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News:

Presidency for Chichester minister

Whole-life discipleship and missional communities: Ken Benjamin of Chichester Baptist Church is elected President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain 2019-2020

Ken was one of two candidates nominated for the presidency, alongside the Revd Linda Turner, minister of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Norfolk. Voting closed on 31 March, and both candidates were informed when the results were calculated last week.

Ken will now serve as Vice President 2018-19, before assuming the presidency at next year's Baptist Assembly.

'I am truly grateful to be given the privilege, opportunity and challenge of serving the Baptist family, firstly as Vice-President and then President,' he said.

'As well as the personal challenge for me, for which I seek your prayers, I am convinced there will be new challenges ahead for all of us.

'The times that we live in require individuals and churches to think beyond existing patterns, programmes and even buildings in imaginative and creative ways.'

Ken, who was born in Sri Lanka before growing up in South London, has served as a minister at Chichester for 21 years. Prior to church ministry he was a retail manager and trainer for a department store in Oxford Street, and a lecturer, teaching business studies and management skills.

In his presidency profile he said he would particularly promote an emphasis on whole life discipleship and missional communities, if elected.

Regarding the former, Ken is an associate speaker for the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, whose message is that all Christians should go into their everyday 'Frontline' world confident that God can work through them. 'This fits really well in a Baptist context with our emphasis on the priesthood of all believers,' Ken said.

Chichester Baptist Church has run various monthly, 'alternative gatherings' for six years in a variety of contexts and locations. It means that on a typical Sunday many members are out and about doing church in the community, and are not in the building.

Ken said, 'A growing number of Baptist churches are exploring and trying similar ways of reaching out. There is the potential within the role of President to develop ways to share ideas and seek to encourage any churches who are looking to explore new and additional ways of gathering.'

Our current President is the Revd Dianne Tidball, whose 'As In Heaven,' theme is taken from the Lord's Prayer. [Click here for Dianne's reflections on her theme.](#)

The Revd Dr Dave Gregory, senior minister at Croxley Green Baptist Church, will succeed Dianne at this year's Baptist Assembly on 12 May in Peterborough. He begins to unpack his theme Divine Windows: Glimpses of God in life, the universe... and everything in the summer 2018 edition of Baptists Together magazine.

The President's main role is as a communicator/facilitator of our Union's vision and mission. The President travels around our Union, engaging with local churches, regional Associations and Colleges.

A key part of the role is leading the Baptist Steering Group (BSG) Accompanying Group, which provides prayer support and shares in spiritual and missional reflection with BSG.

New ministry role for music industry

DJs will now have access to dedicated pastoral support, thanks to a pioneering new role from Third Space Ministries

Third Space Ministries, set up and led by Baptist minister Carolyn Skinner, seeks to demonstrate God's love in the third spaces of society, with a particular emphasis on the leisure industry, including sport, music, cafes and nightclubs.

This week it announced the appointment of Luke Rollins as its first DJ Ministry Coordinator.

It highlighted escalating pressures in the DJ industry, with several high profile DJs cancelling tours or retiring in recent years, and subsequently sharing with fans their battles with depression, addiction and crippling performance anxiety.

Third Space has been working with a diverse group of more than 80 Christian DJs from across the UK, who have shared their own experiences of working in the music industry. They are also exploring how chaplaincy and nurturing support groups can contribute to greater wellness within the DJ community.

Luke Rollins is excited to take this venture to the next level.

With extensive experience as a DJ and promoter, Third Space said Luke understands the wellbeing and spiritual needs of the people working in the music industry and is looking forward to developing avenues for pastoral support for those who work and play in nightlife environments. He is committed to seeing chaplaincy normalised in music venues, events and festivals.

Luke said, 'The strains upon those working in the music industry have never been so great, but I have also seen music as a powerful vehicle for spiritual connection and community.'

'I believe that this new initiative will further develop these connections and relationships, opening doors for chaplaincy within the nightlife industries, providing much needed pastoral support and seeing the music industry flooded with the love and goodness of God.'

Marcia Carr, creator of Girlz B Like, a platform which promotes women vinyl record selectors and music producers, and Mi-Soul Radio presenter, also welcomed this appointment.

'Working within the underground dance culture as a club and radio DJ has been a lonely place at times, and it tests one's faith,' she said.

'To have fellow believers to engage with, for fellowship and prayer, or to just talk with one of the DJ chaplains is such a help. They are regularly on hand to assist partygoers and clubbers whether inside or outside a club and the Third Space Ministries pastoral teams are invaluable.'

Third Space Ministries will officially launch this ministry at an event on Friday 13 April, 7.30pm at Crown House Creative, Morden.

