



8 March 2017

News:

The Apology, 10 years on

Baptists are being invited to reflect on our Union's Apology for Slavery and its practical outworking as it nears its 10th anniversary

A new series of study reflections have been created for small groups to provide further reflection and interpretation on The Apology itself and The Journey that has followed.

In November 2007 Baptist Union Council made a resolution that acknowledged our share in and benefit from our nation's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. Out of the resolution came a commitment to develop ways of promoting racial justice across our Union.

The strategic priorities subsequently recommended to Council – such as building multicultural congregations and developing the leadership skills of black and minority ethnic youth – became known as The Journey.

The new resource is called *Lest We Forget*, and offers reflections and Bible Study notes. In the resource foreword, General Secretary Lynn Green invites Baptists to use the resource and “challenge the practical outworking of The Apology across Baptists Together”.

‘There is no doubt in my mind that we need to keep being intentional about growing into the ‘all nations’ vision of God’s people that we see in the Scriptures,’ she wrote.

‘One of the ways we will achieve this is through listening deeply to the experiences and perspectives of others and allowing ourselves and our communities to be shaped by the Lord through these encounters.’

Its contributors are Doreen Morrison, an independent researcher, CEO of Liberty Trails Emancipation history tour company in Jamaica and author of *Slavery's Heroes: George Liele and the Ethiopian Baptists of Jamaica 1783 – 1865*; Joe Kapolyo, lead minister at Edmonton Baptist Church, London; Steve Latham, pastor of King's Cross Baptist Church in central London, and an associate tutor at Spurgeon's College; Michele Mahon, a Baptist minister who served as youth pastor at Brockley Baptist

Church in south-east London and is due to travel to Peru for long term mission with BMS; and Marvia Lawes, an ordained minister in the Jamaica Baptist Union.

'Through considering The Apology from these different perspectives, I hope that you will be enabled to think more deeply about how issues of racial justice are relevant and can be applied in your own context,' Mrs Green continued.

'As we reflect on the ten years since The Apology, I pray that you will find fresh vision and determination to journey on towards our Kingdom future.'

One of the endorsements comes from Ken Livingstone, a minister in-training at Stockport Baptist Church and Northern Baptist College.

He writes, 'Lest We Forget is an aptly named resource, for how many in our Baptist pews have any more than a fleeting memory of The Apology issued by the Baptist Union 10 years ago? Writing as someone who was not at that time part of a Baptist church, it isn't even a memory.

'This is therefore a welcome resource for all our churches, helping to ensure that issues of race and discrimination are not allowed to creep back under the carpet, where they had resided for many years.

'Perhaps the most notable feature of this resource is its uncompromising language and opinions, some of its contributors reflecting significant criticism of the original Apology.... for those of us who choose to engage with it, it is guaranteed to have us wrestling with some deep, weighty, complex issues.'

Lest We Forget is free, and can be downloaded here:

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/488872/Lest_we_Forget.aspx

Book honour for Chris Ellis

A new collection of essays celebrates and takes inspiration from the work of Chris Ellis, 'our key thinker' on Baptist worship

Gathering Disciples: Essays in Honor of Christopher Ellis is a book shaped around a lesser known aspect of Chris's ministry, namely his hymn-writing. It sees 14 British Baptists take a selection of his hymns as a starting point for reflection on areas of worship, discipleship, the sacraments and theology.

Neville Callam, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance contributes a foreword, stating the book 'richly illustrates the rich tapestry of Ellis' contribution as a scholar who understands the service theologians can offer to the life of the church to the glory of God.'

Chris received *Gathering Disciples* in a surprise presentation at Regent's Park College, Oxford on Friday.

'The presentation – in fact, the whole project – was a complete surprise, heart-warming and humbling at the same time,' he said. 'There's no bigger compliment for a writer than for others to use your work as a platform for their own original writing!'

'I am delighted that this wide group of friends and colleagues have ranged across those themes which have been closest to my heart – theological reflection on worship and spirituality, Baptist identity and ecumenical openness.

'Thank you so much!'

