



25 May, 2016 News:

'Anointed to do good'

New President Rupert Lazar expanded on his presidential theme “Anointed to do good” in conversation with Lynn Green during the lunchtime session

The theme is taken from Acts 10:38. Doing good is a call on every single one of us to go out and be a blessing in whatever situation we find ourselves, ‘being proactive about people’s well being’.

‘Look at people with soft eyes, tender eyes, and do what Jesus would have done,’ Rupert said.

In addition, the theme is a reminder of the gospel power within us. Too many of us have lost confidence in the power of the gospel to change lives, Rupert said.

‘It’s not about compartmentalising, but recognising that we have the example of Jesus to follow, and the power through the Holy Spirit.

‘It’s dynamic, flexible, more about the life we are living, in the moment. Are we filled with the Holy Spirit? Yes. Do we have power? Yes we do.

‘Once we start compartmentalising we run into problems. Let’s not leave evangelism to the experts, as Justin Welby recently said. I don’t think Jesus compartmentalised.’

Consequently, he struggles when people claim they have 'no gifts'. 'Every Christian has at least one gift. There is nothing too small or insignificant. Indeed, we have many gifts to build the church.'

He did not choose the theme, he explained. ‘I was thinking and praying about it. It was in the midst of all that, one night it popped into my head. I knew it was from God, and from that perspective it I didn’t choose, it was chosen to give to our family.’

Born in Trinidad, Rupert is the first President of our Baptist Union to have been born in the Caribbean. There has previously been a Sri Lankan (Fred George 1997-8) and a Ghanaian (Kingsley Appiagyei in 2009-10), and in 2006-7 Kate Coleman, who was born in Ghana before moving to the UK aged three, became the first black female President of our Union.

Rupert described it as a 'tremendous honour, privilege, and who knows where it's going to take us? It's going to be fun!'

Baptists Together - Inspiring One Another

Key messages from our Union were shared at the AGM

The Baptist Union Annual General Meeting began by General Secretary Lynn Green giving an overview of our vision and culture.

Baptists Together is a movement of 2,000 churches, 13 Regional Associations, five Colleges and three Specialist Teams. It is 'all of us and all the different ways we connect at different times,' she explained.

We are a 'dynamic, relational, missional movement,' with a common vision of 'Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission.'

She said it's not just what we do that is important, 'we also need to attend to who we are and how we behave!' We want to intentionally create a culture where we are 'spirit-led and Christ-centred, embracing adventure and serious about discipleship, inspiring others to be all that God created them to be, to feel like one team and to share a hunger for God's coming Kingdom.'

She explained that to enable the vision God has given us to become reality, our work is concentrated in four main areas:

- Pioneering and planting,
- Equipping churches for mission,

- investing in Godly leaders
 - and enabling Baptist voices to be heard in the public square
- A powerpoint presentation followed, giving a financial update. Thanks were given for the Home Mission Appeal which raised £3.83m, an excellent response given the financial pressures churches are under. It was nevertheless a reduction from the £4.1m the Appeal raised in 2012. Lynn said the presentation highlighted the 'significant financial challenges' we all share, such as low interest rates and pension deficit contributions rising. However, we are also taking the initiative with our Loaves and Fishes Project, and a range of projects aimed at increasing our income are just beginning. But while finances were important, Lynn continued, prayer and dependence on the Lord was the most important thing. She reminded delegates of the picture of Beacons of Prayer being fanned into flame across the country she'd been given last year. God was calling us to prayer so that we could make space for Him to speak and move. 'Many churches are using Beacons of Prayer as a focus for seeking God and I find this incredibly encouraging,' Lynn said. 'I want to encourage you to keep on praying and seeking the Lord. 'I want to challenge you to devote time to seeking God whenever you gather together – services,

prayer times, church meetings, small groups, missional teams – making room for the Lord to speak and move.

