

Narnia comes alive

AN iconic British story of love overcoming the evil of the world has been brought to life in spectacular fashion in Leeds.

The Narnia Experience is a community theatre production in an atmospheric former church involving hundreds of volunteers that transports audiences into the winter world of Narnia.

Based on the CS Lewis story of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* it is a fully interactive production. Audiences are immersed into the world of Narnia firstly through a 1940s train station and then the iconic wardrobe, before either following Lucy or Edmund and meeting the White Witch, the beavers, Mr Tumnus, and of course, Aslan.

Such is its popularity the Narnia Experience has been running throughout the day at the Left Bank Leeds, with 12 teams of actors, to sell out audiences since the last week of November. When it finishes on Sunday (8 December) more than 5,000 people will have seen it across 166 performances. It has received excellent reviews and feedback, and been featured in the regional TV news, radio and local press.

'It has been extremely well received and has genuinely exceeded all expectations,' said Baptist minister Simon Hall,



programme manager at Left Bank and one of the many volunteer performers.

Though a coming together of hundreds of people, the Narnia Experience has a core Baptist involvement. Simon leads Revive, an early example of a Fresh Expressions-style Baptist church in a bohemian area of Leeds.

Left Bank Leeds is a charity that has taken on the care of a disused but breathtaking former Anglican church, St Margaret of Antioch, with a vision of becoming 'a centre for arts and culture, for new thought and new ideas, friendly and full of life'. The planning group for Left Bank includes many members of Revive, and the Narnia Experience was an idea that came out from this planning

group, said Simon. As well as delighting audiences, it has drawn together hundreds of volunteers, many working alongside each other for the first time. It features 144 performers, 60 costumed ushers and about 200 construction workers, costumiers and set designers.

'People who love theatre and love Aslan have just worked really well together,' said Simon. 'It's been a great picture of the body of Christ, each person doing what they are made to do, and doing it with great joy. Everything that we needed has been provided.'

'It has genuinely exceeded all expectations. I thought the children would be cynical, but I've been completely proved wrong,' he added.

Baptist church at Westminster Abbey

FOUR people from Memorial Community Church, a Baptist church in Plaistow, took part in a service at Westminster Abbey to mark the 60th anniversary of the National Churches Trust last week (28 November).

The church received a grant from the National Churches Trust in 2011 to improve its community facilities, and as part of the service Philippa King the Development Manager was interviewed by broadcaster Huw Edwards about the community use of the church building (pictured).

Representatives of two churches from other parts of the UK were interviewed about repairs to their buildings funded by the Trust.

In addition two young people from the church, Ian McClue, 16, and Janet Waithaka, 19, along with the minister the Revd Mark Janes, carried banners as part of the procession through the Abbey at the start of the service, following some of the distinguished guests including the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Mayor of Westminster.



The National Churches Trust has also given a £40,000 towards the current £250,000 repair project at Memorial Community Church

Many MPs peers and personalities were among the 2,000 congregation at the service as well as representatives of other churches.

The sermon was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby. Television presenter and Chief Scout Bear Grylls and historian and broadcaster Bettany Hughes read passages from the scriptures.

Philippa said, 'It was an honour to represent a Baptist church from Newham at such a prestigious occasion, and people were interested to hear about the different things our building is used for.'

The Memorial Community Church is used by many local voluntary groups including the Bridges project for homeless people, Active Tuesdays for over 50s and the We Are Family Club. It rents rooms out for events, offices to local charities, has a community garden and recently opened an art gallery in its bell tower.

New regional minister for NBA

THE Revd Paul Reville has been appointed regional minister: mission enabler for the Northern Baptist Association (NBA).

Paul has served at Stocksfield Baptist Church in Northumberland since 2001, as a pastor committed to leading the church in evangelism.

And NBA regional minister (pastoral and strategy) the Revd John Claydon said that mission

was a key component of the appointment, with a special emphasis on evangelism.

'I'm absolutely delighted. Paul has been in our Association for 13 years, and has proved himself to be a missional leader, with a history of being engaged in mission with both younger and older people.

'He's energetic, creative, a deep thinker – he brings a lot to the role, and I'm looking forward to

working with him.'

Paul said he takes on this role with 'a great sense of privilege, that people have invested their trust in me, and excitement'

'I'm looking forward to working with our churches, to see what God is doing and affirming that; and then see how we hear the voice of God and sense the mission he is already doing and how He is calling us on.'

Love in the face of injustice

‘LOVE is not a feeling, love is a decision we make in order to honour Jesus Christ.’

That was the message Dr Yohana Katanacho brought to Catalyst Live in Manchester and Reading this week.

Dr Katanacho is a Palestinian theologian and came to Catalyst Live from Bethlehem Bible College.

Much of his lecture was rooted in his experience as a Palestinian follower of Christ and the challenges that discrimination, unrest and oppression pose to those seeking to obey Jesus’ command to love our enemies.

