



**13 September 2017**

**News**

**Sports chaplaincy celebration - and challenge**

**Churches have been urged to explore the huge mission fields on their doorstep - sports clubs and gyms - at an event celebrating the 25th anniversary of a charity pioneered by a Baptist**

The call comes from the charity Sports Chaplaincy UK, which says there are 151,000 sports chaplaincy opportunities across the country, and an openness as local sports clubs begin to understand the value of chaplaincy.

The charity held a parliamentary reception on Thursday (7 September) to mark its 25th anniversary and share its vision. It was originally called SCORE and pioneered by Baptist minister John Boyers.

To date the charity has trained around 500 chaplains, who provide spiritual and pastoral care in a range of sports. But while it has a high profile in elite sports, notably football (John became the chaplain at Manchester United), rugby union and rugby league, it remains little known in the Christian community.

With denominations, ecumenical organisations and media invited, the anniversary reception was an opportunity for the charity to celebrate what has gone before, and share its vision of a chaplain in every sports club.

'A chaplain is simply an expression of God's love and compassion,' explained chief executive Warren Evans.

'And I believe God has given us a dream – to see an expression of his love and compassion in every community called sport.'

He talked about the huge numbers involved in sport and gyms. There are 151,000 sports clubs, and while numbers vary, each would typically have around 80 adults and 90 children, which equates to around 25 million people. In addition, the UK has nearly 7000 gyms.

While much sporting activity takes place on a Sunday morning, Warren (pictured) and the Sports Chaplaincy team believe churches need to be flexible to reach it.

'I don't believe we should be rejecting a community six times our own because it meets at the same time as us.'

'Let's be creative – hold services two hours later, do a barbecue once a year, pray for the clubs – come up with something in your context.'

He encouraged Christians to see the community of sport as God sees it. While outwardly they may look healthy and wealthy, all are human being with spiritual needs.

'Sport is a mission field. The church should be there. Let's not waste this opportunity.'

The charity seeks to find a club or sporting organisation ready to embrace sports chaplaincy, and identify the right person for the role. It has an initial goal of training 1,000 new chaplains as it sets about its dream of seeing a chaplain in 'every community called sport'.

The reception was hosted by Stephen Timms MP, the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Faith and Society. He said sports chaplaincy was a 'fantastic example' of what the group seeks to champion, and applauded the ambition of seeking sports chaplains around the country.

For more about Sports Chaplaincy UK, visit: [sportschaplaincy.org.uk/](http://sportschaplaincy.org.uk/)

### **What kind of society do we want?**

**The Evangelical Alliance is encouraging the church to ask key questions about the society we want, and how we communicate it**

With less than half the UK population part of a religious faith, according to the latest British Social Attitudes survey, the Evangelical Alliance (EA) is calling on the Church to step up with a new vision for all of society.

Instead of worrying about dwindling numbers in the pews, the EA wants to encourage Christians to speak out with hope for the kind of society they want future generations to grow up in.

It has released a new resource *What kind of society?* (6 September), which 'sets out the difference that love, freedom, justice and truth could make if we took time to learn from our heritage and look to where the life and energy is in the Church today.'

'Evangelicals frequently say they want to change society for the better, so what might that look like?' it states.

'Our goal... is to stimulate the next stage of the conversation, and to equip the church to practically cast a vision and be a voice for the good of all.'

The report shows how Christian virtues of love, freedom, justice and truth can play a pivotal role in giving hope and vision for society.

Following a year of unexpected elections and results, national tragedies and international insecurity, and debate about our future in the light of Brexit, the EA says 'there is great need for such vision and hope.'

Writing in the preface to the resource Dr David Landrum, EA director of advocacy, said, 'Love provides the glue that holds society together. Freedom provides opportunities. Justice rights wrongs. And truth is a rock we can all build our lives upon.'

'We want to see Christians speak confidently of the goodness that our faith leads to, and give voice to a vision of a society where all flourish and grow, and in which love, freedom, justice and truth are not just noble ideas, but the revolutionary principles our society is built on.'

