



25 November 2015

News:

'Love is stronger than hate'

People of faith have been responding to the terror attacks in Paris

At least 129 people were killed and hundreds more injured in a series of co-ordinated bomb blasts and shootings in the French capital on Friday night.

As details of the attacks began to emerge, the European Baptist Federation (EBF) sent a message of solidarity to the Federation of Baptist Churches in France.

'It is shocking and almost unbelievable that this could happen in France and our first thoughts go out to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives,' wrote EBF General Secretary the Revd Tony Peck. 'We pray that the God of peace and all comfort will come alongside them today.'

'But more than that, as the European Baptist Federation we stand with the people of France in their shock and grief, and in their resolve that the evil of terrorism that destroys lives will never have the last word.'

'And we stand alongside you, and all our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially in the FEEB, as you bring comfort to those who will have been traumatised by these terrible events, and as your pastors bring the Word of God to his people tomorrow.'

'May the God of goodness, of love, and of hope draw near to you. My Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace who brought reconciliation by his Cross lead you in these days. And may the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, be among you.'

Mr Peck was at the EBF Anti-Trafficking conference in Sweden when the attacks took place. He continued, 'Yesterday at our Conference we sang the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and I leave them with you as a message of hope on this dark day:'

Goodness is stronger than evil;

love is stronger than hate;

light is stronger than darkness;

life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours,

through him who loved us.

'Please assure everyone that we continue to hold you, and all the people of Paris and France in our hearts and our prayers.'

On Saturday the Federation of Baptist Churches in France released a statement on its website:

Once again, our country has experienced the horror of terrorism, dark, cold, blind and blinded. France, where the state of emergency has been decreed, wakes up in pain, grief and bereavement. Beyond outrage, sadness and misunderstanding, the Federation Baptiste says all its compassion for the victims and families affected by these murderous attacks. The Federation Baptiste encourages all our churches to support and to help in actions and in prayers.

The statement highlighted 1 Timothy 2: 1-8 and Martin Luther King's quote about how only love is able to drive out hate, before continuing with a series of prayer points:

We pray for the victims and their families

We pray for French authorities and government

We pray for medical staff helping the victims

We pray for armed forces mobilised in our country and abroad in maintaining security

We pray for our chaplains in charge of accompanying those who, in the army, in hospitals, airports, prisons, need to hear the Gospel

We pray for our enemies

Let us pray for our country

Pray that God will protect us from all evil on the outside and inside of ourselves.

It also thanked the messages of solidarity received, before concluding with the same Desmond Tutu quote used by Mr Peck in his earlier correspondence.

With ISIS claiming responsibility for the Paris attacks, as well as a spate of recent incidents – bombings in Beirut on Thursday and Baghdad on Sunday, as well as last month's bombings in Ankara and the downing of a Russian plane leaving Egypt – the need for healthy inter faith relations is paramount. This was reflected in a statement issued by the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK on Saturday, the day before the annual Inter Faith Week was due to begin. That statement implored that we do not “allow the wedge of suspicion and distrust to be driven between our communities.”

The full statement read:

We have watched with deep concern the news unfolding of coordinated murders, injury and destruction in terrorist attacks in Paris. Our prayers are with all affected by this atrocity

A jihadist motive is described in news coverage

Terrorism has many faces. Sometimes it wears the mask of religion, claiming a justification in religious teaching for its acts. This is rejected in the strongest terms by faith communities.

Terrorists have as their aim the creation of a climate of fear and uncertainty. Their victory begins the moment that people can no longer live in trust and with a sense of shared citizenship. In Britain, we live with the reality of the impact of international terrorism, feeling the shockwaves of events such as those in Paris as well as in other places around the world. In such a context, we need to build on the solid history of inter community relations in

the UK. Let us not allow the wedge of suspicion and distrust to be driven between our communities.