'The danger is we can be so busy. But the call to God is to wait for him. If we want to act out God's mission, we need to be in step with him.'

Fit for Mission

Stuart Davison, who leads the Baptists Together Mission forum, then gave an update.

As churches we need to have some idea of where we're going and what we're about. However, the Fit4Mission study revealed that many churches either do not have a clarifiable vision, or that such a vision is only in progress, and not complete.

It means that sometimes we throw back the big opportunities God gives us,

Stuart said, telling a story of an inexperienced fisherman who would throw his bigger catches back into the water because he only had a small frying pan. 'At times our faith is not big enough. But nothing is too big for God.'

However, he continued, 'there is a lot going on', citing the recent 40 days of Good News initiative.

Stuart also spoke of a new church in one of the most deprived areas of the country that is seeking membership of our Union. It had many initiatives, such as film nights, and was preparing for its first baptism. Our vision is "Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission" - mission is central to who we are.

Ignite

Ministries Team leader Andy Hughes was invited to give an update on the Ignite Project, which looks at various aspects of how we best support the churches, associations and colleges which make up Baptists Together in our mission in an ever changing world.

The Ignite report, led by Phil Jump, was completed last year and had various suggestions. Its heart was all about equipping God's people for mission in its various forms through investing in Godly leadership, said Andy.

The first major outcome of the report is something called Marks of Ministry, which highlights the 'Christ-like qualities' ministers exhibit, rather placing than an emphasis on what they can do. Baptist Union Council has adopted Marks of Ministry as the basis on which we accredit ministers, and it will start being used in September 2017 for new ministerial candidates.

Other aspects of Ignite which are currently being looked at are covenant, our commitment to walk together under God (a group is being drawn together to flesh out what covenant means for ministers and churches). We are also exploring how we most effectively encourage ministers in their continual ministerial development, through the opportunity to engage in a bi-annual review process.

Andy said there's lots of work to be done, but the approach is collaborative, and encouraged anyone wishing to contribute to make contact via the Ignite email address.

'Ignite is about fanning into flame the gifts that God has placed in all of us so that the body of Christ is built up and lives are changed by the gospel,' he concluded.

Response to Same Sex Marriage

Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader, explained how since the 2013 Assembly we have continued to use the 'talking together' email address to collect all responses from individuals and churches as our conversations around various aspects of same sex relationships progressed.

In March Baptist Union Council 'clearly discerned' that it should offer to our Union the statement concerning potential registration of our buildings for same sex marriage.

'The statement re-affirmed Christian marriage and recognised our ecclesiology, it encouraged creative mission and it encouraged a commitment to unity in diversity,' said Stephen.

The letter was communicated to ministers and churches, and 108 responses have been received (from a distribution list of 4,500 addresses).

'It's blatantly obvious from all those responses and the many conversations that we do not agree,' said Stephen, 'and there is a breadth of opinion in our union.'

He said it's important to remember that what Council did in March was to provide 'a wider context for discernment as part of our walking together and watching over each other'.

This wider discernment should be used by congregations 'to aid their own response as they seek the mind of Christ in their local context,' said Stephen. 'This has always been a part of Baptist shared life and at its best does not run contrary to our Declaration of Principle.'

In terms of what happens next, all concerns will be shared with Council in October, and the Baptist Steering Group (BSG) will continue to reflect on the concerns - pastoral, missional and the centrality of the DoP - raised. Members of the BSG were on hand to talk to delegates during the lunch session. Our Ministerial Recognition Committee is also giving further consideration to the guidelines that sit alongside the Ministerial Rules: their reflection will be taken to Council in October.

Stephen concluded by urging delegates: 'In our reflection together, we must continue to reaffirm our pastoral and our missional commitment to all people irrespective of their sexuality, and that will require each one of us to commit to an even deeper understanding of the differing convictions that lie at the heart of

this matter.'

The full text of Stephen's update is [here](#).

