



12 April, 2017

News:

'Come and be inspired!' - Assembly 2017

That's the message from Lynn Green and David Kerrigan as this year's Baptist Assembly moves ever closer

The 2017 event is in the beautiful spa town of Harrogate in Yorkshire on Saturday 13 May, and thanks to the generosity of hosts the International Convention Centre, an additional worship and communion service is taking place on the Sunday morning.

'We've got a great venue at the International Convention Centre in Harrogate, and it's going to be a great opportunity to make a weekend of it and celebrate with Baptists from all over the country,' said Lynn, Baptists Together General Secretary.

The day will include worship, seminars and discussion groups, a children's and youth programme led by a team from Skipton Baptist Church, and an opportunity in the evening to recognise our newly accredited ministers and BMS workers, and hear an address from Ben Francis, Associate Team Leader with oversight of BMS work in Kolkata.

BMS World Mission will lead a session in the morning, reporting on its aim of seeing one million lives transformed between 2016-2020. The Baptists Together session in the early afternoon, entitled 'Beacons of Hope', will explore key priorities for 2017 and updates on Baptists Together initiatives.

Mission focused seminars

The afternoon offers a seminar programme covering a range of mission-focused topics.

Simon Goddard and Roy Searle, recently appointed to encourage pioneering and fresh expressions across Baptists Together, will share a vision to reach the 94 per cent of people in the UK who aren't currently connecting with church.

Dianne Tidball, who will become Baptist Union president 2017-18 at the event, will explore her presidential theme As In Heaven. How can we be communities which offer a taste of heaven wherever God has placed us?

Pentecost People, a new resource designed to help Baptist churches, will be launched. Pentecost People aims to 'foster a world-aware spirit, modelling ways to welcome and affirm people of every tongue and culture and enabling us to become more fully global in our local worshipping communities.'

David Kerrigan, in his last Assembly as BMS General Director, hosts a seminar entitled: A Baptist people – distinctive or generic?

'Baptists around the world have been, and remain, overwhelmingly evangelical,' he said. But is there a way of being a Baptist Evangelical that is consistent with our history and principles, that can enrich the wider church, and make us better able to face today's complex challenges?

Another seminar will introduce Conversation Welcome, the new pack of resources from the Joint Public Issues Team in the wake of Brexit. The resource aims to help churches and individuals think through the important underlying question - what sort of society do we want to live in? The seminar will begin a conversation on three key issues:

- How should we treat others?
- How should we use our resources?
- How should we make decisions?

Mark Ord, co-director of BMS World Mission's International Mission Centre, will explore mission in a secular world.

Ben Francis will reflect on a church planting model from Asia and its relevance to the UK. 'Ben and his team have been mightily blessed by God over many years, and have planted thousands of cell churches,' said David.

Another session will explore the challenges and opportunities we face reaching the millennial generation with the gospel of Christ.

'Come, that we might celebrate all that is good amongst us.'

Following the seminars, a prayer and In Memoriam session will be led by Geoff Colmer, Regional Minister Team Leader of Central Baptist Association. The evening session will include the celebration of ministers and mission workers, as well as Ben's address.

The children's and youth programme is led by Lauren and Matt Smith, and a team from Skipton Baptist Church. Lauren became a Children's Minister at Skipton Baptist Church in 2013, while Matt is Youth Minister at the church.

The children's programme – reception to Year 6 – is entitled Treasure Seekers. 'As we hunt for treasure we will explore our way through the Bible stories of Jesus to discover that being with God is like finding treasure and also that we are God's treasure.'

The youth programme (Year 7 – 13), called Ignite, will 'explore our role as young people in this world, where we are at, and how we can be living out God's plan in our lives.'

Throughout Assembly will link to the Thy Kingdom Come initiative, the global wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost that people you know might know Jesus.

The additional Sunday morning worship and communion service will be led by David and Lynn.

'The focus is on God, his mission to the world and the particular place for us as a Baptist people,' they said. 'Come so that by being together we can discern God's voice to us as a missionary people.'

