



13 April, 2016

News:

'A moving act of faith and witness'

A Hebden Bridge Baptist church flooded over Christmas rolled back the years to hold a baptism in its garden on Easter Sunday

As with many businesses and homes in the town, Hope Baptist Church suffered major damage in the Boxing Day floods when the whole ground floor of its chapel was submerged. The damage comes on top of major problems that have occurred with previous repair work.

Shocked, but determined to bounce back to live out its 'Christ-Centred - Community-Focused' strapline, Hope has operated as a 'pop-up' church around Hebden Bridge in the New Year.

It's held regular Sunday services in the White Lion pub, midweek prayer and reflections in the Town Hall, and prayer walks and songs of praise around the town.

With Terry Ward and Roz Goodwin seeking baptism, the church organised another pop up event on Easter Sunday. Members set up an outdoor baptistery in the public garden space alongside the chapel. The morning recalled open air baptisms on Yorkshire hillsides in times gone by, as this photo from 1896, shared on the Hope website, shows.

'You may have thought outdoor baptisms were a thing of the past - not at Hope Baptist Church,' said administrator Gerard Liston.

'Having the chapel flooded has created an amazing opportunity to share this symbolic and moving act of faith and witness.

'It was a wonderful way to celebrate Easter Sunday, and it certainly got the attention of people waiting at the bus stop!'

'A service of believer's baptism is always a highly symbolic and moving event,' added Terry Ward, one of those being baptised.

'This time, as well as being a public statement of personal commitment, it is also a statement about the life and purpose of this church,' he told the Hebden Bridge Times.

Gerard said the fellowship has been encouraged by the support of many since the flood, both in the town and beyond. Other churches within our Union have sent cheques and notes of encouragement.

'Having worked for many years to create a sanctuary space and unique venue for this town, this is not where we had expected to be right now.

'We remain a 'Christ-Centred - Community-Focused' church and have been open to exciting possibilities. We are hugely grateful to our friends at the White Lion and all the support we have received.'

Churches switch to clean energy

More than 400 UK churches are planning to switch to renewable energy providers

Launched at the beginning of Lent by charities Christian Aid and Tearfund, The Big Church Switch invited churches and individuals in the UK to switch energy companies, to demonstrate the need for a transition from fossil fuels. During Easter Week, they will negotiate with more than a million pounds' worth of energy bills to find the best deal.

Kidlington Baptist Church in Oxfordshire supports Tearfund and is one of the 424 churches that have registered to switch. Minister the Revd Graham Sinden said: 'We need to practise what we preach.

'If we believe that we should be looking after this world that God created for us all, then we must do all we can to minimise our carbon footprint, particularly as it is the poorest in the world that are worst affected by climate change.'

Another to switch is the oldest Methodist building in the world, The New Room in Bristol. David Worthington, manager of The New Room said: 'We may be the oldest Methodist building in the world but that doesn't mean we have to use the polluting energy of the past.

'We take seriously the impact we have on our neighbours, both locally and globally. Switching our energy provider to clean sources of power is a simple thing we can do to help the global transition to a low carbon world. If we, in a building as old as ours, can embrace the idea of renewable energy then anyone can.'

The Bishop of Manchester, David Walker, welcomed the initiative, saying, 'Creation is a gift from God and Christians have a divine commission to take care of it. Like any receiver of a precious gift, to honour the giver we must treasure the gift. As

individuals and churches we have a choice in how we treat the earth, how we spend our money, how we power our homes and our buildings.

'By creating technology which can turn wind and sunshine into clean and renewable energy humans continue to benefit from the gift of creation. Making the most of this bountiful harvest is a common sense way for us to roll back the ravages of climate change and ensure we are taking an active role in being part of the solution. The Big Church Switch is a practical way for us all to do our bit.'

In addition, Quakers in Britain have arranged a 'Quaker basket' with green electricity supplier Good Energy, in order to add to the 100 local meetings which have so far made the shift to renewable energy.

Christian Aid's Head of Advocacy, Laura Taylor, said, 'The Big Church Switch shows that people are willing to reduce our CO2 emissions, and that we want to take action together. The UK Government must help accelerate the shift from fossil fuels to renewables as they prepare the next carbon budget for our country.'

Ben Niblett, Tearfund Senior Campaigner said, 'We're so encouraged by this growing movement - Christians around the UK have taken action and had a big impact on our carbon footprint by taking part in The Big Church Switch. We're loving our neighbours with our electricity bills. We will continue to hold governments to account and to help people across the world hit by the devastating daily impacts of climate change.'

Churches are able to sign up throughout the year and are offered the opportunity to switch as and when their current contracts end. For more information about the Big Church Switch, visit www.bigchurchswitch.org.uk.