Chris has variously been a pastor of five Baptist churches, a Baptist college principal, Baptist Union President and moderator of a number of committees. Perhaps his most 'long-lasting legacy' is *Gathering for Worship*, co-edited with Myra Blyth. This and other works have resulted in him becoming 'our key thinker with regard to Baptist worship,' says the book's introduction.

Gathering Disciples was co-edited by Myra alongside Andy Goodliff, minister of Belle Vue Baptist Church in Southend.

Its contributors include Rob Ellis, Principal of Regent's Park College and Chris's brother, Regent's colleague Paul Fiddes, and Nigel Wright, Principal Emeritus Spurgeon's College, alongside newer voices such as Shona Shaw, co-minister of Moortown Baptist Church, Leeds, Ashley Lovett, minister at Socketts Heath Baptist Church, Grays, and Beth Alison-Glenny, minister of John Bunyan Baptist Church, Oxford.

Andy hopes other Baptists will read it – and start singing Chris's hymns again.

'I am really pleased with the book, not just because I hope it's honouree will find the essays inside a sign of our appreciation and the regard in which we hold him,' he said at the presentation on Friday, 'but that it is, I think, just a really good book and example of Baptists doing theology.

'It's a book that combines Chris's contemporaries and also some younger newer voices, who have benefited in different ways from Chris's example and work.

'My one other wish that comes from hoping that many will buy the book is that we might start a revival of hymn singing of Chris's hymns.'

'The time for compassion had come'

Fifty years ago Baptists in Manchester made the counter-cultural decision to build a hostel for marginalised foreign students. As Linton House closes, Stephen Roberts shares its story

Reading gas and electric meters and handing over bunches of keys. Hardly a dramatic ending to a 50-year long story, but a job well done and a need met is always worth marking and celebrating.

In the mid-1960s Union Chapel Fallowfield, Manchester, had a modest building, an adjacent plot of land – and a vision – to build a church to replace the edifice that had been destroyed in the war. There were plans and drawings.

But there was also a need. The church had always had strong connections with overseas, particularly Nigeria. There were small but increasing numbers of overseas students in Manchester, and at that time it was very difficult for them to find decent accommodation and a friendly welcome. White landlords would not rent rooms to students of colour, and the few who did charged exorbitant rents for appalling rooms. Rooms with a single shared bathroom in a cellar, one small calor gas stove for heating and cooking; cold, dark and dismal. It was particularly difficult for married students, or those with children.

So the idea developed that the land could be used to build a hostel for overseas students “and their wives” (female students were clearly beyond their imagination in 1964). It was not an easy decision, and of course once the (majority of!) the congregation had been won round, the neighbours needed convincing that it would not lower the tone of the neighbourhood, nor impact on the value of their property.

So Linton House was born. It was named in memory of the Jamaican-born activist (and deacon of Union Chapel) Joe Linton, and shepherded by John Nicholson, then minister of Union Chapel, and Norman Jones, the Area Superintendent. The Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association formed a Housing Association specifically to set up and run the project. Funds were raised from the British Council, loans, various Baptist and other trusts – and of course fund-raising from local Baptists, through generous donations and sponsored events, sales and an international cook book.

In 1970 the building was opened by Mark Bonham Carter, chair of the Race Relations Board. In his opening address he said, 'The Baptists were right when they decided that the time for compassion had come. And they were right to show it in such a practical form... Joining an institution, be it a university or a business was alarming in itself, but more so if it were in a foreign country, it was worse still if one had nowhere to live apart from unfriendly lodgings....

'I hope that this scheme will serve as an example and that others will follow.'

Residents referred to Linton House as “a haven”, “a life-saver”. The resident wardens, members of the church, the International Society, the chaplaincy, and the

residents themselves all helped to make students – and particularly their wives - welcome with trips and cookery evenings, English classes and social events. There were regularly students from more than 20 different countries sharing the 34 rooms and small flats that made up the residence, and it was not uncommon for students whose countries were at war with each other to be amicably sharing adjoining rooms.

The 1970s were not an easy time to be running such an operation with high inflation, and particularly high interest payments on the loans, making finance difficult. Again Baptist generosity was required to keep the scheme afloat. In 1981 the running of Linton House was transferred to the then Baptist Men's Movement Housing Association, which brought much needed expertise in building management.

