

Getting the picture

THOUSANDS engaged with an initiative that enables all kinds of people to be involved in the Christmas story.

More than 8,400 photos were uploaded to the Get in the Picture website across 170 events over the 2013 festive period, with the site subsequently receiving 15,600 unique visitors who viewed 108,000 individual pages.

Get in the Picture (GTIP) works by churches setting up a nativity scene in their local town, and then inviting people from their local community to dress up and be part of the scene.

A photo is taken and then uploaded to the website, which can be printed, emailed to friends or shared on social media.

A post-event survey has just been completed, showing that churches included GTIP events as part of their town's Christmas festival or equivalent. Others were based in empty shopping units. One GTIP event was part of a youth weekend in which young people from different churches were assigned to help with a variety of projects in the city.

The feedback revealed that many felt the event had gone well, with more than 80 per cent stating they would participate in



the event again.

There were some interesting comparisons with the figures from the previous year. In 2012 the number of unique visitors to the website was lower – 10,670 – but they viewed more pages (166,734). This was perhaps because there were more photos in 2012 – 13,265 from 185 events, compared with 8,400 photos from 170 events in 2013.

A major difference can be seen in the way people accessed the GTIP website. In 2013 just under 6,000 visitors came from Facebook, compared with around 3,400 the previous year. And whereas the majority of users came from laptops and PCs in 2012, a year later later mobiles

and tablets accounted for 57 per cent of the traffic.

Dawlish Christian Fellowship was one church that really went to town, organising real sheep to help keep the children entertained while waiting in the queue. The church's Hazel Huggins said it had been a great success.

'The town Christmas market was happening at the same time, so we had a lot of families who took part.

'The atmosphere was light and fun.

'We were able to remind everybody of the real meaning of Christmas but not be too in your face – a really terrific way to share the story of Jesus.'

Record numbers at church drop-in centre as BBC 5live arrives

A CHURCH was delighted with the involvement of BBC Radio 5live when it featured the work of its drop-in centre and broadcast a programme from its premises.

Last Thursday and Friday saw members of 5live's breakfast team visit Pier Avenue Baptist Church in Clacton. The programme was based around a report by the Centre for Social Justice, which highlighted deprivation in coastal towns.

On Thursday the crew spent time at the church's Enfold Project, which serves some of the area's most vulnerable people with food, shower facilities and access to services and agencies.

They spent around an hour and a half there, talking to the church's own volunteers (including the kitchen staff), the support groups and many of those coming in for the breakfast. A number of interviews were carried out,



Pier Avenue Baptist church member Phil Roberts (right) is interviewed by Nicky Campbell (centre)

which were broadcast the following day when host Nicky Campbell broadcast from the church.

Between 9 and 10am there was a live phone-in on the issue. The panel featured minister the Revd Sean Fountain.

Church elder Duncan Wood said the experience had been a positive one.

'We were very impressed by

the whole set up and the depth of research before they came.

'The whole crew, including Nicky, seemed genuinely compassionate and occasionally one felt that tears were not far from their eyes.'

He added, 'Oddly, we had our biggest numbers ever that day - we fed 65 people in all, and even that was with a number of regulars missing!'

'Take heart from early church'

A NEW regional minister has encouraged the churches in his Association to look at the example of the early church.

The Revd Paul Revill was inducted as the new Regional Minister, Mission Enabler at the Northern Baptist Association (NBA) in a service at Heaton Baptist Church on Saturday.

On the same day a short video of Paul speaking about his new role was uploaded to the NBA Facebook page.

He explained how we live in

challenging times – but also times of opportunity.

'Church is no longer at the heart of our communities,' he said. 'Our predominant culture is secular and materialistic, and it's hard to engage people.

'But I think there are good opportunities in that.

'Our situation is post-Christendom, and is more similar to the early church in the first 300 years of its life.

'We can see that same growth they saw, and that same different

quality of life that they had from the surrounding culture.'

He encouraged people to pray for their own situations, and as they do, to ask where is God leading them, and the challenges they face. 'How might God want you to change as a church, so that you might become more missional to meet some of the challenges of the culture we live in?'

Saturday also saw the induction of the Revd Simon Goddard as Eastern Baptist Association Regional Minister.

Church meeting: time to be scrapped - or for radical change?

By Ernie Whalley

It was good to attend the Fresh Streams' event at Swanwick last month and sense the energy and enthusiasm in the gathering. Folks came mainly from our Baptist churches and it was a joy to see how our new General Secretary, Lynn Green, was welcomed.

Fresh Streams has a theology strand and a vote was taken to explore two topics this year:

- engaging with culture whilst remaining distinct from it
- Baptist ecclesiology: has the church meeting had its day?

