



25 February 2015

News:

### **Home Mission Appeal: your generosity will transform lives in 2015**

#### **A big thank you to churches and supporters who gave just under £4 million in 2014 to our Home Mission appeal.**

Home Mission is the Baptist family purse which enables Baptist churches and individuals to reach their mission potential and demonstrate the love of God to their communities.

The figures for 2014 have just been released and there has been an increase of £30,000 in giving from churches compared to 2013. The total raised was over £3.9 million with only a 0.4 per cent decrease on 2013 which was due to a drop in individual giving.

"It's great to see that the giving from the churches went up by over £30,000 compared to 2013," said Malcolm Broad, the Baptist Union treasurer. "So a big 'thank you' especially to those in our churches and Associations who work hard to promote Home Mission. Although when added to individual giving the Appeal was very slightly down on the previous year this is still a good result and I praise God for the ongoing generosity of both churches and individuals."

There was an encouraging picture in giving across the Associations, with nine showing an increase on their 2013 figure.

"The challenge to increase the Appeal remains as we endeavour to help churches and other ministries with Home Mission grants," said Malcolm. "In the meantime we are very grateful for the amount raised in 2014 and hope that with continued generosity we can raise in excess of £4 million in 2015."

Home Mission is used in many creative ways, and through it hundreds of lives have been affected and many people have found faith in Jesus. In 2014 Home Mission giving supported 42 mission projects; enabled ministry in 197 churches; raised over £5,470 from the sale of used stamps and collectibles and supported 65 other ministries.

40 days of Home Mission is a new resource featuring one story each day for 40 days leading up to Easter, showing how your giving to Home Mission is being used to bring the love of God to communities around the country in creative and inspiring ways.

You can also find a selection of stories on the Baptists Together website, in the regional sections of The Baptist Times, and Baptists Together Magazine.

### **Justin Welby calls on Christians to 'challenge cynicism'**

The Archbishop of Canterbury urged Christians to resist political narratives that appeal to self-interest and instead vote for the common good in a keynote address to nearly 400 people at the Love your neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote conference in Coventry on Saturday. In his speech

**Archbishop Justin Welby said: “It’s impossible to love Jesus Christ and not to care about the welfare of people in every respect.”**

The Archbishop went on to appeal to Christians to be positive and avoid ‘miserablism’ – “If we don’t vote we share responsibility for the apathy and cynicism in our politics.”

The Conference was organised by the Joint Public Issues Team, which combines the expertise of the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, to launch the Love Your Neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote Election pack designed to encourage churches to explore themes of truth, justice, peace and wellbeing in the run up to May’s General Election

Most Rev Justin Welby said that proclaiming the good news of Jesus and transforming society were "indistinguishable": “They are literally the two sides of the same coin. You do one, you do the other.” He called on Christians to "proclaim the vision that is transforming ... that challenges the cynicism.”

Mr John Ellis, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church commented: “Archbishop Justin showed how we should view politics through a lens of the Gospel: If we did that we would never succumb to apathy or the temptation to demonise individuals or political parties – instead we would honour the positive and support all those seeking the common good. So, as Christians we stay hopeful, with a stronger motivation to use the political process to fight injustices.”

The programme included a Q&A session immediately after the Archbishop’s speech, reflective worship and a closing keynote speech from the Revd Ruth Gee, former President of the Methodist Conference. Delegates also had the opportunity to attend workshops on poverty, communications, building a relationship with your MP, immigration, climate change, preaching and praying, social justice and peacemaking.

Commending the Love your neighbour resource pack, the Revd Phil Jump, Regional Minister of the North Western Baptist Association and member of the Joint Public Issues Team, said: “Our hope and vision is that every member of our churches will enter the polling booth on Election Day, conscious that above everything else, they are called to be followers of Jesus.” The voting pack is designed for use in churches and small groups in the four weeks immediately before the General Election in May.