By the end of the 1980s the position of overseas students had been totally transformed. The introduction of "full cost" fees by the Thatcher government had turned educating overseas students from an act of goodwill into a lucrative, and increasingly essential, source of income for universities. Student numbers had increased rapidly and larger more efficient accommodation was needed to cope with the demand.

In 1991 Linton House was transferred to the University of Manchester, which was able to provide the management and oversight to run it in this new age. Nevertheless for another 15 years Linton House remained a home for international students with a particular welcoming character, recommended from one to another down generations of students.

However, all good things have a natural life, and a building designed for specific needs in the 1960s was becoming increasingly unsuitable – shared toilet blocks, oddly configured rooms, the inevitable deterioration that goes with creative roof and drainage designs and novel use of concrete. The University closed Linton House as a student residence after the last academic year.

Union Chapel took the building and land back in February, reading meters and collecting keys. The last thing anybody will be wanting to do with it now is to build that temple of a building in the drawings of 1963!

Nevertheless, while that vision was not followed, a need was met.

There is also a postscript: in setting up the lease arrangements in the late 1960s the church was wise enough to consider the possibility that the need may pass – there was clearly little expectation that the home would still be useful for nearly 50 years. As part of the contingency planning they made provision for a realistic ground rent, and this has resulted in an income stream that has allowed Union Chapel to continue its mission for the past 20 years.

To commemorate the work done by Linton House, we are collating stories and memories - contact steve.roberts@manchester.ac.uk if you had anything to do with Linton House you could share or contribute, or if you just want to know more of the story. A booklet documenting its history is being produced.

New campaign targets climate change

An international development agency is calling on UK Christians to join in prayer to help the world's poorest people to flourish and be resilient in the face of climate change

In a statement, Tearfund said it sees prayer as a powerful tool to launch and sustain the international Renew Our World campaign.

Launched on the first day of Lent, (1 March) alongside organisations from another six countries, the long-term campaign aims to mobilise and inspire churches around the world to beat poverty and injustice. Starting with climate change, the campaign will ask governments to make firm plans to keep their promises made in the Paris Climate Agreement, and to invest in clean energy.

The Paris Agreement sets out a global action plan to start putting the world on course to address dangerous climate change. As part of The Renew Our World campaign, Christians will be praying that the 195 countries who signed up to the Agreement will limit global warming to as close to 1.5 degrees as possible and that greenhouse gas emissions will be eliminated.

In addition to prayer, UK Christians are calling on the government to bring light to remote communities around the world, by supporting clean, affordable and renewable energy which isn't reliant on old fashioned grids and power stations. The vision is for a world where everyone has electricity.

Tearfund's Director of Advocacy, Paul Cook, said, 'The Renew Our World campaign will put pressure on governments around the world to deliver on promises made in the Paris Agreement. Part of that agreement is to see energy renewed with clean power, and food renewed by taking action on waste.'

'This is our generation's choice,' said The Right Reverend Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury, and the Church of England's lead bishop on climate change. 'We can beat poverty, and to do that we need to beat climate change.'

'Previous generations didn't know about climate change; for later generations it will be too late. This is our generation's challenge. We need to rise to it. As followers of Jesus we already know we need to love our neighbours and care for creation.'

'Lent is a good time to remember the spiritual and physical limits of consumerism.'

**South Sudan is starving and needs our prayers
Famine is the latest problem to beset one of the world's most fragile states, and
BMS World Mission is helping hundreds of people in desperate need**

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

There was much hope when South Sudan became the world's newest country in July 2011. Over 1.5 million people had lost their lives during decades of conflict with the north of Sudan. It was hoped, by breaking away, such hardship would come to an end.

But barely two years later a dispute between the President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Vice-President Riek Machar led to civil war which has exploited tribal divisions. More than 300,000 people have been killed and 3.5 million have been displaced, many of whom are living in extreme poverty.

Last week, a famine was declared by the UN in some parts of South Sudan, the first time in six years that a famine has been declared anywhere in the world.