A change of treasurer

The session continued with a thank you to Malcolm Broad, who was stepping down after serving our Union as treasurer for eight years. Lynn thanked Malcolm not only for his financial expertise and experience, but his personal faith, wisdom, and commitment to our vision for mission.

His wife Rachel joined him on stage and was also thanked for her part in releasing Malcolm for this role. Speaking at Baptist Union Council earlier this year, Malcolm said it had been 'a huge privilege to serve as treasurer'.

In all he has travelled 65,000 miles, attended more than 400 meetings, worked with three moderators of the trustee board, three finance directors and two general secretaries. The 'best part of the role' has been getting out to local churches through treasurer or trustee training and the more recent pension roadshows.

He said that following the restructuring in 2012-13, our Union's finances are now in good shape - but it's not without its challenges. The Home Mission appeals have been disappointing, and he said there needs to be 'a fresh appeal to churches to get behind Baptists Together.' He also cited amounts held by some of our churches, Associations and colleges, adding that our Union needs to hear and observe the story of the widow who gave everything she had to Jesus.

'God has given us an abundance of resources, so we can afford to give more.'

Following this delegates voted unanimously in favour of a resolution appointing John Levick as treasurer for the year to Assembly 2017. John's name had been brought by Baptist Union Council.

Afterwards John said, 'It is humbling to be asked to take on the role of Baptist Union Treasurer. In taking on the role I hope my background as a Deacon, Church Treasurer, Church Secretary, an Association Treasurer and having sat on various Union bodies in the last few years will give me both an understanding of the issues facing churches, Associations and our Union, and some insight into the ways we may go forward as Baptists Together.'

'We have a number of financial challenges but under the Lord's guidance and working together as a Baptist family I believe they can be addressed. My prayer is

that the Lord will provide the finance we need (not desire) so we can support work across Baptists Together which will build the Kingdom.”

Delegates were invited to welcome both John and Dianne Tidball, who was recently appointed Vice President of our Union (pictured).

‘One Million Lives Transformed’

The recently-published BMS mission strategy 2016-2020 formed the framework for its keynote session at this year’s Baptist Assembly

The strategy highlights the faith stretching targets for each of BMS’s seven ministries, namely church, education, justice, development, health, leadership and relief.

‘One million doesn’t sound that many,’ said General Director David Kerrigan. ‘But between now and 2020 we plan to work in some of the world’s most fragile states, and among the most marginalised and least evangelised communities on the planet.

‘That’s going to be hard. But we believe it is what God is calling us to, and we believe he is faithful and able to achieve more even than we have planned.’

David made it clear this was ‘not about numbers’, but ‘transformation’. BMS’s highest goal is still to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

The goals are about being ‘intentional in our mission, strategic in our approach and responsible with the support of the Baptist family to make the most significant impact possible,’ he explained.

A short film was shown highlighting the mission strategy.

The session proceeded to show what the four values that underpin BMS – love, integrity, faith, and excellence - mean in its work.

‘Our faith is in a God who is bigger than regimes,’ said David. We believe that if we humble ourselves and pray, and if we sacrifice for his work, he is able through us to bring real transformation.’

He told story of five year old Youssef, who was malnourished and hadn’t walked for two years when he came to a hospital BMS helps run in Chad.

'Thanks to God's grace and the work of our medical personnel, he literally walked out of that hospital. He's alive. His life has been transformed.'

There was an audible gasp when the story of Sanjay the church planter was shared. A devout Muslim all his life, he was given a tract while in hospital with cancer. In the darkness he prayer to Jesus and was healed. Giving his life to Jesus, he's now a BMS-supported church planter who had planted 50 house churches, all made up of Muslim background believers.

Working with integrity 'means transparency about BMS stewardship of the resources entrusted to us', said Val Stevens, BMS Director of Finance.

She introduced treasurer Robert Ashurst, who said there had been a surplus in the last financial year.