[The resource pack together with podcasts of keynote speeches and other news from Love Your Neighbour: Think, Pray, Vote is available here.](#)

[Find out what delegates and speakers had to say about the conference here.](#)

## **Conservatives losing out to Labour in poll of UK Christians**

**A survey of evangelical Christians has revealed that nearly double the national average intend to vote in this year’s general election. Four in 10 say they will change their vote from 2010. The government parties have lost significant support while smaller parties and Labour gained.**

The Faith in Politics? report follows a survey of 2,020 evangelical Christians, conducted by the Evangelical Alliance between August and September 2014. It shows many concerns ranging from the credibility of politicians to the issues that Christians think political parties should be pursuing for the common good of society, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable.

The major findings are:

- Comparing how evangelicals voted in 2010 and how they intend to vote today, there has been a fivefold increase in support for both UKIP and The Green Party. Support for the Conservatives declined by nearly a third, while Liberal Democrats lost over half of their support. The Labour Party now has the highest level of support, backed by 31 per cent of evangelicals.
- 94 per cent say they are 'certain' or 'likely' to vote (80 per cent certain, 14 per cent likely), however 24 per cent are undecided which way they will vote.
- Poverty and inequality is the single most important issue for evangelicals. Race and immigration, which is the most important issue for over a fifth of the UK population (Ipsos Mori, Aug 2014), was only chosen by six per cent of evangelicals.
- Comparing how evangelicals voted in 2010 and how they intend to vote today, there has been a fivefold increase in support for both UKIP and The Green Party. Support for the Conservatives declined by nearly a third, while the Liberal Democrats lost over half of their support. The Labour Party now has the highest level of support, backed by 31 per cent of evangelicals.

When asked what policy positions/issues are important and will affect their vote, the top five were:

1. Policies that ensure religious liberty and freedom of expression (71 per cent)
2. Policies that are likely to make a positive difference to the poorest people in the UK (61 per cent)
3. Policies to eliminate human trafficking (59 per cent)
4. Opposition to same-sex marriage legislation (46 per cent)
5. A pro-life stance on euthanasia (45 per cent)

Half of the respondents say they are less likely to believe what a politician says today than five years ago.

Dr Dave Landrum, advocacy director at the Evangelical Alliance, said:

“Evangelical Christians are passionate about politics that works for the good of all of society, and when it comes to voting they’re not going to be backing the party which just benefits themselves the most.

“The issues that concern evangelicals are quite different from the issues that concern the general public. Evangelicals care far more about poverty than immigration. With around two million across the UK this is a section of society that the politicians cannot ignore.

“The high level of engagement contrasts with a high degree of distrust in politicians and their promises. Many commented that the redefinition of marriage had badly damaged their view of politics. In the coming months evangelical voters are likely to be wary of grand promises made by any of the political parties.”

[Read the 'Faith in Politics?' report in full here](#)

**'Creative' appointments in EMBA**

## **The East Midlands Baptist Association (EMBA) has strengthened its regional ministry team with a surprise joint appointment**

Wife and husband Ellen and Steve Price will be joining the Association team later this year as Regional Ministers.

Ellen, currently minister of Oadby Baptist Church in Leicestershire, will be the full-time stipendiary Regional Minister. Steve, who has already been highly involved in moderating some of the Association's churches, will serve in a part-time, non-stipendiary capacity.

Due to "cautious and prudent" budgeting EMBA has been among the least well-resourced Association team in terms of number of churches and number of Regional Ministers, explained Regional Minister Team Leader the Revd Dianne Tidball.

As Trustees, the Directors took the decision to carry a deficit budget and appoint a further full time Regional Minister.

'We prayed for wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and asked that we, as an appointing group, might be ready to be surprised by God's leading,' she said.

'When Ellen and Steve applied, offering to serve together as Regional Ministers, without increasing the budget, we began to see that this might be God's provision for us.

'We are grateful to all those who applied and were interviewed and we are sorry that in such a discerning process some will be disappointed. However the appointing group were unanimous that Ellen and Steve offered a creative way forward for us as an Association.'

The joint appointment will enable the Association to benefit from a range of qualities and experience the couple brings, she continued.

Ellen has "strong relational skills, mission vision and love for God's people both in and outside of the community of the church". Steve, formerly Human Resources Director for Barclays Kenya, brings "wide experience in the business world particularly in Human Resources, mediation, and project management alongside a desire for healthy churches and outward focussed congregations".