Easter Sunrise gathering in Wirksworth, Derbyshire Members of Wellspring Church rose early for an Easter sunrise gathering at a 21st century stone circle

The gathering took place at 6.40am on Easter Sunday (1 April) at the Star Disc in Stoney Wood. Visual artist Aidan Shingler created the Star Disc in 2011 as a celestial amphitheatre, a 'temple without walls'.

'It was an ideal place to celebrate the resurrection of Christ at the rising of the sun,' noted Ingrid Keith, the church's communications trustee.

Worship was led by the Revd Jenny Few.

An extraordinary mission worker's life

“Is this going to be short-term, or for life?” For BMS World Mission worker Ann Bothamley, there was only one answer

She stared down the devil when she was weak. Overcame dysentery, major spinal surgery and crushing loneliness. She founded a hostel for children of mission doctors, helped thousands of people through her nursing service, and returned to work after retirement to give pastoral care to patients.

Ann Bothamley has been an ambassador for Christ in India since 1968. We're inspired by all that she's done in the past, and all that she continues to do. We know you will be too. This is Ann's story.

Chapter one: the beginning

I gave my heart to the Lord when I was nine years old. After Sunday School one day I went to the superintendent and said, “I've decided I want to follow Jesus.”

I then went in for a Bible quiz and won a Bible. It had, 'Presented to Ann Bothamley', and at the bottom was the verse from Matthew 28: 19, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel”. I remember saying to my mother, “I think that means me. I think I have to go.”

So even then, I knew in my heart that God wanted me to go out as a medical missionary somewhere.

Chapter two: the call

I was quite sure that God wanted me to be a doctor, but I didn't do terribly well at school. I went to work in the microbiology department of St Thomas' Hospital, and one day the professor said to me, “why don't you go in for nursing?”

Within six weeks, I was in. I really enjoyed it and knew I was in the right place. I wanted to have more qualifications, so I did a ward sister course, but twice during my training I slipped a disc in my back. After the second time, the matron said, “I think you might have to give up nursing”, and I thought, 'no way'.

I ended up having a laminectomy [the removal of part of a vertebrae] after my fourth year. There was a lot of waiting and I wondered what God was saying to me. But I got through all that and got better very quickly. I did midwifery in Glasgow, and then did a year as a night sister in a large hospital in Croydon. I decided then that it was the time to go to BMS.

Chapter three: the journey

I think God planted it in my heart that I was going to India. I knew, too, that it was going to be for life. I was asked at the candidate board, "is this going to be short-term, or for life?" That was how it was put in those days. I said, "no, for life". And so I was accepted by BMS.

The journey to India was a very long one. We travelled across Europe to Venice, where we boarded a boat to Brindisi, and then went on to the Canary Islands, and down to Cape Town where we boarded the boat to Mombasa.

From Mombasa we went to Karachi and on to Bombay, as it was then. I got on the train about 2pm and arrived the next afternoon, about an hour from Vellore. I was met by someone called Miss Thompson. We were sitting squeezed up on the front seat of the car and she said to me, "well, I hope the Lord has brought you here. Because if not, you might as well go back now."

Chapter four: the attack

There was no question of going back. I was where God had put me. I had quite a few problems to begin with. I had dysentery and it was a very horrible thing.

I also remember being sent up into the hills after suffering sunstroke. I was sitting in a garden and it was as though the devil was saying, "I'm going to get you home." I can remember telling him, "no, God is with me and I am not going home, and don't think you can send me because God is greater than you."

One of the amazing things in those first six months was that every so often Miss Thompson would hand me a little note with a verse of Scripture on it. It was quite amazing, and always seemed to me that God was saying, "I am with you."

Chapter five: the loneliness

There have been times when I have known great loneliness. Sometimes one can be in a huge institution and still be very lonely.

But every so often God would send somebody I could pray with. I'd be tremendously encouraged and God would say to me, "I want you to rely on me more. Just keep relying on me."

Chapter six: the blessings

God has blessed me through some of the experiences I've been through. Three years ago, when I had major surgery on my spine, two families I didn't even know were amazing to me, absolutely amazing.

God has been so faithful to me over the years, and blessed me so much in enabling me and giving me the privilege to meet such a diversity of people and patients.

Watch the moment when Ann is presented with a gift to mark her 50 years' service with BMS.

Chapter seven: the support

I could not be here, but for the support and prayers of people at home. I have two friends who phone me about every two weeks and jot down all the things I would like them to pray about. And there's a church too that does the same thing.

Prayer makes a difference, a huge difference. I'm sure there have been difficult times when I've been carried by the prayers of people at home.