



11 November, 2015

Treasurer's Home Mission message

Baptists are being encouraged to review their giving to the Home Mission Appeal this year by Baptist Union treasurer Malcolm Broad MBE

Home Mission is the Baptist family purse and has seen a gradual decline from a high point of £4.09m in 2012 to £3.94 in 2014.

With the 2015 Appeal currently slightly down on the previous year, Malcolm is encouraging churches to make an extra donation to this year's giving.

'If every church in our Union gives at least an extra £100 to Home Mission this year we would again surpass the £4million mark,' he said. 'So my challenge to each of you is to give at least an extra £100 on top of what you have already agreed to give this year. If £100 is too much for some of our smaller churches aim to give at least £50 extra.'

He also repeated his challenge to churches to commit to giving at least five per cent of their General Fund to Home Mission. Malcolm first made this challenge when he became our Union's treasurer nearly eight years ago.

'We know that if every church gave at least five per cent of their General Fund income per annum, the Appeal would reach £7million,' he said.

'I ask you to hold that thought seriously in your minds because such an investment in the future would ensure our big vision becomes a reality.' Home Mission is vital to our Union's vision of "growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission", he continued.

It funds more than 200 grants to local churches, as well as the work of Associations and Specialist Teams. Or, to put it another way, noted General Secretary the Revd Lynn Green at the recent Baptist Union Council gathering, Home Mission is used in four main ways: Planting and pioneering; equipping our existing churches for mission; investing in Godly leadership; and having a voice in the "public square".

Home Mission has been the subject of a review in the Loaves and Fishes Project, whose recommendations have been brought to the Baptist Steering Group and Council. The recommendations include a name change.

This autumn churches has seen a new Home Mission leaflet (pictured), which carries stories involving newly accredited ministers in West Bromwich, Ellesmere Port, Ramsbottom and New Mill.

For more examples of how Home Mission is used by Baptist churches and individuals to bring the love of God to their communities visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/hmstories>

Malcolm added, 'We do have a big vision, but 'thankfully our God is an awesome God.'

'We all need to trust in Him that as we are faithful in our giving, particularly to help others to faith and to help those who yet have not experienced the love of Christ in their lives, being a part of the Baptists Together movement God's kingdom can indeed be brought about.'

Donate via your church or individually through the donate option at the top of the Baptists Together website www.baptist.org.uk

**Benefit cuts to change behaviour:
unpopular, ineffective and immoral, say Churches
Majority of UK adults believe benefits should be high enough to cover families' basic costs**

Major UK Churches are warning that the Government's Welfare Reform and Work Bill marks a dangerous shift away from a core principle of the Welfare State and will make poor people even poorer.

A YouGov survey commissioned by the Churches has also revealed that 61 per cent of UK adults believe that welfare benefits should be set at a level that allows families with children to cover their basic costs.

In contrast, only 25 per cent of those polled said they thought that benefits should be set deliberately low to encourage families to find work or get more work.

The Churches' report reveals that the Benefit Cap, which reduces families' benefits by an average of over £3,500 per year, has only resulted in 4.7 per cent of families finding work. However, 46 per cent of families affected by the Cap experienced increasing problems with rent arrears.

This is despite the Government's claims that reducing the amount of benefits people are entitled to is an effective way of moving people into work.

'No child should be left without enough in order to motivate their parents,' said Paul Morrison, Public Issues Policy Adviser for the Methodist Church and author of the report.

'If children live in a family which doesn't have enough money they are more likely to die young, do worse at school, and experience worse health. Many of these families are already in work and working very hard. Any policy that claims that taking £1,000 from a family will enhance the life-chances of its children, as the Bill does, is not only supremely questionable but morally flawed.'

The report, entitled "Enough: Our responsibility to meet families' needs", has been published by the Baptist Union, Church Action on Poverty, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, Quakers in Britain, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Reformed Church, who together represent more than 840,000 people in Britain.