Dianne hopes that having a full team the Association will be able to give more focus to church planting in the area. There are a number of innovative developments in Leicester, Peterborough, Nottingham and Scunthorpe "all of which offer models for others and enable us to pioneer new expressions of church".

Ellen said, 'I have come to believe that our calling as Christians is to serve, that we will live life to the full as we serve, knowing the presence of Jesus in serving others. The focus of this serving, our heartbeat, has to be mission, our calling to make disciples wherever we are.

'I hope to listen to God, with churches and ministers, and for them, and listen to churches and ministers, supporting them in their journey of discipleship, to being those who make disciples, sharing ideas, encouraging churches to rethink their status, to ask questions about what they do and how they do it to reflect kingdom values.'

Steve added, 'My conviction is that the Church is the answer and in its Baptist expression it is changing and evolving, retaining Truth at its core but it needs to be more pioneering.

'People find faith one by one and the most fun I have had as a Christian is leading someone else to faith and discipling them in the early stages, and it has always been one to one and borne out of relationship but it is never the same twice. Each church is different and will find its own path if they allow the Holy Spirit to lead.

'Pioneering means change and risk and I have built a career around facilitating change, working through problems and serving others. I can imagine that as a part time Regional Minister I can serve using my tactical skills and HR experience within the network of churches of the EMBA to help resolve problems and encourage pioneering missional communities.

'My experience in leadership and team development may also be of service in equipping and growing healthy leaders. I would love to help grow the next generation of leaders.'

EMBA has also requested prayer for Oadby Baptist Church as it faces its minister moving on.

### **Is the end of Ebola in sight?**

#### **The spread of the deadly Ebola virus in Guinea is starting to slow, says BMS doctor Eric Bafende**

A cold-blooded killer, Ebola has claimed over 9,000 lives across West Africa since the outbreak began in December 2013. Thirteen months later, a BMS World Mission doctor serving in Guinea says that the number of new Ebola cases is decreasing and that he hopes to see the epidemic end within the next six months.

The Ebola outbreak started in a remote Guinean village, when two-year-old Emile began suffering from a fever, headache and diarrhoea. In a matter of days, he, his three-year-old sister and his pregnant mother were all dead (source: BBC). Ebola then spread across Guinea and into neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone. More than a year on, the World Health Organisation estimates that 1,995 people in Guinea have died as a result of the epidemic.

But BMS doctor Eric Bafende, who is serving in Guinea, is hopeful that Ebola is finally being brought under control. "At the moment in Guinea, it seems that new cases of Ebola are decreasing," he says. "I think that everybody – the authorities, the international community – is doing well to try to stop Ebola. Some villages are still resistant, but people are working on that.

"I am hopeful that within six months it is possible that Ebola can be stopped in Guinea."

At the time of the outbreak, Eric was serving as director of the Medical Centre in Macenta, Guinea, and, thanks to your gifts, BMS was able to give a grant of £12,000 to help with the hospital's response. This funded support for vulnerable patients, triage for suspected cases and protective clothing for those helping to fight the disease.

Items the grant paid for, such as gloves, soap and chloride solution, may sound rather basic, but they have made a massive difference to the health workers serving those potentially suffering from Ebola in Macenta. They have created a protective barrier between infected patients and the hospital staff,

reducing the risk of spreading the deadly virus.

“It’s a simple thing, but it’s very important,” says Eric. “And it’s working. In Macenta there is a public hospital, and since the outbreak started they have lost at least ten healthcare workers. But in our medical centre we lost none. So just a simple thing can make a difference.

“I am grateful to all the people who gave money to try to stop Ebola,” Eric continues. “And I am grateful for BMS, because the money came to us directly on the ground, where we are fighting.”

Eric and his wife Sarah returned to the UK for the birth of their second son, Joachim, last year, but are now back in Guinea, serving with BMS.

Guinea is a Muslim-majority country. It ranks 179 out of 187 countries on the UN’s human development index and 47 per cent of its population live below the poverty line. Eric and Sarah have relocated to Labe, a new location for BMS in Guinea, to pioneer our work there. Eric will be leading a growing BMS team in the city, and our work will include community development, PEPE preschool projects, teaching English and skills training.

Please pray for an end to Ebola in West Africa, for the health workers treating those infected, and for the post-Ebola work with the thousands affected by this horrific epidemic.