This had been largely due to legacies being higher than predicted. BMS was 'very grateful', but there was 'no room for complacency'.

BMS has two long term financial challenges, he continued: the closed defined benefit pension scheme, which has been adversely affected by low interest rates; and the challenge of sustaining its income in order to fulfil its strategy of transforming 1m lives.

Giving has remained 'broadly constant', but 'hasn't kept pace' with inflation, Robert said, encouraging people to 'please keep supporting BMS in your praying, giving, and your going.'

Elsewhere delegates approved the commencement of a process intended to lead to BMS becoming an incorporated charity.

The session also introduced the new BMS Syria's Forgotten Families resource. David reiterated the need for prayer for this appeal, amid the continuing crisis and political deadlock in Syria which is seemingly too complex to fix.

'I encourage you to dig deep, and I encourage to use this resource,' said David.

Ending the session, David also made an appeal for prayer 'that God will raise up men and women to come and serve with us.'

'We have been incredibly blessed, but we are going through a little dip,' he said. 'Amongst your churches may God call your best workers.'

Night Shift pioneers invited to Buckingham

Palace

Two Hereford Baptists were honoured by the Queen earlier this month (May 10) with an invitation to a Buckingham Palace garden party for their services to local revellers and partygoers

Brian and Mair Granthier, of Hill Farm, Dinedor, were prompted 13 years ago to create a safe and peaceful haven for late-night clubbers in Commercial Road.

Members of Hereford Baptist Church, they were given permission to open the front of the church on Saturday nights and early Sunday mornings as a place for clubbers to have a rest, tell their story to people who would listen without judging, or just have a coffee and use the toilet. They have been leading a team who have been doing this ever since.

Brian Granthier explained what prompted them to start Night Shift. He said: 'In a word, it was rubbish! It was the fact that the forecourt on Sunday morning was in a terrible state. People who came into town at night said that we were the black spot on the road, so we decided we needed the light of Jesus to shine out on Saturday night.

'We started on the second Saturday of November 2002. We sat in the foyer with a meal of lasagne and played board games. We didn't dare go out because a police friend had told us to keep ourselves locked in because, he said, 'It's a dangerous mob out there'.

'However over the years we have found a friendly bunch and have made friends with club staff and bouncers. The bouncers come into Night Shift and are amazed to see people they have thrown out for being drunk and disorderly drinking tea and chatting to us.

'Someone, seeing us in our hi-vis tabards, said: "Gosh this must be a rough city, even the church has got bouncers!" '

The team frequently hear people say they are grateful that there are people around who can help when it's needed.

There have been stories of lives changed and encouragements remembered. Several people have come back and told the team "I don't know if you realise how much you helped me".

One couple met through Night Shift and subsequently got married, and the speech at the wedding mentioned how Night Shift had changed their lives.

Mair Granthier said: 'Night Shift has had quite an impact. We now work alongside Street Pastors, and we were put on the radio link and recognised as part of the night-time economy. There have been no real scary moments, and we have never felt threatened. People who come in look out for each other, and if someone says or does something inappropriate the others say 'We don't do things like that here'."

She added, 'Being invited to the Palace garden party is such an honour for Night Shift and for all the people who have given up their Saturday nights over the years – 20 to 30 people in total volunteering over the years, sometimes from other churches as well.

Tunisia: life after Sousse

BMS World Mission is helping to develop health services for the dying and disabled in post Arab Spring, post terror attacks Tunisia

Put Tunisia in a search engine and one of the first things you are likely to see is advice against all but essential travel to the North African country.

The 2015 terrorist attacks, most notably in the beach resort of Sousse where 39 people lost their lives (30 of whom were British), have made Tunisia a no-go zone for tourists. But BMS Director for Mission Peter Dunn, who visited the country last week, feels that the attacks Tunisia in an unfair light, and in particular, given an unfair impression of Tunisians.

