

# TOGETHER

God created guide servants  
 recognition hospitable discipling mutual learning  
 gifts responsive Holy Spirit  
 mentoring commissioned  
**EQUIPPING**  
 primary community messenger vulnerability  
 obeying Jesus development companion questioning  
**GOD'S** open to God's guidance  
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**PEOPLE**  
 worshipping, listening releasing communities watching, seeing, following



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# Equipping God's People

## *Equipping God's people to be... God's people!*

It was a Saturday morning in early summer. Two would-be Kingfisher-watchers were in prime position. However the only birds visible from the hide were a common Coot and its two chicks. We watched an ordinary sight become inspiring as a parent Coot modelled to its offspring how to be a Coot.

One chick insistently tapped at its parent for beak-to-beak transfer of food to no avail. Instead 'mum' (or 'dad') repeatedly swam away to perform an outrageously ostentatious demonstration of how to dive underwater to get food for themselves. Being equipped to be fully 'Coot'!

This edition of *Baptists Together* explores the theme of equipping God's people, but equipped for what exactly? And the answer is, equipped to be God's people: participating with God, where God is present and calling, in God-like ways, as a full and varied expression of what it means to be the daughters and sons of God (see Romans 8:19, 29). God's people: imaging the Spirit-filled humanity that has already arrived in the person of his Son. God's people: becoming all that we are meant to be.

So we read about God's people getting involved through the humanitarian and relief work of BMS in Nepal, and the work of European Baptist Aid among refugees.

We glimpse the vision of Andover Baptist, and of the Pioneer Collective, and of the popular and inspiring communities of learning and training, equipping people in each Association: God's people called and equipped to be prophetic, evangelistic and apostolic pioneers and leaders. A fresh releasing and reshaping of people and churches to participate in communities and situations where currently God's people are not yet present – in addition to where we are already active.



Photo: Joan Bryden  
www.wildcardwalks.co.uk

Alongside this we are offered contemporary insights about how being equipped to be God's people means identifying and playing to each person's strengths. This includes honouring and receiving the calling and contribution of all God's people, single and married, children and young people, all participating in multi-generational community. And each offering

their own questions and views about what it means to be God's people - and how we are doing at it so far.

And in case we think this is something else we need to work up, we are reminded in our first article that the initiative in both calling and enabling lies with God, though we give it a go!

The baby chick did give it a go, dived under the water, and emerged unsteadily but triumphantly with nutritious vegetation from the river bed. There's every possibility it's now equipping its own chicks to do the same.

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Email: [media@baptist.org.uk](mailto:media@baptist.org.uk)

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Registered Charity Number: 1125912

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## 'In the beginning God...'

In any true equipping for God's service, the initiative always lies with God, writes **Derek Tidball**

I grew up with the mantra, 'Those whom God calls, he equips'. True, but subsequent experience means I've often wanted to add, 'if you'll let him'.

Naïve spirituality leads some to think, like the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:6-8), that they already have everything they need in some experience of the Spirit and don't need further training. Unwise enthusiasm leads some to rush in without waiting for God to prepare them. Like the axemen of Ecclesiastes 10:10 they expend great energies on the task but would be wiser sharpening the axe before they start.

Others suffer from over-confidence in their own abilities, possibly encouraged by our culture of self-inflation, rather than realising the need for God to equip.

### The broad sweep

In any true equipping for God's service, the initiative always lies with God. In God's providence, Moses may have been a 'born leader', but God still had to teach him through 40 long years in the desert, in the mundane job of minding sheep, before he was equipped to lead. When he was ready, God revealed himself and called him to deliver Israel (Exod 3 and 4).

Even then, it wasn't Moses who delivered Israel, but God himself.

Walter Brueggemann has shown how insistent scripture is that the Exodus is God's act.<sup>1</sup> He, not Moses, brings them out, delivers them, redeems them. That's a far cry from seeing it in terms of a human, political liberation.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Fortress, 1977, pp 173-176.

Trace your way through scripture. Mostly, God chose to use ordinary people. Bezalel, the artistic director of the tabernacle, is often cited as a precedent for using art forms in worship. But the text stresses this was because he was 'filled...with the Spirit of God'. It emphasises that God gave ability to the skilled workmen who assisted him (Exod 31:2, 6). Whatever their 'natural' skills, God equipped them especially for this task.

**God took the lead in patiently equipping him so he could lead his people 'with integrity of heart (and) with skilful hands'**

Joshua was appointed because God gave him 'the spirit of leadership' (Num 27:18). Those idiosyncratic Judges led effectively, if briefly, because 'the Spirit of God came on them' (eg, Jdg 3:10).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See further, *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, Apollos, 2011, esp pp 161-72 and 259-280.

David took longer to gain power but God was unquestionably behind his election and his training. He might have wanted a shorter, easier route to the throne (I would!), omitting those apprentice years as a shepherd and skipping over those years as a fugitive. But God took the lead in patiently equipping him so he could lead his people 'with integrity of heart (and) with skilful hands' (Ps 78:72).

## The New Testament disciples

The initiative in calling the disciples – a bunch of ordinary people – lay with Jesus, not them (Mark 3:13-19). Jesus chose 'those he wanted' and, although lost in translation, Mark's comment that 'he appointed twelve' uses the same verb as Gen 1:1, 'in the beginning God created...'. We tend to truncate the process but they spent years watching, listening and learning from their master before their 'graduation' at Pentecost. He called them, and then he equipped them.

## A deeper look: Paul

'The training of the twelve'<sup>3</sup> would be a worthwhile study. But let's take Paul as a case study.

Paul was at home in three worlds. In the political Roman world he was a citizen. In the cultured Greek world he was a son of Tarsus. In the Jewish religious world he was a Pharisee. God had planned all this long before (Gal 1:15). He's expert at laying down the lines of our lives and weaving them together for his glory in due course. Who better to be an apostle to the Gentiles, on behalf of a Jewish Messiah, in a Roman world than Paul? And yet...

For all the appropriate richness of his background, Paul didn't naturally assume his role as pioneering apostle. The initiative lay with God, who first arrested him on the Damascus Road by revealing himself to him and then commissioning him as 'a chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles...' (Acts 9:1-19). It was a life-defining experience that led Paul to re-evaluate his entire Jewish heritage and to unexpectedly see Jesus as the Messiah. It was life-defining too, in giving him the mission that was to occupy, and eventually cost him, his life.

Paul was always in a hurry and as soon as God commissioned him through Ananias, 'at once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of

God' (Acts 9:20). But there's more to it than that. This may have been an initial short-term stab at things rather than the real launch of his lifetime's mission. There are difficulties in tying up the partial stories of Acts and Galatians, but once called by God, Paul spent some time being prepared before branching out further.

He spent three years in the Arabia desert, being taught directly by God (Gal 1:16-17). Then he went up to Jerusalem and spent time with Peter and James (Gal 1:18-19). In Arabia he learned the gospel, in Jerusalem he met the participants in Jesus' life who filled in some of the details. Revelation and tradition, as F F Bruce put it, both had their part to play.<sup>4</sup> In visiting Jerusalem more than once (Gal 2:1), he demonstrated the importance of mutual learning, recognition and mission, although he was never 'under the authority' of Jerusalem.

We know nothing about his early preaching in Arabia except that for all his self-motivated, driven personality, he never operated as a lone ranger. When we next glimpse him, Barnabas, who'd mentored him earlier, and Titus are with him, and later a host of others joined his teams. His confident leadership never degenerated into self-sufficient arrogance.

## In the beginning and at the end, God

Looking back, Paul never lost the sense of wonder that God had chosen him (2 Cor 4:1; 1 Tim 1:12-14). He never lost the sense of needing others as mentors and companions. And he never arrogated to himself the achievements that were God's alone: 'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow' (1 Cor 3:6).

God holds the initiative in saving, calling and equipping, both ordinary and extraordinary people.

Derek Tidball is visiting scholar at Spurgeon's College and former Principal of London School of Theology



Photo: Colin Brough - www.igbstock.com

<sup>4</sup> F F Bruce, Paul, *Apostle of Free Spirit*, Paternoster Press, 1977, pp 83-94.



Artwork: Chris Duffett

# General Secretary Lynn Green:

In recent years the Lord has been speaking to us as a Union and laying a renewed emphasis on us being a movement of Spirit-led communities. Back in 2011 our Council set aside 24 hours to seek God and consider what he wanted to say to us as a movement of churches, associations and colleges. It was a powerful and profound gathering where we sensed clearly the Lord calling us to renew our trust and dependence upon him. We recognised that, while no one ever intends it, there is that tendency for every movement to inexorably shift towards institution and for the structures to become more important than they should. Of course we need appropriate frameworks to support our life together, but more than anything we depend upon hearts that seek God deeply and are responsive to his leading and guiding.

I know it is unseasonal but I have been reflecting upon the Magi recently (Matthew 2)! Here were wise men who watched for signs of God's activity, and when they saw his star in the east they willingly and eagerly left the comfort and familiarity of all that they knew to travel to find the Christ. After they had found and worshipped Jesus, they continued to be so open to God's guidance and demonstrated such dependence on him, by heeding

God's warning in a dream and returning home by a different route.