Please pray for Eric, Sarah, Gabriel and Joachim.

“Pray for us, that we settle well,” says Eric. “There’s a great opportunity in Guinea, and the place we are is where we need to be.”

This article first appeared on the website of [BMS World Mission](#) and is used with permission

## **EBF appeals to Russian/Ukraine Baptists**

### **The European Baptist Federation (EBF) has challenged Russian and Ukraine Baptist leaders to issue a joint statement calling for peace while acknowledging their differences**

The appeal comes from EBF General Secretary Tony Peck and EBF President Otniel Bunaciu in response to a statement issued by Russian Baptists to coincide with the visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry to Kiev last week.

Although Baptists from both countries have met to discuss ways of responding to the conflict, they have expressed different views about it.

The Russian statement was authored by Vitaly Vlasenko, the Director of the Department for External Affairs for the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

Addressed to friends in Christ “primarily in North America”, the statement spoke of Russian Baptists being “deeply concerned about recent developments in Ukraine”.

In particular the statement highlighted the Freedom of Support Act, which authorised the provision of military assistance to Ukraine when agreed by the US Congress in December, and the subsequent fear

that the “science of diplomacy and the strategy of winning hearts and minds are falling by the wayside.”

Hearts and minds can only be achieved by peaceful means, and both NATO and Russia are too strong to be defeated by military means, it continued.

‘We plead with you in the West and Ukraine to struggle jointly with us Russian Baptists for the cause of a negotiated settlement,’ continued Mr Vlasenko. ‘That joint effort is much more important than our personal convictions on political details.’

The statement ended with an invitation to its readers to tell the Russian Baptists how they can “better and more effectively cooperate for the cause of peace?”

This was taken up by Mr Peck and Mr Bunaciu on behalf of the EBF. They acknowledged that all in the EBF share the Russian Baptists’ “overwhelming strong desire for a peaceful, negotiated settlement to end the violence, bloodshed and driving out of people from their homes in Eastern Ukraine”.

They noted that Baptists believe in a church that has the freedom to seek the mind of Christ without state interference or pressure, and commended the occasions when Russian and Ukraine Baptists have sought to do this.

They also highlighted how Russian Baptists are “understandably concerned” about statements from the US government that seem to suggest support for an escalation of the militarization of the conflict.

However, the EBF letter continued, there was hope that the Russian Baptists would be a prophetic witness in the situation, “especially with regards to the starting of the war and also in relation to the human drama that is taking place in Eastern Ukraine now.”

‘It is quite possible that we in the West do not fully appreciate the Russian perspective on events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, and we need to listen more carefully and learn more.

‘However, as Baptists brothers and sisters we also hear the concerns and cries coming from our Ukrainian Baptist family which is suffering so much together with their entire country and who are seeing their country partitioned and then devastated by a war they did not want and did not start.

‘It also pains us to see that this war is so easily and uncritically supported by Russia's evangelicals,’ the letter stated.

In any move towards reconciliation and peace “what looks like uncritical support for one side in this conflict has to be addressed,” it continued. A “negotiated settlement” will only be credible if it also addresses “the wrongs and shortcomings of all the sides involved in this conflict”.

The letter concluded: ‘It would be an even more powerful witness to what is possible when we acknowledge Christ as Lord if Russian and Ukrainian Baptist leaders could issue a Joint Statement calling for peace, acknowledging their differences but seeking to see beyond them to find a way to encourage their two nations to find a way leave at peace with one another.

‘Is it too much to believe that this might yet be possible?’

According to the United Nations, fighting between Ukraine forces and pro-Russian rebels has claimed more than 5,000 lives since April.

Appeal to Russian and Ukraine Baptists: EBF challenges leaders to issue joint statement calling for peace while acknowledging their differences

## Opinions:

### Some thoughts on church numbers

It must have been the best part of 40 years ago, but I remember it well. I was a very young minister, and I was sitting in a ministers' fellowship. We were a mixed bunch - Baptists, Anglicans, Methodists, Salvation Army, Pentecostals. We always tried to be inclusive and welcoming, so we were pleased on this occasion to have a new minister among us.