"Tunisia in many ways is the country that went through the experience of the Arab Spring and came out relatively peaceably at the end of it," says Peter. "When that atrocity [Sousse] was happening, local unarmed people were trying to disarm the shooter. Tunisian people as a whole feel ashamed and would say, 'This is not our people – we are a peaceful people.'"

Peter, together with Philip Halliday, BMS Team Leader for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, were in Tunisia last week to be updated on the work that BMS workers are doing in the country. No BMS personnel left Tunisia following the terrorist attacks, but rather re-dedicated themselves to helping transform the provision of palliative care and support for Tunisians with disabilities and their

families.

Both of these areas have been neglected in the past, often for cultural reasons. Having a disability can be a huge challenge for someone in a Middle Eastern country like Tunisia. “If people are disabled, there can be a view that they are disabled because of some wrongdoing in the life of their family... or because of some wrong or sin in their life,” Peter says. “People with disabilities can therefore almost have that shame upon themselves.”

BMS has been supporting special needs education in Tunisia since 2002 and over the last four years has been involved in a programme to promote social, economic and educational inclusion for people with disabilities and to develop the quality and opportunities for community-based care. This has included training for educators and families of people with disabilities. A mother of a disabled child felt incredibly encouraged after attending a seminar on self-advocacy, the practice of encouraging those with disabilities to speak for themselves and control their own affairs, rather than others automatically assuming responsibility for them.

“The seminar has been very useful. I have changed my attitude,” she says. “I have started again to use the hearing aid, glasses and prosthesis for my child. The seminar has helped me to not stop hoping, and to work on what is working – my child’s abilities.”

An educator of disabled children who also received training from BMS and our partner organisation felt a lot more confident about teaching her group. “She finally felt like she knew how to come up with new objectives for her lessons and her expectations of her students had significantly increased and had seen results,” Silas, Sector Co-ordinator of the Disability programme, said in his report on the project.

As with disabilities, palliative care is helping to change attitudes in Tunisia, says Peter, thanks in part to the work of BMS. “Very often people when they’re dying are simply left to die,” he says. “Palliative care journeys with them and their wider family at a time of real stress and strain, enabling them to preserve their dignity, be that in a home or hospital setting.”

Until the end of 2015, BMS worker Louise* was one of the team building up the provision of palliative care in Tunisia. “When you are dying and you don’t have enough medication to control pain, you are living in poverty where there are no windows in your house, and there is no running water, life is so much more difficult,” Louise says. “People should not be dying in pain. Palliative care is

incredibly important.”

The emphasis of the BMS team is on making professionals and families more aware of the benefits of palliative care to those that are dying and providing training to enable a better quality of service for palliative care patients.

Whether terror or tourists will return to Tunisia is not certain, but BMS is as dedicated to improving the lives of ordinary Tunisians, as it is to transforming lives around the world.

Baptisms: Albany Park Baptist Church, Bexley, London: Abigail Clare May

**Amphill Baptist Church, Bedfordshire: Patrick Dear and Amber Watts
Bognor Regis Baptist Church (Opengate), Sussex: Sam Sargent & Emily Martin**

Burton Baptist Latimer Baptist Church, Northants: Daisy Weller, Dale Smith, Joel Picket

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gravesend: Hilary and Philip Tucker, John Smith, Joy Ogunlola

Hertford Baptist Church, Hertfordshire: x2 High Street Baptist Church, Tring: Ruban Nelson

London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft, Suffolk: Josh Sturman, Jack Langer, Abbie Struman

**New Milton Baptist Church, Hampshire: Jack Austin and Elaine Rowe
Newcastle Baptist Church, Staffordshire: Nicola Stevens
Rosehill Baptist Church, Burnley: Eric Heywood
Saltash Baptist Church, Cornwall: Paul Gerry**

Somersham Baptist Church, Cambridgeshire: Morgan and Mette Volis, Rachael Daniels