BMS has already been responding to the desperate situation in South Sudan, alongside Christian partners around the world. In 2015, it helped 2,000 displaced families in Narus, providing them a kit containing blankets, plastic sheets, cooking utensils, mosquito nets, fishing nets, hooks and jerry cans.

In autumn 2016, BMS helped provide food packages (maize flour, rice and beans) and emergency relief kits (blankets, mosquito nets and cooking utensils) for around 500 needy families living close to Juba. One woman who received the relief, spoke for many families when she said how thankful they were for our support. "When we arrived here after fleeing from our homes we came with nothing," she said. "The blankets, mosquito nets and the food we received will make our stay here more bearable."

As well as emergency relief, BMS has also been responding to the many cases of gender based violence (GBV) that have taken place during the civil war in South Sudan. Research by the BMS-supported We Will Speak Out Coalition in 2016, when many survivors of sexual violence bravely shared their horrific experiences, was taken up with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by BMS Deputy Director for Mission Steve Sanderson.

Steve says that BMS is looking into other ways to support South Sudan and has something to say to all UK Christians.

“The insecurity in South Sudan has led to death, displacement and now famine. I urge all BMS supporters to pray for the country and its desperate people,” he said.

Please pray for South Sudan in your church services, home groups and quiet times.
Pray for:

- all those displaced in South Sudan who are struggling to survive
- healing for survivors of GBV during the conflict
- international efforts to bring an end to the fighting
- guidance as BMS explores ways it can best help the people of South Sudan further through the local church

Baptisms

Burwell Baptist Church, Cambridge: Marcos Gonzalez Norris

Camden Road Baptist Church, London: Elizabeth Hall

Dawley Baptist Church, Telford: Donna Asson, Amy Birtwhistle, Jodi Mirza, Carol Jarvis and her daughter Annalie Jarvis

Streatham Baptist Church, London: Richard Welch

Union Baptist Church, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire: Catalina Olaru, Mariana Nicolae and an Iranian lady M

Baptism stories:

Ian Olliver, minister of Dawley Baptist Church, Telford, writes: Last Sunday (5th) I had the privilege of baptising 8 people in a special celebration service held jointly with an Anglican Pioneer church who meet close by. Many people were moved not just by the amazing testimonies, but also in seeing two expressions of church worshipping together in unity of purpose. Baptised from Dawley Baptist were Donna Asson, Amy Birtwhistle, Jodi Mirza, Carol Jarvis and her daughter Annalie Jarvis. From the River Community church were Jemima Parker, Will Rudolph and Erin Buckley who are all also involved with a youth fellowship that encompasses young people from the various churches in the Central Telford area.

Chris Johnson, minister of Burwell Baptist Church, writes: Marc (19) grew up in a Christian home but came to his own faith through a youth group trip to Zambia and an experience of God during worship. He gave a clear testimony of his faith before

his family and the congregation. He has been serving in our youth work on Sunday nights for some time and will continue.

Death

HOBBS, the Revd Keith

The family of Keith Hobbs would like to announce the death of Keith on 16 February 2017. He died very peacefully in Ashgate Hospice Chesterfield with his family present. Keith's ministry started at Union Church, Stretford followed by Sion Baptist Church, Burnley (1967-1979) and Grimsby Baptist church (1979-1986). In 1986 he became a half-time tutor at Northern Baptist College and a half-time association minister with the Lancs and Cheshire Association (now North West Baptist Association). In 1989 he became the North West Area Superintendent of the Baptist Union.

He retired in 2001, although, like many ministers of religion, he remained actively involved with the Baptist movement.

Keith's eldest daughter Linda is currently undergoing treatment for breast cancer and funeral arrangements have therefore been planned to take account of her appointments, treatments, health status etc. There will be a close family only cremation service in March.

Family, friends and colleagues are invited to attend a Service of Celebration of Keith's life at Chesterfield Baptist Church on 10 April at 2pm followed by light refreshments in the church hall afterwards.

To help protect Linda, who continues to have a significantly reduced ability to fight infection due to chemotherapy, you are asked not to attend if you have coughs, colds or any other infectious illnesses.

For longer obituary, visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/obituaries>