He had, we all felt, a tough job ahead; his church had been very small and struggling for many years. Geographically it was rather out on a limb, and humanly speaking the chances of growth seemed limited. But, don't worry, that didn't deter him! Oh no!

In our sharing time - we used to take turns to mention topics for praise or prayer - he was decidedly upbeat. After saying a bit about his first impressions of his church, he declared very boldly: "But we are praying to become the biggest church in this town!"

I think we all felt a little embarrassed: ten out of ten for faith, of course; but I think that to some who had been toiling away faithfully for many years in the town it seemed, well, rather inappropriate, even slightly vulgar. But even if perhaps we wondered deep down if he had made something of a fool of himself, we of course did the Christian thing, murmured supportively, and moved on.

Well, that minister disappeared within a year. And he left behind a church which was, if anything, weaker than when he had arrived. Without meaning to be unkind, it was hard to resist the feeling that he was (to use an expression I picked up visiting friends in Texas) "all hat and no cattle".

Two thoughts struck me about that sorry episode.

First, why would a minister, however fired up for God, choose to pray that his church would become the biggest in the town? Why not, er, the most loving church? the most Spirit-filled? the most Christ-centred? the most prayerful? Shouldn't these be our priorities? It really seemed a most revealing remark, making painfully clear exactly what made him tick. It suggested a shallow and fundamentally "worldly" mentality: that size is the supreme mark of "success" in church life. Big is beautiful. Size is God's reward for service.

Sadly, that mentality often creeps into the church in general. I have noticed that Christian people - and not only the ministers - tend to exaggerate the numbers attending their churches. The very simple scriptural word from Paul in 1 Corinthians 3 - "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" - seems to be quietly ignored. But it means exactly what it says, no quibbling. We foolishly allow ourselves to be dazzled and awestruck by numerical success - and discouraged by lack of it.

Second, this experience sent me back to those famous seven letters to the churches (Revelation 2-3). Jesus here usually has something complimentary to say to his people; but, sadly, this is often followed by a hefty “but” or “nevertheless” and some scathing criticism.

But - and this is the point - isn't it interesting that the only two churches which come in for no criticism at all are Smyrna (2:8-11) and Philadelphia (3:7-13), both of which, it would seem, are quite small and struggling? Smyrna is suffering “afflictions and poverty”, Philadelphia “has little strength”. It seems that these churches, probably quite small in number, were the ones closest to Jesus' heart.

Church growth is a mysterious thing. One church, under faithful ministry and with beautiful Christian people, grows year on year. Another, under equally faithful ministry and with equally beautiful Christian people, struggles to keep its head above water. Why? Sometimes there are reasons - sociological, geographical - that we can speculate on. But at the end of the day, we just don't know. Only God knows.

Do you belong to a large church? Well, God bless you! I'm not saying it's bad to grow - of course not! This world needs to see growing, thriving churches - and how. But do remain humble, please, and remember those words of Paul.

Do you belong to a small church? God bless you too! - as long, of course, as you are seeking to build your church by God's word and are open to God's Spirit. Don't be discouraged! God's eyes see things very differently from ours. The world may despise you; some silly fellow-Christians may even look down on you. But you are precious in God's sight. And never doubt that he can use you.

Colin Sedgwick is a Baptist minister living in north-west London, with many years' experience in the ministry.

He is also a freelance journalist, and has written for The Independent, The Guardian, The Times, and various Christian publications. He blogs at [sedgonline.wordpress.com](http://sedgonline.wordpress.com)

## **The wilderness experience**

**As Lent approaches many Christians will consider again the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness of Judea. John Rackley wonders about the significance of wild places for our spirituality and faith.**

What does a wild place look like to you? Maybe you are thinking of exotic areas like the Antarctic or the Himalayas. You may come closer to home and be remembering a holiday in the Scottish Highlands or a walk to the centre of Dartmoor.

The surface of the moon looks pretty wild doesn't it? So does the Sahara from the air.

There is a clear link between wild places and the spirituality of the bible. It is full of stories about the impact of desert landscapes and the faith of people who travel there.

Sometimes we might say that our prayer life is dry and barren like a wilderness. Well not all wild places are dry but what I believe we are describing is a sense of absence that is common to all. There is sparseness about wild places. They are not refined. They can be quite brutal in their impact

especially if we are not used to them.

