

Silent nights....?

HUNDREDS of carol services that draw on the Christmas Day truces in 1914 have been taking place throughout December.

The *Silent Night* Carol events use material created by the national initiative Hope 14 that help remember the remarkable events 100 years ago when fighting temporarily ceased in the trenches of World War I. Soldiers from both sides sang the well-known carol *Silent Night*, with some even joining together to play football.

Hope 14, which aims to inform and inspire people about Christianity, has been encouraging Christians to host *Silent Night* events in their communities as a way of remembering the sacrifice of so many 100 years ago.

In particular it has invited churches to link with local sports clubs, providing a range of material to help. As a result, dozens of stadia that have never previously staged a carol service have done so this year, with thousands of supporters attending.

One of the biggest events was at the Liberty Stadium, home of Swansea City, which saw more than 3,500 people enjoy an evening of carols, music



and readings. More than 1,000 people attended a *Silent Night* event at Selhurst Park, home of fellow Premier League club Crystal Palace. Hosted jointly by the club alongside Churches in Croydon, it involved manager Neil Warnock reading the Christmas lesson from the gospel of Luke, and was described as “a profoundly moving evening” by the club website.

Rugby and cricket clubs, as well as many other football clubs, some non-league, have also linked up with local churches to stage *Silent Night* events.

Hope’s executive director Roy Crowne said the take-up has “far exceeded expectations”.

He added, ‘Lots of clubs have been hosting the first ever carol

service. Some players have given their testimonies, and these have gone on club websites.

‘At so many clubs the manager has said we must do this again. It’s helped churches develop more of a relationship with their clubs. What a legacy.’

As well as sports stadia, many others have taken up the challenge, with more than 600 events taking place in churches, community centres, pubs and schools. Members of Crech St Michael Baptist Church led a service in Somerset Bridge Primary School in Bridgwater, a new school on a new estate and a significant first for the new community. Castle Hill Baptist Church in Warwick have organised an event in the Roebuck Pub.

Basingstoke Baptist Church used the material when it hosted an evening for the local Women’s Institute. ‘It was well received and a very encouraging evening,’ said minister Trevor Woodget.

Roy added, ‘For me, it’s looking to see where these things are in the culture. Because people get the truce, it’s been a fantastic opportunity to present the gospel. It’s reaching people who would never go to a church carol service.’

2014: The Year in Review

January

The year began with calls for an inquiry into the increasing numbers using foodbanks following a heated Parliamentary debate in December 2013. At that stage the Government was still sitting on its own report into foodbanks.

Elsewhere the controversial C4 programme *Benefits Street* was denounced as “intentionally distorted” by Baptist minister Steve Chalke. Mr Chalke’s Oasis charity had just assumed responsibility for a primary school in the very street featured in the programme, and that month saw him chair a meeting giving the under-fire residents a chance to have their say.

February

Incessant rain and damaging floods dominated early February. We reported on how Baptists were responding in the affected communities, such as the Somerset Levels and the Thames Valley. Wraybury Baptist Church in Berkshire became a community focal point as emergency services – including the army – were drafted in to help the town.

The month also saw an escalation in political unrest in Ukraine, leading to the appointment of Baptist Oleksandr Turchynov as interim President

ahead of elections in May.

March

Lent saw food poverty on the agenda once more with the *End Hunger Fast* campaign, which called on the Government to take action

on welfare, wages and food markets, factors it said had contributed to rising foodbanks. The campaign was supported by our Baptist Union. The remarkable life of Peter Thomas Stanford was featured, a freed slave who would become one of the very first black Baptist ministers in the UK. His story echoed

12 Years a Slave, which won a raft of Oscars in early March.

April

April carried a report on a legal victory for a soup kitchen in east London, which had been threatened with eviction from its town centre location. Its chair of trustees was an elder at Blackhorse Road Baptist in Walthamstow. Details of commemorations to mark the bicentenary of the relationship between Jamaican and British Baptists were shared. Prayers were sought after General Secretary Lynn Green was diagnosed with breast cancer. A report also noted the high number of baptisms

celebrated over Easter.

May

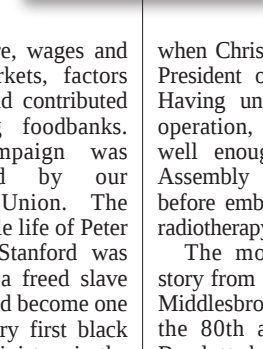
The Baptist Assembly did not take place over the May bank holiday weekend, as normal: rather, 1600 Baptists gathered a week later in West Bromwich,

when Chris Ellis was inducted as President of our Baptist Union. Having undergone a successful operation, Lynn Green was well enough to lead her first Assembly as General Secretary before embarking on a course of radiotherapy.

The month also featured a story from South Bank Church in Middlesbrough, which celebrated the 80th anniversary of Irene Burdett becoming a member there. Fred Perry had yet to win Wimbledon when Irene, now 94, joined the church. Details of Urban Life, a new Baptist-led research centre into pioneering mission, were also shared.

June

The United Navy, Army and Air Force Board, the organisation which sends Baptists and other Free Church chaplains to serve the armed forces, marked its centenary. A community centre run by Altrincham Baptist Church and its local council received a Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service which recognises excellence. We featured a report on Baptist-led Hope 14 activities.



The vital role faith played in overcoming the difficulties faced by the Windrush generation was highlighted in a new dvd resource created by the London Baptist Association.

Meriam Ibrahim, A Sudanese Christian sentenced to death for apostasy, was released.

July

Churches in Yorkshire welcomed the Tour de France, which held its first two stages in the county.

There was a welcome of another sort in the middle of the month, when the Church of England voted to allow women bishops. Our Baptist Union released a statement immediately after the General Synod decision supporting the move. It also highlighted our own Union's journey of Baptist women in ministry which both celebrated advances and recognised there is much to be done in making ministry more accessible to women.