**Swaffham Baptist Church, Norfolk: Roy Stevens
Sudbury Baptist**

**Church, Suffolk: Mel Taylor Tabernacle Baptist Church, Penarth:
Caleb Douglas Wallington Baptist Church, Greater London: Julia
Turek-Osagie**

Baptism stories:

We enjoyed a great time of celebration, when Julia Turek-Osagie was baptised on Pentecost Sunday, May 15th, writes secretary Fran Poole. Julia is from Austria and, joined by her friend Martina, she sang the Lord's Prayer in German. Her testimony told how she grew up in a lively Catholic Church. She joined Wallington Baptist Church Fellowship, several years ago and has grown closer to her Lord, gradually accepting the call to witness to her faith in baptism. She is active in the Children's

Work and, along with her lovely family, is a valued and greatly loved member of the Church.

It was wonderful to baptise Morgan and Mette Volis, a Danish couple who have come to faith in the six months they have lived in the community and worshipped at our church. I also had the great privilege of baptising my daughter, Rachael Daniels. A very special Easter for all of us.

Ordination:

On May 7th at 3pm Chester Road Baptist Church held an ordination service for Mark Francis-Green. Mark felt a call to ministry in 2011 and with the support of the Chester Road and HEBA he became our Minister in Training and attended Bristol Baptist College. The culmination of his studies took place on Saturday when he was ordained by Revd David Ellis our Regional Minister. Not only is Mark now an ordained minister but he is leading a successful church plant in Castle Vale. Chester Road Baptist Church wishes Mark every success in his new ministry.

Peter Vincent, Deacon

Jobs Associate Pastor, Southall Baptist Church Tutor in Old Testament, Spurgeon's College

Events/notices:

Free UK Genealogy is a registered charity (number 1096940) committed to supporting the transcription of public records and making these available as free access public databases. Ten thousand volunteers have contributed more than 350,000,000 records.

Free UK Genealogy is willing to consider transcribing records from Baptist churches, and would also like to hear from anyone wishing to volunteer as a transcriber or photographer. For more details or to discuss individual requests, please contact Dr

Pat Reynolds, Executive Director, on
pat.reynolds@freeukgen.org.uk or 0 1904 541411 / 07943 145
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Visit the website: www.freereg.org.uk

Sailors' Society, a Christian maritime welfare charity, has launched a brand new service resource pack for churches wishing to celebrate Sea Sunday and give thanks for seafarers, the 'heroes of the sea'. Sea Sunday, held this year on 10 July with the theme of Noah and 'My Hero', gives churches around the world the chance to come together to remember seafarers and pray for them, their families and those who support them.

The pack includes a sermon written by John Risbridger, minister and team leader at Above Bar Church, Southampton, and chair of Keswick Ministries, and Sunday School resources by Lisa Edwards, children and families pastor at Guildford Baptist Church.

Visit www.seasundayhero.org

Immersive Experience 21-24 November 2016

This 4 day residential will help you to experience and reflect on the theology and practice of highly contextualised expressions of church and mission. Includes time with Church from Scratch (an incarnational church which is a network of gatherings without a central premises or Sunday services), Shared Space (a Christian social enterprise) and 57 West bit.ly/1Tu9z8N

Missing friend

I wondered if anyone in the church could help me find a friend who I have lost touch with? Her name is Cathy Richards, she married and became Cathy Ndlovu. We trained as nurses in St Albans in 1983-6 and we were in touch until the late 80s, possibly longer, so she will be in her 50s now. She was a committed Christian, I think Baptist and attended church in the St Albans area. I am afraid I cannot remember which one. She moved to the USA with her husband and child who I think was an academic and moved to work in the university, I think in the Boston area initially. Somehow I lost her address and lost touch. Can anyone help me find her again or provide any information at all? We recently had a reunion and would have loved to have heard from Cathy. Thank you in advance if anyone can help regards Jan Carruthers: carruthersjac@gmail.com