Yet paradoxically that very emptiness can lead us to discover what we count as important and what is crucial for our well-being.

Such an experience of wildness in our prayer may in the end produce a deeper more convinced trust in the God to whom we pray and a stronger sense of conviction and priorities.

Travelling through a wild place one has to be careful both over what you wear and what you carry. There is no room for clutter or over-packing. De-cluttering of the mind and our living-space has become a popular Lenten aspiration in recent years.

Indeed we see Jesus on a demanding fast whilst he seeks out the nature of his ministry. There could be no distractions; no excess baggage or accessories.

He practiced the simple trust that he would draw out in his followers. The wilderness was part of his formation as a minister of God's Kingdom. He endured an intense formation. There were no frills, no compensation just a straightforward loyalty to his father in heaven. He would need it.

Wild places are often an encounter with ancient pathways both metaphorical and real. C V Morton used to say that in mountain country there is nothing older than a road. Cities may come and go, the most splendid buildings may live and die but the little road that runs between the rocks lives forever.

This reminds me of the sheep runs down over the combes dropping into Bath. They are still there, the market has gone. I have walked some of the ancient tracks across what used to be called Dartmoor forest linking various places of worship and trade. They would have been very different in the midst of dense woodland.

The greatest surprise was to walk through a valley in the Sinai to be told that the apparently empty wadi was in fact one of the spice trade routes stretching all the way to China.

The prophet Jeremiah told his frightened fellow Israelites to stand at the crossroads and look in all directions and seek out the ancient paths, find the good path, walk in it and they would find rest for their souls. Surely Jesus had this in mind when he too offered rest to the over-taxed and religiously burdened people of his time.

Both the prophet and the Saviour were valuing ancient wisdom; the old pathways. It is a cause of relief and excitement that tried and tested ways of prayer are now being encouraged in our churches. For one of the toxic sins of both our society and our churches is the belief that anything thought of or done more than a generation ago has no value for the present.

Recently I viewed one of Wales's wild places from a distance. I was travelling east on the A40 when into view came the glory of Pen-y-fan, its flanks washed in snow standing anvil-like against a blue sky.

I longed to be there. My eyes did look to the hills as the Psalmist suggests. But not in fear of attack but rather with exhilaration and longing for I knew what I was looking at was the relic of a mountain that once was much higher but had long been washed into the valleys below.

Maybe that is why there is a melancholy in wild places. They are hints of past glory. They attract by their beauty and strangeness but also because they were once something else. And in their winds and eye-stretching vistas we little people are put in our place and invited to be still, to receive, to shut up and be given the blessing of the God who has seen it all before and welcomes us to his side and then walks with us a path of our choosing.

John Rackley is Baptist minister living Leicestershire. He continues this theme in his blog [www.windingquest.wordpress.com](http://www.windingquest.wordpress.com) based on time he spent in the Sinai desert.

## How Genesis Keeps Me Awake At Night

### Singer-songwriter Paul Poulton explains how he couldn't get the first book of the Bible out of his head - and how it all ended up in print

Writing a contemporary commentary on the first book of the Bible was not one my new year's resolutions for 2014.

But as January got underway I found myself thinking about Genesis. I would wake up early with thoughts about how Genesis has related to each generation since it was written. I began to see a theme running through the book and how the pieces fit together. I would sometimes wake up energised while it was still dark and, taking my life in my hands, wake up my wife who was lying beside me and say, "Hey sweetie, I've had some more thoughts about Genesis, listen to this..."

As I read the chapters of Genesis and got to know the landscape and the characters well, I began to wonder why there is so much debate about the book, it seemed clear to me. But I pushed away the voice that told me I ought to put my thoughts down on paper. Yet the thoughts continued to go back and forth in my mind:

"There is such conflict of opinion about Genesis, some people think of it as a fairy tale, with talking snakes and magic fruit trees, they say there are two creation stories next to each other. Even Christians who believe the book sharply disagree about it."

"Yes, exactly, so why should I get involved? I'm happy with my own thoughts about Genesis; the book makes sense to me. I'll let the others come to their own conclusions."