Church members' meetings are often the low point in our church life and for understandable reasons. As a former regional minister, I have probably attended church meetings in over 100 churches in the past 15 years. In the pastorates I served, I chaired well over 200 such meetings. I think I can safely say I've seen much of the best ... and the worst! Power politics, imitations of the worst of Westminster, packed



meetings when there's a proposal to remove pews... or terminate a ministry ... to name but a few.

However, I've also experienced the best when there has been careful listening in tough meetings and people have changed their minds, when there has been space for the prophetic and the quiet voice on the margins has been listened to and heeded.

I understand how the church meeting has become a forum for the leaders' plans to be shared with little opportunity for discussion. I understand why many people avoid them like the plague because they do not want a sleepless night.

So where do we go? I believe Fresh Streams is right to want to explore this topic. The time is right to consider...

• Why do we have church members' meetings anyway? It

is fruitful to explore the reasons for this in our history? Its essence is at the heart of our history and principles that, in the gathering community of believers, the Spirit of God is seeking to prompt and guide us in the ways of Christ in our day.

• The church meeting should be the setting where our 'little' Kingdom visions are placed within the glorious, limitless, ongoing purposes of our great God. In our fragility, God deems to use even us as Kingdom partners.

• Who sets the agenda? This is a key question for me. Is it driven by our own parochialism or by a genuine openness to the Spirit? We sing 'be the wind in these sails' but do we mean it? Have we the maturity, prayerfulness and courage to practise this in our life together, as expressed in the church meeting?

This is the latest blog from the Revd Ernie Whalley, president of our Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Agree, disagree? Have your say by following this link <http://bit.ly/1bqs6rD>

visit to Morden Baptist Church, and the leadership that enables Pioneer mission
<http://bit.ly/1g1pCCV>

> Towards a discipleship culture - Andy Glover outlines the role and purpose of the pilot missional community at Hoole Baptist Church in Chester
<http://bit.ly/1g1pSC5>

> Truth, lies and the spirit level - York conference looks at poverty and inequality in Britain today, and the rhetoric surrounding them
<http://bit.ly/1kShAiW>

> The Prescientific Bible, 12 Years a Slave, Orphaned Land, Flat Earth Unroofed, Reflections on Ecumenical Activity: latest reviews <http://bit.ly/1IAN695>

Free webinars on leadership

TWO webinars on leadership have been organised by Urban Expression alongside BMS World Mission and Bristol Baptist College.

The first is on 25 February, where Kerry Coke will look at relational leadership.

She will look at developing a leadership culture which values relational behavior, and identifying and drawing out individual leadership potential in a multicultural and diverse context through relationship.

On 27 March Fran Beckett will explore the subject of leading teams – the positives, pressures and potential.

This will be an exploration of the leadership role in building and leading effective teams. It will include consideration of some of the principles and practicalities of an empowering leadership style, and how vulnerability as a team leader can be a positive thing.

Each webinar, hosted by the Church of the Brethren, starts at 7.30pm, lasting 90 minutes.

To register for either or both of these events contact Stuart Murray Williams at stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk

You will be given details of how to access the webinars. There is no cost.

Find more information at www.urbanexpression.org.uk.

New Angus exhibition

STETHOSCOPES and petticoats – the changing roles of non-conformist women is the title of the next exhibition at the Angus Library and Archive.

The exhibition will be held in March 2014 and will look at the amazing contributions that non-conformist women made to the changing social landscape of Britain and beyond.

The Angus, based at Regent's Park College in Oxford, will

be hosting the exhibition along with talks examining the impact women have had both historically and in the current context.

Tickets are now available for the talk with Hilary Ingram, on the life of Dr Ellen Farrer, a pioneer female doctor who set sail for India in 1891.

To book visit <http://bit.ly/1irUD5>

THE THIRD annual Sam Sharpe Lecture will be delivered by the Revd Dr Delroy Reid Salmon, research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture, Regent's Park College Oxford. The lecture takes place at the House of Praise, 2 Tudor Road, Easton in Bristol on 15 October at 7pm. Tickets are free.

For more on the Sam Sharpe Project, visit www.samsharpeproject.org

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BAPTISMS

Amphill Baptist Church, Bedfordshire: Ellie Rowe 1
Ashurst Drive Baptist Church, Ilford: Bekki Stewart and Kwabena Osei-Asibey 2
Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church, Herts: Tony Huckle 1
North End Baptist Church, Portsmouth: Emily Warden and Wilson Winyu Ngwa 2
Streatham Baptist Church, London: Phenicia Holder, Lamar Omelie Scarlett, Kynisha Rose 3

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> Missional clusters 'small enough to know everyone but large enough to do things' - a