It highlights how the Bill threatens to undermine a founding principle of the welfare state: namely, that the amount families receive in benefits should be sufficient to meet their basic needs. The Churches say the Bill will break the link between what people need and the amount of support they can receive. Families with children will be hardest hit by this change.

'Fairness to the taxpayer should not be achieved at the expense of unfairness to children,' Mr Morrison continued. 'As Christians we believe

all people are made in God's image. We do not believe that we should ever deliberately deprive a person, a family, a child of enough to thrive or to fulfill their God-given potential. We are asking that the welfare state holds to its founding principles, and seeks to provide enough so that every child can have the best chance in life.'

Small Church is a big deal

Hilary Taylor reports on efforts being made to resource and connect our Union's small churches

2015 has been a year of change around our Baptist Union as some Associations have taken up the challenge of gathering small churches together for days of encouragement, networking, teaching and eating.

The London Baptist Association's Small Church Connexion (SCC) have been holding events twice a year since 2003 for the smaller churches (those with 40 people or less) such as resource days, workshops, retreats and celebrations.

In October 2014, a meeting was held in London to which all Associations were invited. Representatives from seven Associations met to discuss small church life in both urban and rural situations and how best to encourage the churches.

The Associations all do great work among small churches but don't often get them to meet together for mutual encouragement. As the LBA had experience, two of the SCC team were asked to provide a draft programme for small church day conferences which could be rolled out across the country.

Central, Northern, East Midlands and South West Baptist Associations have all run with the idea in 2015, tweaking it to suit their locality. The days have all been well received by the small churches. Here are some comments:

'Well worth travelling 85 miles'

'I have appreciated the day – it was excellent'

'I enjoyed every minute – no waffle, no wasted words, all practical stuff'

'Fantastic day – so helpful'

'When is the next conference?'

All Associations were all invited back to London in October 2015 to feedback on the events and to discuss the way ahead. Ten Associations were represented alongside our guests Jenni Entrican, current Baptist Union President, and Simon Mattholie, an accredited Baptist minister who is the chief executive of Rural Ministries. The feedback was very positive and discussion lively!

Looking ahead, it was suggested that the Associations hold a variety of events, to scratch where the churches are itching. What are the local issues? What resources do they lack? Do they want training? What subjects do they want to discuss?

Another suggestion was for a newsletter to be circulated to all the small churches within an Association as happens across the LBA. The SCC contacts and connects all 108 small churches about four times a year. It is full of stories, dates of upcoming events and ideas. The common feeling of isolation needs to be eliminated, so it's a good tool. Central Baptist Association has already taken up this idea.

Websites were also discussed. Each Association already puts all local events, news and resources on their websites, but it was decided to refer people to the LBA website (londonbaptist.org.uk) Small Church Connexion pages for specific good stories and resources. Additional resources include the blog I write for small churches (smallchurches.wordpress.com), as well as my book *A Toolbox for Small Churches*.

Let us celebrate our small churches, which make up half of our denomination, encouraging them to reach out in mission. Many small churches are doing amazing work in Jesus' name, often on a very limited budget, impacting not only their local communities but also globally.

It really is not about numbers; its about health. Let's think Kingdom as we work together and learn from each other across our Baptist Union.

Hilary Taylor is the Small Church Enabler for the London Baptist Association, and a member of Ashford Common Baptist Church

**Generous and committed but lacking mentors
Giving, mentorship and finding a spouse are key concerns for Christian young adults, a new report has revealed**

Building tomorrow's Church today: the views and experiences of young adults in the UK Church, was published by the Evangelical Alliance and launched at a special event on board the HMS President, Victoria Embankment, London on Monday (26 October).

The report focuses on millennial Christians – those aged between 18 and 37. The young adults surveyed were committed church attenders, with 89 per cent attending church weekly, with another 10 per cent attending at least monthly.

Findings: generosity and frustrations

Despite living in cash-strapped times millennial Christians are extremely generous, the report found. A combined total of almost half (47 per cent) give away at least a tenth of their money. Black and Minority Ethnic Christians (BMEs) are markedly more generous – with 60 per cent giving away at least a tenth of their income, compared to 44 per cent of white British young adults.