'We can achieve so much together'

A small fellowship in Birkenhead shares the Easter message with 200 pupils after asking for help

Laird Street Baptist Church wanted to make a difference during Holy Week but knew we could not do this on our own, so we asked our Life Expectancy link church St Bridgets, the local Anglican Church and the Assemblies of God Church in Egan Road to help us. They all rose to the challenge.

We invited approximately 200 children from the local primary school to share in an Easter Experience where we gave the Easter message. They visited five different stations around the church, showing the life of Jesus following on from Christmas.

The first station was about Jesus lost in the temple; the second station the feeding of the multitude; the third station the storm on the sea; the fourth station the communion, the fifth station the crucifixion.

We came together at the end to share the resurrection. The children were all given an Easter egg which had been very kindly donated by the local Cooperative funeral service near the church.

This was an amazing experience and the children and staff enjoyed every minute. We have learnt from this experience that together we can achieve great things from God, so we are looking forward to working together and waiting to see all that God has in store for us. It is all about resourcing together our God-given gifts and using them for His glory.

We can achieve so much together.

'Nothing good comes out of Wythenshawe?'

The estate of his placement church has undeniable problems... but God is passionately involved, writes a Baptist minister-in-training

I was slightly concerned, genuinely surprised and frequently amused at the number of people who recited this line to me when I arrived in Wythenshawe Manchester – which for many years held the awkward title: biggest council estate in Europe. Of course it was said tongue in cheek but what was striking was the sheer number of individuals who greeted me with this standard local line, “nothing good comes out of Wythenshawe!” whenever they found out where I was working. They often said it with one of those knowing smiles. “Nothing good comes out of Wythenshawe”. And one person added helpfully “... except for the bus”.

Well apparently nothing good was supposed to come out of Nazareth* either ...

Since 2014 I have been on a ministry training placement at Brownley Green Baptist Church, Wythenshawe, a small but active church of around 50. Wythenshawe is a large estate on the edge of Manchester. Although the church is a good mix of professional and working-class folks, Wythenshawe itself has many difficulties including low literacy, debt, unemployment, poor housing, gambling and pervasive low self-esteem.

Living In The Moment

But there is a rawness to life here. People live day to day and that can strip away both our layers of false security and our layers of unbelief.

One day - it was a Monday - I was sitting with a young mother in hospital awaiting news of her critically ill husband. I chanced to ask her how she was coping with shopping and finances, and her reply is one I will never forget. She thought about my question carefully and then said ...”well we’ve money coming in on Thursday and I’ve got £16 ... so we’ll be OK”. The last 4 words caught me completely off-guard. I

sat there thinking ... for lots of people I know, £16 could fall out of their pocket and they might not even notice – never mind running a family for 4 days.

On a happier occasion I happened to know two couples who were getting married. I learnt that one in, Cheshire, were spending over £1,000 on flowers for their big day. Whoa! That's a lot but apparently not that exceptional since the average British wedding is coming in at £10-20,000. Our couple in Wythenshawe however simply went to the local flower shop with £60 and asked what they could do. More recently a second couple looking to get married with church providing ceremony and reception, postponed their plans after learning they needed to save up £70 to pay the registry office.

This rawness to life does have benefits. If you say you've got some good news, most people are at least interested in what you have to say and will hear you out. Perhaps folks are simply less insulated from the need for good news than many of us.

Thinking In The Moment

All of us absorb the culture we are in, and to an extent that can surprise us. I used to live in inner-city Manchester but for over 15 years have lived in a Cheshire suburb and that has left its mark. A few months ago I was conducting a series of Bible Studies in Wythenshawe and noticed one night that people had slipped into some "bad language" "by way of conversation". Now admittedly I am guilty of swearing but I do it in that quiet sort of way (and I would like to stop!) So I sat there wriggling silently, thinking "hang on, as the minister should I be saying something about this or am I just bringing in conventions which simply don't belong here?" After some uncomfortable minutes – and realising unfortunately it wasn't going to stop by itself - I made up a random rule. Swear-words which began with certain letters would now be met with a gentle rebuke while others would not Yes it sounds ridiculous - but I was again taken by surprise. Anyway people took it well - conversation continued with a little less colour. (Feel free to contact me for a table of permissible swear words to use in church Bible Studies).

Going Beyond The Moment

Through the week the church is very impressively engaged with this community and across all ages - last year nine people came forward for baptism, half of whom were new to the faith. They also know how to celebrate. Celebration is a big part of life here. Everyone's birthday seems to get called out and every event that can be marked is done so with bouts of fine food, music, and even the odd dance. Of course there are deep-seated issues in an area like this but there is also a joyful resilience that won't be silenced.