What, struck me was that the Magi were not simply other worldly stargazers; no, they watched and then they took action! Watching, seeing, following, worshipping, listening and obeying; that's a pretty awesome example of what we long to become. Seeking to be a movement of Spirit-led communities is not

just about sitting around waiting for God; the vital and dynamic truth is that our action flows out of our seeking and depending on the Lord. Then it's not just 'stuff' that happens, it's Kingdom stuff.

**our action flows out of our seeking and depending on the Lord**

**we want to be Spirit-led communities**

We are in step with the Holy Spirit and the Lord finds it much easier to be at work in us and through us!

So our challenge is to intentionally and wholeheartedly seek God's will and purpose for our local churches and every expression of our shared life. Where are you seeing good examples of that? Where do we need to recalibrate life away from institution and towards Spirit-led community? For me, this involves approaching gatherings like the Baptist Steering Group and Council in new ways so that prayer and discernment are at the heart of things. I still have much to learn but it's good to be on the journey.

What about you? Whether it is church or deacons' meetings, mission, engaging with children and young people, your contribution at work or stewarding your resources, we want to be Spirit-led communities; watching, seeing, following, worshipping, listening and obeying Jesus. ■



In June Lynn Green encouraged a call to prayer, facilitated by a blog. For more details, visit [www.baptist.org.uk/beacons](http://www.baptist.org.uk/beacons), and see the news story on p34



Benjamin Brown - leading worship at an interns led worship service at Andover Baptist Church in June



Photo: Andover Baptist Church

# Building Bigger People

We all have something to offer in mentoring others – and a biblical mandate to do so, writes **Clive Burnard**.

Over almost eight years, **Andover Baptist Church (ABC)** has experienced a God-given phenomenon: 23 people have been sent out into ministry and mission with 35 more completing our internship training programme - the Joshua Challenge. All glory to Christ Jesus, who gave ABC members a vision to 'build bigger people before building bigger premises'. This is a vision to empower everyone in our church family to become whole life missionary disciples.

Jesus gave some 'to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers' (Ephesians 4:11a). He gives these people to his Church not to do all of the ministry but to embrace a clear purpose: 'to equip' (NLT) or 'prepare' (NIV) ALL of 'God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up' (Eph 4:11b).

'Building bigger people' involves: helping them to 'reach unity in the faith and become mature', maturing - 'to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' (Eph 4:11b). Father God wants his family to reflect the *Christ-like character* of his son and also his *charismatic competence*. By calling, teaching, empowering and sending his 12 apostles and

the 72 (or 70) disciples (Lk 9:1-2 and 10:1), Jesus provides the supreme example... and Jesus equips his Church to *empower* ALL of his people, as the Holy Spirit gifts them too, so that 'the whole body... builds itself up in love, as each part does its work' (Eph 4:16).

If our Baptist Union is to become a truly missional movement, this may require a deeper understanding of how our whole Baptist family might be empowered for such service. Compassionate pastoral care and a faithful ministry of 'Word and Sacrament (or ordinance)' remain vital. However, it is my humble conviction that pastors, elders and deacons (and others) could more fully embrace this equipping ministry. Even though people sometimes leave their churches claiming a lack of care, they seldom complain that they were not mentored, or *empowered* sufficiently.

## How can we equip others so that they maximise their redemptive Kingdom potential?

Church should not merely be a cosy Sunday morning club or a sheep pen. Our congregations would be better described as worshipping communities, training centres, and even fishing boats, populated by whole life missionary disciples. We *gather* to worship God and to be encouraged and empowered for service and mission as we are *scattered*

into our communities. Neil Hudson, and London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, have helped ABC to recognise our calling as whole life (missionary) disciples living for Jesus on our 'frontlines': [www.licc.org.uk/shop/product/life-on-the-frontline](http://www.licc.org.uk/shop/product/life-on-the-frontline).

How can we equip others so that they maximise their redemptive Kingdom potential? Let us take the word **'EMPOWER'**, to help us reflect upon some simple ways in which ministers and members might embrace this equipping mandate together:

**E**quipping people necessitates an intentional **M**entoring (discipling) of people, through **P**ersonal (relational) contact, by offering divine, structured **O**pportunities to grow. Such mentors need to exercise godly **W**isdom in terms of the questions they ask and the opportunities which they provide. They give tangible, loving, prayerful **E**ncouragement to enable others to grow in Christ, **R**esourcing them in diverse and creative ways. These key elements enable us to **EMPOWER** others:

**E**quipping: is not merely about imparting propositional biblical truth, vital though that is. Journeying prayerfully with others as they live out and reflect upon experienced truth is indispensable for true discipleship.

**Mentoring:** at ABC, this involves pastors, small group leaders, peer mentors, personal mentors (and a tutor, as well as teachers, for our interns). We have organically and structurally grown a culture of intentional mentoring. Genuine mentoring enables a personal and transformational experience of biblical truth.

Perhaps the best leadership decision I ever made was not to lead

**Personal:** effective equipping through mentoring will, at best, be relational. Jesus did not do professional detachment. When we know someone personally, we are better positioned to understand not only what they need to hear but how best to share that.

**Opportunities:** Perhaps the best leadership decision I ever made was not to lead. I asked 21 year-old Andy Fitchet to lead a team of seven people, which I was part of when ABC partnered with BMS and travelled to Kolkata, India, to serve with Big Life Ministries. Andy is now minister-in-training at **Whitchurch Baptist Church**, a Home Mission church, which he is leading into genuine growth. Another team member and his family were just commissioned at ABC to be sent to India with BMS. Such outcomes followed Andy's opportunity to lead and learn. I needed to be there for him, but I had to ensure that I allowed him to actually lead.

**Wisdom:** involves asking the right questions. Mentors help best by wise questioning, encouraging deep reflection. Wise community discernment is also vital in testing calls to ministry and mission. It has been a wonderful, faith-building journey, seeing 23 people raised up in our midst for ministry and mission. ABC has developed a culture of equipping and the church family embraces its role in all these ways.



Matt Light - preaching the gospel in Poland during an interns' mission trip



Dr Hannah Leach GP - a Joshua Challenge intern - learning how to serve Jesus and his Church through technology (on the ABC sound desk)



Andy Fitchet (centre) was asked to lead the ABC team which visited Kolkata with BMS World Mission by Clive Burnard (right)



Kayleigh Brown - leading worship at an interns led communion service at ABC this year

**Encouragement:** is critical. Folks need 'freedom to fail' when given opportunities, plus honest constructive feedback. But, they thrive on detailed encouragement. Regarding preaching feedback, we operate an unwritten 'three day rule'. Only *positives* after the preach, and other observations no less than three days later!

**Resourcing:** Our own association (**Southern Counties Baptist Association**) runs the excellent *Footsteps* training course in partnership with **Regent's Park College** (see p16-17). All our colleges provide flexible courses. ABC's Joshua Challenge requires our interns to have a project which they must lead: [www.andoverbaptist.org.uk/media/videos.php](http://www.andoverbaptist.org.uk/media/videos.php)

Is such empowering only possible in larger churches? Absolutely not! God loves his flower garden of churches: small, mid-sized and large. All are beautiful to him and are unique and distinct. But all need more equipped and empowered people released into service and all of us have something to offer in mentoring others. Smaller churches may even provide greater opportunities: they are sometimes healthier than larger declining churches and it is healthy churches (of any size) which are most likely to grow and impact their communities. If we Baptists Together are authentically committed to 'growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission', we must pray very hard and we must also empower a whole new cadre of younger, pioneering leaders and passionate disciples of Christ. This will equip our denomination to become truly effective as a missional movement.

As I anticipate, with excitement, relocating to serve the people of **Mutley Baptist Church** and the great City of Plymouth (19 September 2015), I remain convinced that the re-evangelisation of these islands depends, in part, upon the rediscovery and intentional implementation of this core aspect of our God-given mission and ministry. So, please - let's EMPOWER others!

**Clive Burnard** is the Senior Pastor, Team Leader of Andover Baptist Church, Hampshire. He mentors leaders in a variety of contexts, serves with the BWA Ministry Commission, and his doctoral thesis describes Transformational (Visionary) Servant Leadership in a Baptist context





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# In Pursuit of Happiness...

Adopting society's insistence that a partner and children are essential ingredients for a happy life is both a disservice to single people and at cross purposes with Jesus' teaching about family

By **Lina Toth**



Photo: BMS World Mission - Catalyst Live 2014

Have you noticed how easily we Christians talk about God being the source of our happiness? And yet our reaction to single people in our midst suggests something different. Single believers often encounter an assumption that being single is, by default, less happy than being in a relationship.

I suspect this will not be a surprise to many readers, but if it is, just sit with one single person and ask them to

recount at least some of the instances where they felt excluded in church life, or were told "awww, your time will come, don't worry", or heard a prayer "for the sick, the shut-in, the single".

We have adopted a powerful myth floating around in our society. The myth is mutating and is currently contested in a variety of ways, but it is still very pervasive in its insistence that, for most people, a partner and children are essential ingredients for happiness.

We seem to have 'baptised' this myth and adapted it to describe a Christian 'happiness package'. In fact, we Christians seem to embrace it more strongly than society does; for us, 'church' and 'family' are inseparable.

So much for 'being happy in Jesus'. Which, of course, is a problem, because it is so far from the way Jesus – himself a single person – thought about such things. Jesus was clear: his family first and foremost were those who did the will of the heavenly Father.