Tomorrow Inter Faith Week gets under way in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. One of its themes this year is 'Living Well Together'. The events that the Week will see are a reminder of the reality and the importance of a positive coexistence. Tackling tough issues is part of this and on the agenda are those such as extremism, freedom of expression and responding to social ills such as poverty. Inter faith discussion and engagement does not just focus on easy issues; it is not just the province of those who agree. It is a challenging and vital process that needs, increasingly, to be part of the common discourse of our society.

We conclude, as we began, with our concern and sympathy for our near neighbours in France at this time.

It was signed by The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE (Co-Chair), Vivian Wineman (Co-Chair), Maulana M Shahid Raza OBE (Vice-Chair), Dr Natubhai Shah MBE (Vice-Chair) and Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE (Vice-Chair).

A prayer for Inter Faith Week has been written by the Revd Andy Williams, Moderator, Baptist Inter Faith Working Group.

'Christians would help Syrian refugees'

More than four in five churchgoers would personally help Syrian refugees this Christmas, if presented with a practical way to do so

Embrace - feed a family
And two in three believe the British government has not yet done enough to support work with Syrian refugees in Europe and the Middle East.

These are some of the key findings in a survey of UK Christian views on the migrant and refugee crisis carried out this month for the charity Embrace.

While almost nine in ten have taken or signify a desire to take some kind of action, to date only one in four (28 per cent) have donated to an emergency appeal for refugees. In addition, almost one in three (31 per cent) would be willing personally to house a refugee or refugee family for up to a year.

'These statistics reveal hundreds of thousands of Christians ready and willing to be part of the solution to the biggest refugee crisis since 1945,' said Jeremy Moodey, CEO of Embrace.

'The challenge facing both the government and the church is to show practical ways they can do so.

'Christians recognise the need to deal with this terrible refugee crisis both on their doorsteps and at source.

'They want to respond to the desperate needs of those arriving in Europe, but also to help the millions of displaced people still left in the Middle East, to give them hope for a future.'

Baptist minister-in-training is blogger of the year

Chris Goswami was a Premier Digital award winner for his blog 7minutes.net

Chris Goswami, training for the ministry at Northern Baptist College and a frequent contributor to The Baptist Times, began blogging two years ago on www.7minutes.net, a magazine style Christian blog that discusses community, faith and Christian living.

He was a finalist with 7minutes in the Premier Digital Awards in 2014, but went one better this time during the award dinner and ceremony in London over the weekend.

'To say I was shocked when they announced the winner is an understatement,' said Chris, associate pastor at Brownley Green Baptist Church, Wythenshawe, 'I was videoing the announcement thinking 7minutes should get a mention when they announced I had been awarded first place!'

7minutes is divided into three areas, with a blog, audio and interesting content drawn from elsewhere, all looking at a range of issues from a Christian perspective. The aim is to give visitors "something to think about, something to encourage, maybe amuse, refresh, or inspire, in bite sized chunks."

Chris has worked for 25 years in the telecoms industry and is currently Director of Marketing and Communications at Openwave Mobility. This background and a call to the ministry led to the formation of the blog in 2013, he explained.

'When I entered the process of ministerial training we know as "Formation Training" a question that occurred to me was "but what has God formed already..?" I don't believe he has been sitting by waiting for me to reach middle age before he could say "Start training now Chris". When I thought about this the obvious answer that hit me was my current title as a Director of Marketing and Communications. This role coupled with the fact that I was now being hit with a whole mass of theology I was previously ignorant of was the equation from which 7minutes emerged.

'And in fact a surprisingly large number of blogs have come out of subject matter we have studied at college - but always in a "theology lite" container of course!'

There were more than 800 entries in the Premier Digital Awards, now in their ninth year, across various categories of blogs, apps, social media, websites, and creative uses of media.

'Best Use of Video' award went to ChurchAds.Net which created the powerful 45 second video titled 'Christmas starts with a baby's giggle' as a modern way of echoing the current Christmas campaign message 'Christmas Starts with Christ', and the PrayerMate App won the People's Award.

Coulby Newham Baptist Church in Middlesbrough was a runner-up in the most engaging Small Church Site category.