'Come, that we might celebrate all that is good amongst us.'

To register your place visit: www.baptistassembly.org.uk

Bookings close on 24 April

Benefit changes criticised by churches

JPIT says Government's new two-child limit is "deliberately ignoring" needs of some of the UK's poorest children

From Thursday 6 April the Government's flagship benefit, Universal Credit, will not offer help to the third or subsequent children in a family. This fundamentally changes the benefit system so that it "deliberately ignores" the needs of some of the UK's more vulnerable children say Church leaders.

Over the next three years around 640,000 families containing at least two million children^[1] will see substantially lower Universal Credit payments

From November 2018 the two-child limit will also be applied retrospectively. The needs of the third child born long before the two-child limit was thought of will also be ignored.

Rachel Lampard, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, said, 'The two-child rule takes a knife to the social security safety net and hundreds of thousands of the UK's most vulnerable children will fall through the gap created.'

'These cuts are the driving force behind the expected increases in child poverty over the next decade. The consequences for these children will last for a life-time.'

The Revd Dr Richard Frazer, Convener of the Church & Society Council, said, 'From Thursday payments under Universal Credit will deliberately ignore the needs of some of the UK's poorest children. The Government's flagship benefit will not offer help to the third or further children in a family.'

'How can a decent society look at an impoverished child - and then ignore their needs?'

Both the Government's impact assessment [2] and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) research make it clear that the two child limit is not expected to achieve its aim of reducing the number of children born to poorer families needing the support of the benefit system[3].

'We should be appalled that children's needs are being deliberately ignored, no matter what the justification. It is extraordinary that the Government has pressed ahead with this cut despite the fact that its own research says that it is not likely to achieve its aim of encouraging families to have fewer children,' said Grace Pengelly, Secretary for Church and Society, United Reformed Church.

YouGov polling in October 2015 indicated that the majority (61 per cent) of UK adults believe benefits should be high enough to cover families' basic costs.

Speaking on the statistics, the Revd Stephen Keyworth, of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, added, 'This policy flies in the face of one of our benefit system's founding principles – that families should have enough to meet their basic needs. Our churches believe this principle is important and polling indicates that the public believe this principle to be important too.'

'The two-child limit recognises that larger families have additional needs, but chooses to ignore them. We urge the Government, even at this late stage, to hold to the founding principles of the benefit system and not deliberately ignore the needs of the most vulnerable children in society.'

BMS appoints new General Director

Dr Kang-San Tan will take up the role of BMS General Director after David Kerrigan retires

Dr Tan is currently Executive Director for AsiaCMS, an Asian indigenous mission network in relationship with Church Mission Society, and will join BMS in the autumn.

Dr Tan is presently based in his home country of Malaysia, where he is a life member of Trinity Baptist Church and Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church. He and his wife Loun Ling Lee, together with their daughter Chara, also have the active and ongoing support of Grace Chinese Christian Church in Singapore.

Having gained a Doctor of Ministry degree from Trinity International University in the United States of America, Kang-San also completed a PhD in the Theology of Religions, with special reference to Buddhism, at Aberdeen University.

Maureen Russell, Chair of BMS Trustees, said: 'Everyone on the search committee was very impressed by Kang-San's missiological experience, insight and vision for BMS. The Trustees are unanimous in our welcome to him, as he takes us into the future, building on David Kerrigan's very successful period of leadership.'

The retiring General Director David Kerrigan added. 'We have worked hard over recent years to learn from the World Church and to internationalise our leadership.

'I'm delighted that that commitment has come to very significant fruition with the appointment of Kang-San, who will have my full support as he prepares to take over the leadership of this wonderful organisation.'

Lynn Green, Baptists Together General Secretary, spoke of her excitement at the appointment of Dr Tan, adding, 'This is a bold and creative appointment and one that I believe will also impact Baptists Together as we seek to engage in mission in the UK in the future.