Why do we not take this seriously? The witness of the New Testament is clear: the primary community for Jesus' disciples was their fellow disciples, not the nuclear family. It's why they called each other brothers and sisters; and why the first Christians were accused of destroying the Roman society by being 'anti-family'! (The families of those times, by the way, were very different from what we think of as families today – they were the whole household, including extended relations as well as servants and slaves. We would do well to remember this when we quote the Bible on the subject of family, because the chances are we do not mean the same thing.)



Photo: Vinicius Sgarbe - www.freeimages.com

As Christians, we need to really reflect on our attitudes towards those in our midst who are single. The way we tend to react to being single is unjust and unhelpful.

But more than that, it is an indication of a much larger problem: a church which does not welcome single people is a church which has not really grasped the radical nature of the Kingdom of God, the beginning of which Jesus announced. Such a church has not really understood that in the light of what God is already doing, everything needs to be reordered, including our priorities, our wallets, and our family relationships.

If we want to follow Jesus for real, we must be serious about considering our gathering of believers as our primary community; only then will our talk of 'brothers and sisters' be meaningful. What can such community look like?

We would do well to look at the practices that sustain our life as a church, and ask, repeatedly: is this really a welcoming place for all, in the manner in which Jesus intends? What about the way our worship services are shaped, our Bible study groups structured, the themes we focus on, or the examples

we use? How about the absence of rites of passage for single people compared to stepping stones such as marriage, blessing of the children or wedding anniversaries?

However, only so much can be done during the few hours a week when we gather for worship. How much are we really a community – that is, how much are we ready to share our lives beyond the church walls on Sunday? Are we really ready to relate to each other not on a basis of coupledness, keeping single women at bay because they are somehow a threat, and a reminder that singleness might strike us too one day? Can we turn our homes into places of hospitality where we live honestly, and are not afraid of the vulnerability that such honesty entails? Are we prepared to open up and provide a safe place where people can share their fears, their pain, and their worries, as well as their joys, and hopes, and dreams?

We need each other, single and married people alike. There are things to learn from one another, and burdens to carry. You see, both singleness and marriage

present unique opportunities; but both carry specific limitations. There are things a person is saying 'no' to as soon as she or he gets married, just as there are things a single person foregoes in their singleness.

Our call is to draw to each other, celebrate each other's giftedness, and help each other ask, "What is God doing in and through my life, and in and through our lives together?"

Then we can become a living demonstration that deep happiness is equally possible in different personal circumstances, and resist the cultural pressure to conform to the ways of this age. For that, we need each other, because re-learning true happiness is a long, communal and counter-cultural business.

**If we want to follow Jesus for real, we must be serious about considering our gathering of believers as our primary community**

**Lina Toth** (Andronoviene) is a Lecturer in Practical Theology at the Scottish Baptist College, and author of *Transforming the Struggles of Tamars: Single Women and Baptist Communities* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock 2014)



Lina Toth explores the theme of single women in the church on the *Baptist Times* section of our website. To read more and leave your feedback, visit [www.baptist.org.uk/lina](http://www.baptist.org.uk/lina)



Baptists gather together to share a picnic at the Baptist Assembly 2015

# Common as Muck



Illustrations: Ruth Whiter

The common pigeon as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit? Six reasons why we should stop looking for doves, and start noticing pigeons. By **Ruth Whiter**

As I grew up and developed an interest in both Christianity and graphic design, I began to feel slightly guilty about my distaste for the pretty white or pastel coloured doves that were often used as a symbol of charismatic renewal in the 1980s and 1990s.

After all, had not God himself ordained the use of this 'logo' for the Holy Spirit, when he sent a dove to alight on Jesus after his baptism?

I was somewhat relieved, then, when my present minister presented us with an alternative. He's a competent birdwatcher who has spent time in the Holy Land. He had also read Michael Mitton's book *Wild Beasts and Angels*, which points out that when John the

Baptist described this event (John 1:32-34) he would have used the word 'dove' to mean the grey, black, and emerald Rock Dove, common in the Middle East and also around our own coastlines. This species, *Columba Livia*, was domesticated as a source of food, before returning to the wild, where it has thrived as the common feral pigeon.

Ever since this revelation, I've been much more aware of pigeons, and allowed their presence to remind me that the infilling Jesus experienced that day was not something rare or unattainable. In fact, I think there are several reasons why the common pigeon makes a great metaphor for the third person of the Trinity. Here are just six:

## Pigeons are everywhere

Just as the prophet Joel predicted that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on all people, in these days the feral pigeon has colonised the entire globe. A map showing pigeon distribution across the world shows almost every land mass and island shaded – I can't find any other bird this is true of. You will rarely step outside your home without encountering a pigeon. Often as I cycle to work, a pigeon will swoop down and fly before me for just a few seconds, an unobtrusive guide and companion, never pinned down, but near at hand. This helps me to remember that as Jesus promised, he is *always* with me through the presence of his Spirit.

### Pigeons are usually ignored

If you watch any human who is watching birds, whether a child by a duckpond, a twitcher in a hide, or a gardener looking out at her bird table, it's a safe bet that any pigeon present will remain more or less invisible to the viewer. Do you think we sometimes pray earnestly for an appearance by the rare white dove, when the faithful pigeon has been there all along, hiding in plain sight? Like our own breath, which is also synonymous with the Spirit in scripture, we are healthier if we allow ourselves to be aware of, and make space for, the work of the Spirit within and among us.

### Pigeons get hurt

I've seen city pigeons with all kinds of battle damage – broken wings, missing feet or claws, and the occasional one that simply hasn't been able to remove the chewing gum it stepped in. Paul warns us not to 'grieve the Holy Spirit' in Ephesians 4:30, but surely many of us do, to a greater or lesser extent. If Jesus' incarnation led to abuse, spit, thorns, and ultimately the cross, do we imagine that the Spirit is immune to the pain and anguish of living among sinful humans?

### Pigeons make a mess

Have you ever thought that the spikes, nets, and other measures put in place to keep pigeons away from town centre buildings look uglier than their droppings would? I'm sure there are good reasons for protecting buildings in that way, but what about our churches? Perhaps we are sometimes so concerned to keep everything manageable, tidy, and ordered, that the Spirit cannot get close enough to set our hearts on fire. I work alongside a Regional Ministry team who support

and enable churches who are following God's call to begin something new, and this can, in my experience, be a rather messy business.

### Pigeons are effective messengers

Everyone knows that pigeons make good messengers. In the Second World War, in an age when instant communication was already possible using the telegraph and telephone, the United Kingdom used about 250,000 pigeons for military purposes. Pigeons can fly without the aid of technology, giving them a different perspective on a situation. The presence of the Holy Spirit with us means that God's perspective on our situation is always with us, and that very often, God will find a way to communicate that perspective to encourage, warn, or direct us. The idea for this article began during the first editorial meeting of this edition of *Baptists Together*. As we discussed how the Holy Spirit equips us, we were all startled by a loud thump on the window, and for a moment had no idea what was happening. Then someone commented: "It's OK, it's just a pigeon."

### Pigeons go to places we avoid

Michael Mitton points out that the Rock Dove is content to roost in dark,



damp caves, and likewise town pigeons are commonly found in concrete underpasses and the messy places where those we might view as being on the margins gather, whether that's skateboarders, street dwellers, or those trapped in addiction. Recently I watched a pigeon fly into a dark tunnel, above which humans had fixed the sign DO NOT ENTER THIS TUNNEL. We know from the gospels that we would find Jesus with no-go people in no-go places, so we should expect to find his Spirit working in those places too.

The prophet Joel makes it very clear that when the Spirit is poured out on all people, that will mean *all people* (Joel 2:28-29). He deliberately includes women and servants and *women* who are *servants*, because he knows our tendency to assume the exclusion of certain groups when we imagine God's work among human beings.

It's interesting to note that a particular love for pigeons can itself place you on the margins of society. You can see this in the portrayal of 'Bird Ladies' in *Mary Poppins* and *Home Alone 2*. Bath's 'Pigeon Man', who offers tourists a photo opportunity with his feathered friends outside the Pump Room, before thoughtfully offering them a hand sanitizer and a bucket for their coins, is playing the role of the outsider and the fool. If our world is to notice and encounter the Spirit God has lavishly poured out on all people in these days, perhaps that's what we need to be.

Author and illustrator  
**Ruth Whiter** is  
communications  
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West of England Baptist  
Association



Share your thoughts on Ruth's article at [www.baptist.org.uk/pigeon](http://www.baptist.org.uk/pigeon)



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# Equipped to Serve

Photo: Anthony Clarke



A range of courses are offered by Baptist colleges working in partnership to help people in our churches grow in faith

Do you want to deepen your understanding of faith? Grow in discipleship? Develop skills in ministry? Learn what it is to be a pioneer? You might question whether theological training is for you, but there are a range of courses delivered by Baptist colleges and partners designed to help strengthen those in our churches and beyond.

In recent years five Baptist colleges teamed up with associations and the Ministries Team to form the Baptist Training Partnership. Out of this collaboration came a course specifically for Baptists. The course is designed for a whole range of people including supporting the vital ministry of nationally recognised lay pastors and preachers.