‘Love,’ Dr Katanacho told audiences, ‘is not an excuse to abandon justice. It is an opportunity to pursue justice.’

The particular form of justice he encouraged attendees to pursue is inextricably linked to the position of Palestinians in both Israel and the Occupied Territories. ‘There is an opportunity to oppose oppression today,’ he said. ‘Not to be pro Israeli or pro Palestinian, but pro Jesus Christ.’

Dr Katanacho said that Palestinian Christians wanted the Church to speak out against discrimination and that the



credibility of Christians in the Middle East was intimately linked to how the Palestinian issue is dealt with by Christians globally.

In a talk as full of wit and warmth as challenging truth, he spoke of how in his past he had assumed the God of the Bible did not love Palestinians, and how, throughout a supernatural conversion process that eventually saw him abandon atheism, the justness of God in his own context remained a challenge for him.

‘The problem is not the Jews,’ Dr Katanacho said of the Israel-Palestine situation. ‘The problem

is sin.’ He said that the voice of Hagar, a foreigner mistreated by those who ought to have been the light of God, should be the voice of the Baptist Church as it spoke out against injustice.

Catalyst Live was a two day event organised by BMS World Mission featuring a range of speakers, including Jurgen Moltmann, John Lennox, Stephen Holmes and Sharon Dirckx.

Videos, and summaries from all the talks, at Catalyst Live can be found at <http://www.bmscatalystlive.com/>

maintaining a structure during a service?” This tweet frustrated me.

<http://bit.ly/lsmu8m>

> Engaging with Scottish independence - and why it’s important for Baptists to draw upon their own tradition of conversation and discussion

<http://bit.ly/1cYaTXL>

> Baptical congregations and Baptist identity in the 21st century - the congregational type of church governance is being reshaped in many of the new Baptist churches

<http://bit.ly/190Ze1N>

> A longer report from the recent Baptist Union Council meeting

<http://bit.ly/IHG9kw>

From the www. baptisttimes.co.uk

Recent stories and comment pieces on *The Baptist Times* website

> “As worship leaders, how do you balance between allowing the spirit to lead, while

Campaign welcomes foster age extension

THE church-based fostering and adoption campaign, Home for Good, has welcomed the government’s move to extend the age at which children can remain in foster care.

The Department for Education is imposing a legal duty on councils to provide financial support for those who want to stay longer with foster carers. Children in care will now be able to stay with their foster parents until their 21st birthday if they wish to.

Dr Krish Kandiah, a director of the Evangelical Alliance, one of the organisations behind Home for Good, says this move makes absolute sense because in some instances it would be negligent to “chuck them out” at 18.

‘To expect looked-after children who will already have experienced trauma in their lives, to leave home at 18 is optimistic if not negligent.’

He added that many 18 year olds might be tempted by the offer of independent living while others find the possibility daunting. Either way many children in foster care have complex issues and are not ready to live on their own.

Home for Good is working with churches to encourage them to foster or adopt children.

More than 20,000 Christians attended National Adoption Sunday services last month to learn more about fostering and adoption.

Free Christmas film

AN accredited Baptist minister and filmmaker has produced a short Christmas film that churches have been encouraged

would it feel if God was born this Christmas?’.

The film emerged as Var and Rob reflected on ‘how very close



to use as a resource.

Var Smallwood, who serves under Rise and Shine, a black-led Pentecostal Church in Bristol, has teamed up with former BBC producer Rob Wicks to form Still Small Films, a new Youtube channel.

Their first film is called *Christmas Together*. At just over one minute long, it asks ‘How

hope and hopelessness are to each other and how, sometimes, it’s not until you stop searching for solutions you can be found by God.’

It’s free to use as a resource to anyone who wants. Any Youtube revenue will be donated to charity.

To view the film visit <http://youtu.be/5NYYhSKAbv0>

DEATH

JAMES, John Francis Edward passed away peacefully on 23 November, aged 89 years. Much loved husband, father, grandad and great grandad. Former headteacher, actively involved in both Victoria and Calvary Baptist Churches, Cardiff, in the South Wales Baptist Associations, the South Wales Baptist College and the BMM. Thanksgiving Service at 12.30pm on Monday 9 December at Calvary Baptist Church, 134 Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff CF11 9ND

BAPTISMS

Arundel Baptist Church, Sussex: Wendy Puttick 1
Beckenham Baptist Church, London: David Hajos 1
Chipping Campden Baptist Church, Gloucestershire: Lauren Jordan, Emily Irvine, Naomi Smith 3
Dorchester Baptist Church, Dorset: Duncan 1
Friars Baptist Church, Shoburyness: Jaimi Mayhew 1
Haywards Heath Baptist Church, Sussex: Josie Batchelor, Jonathan Bedingham, Oll Mitchell, and Josh Mitchell 4

Send notifications of baptisms, ministerial changes, deaths and testimonies to phobson@baptist.org.uk