Churches and Christian organisations are already working to promote love, freedom, justice and truth in many places in our society. The resource profiles some examples ranging from church responses to the Grenfell Tower disaster, to groups which help people break free of addiction and debt, and Christians who organise hustings during vital elections.

The EA says it wants to give Christians increased confidence in speaking publicly about the impact of their faith on all areas of life.

The report is released in the wake of the latest British Social Attitudes Survey, which showed a rise in the number of people describing themselves as having no religious affiliation.

Dr Landrum said, 'What we're seeing is the death of nominal religion in the UK.'

'For Christians who believe in Jesus and the teachings of the Bible, this is a chance to speak with fresh clarity about what our faith means, and show all of society how it can benefit.'

For more, visit: [eauk.org/wkos](http://eauk.org/wkos)

## **Queen's Award for Baptist team**

### **A team from a Baptist church that supports carers receives the highest award given to local volunteer groups**

The Carers Ministries Team at Rayleigh Baptist Church (RBC), Essex, are the recipients of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Services (QAVS), the MBE for volunteer groups.

The Queen's Award is given to recognise outstanding contributions to local communities by groups of volunteers. The RBC Carers Ministries Team is one of 224 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year.

The Award recognises that the volunteers within the RBC Carers Ministries Team offer effective support and time out for carers. Carers can access help on the telephone, as well as attending three different sessions throughout the month:

- Carers Café, which takes place on the first Saturday of most months and includes various community activities

- Carers and Cared For Coffee Morning, on the third Friday of every month.

- Share the Care, which offers one-to-one support by appointment.

The café started 12 years ago with small local beginnings, but has steadily grown in numbers, both in volunteers and the carers and their loved ones who have registered for support.

While part of Rayleigh Baptist Church, no one is expected to embrace their faith. The only criteria being that they are a 'Carer'. Everyone is welcome and the support services are free and make a significant contribution to improving the well-being of adult carers and their families.

In a statement, the church said the Carers Café and its satellite services 'combat loneliness and isolation, signposting to useful contact and empowering Carers to make social connections with those who share a common factor – 'They Care'.'

On being asked what receiving the QAVS means to the team, leader Georgina Biggs, said, 'Being awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is a great encouragement to the team and gives credibility to the work we do, enabling Carers to come forward with confidence.'

When the awards were initially announced on 2 June (the anniversary of The Queen's Coronation), Lord Petre, the Lord Lieutenant for the County of Essex, said, 'I

am delighted that the Rayleigh Baptist Church Carers Café has been recognised by Her Majesty the Queen, as the winner of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Services.

'Volunteers at Rayleigh Baptist Church Carers Café Ministries Team offer effective support and respite to carers and the support it extends to the carers and their loved ones is exceptional.'

With Lord Petre having retired in August, the RBC Carers Ministries Team will receive the award from his successor Jennifer Tolhurst on Tuesday, 12 September.

### **A free discipleship video every day?**

**That's the aim of innovative new ministry [thefuelcast.com](http://thefuelcast.com), which brings a Bible-based, devotional video to subscribers' inboxes every weekday**

The fuelcast.com has been operating since January and has featured a variety of pastors, scholars, youth specialists and more in its short devotionals.

It's the brainchild of Andy Thomas, a filmmaker and accredited Baptist minister. He explains the ministry exists to 'help people of faith, strengthen their faith.'

'Apparently, when it comes to our Christian lives, many of us are running on empty,' Andy says.

'The conviction, confidence and passion we once had is running out.

'What we need is fuel. When you add fuel there is fresh energy and power; fuel brings conviction, confidence and growth.

'That's what thefuelcast.com is all about: daily fuel for people who want to take their discipleship journey seriously and invest in their faith journey.'

The short videos are free. The most recent are available on the website; once signed up subscribers can access the whole library. To date more than 160 videos have been made.