The report also found that almost three quarters of respondents stated faith as the most important factor in the decisions they make. However, the research raises concerns that a quarter of young adults said that older people in their church struggle to relate with them and a fifth were thinking about leaving.

The survey also reveals several frustrations: the Church seems to be doing less well in helping young adults to find a marriage partner and develop leadership skills. Almost a third of respondents said they don't have a Christian mentor, or a group of friends they are honest and accountable to about their life and faith and a third said their church was not really helping them to live out their faith at work.

Differences between white British and BME respondents

The research highlights fascinating differences between white British and BME respondents with white British respondents being consistently much less conservative in their views.

Areas of disparity include views on the authority of the Bible, evolution, homosexuality, cohabiting and marrying a non-Christian. Some 81 per cent of BMEs think cohabitation is not something an unmarried Christian couple should do compared to 63% of white British Christian millennials. A further 73 per cent of BME millennials believed that the Bible in its original manuscript is without error compared to 52% of white British young adults.

However, when the opportunity arose to talk about their faith, 81% of white British millennials had shared their faith in the last month compared to 61 per cent of BMEs.

Bible-reading seems to be less popular with millennials than prayer. Around 63 per cent of young adults surveyed are praying daily, while only a quarter are reading their Bibles every day.

The study, which also breaks down the statistics by gender, reveals that men are more likely to commit to a daily devotional than women (31 per cent v 23 per cent). There are no significant differences in prayer habits by ethnicity.

Teaching and where it comes from

The report states that less than half, (49 per cent), said that the teaching they find most benefits them is teaching from their church – meaning leaders cannot assume that it is their preaching that most influences millennials in their congregations.

It illustrates that other channels such as podcasts, online blogs and social media benefit them in their pursuit towards a closer relationship with God.

Analysis

Steve Clifford, general director of the Evangelical Alliance, said, 'Our research proves that not all young adults are leaving the Church in droves. They are passionate about prayer, sharing their faith and giving. However there is still work to be done. It is concerning that millennials lack suitable mentors.'

'Mentoring is the most effective tool we have in undoing past mistakes the Church has made and transferring wisdom gained over a lifetime. It is a privilege. Within each Christian leader is the potential for limitless reproduction. We can do this.'

Yemi Adedeji, director of the One People Commission of the Evangelical Alliance, said, 'Peer pressure is a huge reality for Christian millennials who can sometimes feel compelled to behave a certain way in order to fit in to student or work life.'

'As church leaders we have a mandate to use the results of this survey to examine how we are engaging with young people and to consider how we can listen to the next generation and position them for success in every area of their lives.'

**Bibles handed to Serbian army to 'improve respect for the enemy'
More than 4,000 New Testaments are being given to the Serbian army in a bid 'to prevent future war crimes', according to a senior military figure.**

More than 4,000 New Testaments will be handed out to soldiers over the coming months. The Bible would 'improve respect for the enemy' according to Colonel Dr Sasha Milutinovic, Chief of Religion Section, General Staff of the Serbian Army.

He said, 'I hope as a result of this we will never see a war crime in the Serbian Army again. 'In the past we made some mistakes. But now we not only want to improve our morals but to come back to faith in eternal life and to eternal values.'

The New Testaments have been produced by Bible Society and will be distributed free later this year. It is hoped that, in time, all 33,000 members of the Serbian Armed Forces will receive a copy.

The General Secretary of the Bible Society of Serbia, Vera Mitic, welcomed the move. 'Soldiers can learn a lot about military service from the Bible,' she said. 'I strongly believe that the Bible should be a spiritual and moral guide for our soldiers.'

She added that she hoped the scheme would 'inspire' other Bible Societies in the Balkans to provide Bibles to their armies.

The former head of the Serbian Army, Ratko Mladic, is currently on trial at the Hague for war crimes. He denies 11 charges dating to the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. However, during the siege of Sarajevo, some 10,000 people – most of them Muslim – were killed by the Serb forces.