(For a full list of winners visit <http://www.premierdigital.org.uk/Premier-Digital-Awards/Winners-2015>)

Commenting on this year's winning entries, Premier's Chief Operating Officer Kevin Bennett said: 'We've been totally amazed and utterly delighted with the quality and originality of all the entries.'

'This year's winners have set a new benchmark for pushing boundaries in sharing the message of Christ online with the aid of cutting edge technology.'

Chris naturally agreed about the importance of having a credible online presence.

'Sometime you wonder whether it's worth the effort continuing to write but this is a tremendous encouragement to all entries who made it to the finals,' he said.

'With the prevalence of smartphones and tablets, so called sacred spaces online have become a key ministry area. The annual Premier Conference provides a great focus for us here in the UK.'

Website award for Baptist church

Coulby Newham Baptist Church in Middlesbrough was voted runner-up in the most engaging Small Church Site category in the Premier Digital Awards earlier this month

Its minister Stephen Sutton has created the site using Wordpress over the last couple of years.

'We were very pleased to be runners up,' he said. 'The website has actually just been a hobby of mine in the evenings.

'It has taken a long time to get it how I wanted it and it will probably take another couple of years to finish it off but I have found it amazing what you can achieve on the Wordpress platform with very little technical knowledge, as I can't code or anything fancy like that.

'A good website is a massively important communication tool to have as a Church as it is in reality just as important as the welcome you provide on door step on a Sunday morning.'

With this in mind the website has been set up to be "as welcoming as possible", giving a sense of "what sort of a bunch of people we are", he continued. There are lots of photos, light and easy to engage with text, and clear communication of what's going on within the church.

Stephen has ensured the website is regularly updated by integrating both its MailChimp (email provider) and its Facebook and Twitter feeds.

'I didn't want to end up with a website that was high maintenance to keep upto date, because inevitably I would fall behind with it and there would be loads of out of date events and info on the site that no one wants to know about,' he explained.

'So as we upload sermons and send out the regular email/twitter news and the site is automatically updated.

'I love it this way because we get to have a site with loads of the latest info on but I actually rarely log on to make changes to it.'

About a year ago a responsive layout was introduced, meaning the site now changes automatically whether accessed via phone, tablet or laptop.

'This has got to be a must have now the majority of searches and information is consumed on a mobile device,' continued Stephen.

'There are loads more improvements I would love to have the time to do to the site but for now, it looks good and it gets the information across.'

Visit <http://www.cnbaptist.com/> for more

How a church solved its boiler problem

What do you do when you have an urgent need for a new boiler but no money? Sam Griffiths shares one Baptist church's story

Our church, Wellington Baptist Church in the heart of Wellington, Somerset dates back to 1883. We'd been told that our 40-year old gas boiler was on its last legs but we had no money in the pot to pay for a replacement. With quotations coming in between £12,000 and £20,000 we were forced to issue an appeal to church members and ask them to urgently pray.

Then one day I was surfing the Baptist Collaboration Facebook page and caught sight of a discussion on biomass, and alternative heat options. After some research, a miracle presented itself - a totally brand new biomass boiler, installed completely free of charge!

It also came with the added benefits of lowering our energy costs and enhancing our green credentials. It took some believing, further investigation, extensive leadership team and church meetings and then we were ready to move forwards

We commissioned a local biomass company to carry out the installation, which was to be financed by Gwent Energy CIC.

After a lengthy process just to get to this stage we were extremely disappointed when our chosen installation company was declared incapable of delivering the project. The project ground to a halt and we were left in the lurch with an imminent Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) tariff digression looming.

We prayed again! Within a week God had moved miraculously and out of the blue spoke to Pete O'Shaughnessy, MD of Dryad Energy.

Dryad Energy stepped into the breach and took over our installation project as per the original job specification. We were hugely relieved and pleased to have the project back on track.

The project was not without its challenges – our church occupies a town centre location so access was difficult and the boiler had to be maneuvered into the boiler house located in the cellar.

We held our breath at that stage but all went according to plan and our fully automated 100kW wood pellet boiler was installed successfully.