The course is delivered by all the colleges (sometimes in conjunction with associations) in slightly different ways, but its core curriculum is the same, with modules on the Bible, mission, leading worship, preaching, Baptist belief and practice, theology and culture, and personal development and formation. Each college delivers training in a way that best suits both the college and

its participants, and flexibility is a key component. Names to look out for include *Prepare for Service* (Bristol Baptist College), *Together in Mission and Ministry* (Northern Baptist College), *Footsteps* and *Growing in Service* (Regent's Park College, Oxford), *Pathways* (South Wales Baptist College), and *Equipped to Minister* (Spurgeon's College).

Alongside this, *Equipped to Pioneer* is a part-time training course for those involved in church planting or pioneer ministry in Baptist churches. The course consists of a range of modules, drawn from the curriculum of the Baptist Training Partnership, together with further modules on mission in today's context and pioneering. The modules are offered by Baptist colleges and by the Crucible Course, which is run by Urban Expression. Optional modules are delivered by the CMS Pioneer Mission Leadership Training Course.

In addition, Spurgeon's College has been pioneering online learning. In 2013 it announced its Church Training Initiative (CTI) - a bite-sized way to theological education via a series of online resource packs on particular topics. Each pack takes around six hours to complete and is downloaded from the Spurgeon's College website.



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At the time Director of Spurgeon’s Online Learning, Dr Debra Reid, said, “We have found that many people are not interested in degree level study but would like to gain a better understanding of practical theology and church skills.

“The CTI has therefore been designed specifically for those

in that position, many of whom face major financial and time pressures in the current economic climate.”

All of the above are ‘Access-level’ - in other words pre-university. Naturally all the five colleges offer university-validated courses, the next step for those wishing to go deeper.

**Testimony:**

**Footsteps** is described as a training course in Christian discipleship for anyone who wants to deepen their understanding of faith and develop their skills in ministry. It is offered by both the **Central** and **Southern Counties Baptist Associations** in partnership with **Regent’s Park College, Oxford**. There are two parts – **Footsteps 1** and **2** – and both take place one Saturday a month over the course of a year.

**Vaughn Armstrong**, a marketing manager, completed his second year of **Footsteps** earlier this year. He went on the course as he was becoming increasingly involved in leadership at his church, **Bloxham Baptist Church** near Banbury, and realised he’d had no formal church training. He says it’s been invaluable in several ways.

“There is a huge breadth, from tackling and understanding the Bible, ethics, different types of spirituality. I grew up in a Christian family and know bits of the Bible quite well, but I didn’t really know how it fitted together, so this has really helped. It’s also been very interesting learning about Baptist history, doing the assignments has broadened my reading.

Vaughn now says he is more confident about preaching. Whereas previously he spoke when he had something to say, this has encouraged him to stand up a bit more often.

“Hopefully Mike (Tydeman, Vaughn’s minister) has more confidence in me when he gives me part of a sermon series. I now have more knowledge of the Bible, and a methodology for creating a sermon.”

It has helped being part of a learning community. About half who did **Footsteps 1** have done **Footsteps 2**, meaning he has seen the same faces every month for two years. Some are in similar positions to him, some have come on the course simply to develop themselves.

“The best thing of all is remembering you are part of a bigger, wider community. You can get so completely blinkered about one church.

“We’ve shared, encouraged, grown - it helps to underline that we are stronger together.”



**Links:**

**Bristol Baptist College**  
*Prepare for Service*  
[www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/prepareforservice](http://www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/prepareforservice)

**Northern Baptist College**  
*Together in Mission and Ministry (TiMM)*  
<https://northernbc.wordpress.com/working-with-churches/the-timm-course>

**Regent’s Park College, Oxford**  
*Footsteps and Growing in Service*  
[www.rpc.ox.ac.uk/community-learning](http://www.rpc.ox.ac.uk/community-learning)

**Spurgeon’s College**  
*Equipped to Minister*  
[www.spurgeons.ac.uk/lay-ministry-training](http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/lay-ministry-training)

*Online courses* at <http://bit.ly/WgfsJC>

**South Wales Baptist College**  
*Pathways*  
[www.swbc.org.uk/learn-with-us/pathways](http://www.swbc.org.uk/learn-with-us/pathways)

**Equipped to Pioneer**  
[www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/368850/Equipped\\_to\\_Pioneer.aspx](http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/368850/Equipped_to_Pioneer.aspx)

**The Crucible Course**  
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- Watch out for new online courses in Baptist history and theology

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## The Big Conversation

Susan Myatt is beginning her fourth year of training at Northern Baptist College, and will be continuing in her two placements she's had during this time: one at Rising Brook Baptist Church, Stafford, the other with the Lichfield Diocese Deaf Church. Glen Marshall is one of the Co-Principals at the college, and has worked closely with Susan.

*Baptists Together* magazine invited them to participate in a conversation reflecting on how Susan's time at the college has equipped her for the ministry to which she has been called. What follows is an edited version of that conversation, which was filmed at Rising Brook, and can be viewed online at [www.baptist.org.uk/susan](http://www.baptist.org.uk/susan)

**G**len: Susan, let me take you back to before you started at college and ask you about what it felt like as you were thinking about beginning this journey of preparation for ministry. What did you expect?

**S**usan: I wasn't sure what to expect. I was more worried about if I was capable of learning and studying, and how much I would struggle with the English. And everyone was hearing and would I be able to cope with that?

**G**: For those who don't perhaps appreciate, you say you had concerns about the English - because your first language is BSL (British Sign Language)?

**S**: Yes, that's right. It was very hard to read all the literature and the Bible. I prefer to sign, and I was concerned about my use of English - in terms of understanding some of the complex terminology and double meanings. And I was the only Deaf person, who signs, and so it was very hard; it was a struggle and very different. I felt they were all very clever, and academic and I felt very inferior. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to manage and I felt stupid - thick.

**G**: You mentioned something there about 'double meanings' and I think one of the things that I learned when talking with you is, not only is BSL a different language, it's a different kind of language. Whereas in English we do a lot with ambiguity and double meanings, and layers of meaning, that's less true in BSL, isn't it? It's more straightforward - more matter-of-fact.

**S**: Yes, absolutely, it's very direct and clear, but English language, either spoken or written when you're reading it is hard, and I was trying to keep up with the meaning and understanding. It was very hard to learn how to say the words and pronounce them. I'd have to put my hand up and say "What does that word mean?" because I didn't know, or understand in that context. I felt quite embarrassed at the time.

**G**: I think you've learned since then that when you ask, "What does that word mean?" you are probably helping the other students as well.

**S:** Oh yes, I was surprised that happened, yes. They were all waiting for me to put my hand up and say "What does that mean?" and were quite relieved when I did because, I felt they probably didn't understand as well. And that was a relief to me!

**G:** So you're describing a situation where your confidence was low, but you were still enjoying the learning. Perhaps, if I'm hearing you correctly Susan, the main thing that happened in that first year was confidence building?

**S:** What helped was the tutors – that helped my confidence. If I had a difficult question, they would give me time and they would explain and clarify things. And that really struck me. Everyone was learning – like feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology – there were similar parallels to Deaf theology. We could compare and share information.

Also relationships with students started to develop. There was a couple who had been learning sign language, and the tutors were also becoming more aware of my needs: they had to tap my shoulder to get my attention so I could lip-read them, and face me.

**G:** So with those improvements, and I'm very aware that we've had a lot to learn from you, but as those improvements have come along your confidence has built. You are just now at the end of your third year, does it feel different now to how it felt during that first year?

**S:** Oh definitely. There's a huge difference. My eyes have been opened and I feel much more confident, and I feel more ready. I thought I knew everything about Deaf community and church, but not really. Now I've learned so much, and I've grown and I've learned so much from the course, for instance how to translate things for the Deaf community and make a rich resource and information.

**G:** It's clear from that that you've got a strong sense of call to work with your own community, to minister in the Deaf Church, to use the things that you've been learning in the classroom, and on placement here and in Lichfield. Tell me what it feels like now as you look forward to starting that ministry in the next 12 months or so. Have you still got your enthusiasm?

**S:** Oh definitely, yes absolutely. I've got lots of ideas. I'd like to create more songs, drama and liturgy for worship. I would like to think about new ways of how Deaf and hearing people can get together and share worship. I know that there's a lot of work to achieve that, but it's a step and that's important. Deaf people need their confidence boosted as well, and I want to encourage them and empower them that they can have a relationship with God. But at the same time I want to encourage hearing people to be more aware of Deaf needs as well.




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**G:** We've talked quite a bit, Susan, about experiences in Manchester, and studying theology. Perhaps you could tell us a little bit about the work you've been doing here at Rising Brook over the past three years – what kind of things have been going on with the Deaf people in this area?

**S:** When I arrived there was nothing much going on for Deaf people. I decided to set up a Deaf café for both Christians and non-Christians just to come and share things about prayer, drama, songs, Bible stories, any problems perhaps they could chat and share about, and that seemed to be quite popular. It's once a month and has been good.

And then I visited a Deaf coffee morning that isn't a Christian initiative, but they were looking for a venue. I said they were welcome to come here and they thought "Oh no, it's a church, we wouldn't want that". And I said, "OK, I accept that". But a month later I got an email saying yes, they were interested in coming here and using this, and it's been very smooth – it's gone well. The lady in charge is Deaf and a social worker. We've been working well together and it's been good to have that professional mutual support. Now a lot of Deaf people know that there's a Deaf coffee morning and Deaf café here in the church.