More than 8,000 Bosnian men and boys were killed in a massacre at Srebrenica in just three days. This became known as the worst war crime in Europe since World War II. Earlier this year a judge at the Hague upheld charges against five former Serbian Army officers for their role in the Srebrenica massacre.

Baptisms:

Amphill Baptist Church, Bedfordshire: Sarah Feil

Bethany Baptist Church, Cardiff: Joseph Taylor

Calvary Baptist Church, Cardiff: Janet Hamilton

Leamington Spa Baptist Church, Warwickshire: Emma Archer and Grace Cole

Limbury Baptist Church, Luton: Oloruntomi Ifepariola

Wokingham Baptist Church, Berkshire: Julia Piotrowski and Jade Gurney
Beaumont

Know anyone preparing for baptism? Check out our new range of cards

Send your baptism notifications to phobson@baptist.org.uk

Baptism stories

Most Baptist churches have comfortable facilities for baptism, but two members of the fellowship at Dover Baptist Church recently chose to go through the waters in a very different way.

It was a Sunday afternoon in Dover, and Kearsney Abbey Park was busy with families enjoying the late summer sunshine, when two female figures in long white dresses trimmed with gold were seen walking along the main path and disappearing into a glade by a stream.

Were they angels, bridesmaids, or actors from Dover Castle who had lost their way? No. They were a mother and her daughter coming to be baptised in the river.

Little by little, parents called their children, groups packed away their picnics, and a crowd gathered in the glade. The two were baptised amid modern and traditional songs, as well as prayers and hugs from members of several local churches.

Rowan testified that she had heard Jesus call her as a little girl, and that she was responding by being baptised.

Her mother Jan said she had also been called by Jesus as a child, but had taken rather longer to respond. She said, "Revival is happening all around us in this town," and urged churches as one body to become part of what God is doing here.

The minister, Graham Stanford said, "I believe it is vital for the church to come out of its buildings and be more visible in the community, so it has been a pleasure to be able to change my normal practice and conduct these baptisms in the open air. And praise God, it was a warm sunny day!"

Death:

WILLIAMS, Rosemary

Rosemary Williams died at peace on 26 October following cancer, with Edward (married for 59 years) and their three daughters beside her. She was much loved and respected as an RE teacher, as well as sharing fully in her husband's ministry, interfaith contacts, etc - 10 years with BMS at Serampore College (India), then at Sparkbrook (Birmingham) and Alcester - retiring to Malvern.

Jobs

iKnow Church and Church Edit web developer

Executive Director, Mercy Ships UK

Chief Executive, Parkside Residential Home

Pension Trustee and Consultative Group Roles with Baptists Together

For more information on all these positions, visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:

Inter Faith week

Inter Faith week takes place 15-21 November. Having a special week provides a focal point, helping to open inter faith activity up to a wider audience so that more and more people are made aware of the importance of this vital work and are able to participate in it.

For more information, see www.interfaithweek.org

Andy Williams, moderator of the Baptist Inter Faith Working Group, has written a prayer, which can be found here:

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/452886/A_Prayer_for.aspx

20,000 welcomes: an Advent vigil for refugees

This event is arranged by the Churches Refugee Network to take place on Tuesday 8 December, from 10.00 to 4.30 pm, at St Margaret's Church, Westminster. All are welcome, for the whole or part of the day. It will be structured around three main themed sessions: Re-member, re-member: exodus and exile (10.00 to 12.00); Blown by the winds: conflict, climate change and current pressure (12.00 to 2.00 pm); Consider yourselves at home (2.00 to 4.00 pm); with an epilogue from 4.00 to 4.30 pm. All are invited afterwards to attend evensong in the Abbey.

Get in the Picture

Registrations have now opened for Get in the Picture 2015, an opportunity to re-experience the Christmas story in a creative and fun way.

<http://www.getinthepicture.org.uk/>

Pension roadshows

Pension and finance roadshows are taking place across Associations between now and January.

Visit

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/449747/Pension_Finance_Roadshows.aspx