Church in Reading for over 50 years, living in Spencers Wood near Reading until ill health necessitated a move to a care home in the Reading area. A thanksgiving service for his life was held on 19 August.

BAPTISMS

Llanfair Uniting Church, Penrhys: Lynda Thomas 1
London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft, Suffolk: Malcolm Cherry, Yvonne Cherry, Alicia Read, Chris Pimlott 4
Streatham Baptist Church, London: Tryrique Carr, Tricia Carr, Roxanna Carr, Sherifa Carr, Gloria Austin, Jackie Read, Mohammed Rashid. . . 7

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War, looking at what we can learn from our predecessors, tips and resources on how to commemorate the anniversary, and the strange tale of the Baptist minister who found himself in Germany as war broke...

<http://bit.ly/1hZtkOe>

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> John Rackley is concerned by the absence of one sort of prayer among the different churches he has visited

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