Author Richard Littledale, minister of Newbury Baptist Church, recently blogged about being a contributor. He wrote:

*In the last week of June the small film crew of three arrived at Newbury Baptist Church to film the videos with me. There were two things which struck me immediately about them. The first was their professionalism – in a new environment they set about the task of setting and lighting the shoot with a practised ease born of experience.*

*The second was a deep- rooted sense of mission. These busy people add their work for Fuelcast on top of other commitments because they believe they have a calling to do so.*

*As they set up the cameras, as they edit the footage, as they publish it to the library – heart and mind are set on the people who will watch the films. Those people might be in a messy kitchen, a minister’s office or on a busy train – but all may be in need of inspiration, and Fuelcast are there for them.*

‘Our sincere hope and prayer is that this resource will help you grow deeper in your discipleship,’ Andy adds, ‘becoming the person you were created to be and living the more abundant life Jesus came to bring.’

Steve Finamore, principal of Bristol Baptist College, was a recent contributor. He spoke on being thankful. Other Baptist contributors have included ministers Gemma Dunning, Brendan Bassett and Benjamin Lucas.

## **Opinion**

### **Four ways Baptists need to transition**

**We need a mind-set, demographic, leadership and relational transition, writes General Secretary Lynn Green**

We are acutely aware we live in changing times. When I was born my dad ran up the road in the middle of the night to the telephone box to call for the midwife. When my son was born my husband phoned our family from our home phone downstairs. Just two years later I lay in bed and used my mobile phone to tell my mum of daughter’s arrival. Nowadays photos are shared within minutes via social media!

As a local church pastor I particularly enjoyed visiting my oldest member. Elizabeth was born at the end of the 19th century, and it was always fascinating to listen to the life and faith story of someone who lived through two world wars and the unbelievable technological advances of the 20th century.

Of course, our churches are not immune from this bewildering onslaught. But as Peter Morden rightly points out, while the changes themselves may be new, the fact of change is not. Every generation has to respond to the call to worship and follow our God who dwells in the eternal present. If we want to be with Him we need to stop trying to live in the past and embrace the present moment as well. To help us, here are some thoughts about the sort of transitions we need to be entering into.

## **We need a Mind-set transition**

The first and most fundamental transition I believe we need is in our thinking and self-understanding. Through the 19th and 20th centuries Baptists thoroughly enculturated themselves in the mode of institutions and this is reflected in the life of our Union as well.

While I see many signs of a transition in progress here, I also see an unhelpful commitment to institution that can act as a negative pull in our attempts to move forward. Surely what we need to learn from the trajectory of the church through the ages is the need to renew our focus on Kingdom rather than institution; on whole life discipleship rather than Sunday attendance; to move from a preoccupation with rules and boundaries to an undefended commitment to loving God and others; a focus on community transformation rather than empire building, from sucking resources in to being a source of blessing, from “keeping the show on the road” to participating in God’s mission to the world, and from once majority to vast minority.

In order to navigate these transitions, we need the spiritual gift of discernment; an ability to discern between outward form and inner content. We struggle in transition when we invest too much emotional value in the “ways we have always done it” and fail to see beyond those ways that have served us well to the fresh ways that will embody our commitment to Christ in the present. So whether it is in our small groups, local churches, Associations or our Union, I believe we need to continue to be open to the renewing of our minds through the Holy Spirit so we can see and perceive God’s new thing in the present moment.

## **We need a demographic transition**

Globally, while the West grows older, the rest of the world is growing younger. It is estimated that by the year 2020 almost 70 per cent of all Christians worldwide would be under the age of 45. In Asia, Africa and Latin America, where Baptists are growing fast, that is particularly true. Countries, such as Ghana have witnessed a 1700 per cent increase in Baptists since 1990, according to the Baptist World Alliance. The average median age in Ghana is 21.5 in comparison to 39.4 for the United Kingdom. Interestingly the two largest churches in our Union are both Ghanaian churches. In the light of these demographic shifts it is significant that the recently appointed General Secretary Elect of the Baptist World Alliance, Elijah Brown, is 36 years old.