August

A couple of intrepid Baptists strapped on their walking boots: evangelist Ashley Stansfield's 200 mile walk of witness took him from the Lake District to the North Yorkshire Coast. Accountant Dave Hall set off from John O'Groats to Land's End for 40 marathons in 40 days, staying in replica shack

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Bicentenary on R4

A CHRISTIANITY centring the 200th anniversary of the Methodist movement is being celebrated in a new DVD resource created by the London Baptist Association. The DVD, titled 'The Windrush Generation', features a new DVD resource created by the London Baptist Association. It features a new DVD resource created by the London Baptist Association. It features a new DVD resource created by the London Baptist Association.

each night to raise funds for a charity that builds low cost homes for slum dwellers in Sierra Leone. We reported on Ali Boulton's appointment as Pioneer Mission Enabler in the Southern Counties. There was also

a worrying report about Christians being deliberately targeted in Ukraine, including a deadly attack on a Baptist church in Stryansky.

September

Baptists in Scotland spoke of the need for politicians to honour promises following the referendum on independence which took place on 18 September.

Our Baptist Union was one of a number of denominations urging military caution as Parliament met to approve strikes on Islamic State. We also carried a report on the closure of the charity Viz-a-Viz. The official launch of Urban Life took place in Bristol.

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Urban Life launch

A NEW urban mission and witness centre has been launched in Bristol. The new centre, called Urban Life, is a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Baptist Church of England. It will provide a base for evangelism and discipleship in the city.

October

Many of the events the Jamaican and British Bicentenary went ahead in October, including

a series of services at Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham. Unfortunately a technical problem prevented the first of these airing live on BBC Radio 4. The Heart of England Baptist Association announced three appointments to its regional ministry team, with Adrian Argile now Team Leader, succeeding Keith Judson. Elsewhere, with his retirement, Philip Webb brought to a close a remarkable Baptist family ministry spanning almost a century: both Philip's father and grandfather were Baptist ministers.

November

A series of Tributes were paid to David Goodbourn, a Baptist Union Trustee and former General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, who died aged 66. Our Baptist Union pledged its support to the Pray and Fast for the

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Tributes to David

TRIBUTES have been paid to David Goodbourn, a former Baptist Union Trustee, General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, who died on Monday (11th November).

Climate initiative, in the lead up to the crucial climate meeting in Paris next year. Baptists and the University of Oxford honoured the important contribution of Paul Fiddes to theology and life of the church. The rescheduled Bicentenary service finally aired on Radio 4.

December

The most extensive report into the causes of food poverty was published following an All-Parliamentary Inquiry. The Northern Baptist Learning Community reverted to its former name, Northern Baptist College.

New directors at the EA

GAVIN Calver, an accredited Baptist evangelist, has been appointed to the leadership team of the Evangelical Alliance.

Gavin, currently national director of Youth for Christ (YFC), will take up his position as director of mission/England at the Alliance in June 2015.

He succeeds Dr Krish Kandiah, who left his position as director: churches in mission earlier this year to become president of the London School of Theology and founding director of Home for Good.

In this new role, Gavin – who has been a Council member of the Alliance since 2012 – will be responsible for “developing creative initiatives to draw together member organisations into coalitions that serve the Church and help position the Alliance as a catalyst for change”, as well as being a voice for the Church to government and media.

Also joining Gavin on the leadership team is Chine Mbubaegbu, who has been appointed the Alliance's director of communications. Chine, a former journalist, author and head of media and communications, is among the youngest members of the leadership team in the Alliance's history. She is also the EA's first black female director. With both in their 30s, the Alliance said the appointments demonstrate its commitment to “raising up the next generation of leaders”.

Urban Life website

THE website of Urban Life – a new missional and urban training initiative – has been expanded.

Urban Life aims to provide practical, local and accessible training to Christian groups in marginalised places, and launched earlier this year.

Since then work on the website has developed, and now there is now much more content to highlight the ways in which Urban Life will operate.

This includes its Theology-to-go groups, piloting in 2015, its webinars, and Learning Journeys, a course designed specifically for Christian groups who are seeking to engage more deeply and thoughtfully with the overlooked and disadvantaged places in their cities. Learning Journeys will be offered in 2016.

Though still early days, in time the site will offer a range of resources, research and reflections for those interested in

urban mission.

Urban Life has been formed by Bristol Baptist College, Urban Expression, BMS World Mission and the Baptist Union, with the latter providing much of the funding.

It is facilitated by Mike Pears, accredited Baptist minister and member of an Urban Expression team in Bristol.

He said, “We hope that the website will be a helpful resource for those exploring questions about Christian involvement in marginal places, especially in urban communities.

“It's very early days but next year we hope to build up a lot more content.”

Mike, who will be writing a regular blog, added that a key aim of Urban Life is to take training and research directly into people's contexts.

Visit: <http://urbanlife.org/>

JOBS

Chief Executive Officer, Tools With a Mission Chaplains, RAF

For more details visit: www.baptist.org.uk/jobs

DEATH

CAMPBELL, the Revd Veronica born November 1941 and died October 2014. Veronica was pastor from 1991-2008 at Cricklewood Baptist Church before retiring and moving to Plymouth where she was asked to help Catherine Street Baptist Church.

BAPTISMS

- Haddenham-cum-Dinton Baptist Church, Bucks:** Julie Bernard 1
- Norbury Baptist Church, London:** Rebecca Carnegie-Timms 1
- Rugby Baptist Church, Warwickshire:** Linda Gentles 1
- Yardley Wood Baptist Church, Birmingham:** Meg Horton and Jon Tandy . . . 2

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