A couple of days after this mental wrestling match I once again awoke early in the morning with some more thoughts about the amazing book of Genesis. It was 3:00am actually, and the thoughts were impressed upon me with force. I once again began to feel the need to 'write it all down'. So I prayed.

"Lord, someone has got to tell me to start writing this book, because I'm busy with my music, and my inclination to get on with the hard work of writing a book is weak. But if someone tells me to start writing about Genesis then I will. Amen."

My wife was fast asleep while I prayed so I woke her to tell her my latest inspirational thought about Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel which woke me up in the first place. My wife sleepily listened to my first sentence then interrupted and said, "Could you write it down please, and I'll look at it later?"

So my journey began.

I carved out some time and began to write. I have written a book before, and also articles for magazines and web sites, but for this new book about Genesis the narrative came out so fast that the word count reached 80,000 in a short space of time, I was surprised at the speed I wrote and the inspiration with which I wrote. I sent the manuscript to a theological publisher who got straight back to me saying they would publish the book, which I called *Genesis for Ordinary People*.

I have no big desire to get into the debate about the first two or three of chapters of Genesis, but I can't write a book about Genesis without including the first chapters. So I wrote about them; they make good sense to me. However, what drove me on more than anything else is the relationship that God wants to have with us humans. God spoke to men, walked with men and reached out to us; and the story begins, with aplomb and adventure, in Genesis. We sometimes forget how exciting it is to be with the God of heaven and earth.

As I wrote the book the peace of Eden's garden settled upon me. I found myself walking down the street thinking things like "If the Lord God was walking right next to me along this street, what would I say to him?"

"Lord," came the answer to my own question, "you have created such a wonderful world, this tree that we can see here, it's remarkably beautiful in design. This ground that we are standing upon, it's astonishing. All the hidden resources below the earth's surface that we use to build and propel our cars along the street, you have provided them all. Lord, how wonderful is your name in all the earth. Thank you for reaching out to me and walking with me. You know Bob Dylan? Well, as Bob said, 'What can I do for you?'"

*Genesis for Ordinary People* follows the intriguing thread that runs through the entire book of Genesis. I take a good look at the story's wonderful, and flawed, people and beings, inviting readers to gaze into the garden of Eden to witness the reality of what actually happened there. I follow the storyline of Genesis but often look back, adding a fresh perspective to Adam and Eve's enthralling lives. A fascinating picture emerges as the layers of Genesis accumulate.

Paul Poulton is a writer, speaker and singer-songwriter. He talks about life, human idiosyncrasies, his Christian faith and philosophy, sometimes seasoning his discourses with humour. Paul is a member of his local Baptist church in Staffordshire.

## **But What Exactly Do I DO?**

### **Concluding his series on leadership, Darren Blaney looks at what a leader does**

All this talk of leadership as influence, of moving agendas, of 4Cs and 3Ps, is all well and good, but what exactly does a leader *do*?

One Christian leadership expert based in the UK has suggested the following very helpful outline:

**A Christian Leader  
Works with Others to  
Build the Team**

## Develop the Individuals Complete the Task.

Four things become quickly apparent. As a leader...

1. **You do not work alone.** Whether you are the senior leader, one leader amongst other leaders, or a lone-leader overseeing a group, you do not, indeed *cannot*, achieve success by yourself.
2. **You must build the team.** Unlike Jack Bauer in "24", completing the mission is not everything. The team is important. They are people. They have feelings. They have legitimate needs. As a leader, you must help build the sense of belonging or fellowship amongst the group.
3. **You must develop individuals.** Hopefully the mission or task will be completed. But are the individuals who helped achieve it wiser, more able, more confident in God, more equipped than when they started out with you? Are they ready for bigger and more daunting challenges in the future?
4. **There is a task, or a project, and it needs to be completed.** A happy team that fails to achieve its main goal usually ends-up a miserable team. So achieving the goal is important. (However, there are exceptions to this: sometimes a team gives a project its best shot, and it just doesn't work out. In such circumstances one learns, grows and moves forward. Indeed failure can be the spring-board to greater success.)

**Application:** This definition of what leaders do gives rise to five, simple, sets of questions that a good leader will regularly ask him or herself. Why not put them in your journal for regular review, or on your group's Agenda as a recurring discussion item?