In our own context, the ageing population in the UK is going to present us with several challenges in the coming years. As we cherish, honour and care for the elderly, we need a blessing from them for us to grow younger as churches and a Union so we can be faithful in handing on the faith to our children and children’s children.

The statistics above from the Baptist World Alliance also show us, however, that age is not our only significant demographic shift. They clearly point to the need for us to embrace the journey of transition that reflects that fact that the world is now on our doorstep – literally. In these days the Lord has graciously given us another opportunity to reflect in our churches and Union the ‘all nations’ vision of the Kingdom that is conveyed through Scriptures. May the history books record that we had the faith, humility, prophetic courage, grace and vision to make this transition, and to make it well.

### **We need a leadership transition**

As our position in society becomes more marginal and as our financial resources are challenged by many factors such as changing demographics and loss of denominational loyalty, our capacity to resource full-time, “professional” ministry will become increasingly difficult. As Stuart Murray-Williams points out, we can either look back and lament our former glory, or we can make the choice to look for the opportunities this new era will bring. Our dna as Baptists includes a very strong commitment to the priesthood of all believers and this will serve us well in this particular area of transition. I believe that in these times of transition we will need to ensure that we focus on the nurturing of Christian character in all of us, and in our leaders in particular.

We also need to be willing to imagine and release all sorts of flexible patterns of leadership so that the rich gifts of God’s people are developed and released for the sake of His Kingdom Mission. I am confident that this leadership transition will enable us to see a much more rich and diverse network of leaders emerge and flourish and contribute to the health and growth of our churches and communities.

### **We need a relational transition**

It seems to me that in our institutional phase as a Union and as churches we have expressed our historic commitment to interdependence as Baptists in distinctive, and rather formal ways. Our challenge going forward is to discover new ways to embody our interdependence so that we can continue to nurture our passion to see mission and ministry flourish contextually from the grassroots.

As the UK church has become more marginalised in recent years there has been a growing willingness to forge partnerships. It is encouraging to see Roger Sutton and others being so key in nurturing unity movements such as Movement Day across the UK.

We cannot fail to see that this new sense of partnering for the sake of the Kingdom arises from the heart of God who desires that “they all may be one”. Just as Jesus called the first disciples to head out into deep water and cast their nets, so it seems clear to me that if we want to see God’s Kingdom come then we need to be weaving



the nets of relationships and partnerships that will be able to contain the harvest in God's heart. No doubt we have much more to learn about humility and seeking God's Kingdom first in this time of transition, but it is good that we are on the journey into closer partnerships.

There is no doubt that throughout our Union we are on the journey of transition already. The question for me is whether we are going to travel that journey "the scenic route" like God's people in the wilderness in Old Testament times, or whether we are going to devote ourselves to prayer; being attentive and obedient to the call of Christ in this present moment and take seriously the invitation to participate in the life of God's Kingdom here and now.

### **Baptisms**

Amphill Baptist Church, Bedfordshire: Madeleine Baker and Jack Moore

Ebenezer Baptist Church, Scarborough: Laura Conley

Hope Whitby, Yorkshire: Marion Godley

London Road Baptist Church, Suffolk: Wayne Paraire, Jayne Richardson, Keith Peacock

Norbury Baptist Church, London: Rebecca Cliffe

Thatcham Baptist Church, Berkshire: Graham Wall and Paul Long

### **Baptism stories**

We had a wonderful service on Sunday September 3rd at Amphill Baptist Church when Madelaine Baker and Jack Moore, two of our young people, were baptised. Each gave a very moving account of their journey to this point in their Christian lives. Many were greatly touched by what they said as we have known them for many years and have seen them come through to this point of commitment. It was wonderful to see those very special young people take this important step. The church was full and two overflow rooms had to be used.

### **Induction**

"Revd Daniel Parkes was inducted as Minister of Scarisbrick New Road Baptist Church Southport on Saturday 9th September 2017 - To God be the Glory " For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29 v 11