**G:** And one last question about Rising Brook. Am I right in remembering that, since you started here, some people have been baptised or become members?

**S:** Once we'd started the Deaf café and more people were coming – it was a small group, but it was good – one person wanted to be baptised. Two of them became members of the church, and they regularly come to church services which are accessible with an interpreter. More recently, two people who are Deafened (they don't sign) have both become members as well. They are also involved in Deaf café. They feel safe here and that they belong, and that we understand their needs and how they can learn things in the Bible. The relationship that's grown has been amazing.



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*At this point in the conversation Susan began to ask Glen questions:*

**S:** Looking back and reflecting on things, what have you learned from my experience at the college – having a Deaf student there?

**G:** I think the first thing, the big thing that we learned, is just how little we understood about Deaf people, Deaf culture, the Deaf community. So we've learned to appreciate just how challenging it is to be Deaf, living in a hearing world. And more than that – just how much mainstream society actually, in lots of ways, discriminates against Deaf people; how difficult it is for Deaf people to access all kinds of resources, all kinds of forms of communication that we take for granted. So I think I've learned a lesson about injustice really.

And you may remember that, when we became aware how little we knew, we invited Hannah Lewis who works up in Liverpool, and who is an expert in this area. She is Deaf and has a PhD in theology. She did some staff training with the whole of Luther King House. That was very, very helpful.

**S:** Do you feel the college is preparing people for ministry for the Deaf community?



**G**: Well I think, obviously, most of the time we are working with people who are not Deaf – that goes without saying – and we try to prepare people by helping them to grow in their relationship with God. We try to prepare people by giving them the skills that they need for the practice of ministry and we try to prepare people to think theologically – to think about God’s word and how to interpret that to the modern day world.

But specifically in relation to working with Deaf people, we really weren’t equipped for that when you came. We still have a lot to learn, but I would hope that because of the experience of working with you for three years now, we’d be better equipped should anybody else come along who is also Deaf.

**S**: Looking at the future, what are your plans to improve things?

**G**: Generally speaking, we’re aware that preparing people for leadership in God’s church and in God’s world needs to keep on developing and changing. We’ve already been learning that to prepare people for ministry is to prepare people for mission – that we can’t separate those two things out; they belong together.

I think in the future we are going to have to be able to prepare people for a big range of ministries – so people who are full-time, people who are part-time, people who are spare-time, and to find ways that are appropriate to equip people for a whole variety of ministries in the future. Part of what makes it exciting and a little bit scary is we don’t quite know what the future is going to be like. ■

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So, Susan, let me take you back to before you started at college and ask you about what it felt like as you were thinking about beginning this

### Video Conversation

Susan and Glen’s conversation was filmed at Rising Brook Baptist Church. It was facilitated by Di Phaisey, a registered qualified BSL interpreter.

You can watch and download this video from:  
[www.baptist.org.uk/susan](http://www.baptist.org.uk/susan)

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Baptist minister **Anne Carter** highlights a tool that helps people discover who they truly are

**James** was fed up that his friends were consistently calling on him for help. He felt they were using him.

**Laura** was facing yet another interview.

**Martin** was on sabbatical and wanted to reflect on his ministry and think about whether he needed to change focus.

**A church** wanted their diaconate to work together more effectively

**Emily** simply wanted to learn about what her gifts were.

What have they got in common?

They all discovered a tool that could help them understand much more of who God made them to be and then develop that in a variety of ways.

Gallup's tool, the *Clifton StrengthsFinder*, is not well known outside of big business in the UK. It was dreamed of by two Christians from Gallup who asked, "If God designed each of us as unique individuals, how might the research capabilities of Gallup help us discover what those are?" They also asked how lives could be different if the focus for development was on what people did well rather than their weaknesses. The result was this tool.

**James** discovered that his top Strengths were empathy, adaptability and 'restorative' enabling him to help others in unique ways. This turned round his whole attitude to life.

**Laura** got the job because she could clearly and confidently express "What is it that you would bring to this role?"

**Martin** was pleased to discover that he had already been using all his Strengths, found some ways to develop them further and then continued his work with increased confidence.

**The diaconate** understood themselves and each other better and as a result of this and other input to the church they have seen substantial growth.

**Emily** sees that her networking and bridge-building between people is not something everyone can do.

So how does **StrengthsFinder** work?

A simple online assessment, telling you what your top five strengths are, is followed by a coaching session that brings the results to life. Geography is not an issue as most coaches are happy to coach by phone or Skype as well as face to face. *StrengthsFinder* can also

be used in an on-going way for support and mentoring. I love working with people in this way and watching them put into words what they know is the real them but have been unable to articulate clearly. Then they are able to make choices that energise them, and benefit those around them. It's a tool for growth – for both individuals and teams.

**StrengthsNet UK** has a vision to grow a team of coaches who can make *StrengthsFinder* accessible to individuals and teams, particularly in churches and charities in the UK. It's early days in the UK for this tool, but elsewhere in the world it's being used in schools, with those who are homeless and/or out of work and those with low self esteem. At the other end of the scale, top businesses use it to enhance their teams and increase work relations and productivity. There are even children's and young people's versions available – *Strengths Explorer* and *Strengths Quest* respectively.

**Anne Carter** is a retired Baptist minister, with an earlier background in counselling and training, and is now CEO of StrengthsNet UK



To find out more, including how to find a coach, go to [www.strengthsnet.org.uk](http://www.strengthsnet.org.uk)



Training photos – taken by Dave Carter

An interview with

# Chris Rose

**Youth and Children's Worker at Chatsworth Baptist Church in London. He appeared in the *Reflections on Zacchaeus* film shown at the Baptist Assembly**

## How did you become a youth worker?

I didn't intend on becoming one! I've been a Christian all my life, and at 18 when I finished college I started up a community gospel choir. It wasn't affiliated to any church, it was more through my love of music.

It was popular and grew to the stage where 50 young people were coming. It was becoming a community, and grew beyond the music. When you have that number of people in your care, there are challenges in their personal lives that you're helping them to deal with.

I thought of it as a hobby. I would come back from university (I was studying business studies to be an accountant) for rehearsals. Without realising it, I was doing youth work.

## So what happened next?

A few churches in the area became interested in what we were doing. One of them was **Chatsworth Baptist Church**, whose pastor at the time was Susan Stevenson. She really encouraged me to do youth work full-time. I went on courses and became the youth worker at a small church in Blackheath. I really enjoyed it. And now it's come full circle, because I'm back at Chatsworth, where my calling was first recognised.

## How do you see your role?

To build relationships with the youth (along with their parents, the volunteers and the wider church); to help them find their identity in Christ and to equip them as they walk in their purpose.

Primarily I would say my role (or aspiration) is to simply be a positive Christian influence in their lives.

## Many were struck by what you said in the *Zacchaeus* film, shown at Assembly.

### Can you remind us what you said?

Yes, like Zacchaeus, our young people are searching for something... for love, for purpose, for identity, for self worth. For some reason their view has been blocked, they can't see what they're meant to see.

In the story of Zacchaeus, the object that reflects what youth work endeavours to be is the sycamore tree. The sycamore tree allows Zacchaeus to rise above the things that are blocking him.



As youth workers we must be like the sycamore tree and allow our young people to rise above it, and see beyond what their peers see. And to see Jesus for themselves.

## What are your biggest challenges?

Managing the four different components of youth work (youth, parents/guardians, volunteers/workers and wider church) is a challenge. In some ways each component is like a ministry within itself.

For varied reasons many churches are struggling to hold on to young adults in the 18 - 30 age bracket. This creates a generational gap where young children and teenagers have no or few positive young role models in church, and often find negative role models outside of church.

This biggest challenge has to be combatting the moral breakdown in society which has led to socially accepted/encouraged behaviours which hinder, or in some cases stop completely, the growth of young Christians.

## Do you have particular favourite scripture?

Loads! But right now I keep meditating on Deuteronomy 30: 19-20.

The *Zacchaeus* film shown at Assembly can be found on the Assembly website [www.baptistassembly.org.uk](http://www.baptistassembly.org.uk) and on <https://vimeo.com/128125766>

The gospel choir Chris formed has recorded an album, which will be released soon.

Visit [www.genesisofficial.com](http://www.genesisofficial.com) for a taster.





Photo: BMS World Mission

## Nepal: we're not leaving

The devastating earthquakes in Nepal earlier this year strengthened BMS' commitment to the country, both in the short term... and long after the cameras have gone

### “Are you leaving now?”

This is the question BMS mission workers **Angus and Helen Douglas** were asked more than any other in the aftermath of Nepal's earthquakes. Neighbours, friends and strangers - and supporters back in the UK - all wanted to know.

Angus and Helen, together with their children, Caleb, Charis and Esther, had moved to Nepal in summer 2012. Angus is helping to develop the future of the Kathmandu International Study Centre (KISC), where education is provided for both missionary children as well as for local Nepali teachers through teacher training. Helen is a GP and is involved with health work.

But the couple - and BMS - were not going anywhere. As Nepal suffered terrifying aftershocks, the presence of BMS workers standing alongside their Nepali friends when they could have gone home spoke volumes.

Helen says: “Angus sat with a Nepali colleague who was weeping, saying how much it meant to him and the community that we had stayed in Nepal. Walking through the pain and hardship together meant so much to him.”