We're thrilled with our biomass boiler and hugely appreciative of Pete and the rest of the Dryad team.

I no longer need to pray before switching on the boiler and our congregation will be toasty warm this winter.

Baptisms:

Amesbury Baptist Church, Wiltshire: Megan Doole, Akua Sevwaah Bonsy, Joycelyn Serwaa Myame

Cannon St Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham: Cheryl Rouse

Charnwood Road Baptist Church, Shepshed, Leicestershire: Kate Ashby

Desborough Baptist Church, Northamptonshire: Judith Lewis-Warren

Heanor Baptist Church, Derbyshire: Catherine Butler-Worrall and Richard Martin

Hutton and Shenfield Union Church, Essex: Susannah Deacon and Catriona Deacon

Kidlington Baptist Church, Oxfordshire: Holly Marshall-Falland

Maidstone Baptist Church, Kent: Hayley Atkinson, Abigail Flemons, Tom Vincent (together with Godswill Jonas, Godwin Jonas, Geraldine Jonas and Keris Matthews from Destiny Ministries Church, Vinters Park)

The Baptist Church, Kilmington, Devon: Richard Andrews

West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church, London: Patrick McDonnell

Know anyone preparing for baptism? [Check out our new range of cards](#)

Send your baptism notifications to phobson@baptist.org.uk

Death:

ATFIELD (nee Lawton), Joan Margaret Mary

Joan Atfield, who lived in Sutton and Cheam for most of her life, passed away peacefully on Monday 16 November 2015, her 99th birthday. A much loved mother, grandma and great-grandma; a former librarian in Sutton and Carshalton; and long-standing member of Sutton Baptist Church, Joan is now with her beloved husband Denis.

Following a family service at the North East Surrey Crematorium, Morden, there will be a service of thanksgiving on Friday 4 December at 3:15 pm at Sutton Baptist Church, Cheam Road, Sutton, Surrey to celebrate Joan's life – lots of colour please!

Donations in Joan's memory can be made to Christian Aid and the Leprosy Mission through W A Truelove and Sons Ltd, online via

<http://www.watltd.co.uk/> or 22 Mulgrave Road, Sutton, Surrey SM2 6LE, 020 8642 0089.

Jobs

Executive Director, Mercy Ships UK

Chief Executive, Parkside Residential Home

Pension Trustee and Consultative Group Roles with Baptists Together

For more information on all these positions, visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 21

The crucial climate change conference in Paris begins on Monday, 30 November.

This Sunday, in what is being billed as the biggest UK climate protest ever, people from all walks of life will gather in London to March for climate justice and jobs. Marches/rallies also planned in Edinburgh and Cardiff (Saturday), Bristol, Newcastle and Belfast.

Find out more at <http://www.timetoact2015.org/>

Are you taking part? Let us know and send your photos to phobson@baptist.org.uk

Also take a look at this helpful briefing document from Christian Aid about what the climate conference must achieve: <http://ow.ly/d/425O>

Enough for Advent

During the season of Advent, the Joint Public Issues Team are offering a series of four reflective readings and prayers. They are designed to be suitable for use in Sunday services as part of the lighting of advent candles, but could be used in other contexts too.

These resources are designed as part of the #ENOUGH campaign, to help churches be more aware of its key priorities and to help root our public campaigning with our Gospel faith.

Visit www.baptist.org.uk/enoughadvent

20,000 welcomes: an Advent vigil for refugees

This event is arranged by the Churches Refugee Network to take place on Tuesday 8 December, from 10.00 to 4.30 pm, at St Margaret's Church, Westminster. All are welcome, for the whole or part of the day. It will be structured around three main themed sessions: Re-member, re-member: exodus and exile (10.00 to 12.00); Blown by the winds: conflict, climate change and current pressure (12.00 to 2.00 pm); Consider yourselves at home (2.00 to 4.00 pm); with an epilogue from 4.00 to 4.30 pm. All are invited afterwards to attend evensong in the Abbey.

For more visit www.baptisttimes.co.uk