1. *Others:* Am I slipping into Lone Ranger mentality? Who are my other leaders? Do I pray for them? When was the last time I encouraged them?
2. *Team:* What are doing to build the sense of team in our group or church? What are we doing that is damaging the sense of being a team?
3. *Individuals:* What are we doing to identify and develop specific individuals in the team? What am I doing? What could we do over the next 12 months? Have we thought and prayed about who might benefit from mentoring or training?
4. *Task:* What is our primary task? Have we defined it clearly? Do we communicate it to the team? Have we thought about what specific goals would be appropriate as markers along the way? How are we doing in achieving our aim? How do we know?
5. *Overall:* Are we holding Team, Task and Individual Development in balance?

The Revd Darren Blaney is Pastor of Herne Bay Baptist Church

### **Baptisms:**

Ashford Common Baptist Church, Middlesex: Janine Nicholas, Kyleigh Goodall, Ian Gamble

Harrogate Baptist Church, Yorkshire: Margaret Cole, Kate Cole and Carol Cole

Horley Baptist Church, Surrey: Jade Holden

Norbury Baptist Church, London: Joan Campbell

## Deaths:

BELL, Sabina, widow of Rev Alfred Sayers Bell passed away peacefully in St Francis Hospice Berkhamsted on 9 February aged 96. Loving Mother of Christopher and Hilary, grandmother and great grandmother. Shared Alfred's ministry at Northcote Road Baptist Battersea and Caversham Free Church Reading. Then as social worker when Alfred assumed the role of Principal of John Groom's Charity at Edgware. Memorial service at Pinner Free Church on 18 February at 12.45. No flowers please but any donations to: St Francis Hospice, Berkhamsted, Mission Aviation Fellowship, Toy Box Charity

FLEETWOOD, Audrey - Passed away peacefully at Kenwith Nursing Home on 11 February 2015 aged 91 years. Wife of the late Revd Alan Fleetwood and mother to Michael, Jenny, Elizabeth and Cathy

MURDOCH, the Revd James - It is with sadness we wish to let our friends in the UK- wide Baptist Union know of the passing of Jim Murdoch in his 100th year on January 16 2015 in Stirling. Jim was born on 12 August 1915 and spent his growing years in Gourrock attending the Baptist Church there. After serving in the Royal Engineers in Egypt during WW2, he returned to Glasgow where he worked in the family printing firm and was an active member of Cathcart Baptist Church. His interest & lifelong participation in Christian Endeavour took him all over the world eventually in the capacity of World President. He was accepted into the Baptist ministry and served the Baptist churches in Larkhall, East Kilbride (Westwood) and Grangemouth. Laterally he and his late wife, Betty, were members of Cornton Baptist Church where a Thanksgiving Service was held on 24 January 2015. (Heather Spence, daughter)

PURDY, the Revd Malcolm - minister of Newall Green Baptist Church, Manchester, for 37 years, died 2 January 2015.

## Events:

Resurrection City: [The College of Preachers](#)

Wednesday, 11 March 2015 from 10:00 to 16:00 at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London

The pulpit at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church has always attracted interesting preachers, none less so than Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr., who preached there in the early 1960s at the invitation of the then minister Revd Dr Howard Williams.

Luther King went on to organise the 'Poor People's Campaign' in 1968, seeking economic justice for those living in poverty, especially for those from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It was his final campaign, and continued after his death. The 'Poor People's Campaign' gave rise to Resurrection City, a temporary shanty town which was the focus of the campaign.

In choosing this title, *Resurrection City*, for the 2015 Preaching Festival at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, we are inviting speakers and participants to focus on key issues highlighted by Martin Luther King's campaign, which remain strikingly relevant to the contemporary world. We will be considering the ways in which preaching can engage such issues as poverty, ethnic diversity, and political activism. *Resurrection City* is an invitation to discover afresh the significance of resurrection in the heart of the city.

Keynote Speakers

- Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford, and Chair of the College of Preachers

- Revd Dr Kate Coleman, founding director of Next Leadership, Chair of the Evangelical Alliance Council, and former president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
- Revd Dr Brian Haymes, former Principal of both Bristol Baptist College and of Northern Baptist College, and former minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

For more visit: <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/resurrection-city-tickets-12634884279>