It is their love for God and for his people that is motivating the Douglasses, and all of the BMS team, to stay in Nepal. Jesus walked on earth, alongside those who were suffering, and that's what BMS workers are trying to do too. In important ways - both big and small.

As well as standing in solidarity with those affected in the country, BMS workers helped to head up the relief effort of two of its long-standing partners, the International Nepal Fellowship (INF) and the United



Photo: BMS World Mission

Angus and Helen Douglas, with Caleb, Charis and Esther





Photo: BMS World Mission

provided by BMS occupational therapist Megan Barker and her team. This work provides the focus of the 2015 BMS harvest appeal, *My Father's House*. The title refers to 10-year-old Diya, whose dad's spine was shattered in a terrible truck accident. "It's a story of incredible hope," Mark Craig, BMS Director of Communications told the Baptist Assembly. "And there is so much more need for that now."

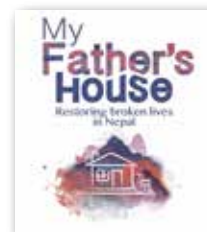
"When the camera crews move on and Nepal is no longer headline news, there will still be hundreds of thousands of Nepalis who need help," added Mark. "Because of you and your gifts to our Nepal earthquake appeal, we are able to carry on standing with them. Thank you."

Mission to Nepal (UMN). Together they were able to assist more than 10,000 households through the provision of emergency shelter, food, water and medical check-ups.

But BMS' response goes beyond immediate needs. Working with INF, UMN and the development arm of the Nepal Baptist Church Council, BMS is

helping with the long-term recovery of three badly affected districts in Nepal - Dhading, Gorkha and Lalitpur. This involves providing shelter, livelihoods and health care - including psychosocial support.

It is building on existing projects, utilising knowledge and relationships. One example is the spinal rehabilitation



Visit <http://www.bmsworldmission.org/myfathershouse> for more.



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# Where have all the APEs gone?



This might seem like a strange question, but it's one that explains why the Pioneer Collective has a vision to identify and release 400 new Baptist pioneers, writes **Simon Goddard**

We need to start by taking a look at Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)...  
*'And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.'*

Here we see the various shapes of ministry given by Jesus as a means of bringing life and growth to the church. It is sometimes described as the 'fivefold' ministry, and the different roles of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers can be remembered using the acronym APEST. Whilst in Jesus we may well have seen all five of these roles encompassed in one person, those who minister generally demonstrate a gifting and calling in one or possibly two of them.

**Why are the apostles, prophets and evangelists missing from our churches, and what can we do to bring them back?**

If we did a survey of the ordained ministers in our churches, however, I am sure we would find a predominance of shepherds and teachers, and thus the question 'where have all the APEs gone?' arises. Why are the apostles, prophets and evangelists missing from our churches, and what can we do to bring them back? If all five 'pillars' of ministry are required for 'building up' the church, then it surely can't be healthy for our churches when three of them are missing.

Clearly when we talk about leadership in our churches we aren't only referring to the ordained minister - although I think if we looked in our diaconates and ministry teams, we would still find a lack of APEs. But how would you recognise what an APE is anyway? Let's take them in reverse order:

## **Evangelist**

This is probably the most easily identifiable of the three - an evangelist is someone (like Chris Duffett) who seems effortlessly to be able to share the gospel with others. As a Union we already recognise and nurture this gift and there is a small number of accredited evangelists within the Baptist family. The reality, however, is that very few of our churches will call a stipended evangelist as part of their ministry team, and those few evangelists who do manage to make ends meet either end up having to set up their own charity (which can easily disconnect them from the local church) or being squeezed into a more traditional shape of church leadership.



**Prophet**

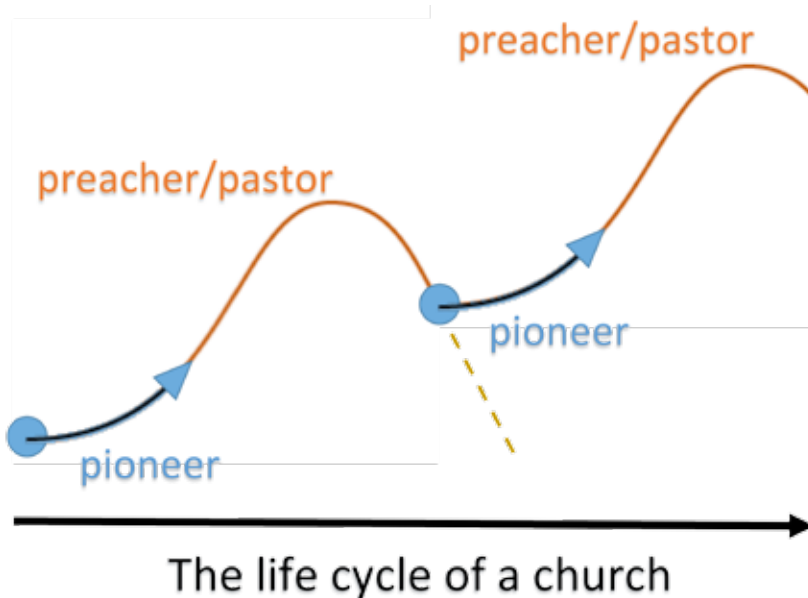
These people are perhaps more difficult to categorise, and any definition is going to be an oversimplification of this spiritual gift. Here, however, I would describe a prophet as the person who is able to read the culture and whose heart is to bring transformation and renewal to the church. They can see what God is calling the church to be in each particular generation, and they desire to bring about the change that is necessary for the church to effectively engage in the mission of God.

**Apostle**

This label is perhaps the most controversial - but at its simplest this is a person who is 'sent' on behalf of the church to begin something new. Whatever the history of your church it was probably planted by someone with an apostolic gift, even if this wasn't the language used to describe them at the time. In this generation these include the individuals who are starting fresh expressions of church, and are passionate about making the church relevant to the 94 percent of people who aren't yet engaging with it.

The language is imperfect, but in different ways all APEs probably fall within the category of 'pioneer', and we can find examples of them in the New Testament:

- » Like Paul, apostles pioneer by sowing the seeds of the gospel in new places, and seeing churches grow;
- » Like Peter, prophets pioneer by bringing a fuller understanding of the gospel and its implications to an existing community of God's people;
- » And like Luke or John, evangelists pioneer by taking the good news to people who have yet to hear it.



At any one time a church would benefit from having a balance of these gifts and callings amongst their leaders and congregation. For different chapters in a church's story, however, some characters have a more prominent role than others. At the very beginning, as has already been noted, it is likely to be an APE, a pioneer, who helps to plant the church and oversee its early growth. Those with ST gifts then need to take over, with the shepherd-teacher taking on a 'settler' role by nurturing the community, discipling it and putting its roots deeper into the Word.

There usually comes a time, however, in a church's life cycle, when its growth has plateaued or started to decline, and this is the time when the congregation can benefit from calling a pioneer into its midst. The gifts of the pioneer will help the church to make the changes necessary to experience further growth and renewal. Then, after a while, it's time for the preacher-pastor again, and so the cycle continues - or at least it should!

With a lack of APEs, however, the cycle is broken: churches aren't planted and decline sets in to existing congregations. And that is why the Pioneer Collective has a vision to enable us, as Baptists Together, to identify, release and resource 400 new pioneers. This means finding individuals within the membership of our churches who can be released and commissioned by their congregations to do new things.

It also has implications for the processes of recognising and training ordained ministers, as well as the challenge for churches to identify where they are in the life cycle, and call the right type of minister to help them move forward.

Please do contact the **Pioneer Collective** for more information about the vision or, if you want to explore some of the thoughts in this article further, I would recommend reading the book *The Permanent Revolution* by Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim.

As we rediscover and apply the teaching of Ephesians 4, I am excited about how God can use it to bring renewal and growth to his church.

**Simon Goddard** is the Co-ordinator of the Pioneer Collective, and a Regional Minister in the Eastern Baptist Association



Evangelist Chris Duffett

Contact Simon on:  
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 0845 475 4003,  
 or visit:  
[www.pioneercollective.org.uk](http://www.pioneercollective.org.uk)

Share your thoughts on Simon's article at [www.baptist.org.uk/apes](http://www.baptist.org.uk/apes)



Photo: Ian Britton

A genuinely intergenerational ministry may stop the drift of young adults away from the church, writes **Sandra Crawford**

I'm half way through my working life, most of which has been spent as a Youth Specialist Minister in the north of England. The milestone has caused me to stop, look back and forwards: do I want to carry on with this, or try something completely different?

I lived for 10 years in Manchester, where I developed and led a large youth work; big numbers, a glitzy programme, with good outcomes of conversions and baptisms. We focused on large youth clubs, regular big events, schools outreach, residential activities, and social events. From a purely statistical perspective we were successful, as we made contact with an average of 200 under-18 year-olds each week.

However, although we looked successful on the surface, the difficulties and lack of success in other perspectives were numerous. Many young people didn't transition from the youth work into the wider adult church. Why not? Because the adult church was not their church. Their church effectively stopped at 18.

Upon reflection, the church's youth work ran in parallel to the adult church, and although the two occasionally connected, it ran like a parachurch agency. Another difficulty we faced was the retaining of youth leaders, as often their commitment to the youth ministry pulled them away from their own involvement in the wider church and their own discipleship.