What are our priorities as a church? Actually no different to any church; they include:

Reminding people (including myself) to give thanks for everything that's good, everything we do have – as writer Ann Morisey puts it: “learning to see the present through rose-tinted spectacles”.

Empowering people to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and health (harder than it sounds).

Encouraging people to volunteer in “random acts of kindness”, as a mitigation against worrying about ourselves, and the surest way to grow in one's own faith.

There's a deep honesty about people here - they don't tend wear masks to hide their problems. But the truth can also be shocking. I admit I sometimes feel like closing my ears to the messy stories people tell me. But then I remember that God is passionately involved in our mess, so much so that he became a part of our mess. My mess.

It's only a placement, but I've been here 18 months, still enjoying it, and I haven't caught the bus yet.

*John 1.46: 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip.

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The Servant Queen; the King she serves

The Queen turns 90 in 2016, and a new book which chronicles her faith could be a great catalyst for conversation

The Queen has served our nation all her adult life with an amazing consistency of character, concern for others and clear dependence on Christ. So in honour of her 90th birthday, the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC), Bible Society and HOPE have partnered to write a book which demonstrates and celebrates both her faithfulness and her faith, with a foreword written by the Queen herself.

The Servant Queen and the King She Serves is designed to be a conversation-starter and a gift from churches to their local communities and from individuals to friends, colleagues and family. As the royal birthday celebrations unfold throughout 2016, talking about the Queen may be one of the easiest and most natural faith-sharing opportunities Christians have and this book will be a great catalyst for conversation.

Mark Greene, the Executive Director of LICC and principal author of the book, says about his inspiration for the project: 'It was a penny-drop moment for me. I always knew the Queen was a Christian but it's the way she lives it – here's a global leader under constant media scrutiny, working in a multi-cultural, multi-faith, politically-

correct society, who's brilliant at her job and utterly clear and unashamed about her beliefs.

'What an example of whole-life discipleship!'

The main dates for celebration are the Queen's birthday itself, on 21 April, and her official birthday weekend, 10-12 June – these summer dates particularly hold great opportunities for street parties, neighbourhood and community group celebrations, or special church services; all events where the book could be given away easily. However, the book itself is not dated: it simply honours the Queen's 90th year, so it can be shared throughout 2016.

Since the book isn't a commercial product, and is intended to be given as a gift, the bulk order price (for 10+ copies) is just £1 per copy.

If your church ordered a few hundred copies, or more, how might you be able to give the book away in your local community? Perhaps you could talk to your diocese or 'churches together' group about a joint idea. Or maybe you could simply order 10 copies as an individual and commit to giving them away to friends or colleagues. There is also a special schools' edition of the book, created in partnership with Scripture Union, which is designed to help kids aged 10+ celebrate the Queen and her life of faith and service.

So how might that be used in your community? For more creative and practical ideas about how and where you could share the book, and to order your copies, take a look at www.licc.org.uk/thequeen

However you're able to share *The Servant Queen*, hopefully you'll find it encouraging, inspiring and easy to pass on and God will give you many opportunities to share both the book and something of your own faith story with the people around you.

Baptisms:

Aylestone Baptist Church, Leicester: Helena Barratt, Steve Atkinson, Ann Buxton, Jan Anderson

Ashurst Drive Baptist Church, Ilford Essex: Dianne Holder

Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church, Herts: Emma Meaden, Aastha Singh

Blaby Baptist Church, Leicestershire: Nev Taylor and Elaine Parsons

Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield: Mehrdad, Vahid, Mohsen, Siamand, Mostafa, Mina, and Marzie

Cherry Hinton Baptist Church, Cambridge: Fay Elbourn

Combe Martin Baptist Church, North Devon: Jaycee Lorrimer, Harriet Holmes, Nigel Bower, Oliver Bower, Toby Bower, Jack Bower

Cottingham Road Baptist Church, Hull: Pat De Santos

Dagenham Baptist Church, Essex: Hannah Chesney

Dedworth Green Baptist Church, Windsor: Hannah

Gilgal Baptist Church, Porthcawl: Beryl Smith and Julia Morris

Griffithstown Baptist Church, Pontypool, Torfaen: Kath Howells and Pauline Kelsey

Haddenham Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire: Carol Isaacson

Holmer Green Baptist Church, High Wycombe: Mathew Torbati

Hook Norton Baptist Church, Oxfordshire: Matt Duval

Hope Baptist Church, Hebden Bridge: Terry Ward and Roz Goodwin

Laindon Baptist Church, London: John Perry; Sonia Perry and Karen Sage

Limbrick Wood Baptist Church, Coventry: Chloe Darboe

London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft, Suffolk: Martha Evans, Jeine Santos