'It was a privilege to be part of the discerning process for this appointment. I have really enjoyed working alongside David Kerrigan and appreciated his support in so many different ways and I look forward to welcoming Dr Tan in the same spirit.'

Dr Tan is planning to take up the post of General Director in October.

Presidency nomination for minister with love of science David Gregory - or Dr Dave who runs a Messy Science Lab - will be our Union's President in 2018-19

Dave, who worked at the Met Office and European Weather Centre in weather and climate research for 15 years before following the call to ordained ministry, was one

of two candidates for the Presidency, alongside John Singleton, a former Regional minister.

Voting closed on 31 March, and Dave was informed by General Secretary Lynn Green on Monday.

'It is a somewhat unexpected journey that God has led me on these past months,' he said. 'I am grateful for the encouragement and support of my colleagues and the church at Croxley Green, along with others as I have explored God's leading.

'My thanks too for many in the Baptist family who sensed I might have something to share.'

In his profile, he explained how the Apollo moon landings inspired an interest in science when growing up. He studied Physics and Astrophysics at the University of Leicester and became a Christian while at Imperial College in London researching thunder storms.

As a member of Easthampstead Baptist Church, he led the planting of a new congregation into a local estate which resulted in him exploring pastoral ministry.

David teaches science and faith on the Footsteps training programme in the Central and Southern Counties Associations, as well as to schools, churches, community groups and Bible Colleges and in 2015 organised a CBA workshop "Science for Ministers".

At Croxley Green, David helps lead the monthly Messy Church where, as "Dr Dave", he runs the "Messy Science Lab", using simple experiments to help children, parents and carers to enjoy science and through it connect to God and faith.

He is also helping to co-ordinate the national Messy Church Does Science project - part of the Scientists in Congregations initiative at St. John's College, Durham - inspiring Messy Churches to use science in exploring faith, a resource book being launched at the Ely Cathedral Science Festival in June 2017.

He said,

'I hope in my Presidential year that I will gain a bigger picture and learn from the diversity of life and mission across the churches of Baptists Together, and have something to bring that will encourage and inspire the journey we are on in sharing in God's life and mission.

'I am sure that "Dr Dave" and Messy Science will be part of the year, along with helping people of all ages to discover something of God through the wonder of creation that we can find all around us, and also through what science reveals.'

Dave will become President at the 2018 Baptist Assembly. At this year's Assembly in Harrogate Dianne Tidball will succeed current President Rupert Lazar. Her presidential theme is "As In Heaven".

The President's main role is as a communicator/facilitator of our Union's vision and mission. The President travels around our Union, engaging with local churches, regional Associations and Colleges.

A key part of the role is leading the Baptist Steering Group (BSG) Accompanying Group, which provides prayer support and shares in spiritual and missional reflection with BSG.

Minister tops national comedy heat

Baptist minister Allan Finnegan has stormed into the semi-final of the English Comedian of the Year

Allan Finnegan topped his heat at the Lyric Rooms, Ashby-De-La-Zouch, Leicestershire, which featured 12 acts in total.

The audience had to score each act after their performance and then pick their top three to move to the next stage of the competition. Allan, minister of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Netherton, received double the votes of the second placed act.

'I entered with no expectation of getting through,' he said. 'My act is all about being a minister of a church and how bad I am at it.'

'I thought it was a very good standard with some great acts in the heat and I'm very surprised and excited to have got through!'

Allan has been on the comedy circuit since training to be a Baptist minister, when as part of his training he was enrolled on a six-week course run by the Comedy Trust.

'I had no intention of ever doing comedy,' he said. 'I was just doing it to compare the differing skills between preaching and standup.'

But he found he had a knack for it and has continued ever since. Allan has previously reached the final of the New Comedian of the Year, and won a Liverpool Comedian of the Year award.

'I really enjoy doing standup now and feel it has opened my up to a whole new audience.'

'I'm hoping to break down some of the stereotypical images of ministers, but then again I'm not your stereotypical minister.'

'Faith can be fun.'