As I look at that first 10 years, a number of young people's stories really stand out to me, primarily those I had the privilege of walking alongside in a relationship where we discovered and learned together. I regularly found myself facing situations where I felt out of my depth. However, from here we built relationships where we were both active participants in learning, and found opportunities together to reflect on life situations and work out theology from that place, rather than just me pour theology into them. We created space together to question and debate.

Westerhoff's<sup>1</sup> understanding of a community of faith is of a people on a journey of seeing, joining, searching and owning faith, a pilgrimage with companions in community. Our Union's dedication service in *Gathering for Worship* recognises the powerful role of community in the spiritual development of children: 'Together we celebrate the importance of community and the truth that parents and children need not be alone.'

1 Westerhoff *Will Our Children Have Faith?*

And yet we are so quick to divide that community on age grounds; children's groups, youth groups, adult groups.

Eleven years ago I moved to my second church, a much smaller church with fewer resources. After a couple of years we found ourselves in the position where our only musicians were young people, and we have been led musically by young people from 13 years of age since then. This encouraged us to consider why we split into age groups: are there other ways to worship, to learn, to gather together?

I began to read around the subject of intergenerational ministry and discipleship of young people. An intergenerational church has relationship building across the ages as the bedrock, rather than the default position that churches often take of splitting into age groups with a few adults looking after young people. If we are going to split into groups, why do we do it on an age basis? What about different groupings - the artistic, the readers, the dancers, the talkers, the sporty, the competitive? What about random groups which include a wide age range? Psychologists point out that adolescents go through a second intense period of brain development and reorganisation (the first takes place from 0-3 years) and the need for a stable adult community at this point in their lives is vital.

The church can be a community of cross generational relationships which few other social institutions can offer. However the longer we are in it, the more we become used to it, and familiarity can blind us to the rich opportunities it offers. Commitment to a community of believers has been chipped away at due to the fragmentation of community within Western culture; commitment to community has been overridden by a consumer culture which just looks for the best deal for me. In many places church seems to have become a professionally-led programme, rather than 'a creative, participatory, communal hive of spiritual life'<sup>2</sup>; one which encourages generous, gracious, and dynamic relationships, which in turn encourages young people on a personal pilgrimage with companions in a community of faith.



Photos: Sandra Crawford

For what an exciting privilege we have as church to intentionally walk alongside young people, offering differing levels of connection and the precious gift of relationship. We can create a community of faith enculturation, a safe haven and secure base. We can become a village of trusted people, able to journey with them, exploring together who we are in Christ, and develop theology with them from where they are, rather than trying to pour theology into them.

So I may be half way through my working life, but it is this potential that still excites me. I will continue in my calling as a Youth Specialist Minister (and no I'm not too old, and I'm not going to move on to become a 'proper minister', grrrr, don't start me!) and I will continue to create all age, all ability community.

The North Western Baptist Association with Northern Baptist College are running a series of day events looking at Intergenerational Church, with the intention of gathering a number of churches who want to go on this journey together, who are willing to read, research, reflect and pray as they put their learning into practice. The next day is on Saturday 23 January 2016.

**Sandra Crawford** is Regional Minister for Youth in North Western Baptist Association and co-pastor at Leyland Baptist Church in Lancashire



## Intergenerational Ideas for Your Community

### Big Questions Sunday

We asked our teenagers for some big questions that they wanted to discuss with the wider church, and we've looked at: how did the Bible get here?, creation and evolution, how should Christians get involved in politics?

We sit in all-age groups with a facilitator in each group to make sure no one person takes over, and we discuss some pre-planned questions. This has helped relationships grow across the age boundaries. It has helped young people realise that we don't all agree with one another, and yet we can still be part of the same worshipping community.

### Events

We still have weekends away for young people, activity days for children, but have begun to ask 'how can we hang out together across the ages?' We recently held an all age games evening where the teenagers were given the task of running the games and ensuring all ages could participate. The winner of Wii dance was Bill who is probably the oldest member of the church.

### Prayer Groups

We have intergenerational prayer groups – which only meet on a Sunday. Everyone is in a group, with the aim of encouraging conversations across the age groups, asking one another what they would like prayer for that week, and then following it up the following week. As each group contains children and teenagers there are fairly strict guidelines for the groups, such as no contact by social networks or mobile phones so that we can ensure we keep children safe. We often split into these groups during Sunday mornings to pray for one another and build relationships.

### Further reading:

Alexander, L, 2012 *Children, Families and God* Italy: Evangelista Media  
Powell, KE, 2011 *Sticky Faith* Grand Rapids: Zondervan  
Westerhoff J H III, 2012 *Will Our Children Have Faith?* 3rd ed NY: Morehouse Publishing

<sup>2</sup> Murray-Williams *Multi-Voiced Church*





Photo: EBF

## European union

Across Europe and beyond, Baptists are serving in the most challenging of circumstances. Through its European Baptist Aid (EBAid) initiative, the European Baptist Federation (EBF) seeks to walk alongside and equip them to be effective witnesses to the Kingdom of God.  
**By Rupen Das**

In Barcelona, Spain, Baptist churches organise and run a food bank for the unemployed that has won recognition from the local authorities for addressing critical social needs in the community. According to one Spanish Baptist leader, this has enabled the Baptist churches to move from the fringes of Spanish society to becoming an integral part of the community and raised its credibility. Though the ministry is funded locally, it has benefitted from **European Baptist Aid (EBAid)** capacity building support.

In Baghdad, Iraq, the only Baptist church in the city has been helping those displaced by the conflict, regardless of their religion or ethnic group. In doing so the small Baptist community has built bridges of peace with other communities, which would not have been possible otherwise. EBAid helped the church access funding to make this important ministry viable.

These are just two examples of how direct European Baptist Federation (EBF) support, through its EBAid initiative, is making a difference. EBAid's goal is to be a channel for humanitarian relief and development projects through the member unions of the EBF. Its expertise helps in the running of aid and development projects in the EBF region, as well as to co-ordinate a response to the requests for help which we receive from Baptist Unions and churches in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.



Photo: EBF

Besides coordinating funding, EBAid has also organised training sessions over the past few years which have focused on issues such as designing development projects, proper project planning and proposal writing, and ensuring the sustainability of development programmes.

Participants have represented churches from Albania, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Georgia, Spain, Serbia, Romania, Belgium, Iraq, Sweden and others. The social issues that they address range from refugees, to poverty, addressing the needs of marginalised communities (such as the Roma), of those who are unemployed, and of migrants, reconstruction after disasters, and meeting the psychosocial needs of those who are mentally ill.

All this represents only a portion of how churches are seeking to demonstrate the compassion of Christ, besides verbally preaching the gospel.

Helping the Ukrainian Baptist Union to respond to the humanitarian crisis engulfing the churches in their eastern provinces is the latest initiative EBAid is involved in. An EBF team recently visited Ukraine to assess the situation. At the end of the visit EBF offered to help the Ukrainian Baptist Union to train their staff and churches in designing, implementing and reporting on humanitarian assistance projects. The capacity building will be both through mentoring and formal training, enabling the Ukrainian Baptists to increase the amount of assistance that they are able to provide those in need.

With the changing social and political landscape in the region, EBF is constantly seeking ways to enable its member churches and unions to remain relevant, while also being witness to the reality of the Kingdom of God.

**Rupen Das** is a consultant for mission and development with the European Baptist Federation (EBF), on secondment from the Canadian Baptist Ministries



# Events



**Racial Justice Sunday**  
13 September  
[www.ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-2015](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-2015)



**The Big Welcome**  
20 September  
[www.baptist.org.uk/bigwelcome](http://www.baptist.org.uk/bigwelcome)



**Sam Sharpe Lecture**  
7 October  
Whitlands College,  
London  
Speaker: Joel Edwards  
[www.baptist.org.uk/samsharpe](http://www.baptist.org.uk/samsharpe)



**Faith and Thought**  
Open Symposium -  
Dealing with Conflict  
10 October  
Bloomsbury Central  
Baptist Church  
[www.faithandthought.org.uk](http://www.faithandthought.org.uk)



**Anti-slavery day**  
18 October  
[www.antislaveryday.com](http://www.antislaveryday.com)



**One World Week**  
18-25 October  
People working together to  
build a just, peaceful and  
sustainable world  
[www.oneworldweek.org](http://www.oneworldweek.org)



**Bible Sunday**  
25 October  
[www.biblesociety.org.uk/biblesunday](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/biblesunday)



**Adoption Sunday**  
1 November  
[www.homeforgood.org.uk/get-involved/adoption-sunday](http://www.homeforgood.org.uk/get-involved/adoption-sunday)



**Baptist Women's  
World Day of Prayer**  
2 November  
Theme: 'Arise, Shine'  
[www.baptist.org.uk/bwwdp](http://www.baptist.org.uk/bwwdp)



**Remembrance Sunday**  
8 November



**BBC Children in need**  
13 November  
[www.bbc.co.uk/corporate2/childreninneed](http://www.bbc.co.uk/corporate2/childreninneed)