Long Buckby & Brington Baptist Church, Northamptonshire: Sarah Collins

Longfleet Baptist Church, Dorset: Nicola Cornes

Moriah Baptist Church, Risca: Vivienne Coughlin and June Iles

Newport Pagnell Baptist Church, Bucks: Tricia Espey and her granddaughter, Jade Espey

Preston Grange Community Church, Tyne & Wear: Craig Barrass

Ross Baptist Church, Herefordshire: Tammy Price and Tina Jones

Rye Baptist Church, East Sussex: Betty Masters

Salisbury Baptist Church, Wiltshire: Emma Vaughan

Spalding Baptist Church, Lincolnshire: Hannah Ruddle, Jacques Klompas and John Willett

St Andrews Baptist Church, Bletchley: Malcolm Ashurst

South Woodham Evangelical Church, Essex: Mick Fieldhouse

St Anne's, Northumberland (see below): Toni Brewer and Joyce Bartlett, Sue Maskell and Annie Clacey

Tabernacle Baptist Church, Penarth: Heather Bliss and Elspeth Robertson

Teddington Baptist Church, London: Helena King, Jessica Darvill

Underhill Baptist Church, Barnet: Richard Batchelor

Upminster Baptist Church, Essex: John Connor, Andrew Stapleton, Victoria Kuponiyi

Upton Vale Baptist Church, Torquay: Joyce Nie, Sophia Nie, Steve Phillips, Samuel Dean & Matt Redmond

Wealdstone Baptist Church, London: Joshua Gorde, Andrew Hill and Diane Hosten

Zion Baptist Church, Notts: David Becket, Margaret Sankey, Robert Quincey, Kath Kellet, John Kellet, Allison Baker and Dennis Cheetham

Baptism stories:

On Palm Sunday evening Hannah was baptised at Dedworth Green Baptist Church in Windsor, writes church secretary Carol Edwards. Hannah has grown up within the church having first come when just a few months old following her family's move to Windsor. In her testimony Hannah shared as to how she committed her life to Christ two years ago at New Wine but now felt it was the right time to be baptised. Hannah plays an active part within the church playing her cello as part of the music group, is an active member of the Zoned Out Youth Group and is also part Y@S (a youth group which is run by Slough Baptist Church for their young people and others from the local area). The church was packed for the service with many of Hannah's friends, family and teachers joining the congregation.

The Revd Philip Young writes: Easter Sunday celebrations fully complete with six believers baptisms in Combe Martin Baptist Church North Devon. To have so many at one time for a small village church fellowship is a first in living memory. Also on the 165th church anniversary we celebrated the wedding of Richard Leat and Mandy McMillan.

Good news from Haddenham Baptist Church near Ely in Cambridgeshire - our first baptism this year, writes Church Secretary Paul Shepherd. Senior citizen Carol Isaacson was baptised on Sunday 10 April and was well supported by her family and friends. Rev. Jim Mullin led the service and about 40 people enjoyed a sumptuous 'bring and share' lunch afterwards

St Anne's Northumberland: The service was an ecumenical one at which Toni Brewer and Joyce Bartlett were baptised. Having witnessed this, two Methodists who were present also came forward, shared their testimonies and were baptised – Sue Maskell and Annie Clacey. A memorable evening!

Deaths:

FAIRWEATHER TALL, the Revd John (82) died peacefully on 6 April. Faithful servant of God, much loved husband and father of Christine, Andrew, Mark and Stephen

In Memoriam:

Treasured memories of our dearest Dad & Grandad, Rev Garwood S Tydeman who died on 4th April, 2001. Always in our thoughts. Love from all his family.

'Great was his faithfulness'

Jobs:

Mission Enabler, Telford Christians Together and Churches Together in Shropshire

Notices:

Flames of Prayer

Lynn Green is encouraging all our Baptist churches to join together in creating a Beacon of Prayer – sharing the ways in which God is at work in and through our churches and communities. She would like church leaders to download and print a flame template (if possible on yellow or orange paper), and then write down where you see God at work in and through your church/community. Bring it with you to this year's Baptist Assembly in Oxford on 14 May, or send it to the Assembly office by 29 April. Full details are on the Baptists Together website.

Every Tribe, Nation and Language: Growing Multi-ethnic Churches

A day conference for church leaders seeking to integrate people from different ethnic backgrounds into the life and mission of their church. A collaboration between Birmingham Churches Together, the Queen's Foundation and the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World

July 2 at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham.

Visit: <http://www.queens.ac.uk/why/black-majority-church/every-tribe-nation-and-language-growing-multi-ethnic-churches-conference-2n/>

For more visit www.baptisttimes.co.uk