**Interfaith week**  
15-21 November  
[www.interfaithweek.org](http://www.interfaithweek.org)



**Prisons week**  
15-21 November  
'A new and living way'  
[www.prisonweek.org](http://www.prisonweek.org)



**Advent Sunday**  
29 November



**Get in the Picture**  
December  
Experience being part of the  
nativity in a fun way  
[www.getinthepicture.org.uk](http://www.getinthepicture.org.uk)



**World Aids day**  
1 December  
[www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org)



**Human Rights day**  
10 December  
[www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday](http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday)



**International Migrants  
day**  
18 December  
[www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday](http://www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday)

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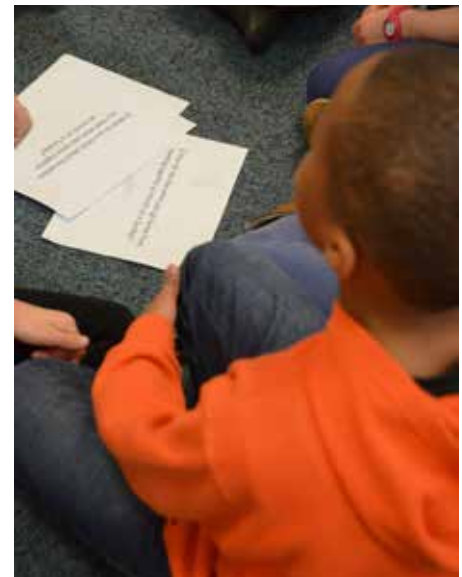
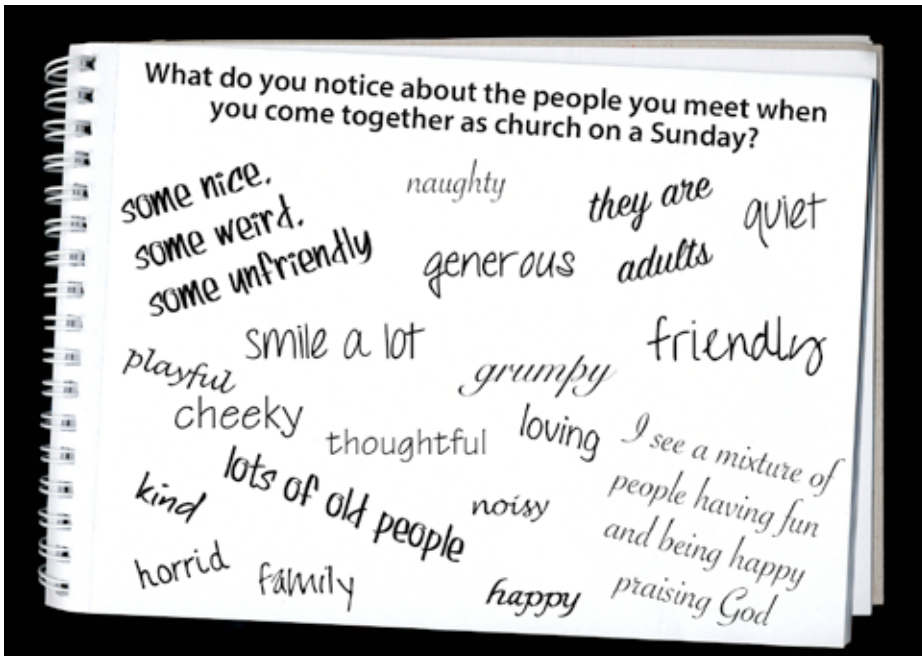
# The Big Question: how do our children see church – and us?

We'd all love our children to be blessed by our churches and those within them. But what do they really think? Are they as happy as we hope? If not, why? And what do they notice about the adults around them?

What follows are answers given by those of primary age at the 2015 Baptist Assembly to two questions from the Arise Ministries team, which led the children's work at the Baptist Assembly.







The answers are clearly a snapshot of a small group of children in Baptist churches, but are nevertheless revealing. They are varied, and there are some typically lovely responses alongside honest observations that will challenge us. Being aware of some of the issues is the starting point from which they can be addressed, both

within our church life and potentially how we respond personally to the children in our midst.

How do you think the children in your church would answer these questions?

And if some of the responses are negative, how could you respond?

Arise Ministries works on a local, regional and national level, and seeks to help the Church reach children with the gospel, so that they have an opportunity to discover Jesus and become his followers. The team regularly leads the children's work at the Baptist Assembly.

Visit [www.ariseministries.org.uk](http://www.ariseministries.org.uk) for more.



The Children's Society

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## Gearing up

*Just before our annual summer holiday we invested in a roof-box for our car. With two maturing teenagers and a full-on five year old, the amount of equipment we needed to take with us had finally exceeded the vehicle's ability to contain it.*

*Having one, of course, opened up greater possibilities. Not surprisingly we transported a whole load of 'stuff' half the length of the United Kingdom, only to return it unused a fortnight later.*

*'Being properly equipped' is an important and justified concern for anyone, and we can be grateful for the thoughtful ideas in this magazine. But there comes a point, particularly in our western materialist society, when being equipped can simply give way to loading ourselves up with so much that it risks becoming more of a burden, rather than being of any useful purpose.*

*The New Testament often presents us with the picture of a church that was notably 'un-equipped'. Jesus deliberately told his disciples to travel light; in fact it was their vulnerability and reliance on strangers that was a key vehicle through which the gospel would be expressed.*

*In the early chapters of Acts, the gospel suddenly magnifies its geographic impact when the Jerusalem believers are scattered throughout Judea, Samaria and beyond – not with any great preparation or swathes of equipment, but running for their lives as persecuted refugees, probably with little more than the clothes they stood up in.*

*So what am I saying? Am I seeking to pour scorn on all that has gone before and to dismiss the idea that we might usefully 'equip God's people?' No – in fact I believe we should do all we can to prepare and equip ourselves for all God has called us to. But let us also recognise that equipping and training alone will not enable us to fulfil our Kingdom calling.*

*I often find myself asking how those early believers, so new to the faith, so seemingly ill-equipped, were able to have such a significant impact. The answer, I think, lies in that life-changing encounter that each had had with the living Christ; their compelling belief in the power of the Gospel and their unstinting commitment to its truth – whatever that might cost them in human terms.*

*It is this, more than anything else, that will equip us for the works of service to which we are called.*

**Phil Jump** is the Regional Minister  
Team Leader at the North Western  
Baptist Association



Artwork: Chris Duffett

### 'Light beacons of prayer across the UK'

A call to prayer was launched by **Lynn Green**, General Secretary of our Baptist Union, earlier this year.

Explaining that God has been speaking to us from Isaiah 43:18-19, she said she has a clear sense that God wants to do a new thing: he is calling us to prayer to make space for him to speak and move.

She went on to say that God wants to light beacons of prayer: "Beacons of prayer that are people inspired to pray and seek the Lord, not with our own agenda but simply that we might draw close to him and open ourselves and our churches to him so that he would have the freedom to move amongst us and through us by his Spirit."

To help facilitate this call to pray she created a new blog – called **Beacons of Prayer** – where she has been regularly posting short passages of Scripture she's been using to inspire her own praying.

To find out more and view the **Beacons of Prayer blog**, visit: [www.baptist.org.uk/beacons](http://www.baptist.org.uk/beacons)

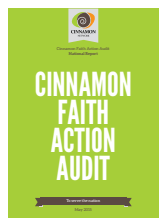
### Christian social impact measured

New research from the **Cinnamon Network** has documented the large scale social impact and economic value faith-based groups are having in their communities.

The report from the Christian charity the Cinnamon Network is the most comprehensive analysis yet of the current level of commitment of local churches and other faith groups in supporting their communities.

Gathered in 57 'Faith Action Audits' and then extrapolated across the UK, it estimated that nearly two million volunteers and 125,000 paid staff are involved in almost 220,000 social action projects each year. It has calculated this to be worth £3bn a year.

The report added that there are likely to be widening gaps in services due to statutory provision being increasingly limited. 'Into these gaps the Cinnamon Network wants to see local churches and other faith groups grow in confidence and capacity in their role at the heart of the community,' it stated. Find out more at: [www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk](http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk)



On a related note the charity **Christians Against Poverty** (CAP) has praised the commitment of Baptist churches in helping people struggling with debt, unemployment and addiction. The charity released figures earlier this year showing how many Baptist churches are running CAP debt centres, job clubs and release groups (which help people break addictions).

"We love to work with the Baptist Church," said CAP's Chief Executive Matt Barlow. "We're always aware of this huge desire on the part of both the congregation and leadership to connect with the community in a real and relevant way." For the full story, visit [www.baptist.org.uk/cap](http://www.baptist.org.uk/cap)

## How to prepare for important Paris climate gathering

A crucial meeting that will determine how the world responds to climate change takes place at the end of the year.

In late November/early December representatives of almost 200 countries will gather in Paris for **COP21**, where they will attempt to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change.

Is there anything Christians can do to prepare for this gathering?

Nicky Bull, a member of **High Street Baptist Church** in Tring, is chair of Operation Noah, a charity providing leadership and focus in response to the threat of climate change.

She suggests three things:

**Pray** – for all the leaders gathering in Paris; for the many pilgrims converging on the city and for all who will seek to bring a prophetic and biblical voice to the talks

**Practise** – a more sustainable lifestyle, thinking about how you travel, eat and shop and the impacts of your choices for carbon emissions

**Proclaim** – whether to a congregation on a Sunday, in conversation with friends and colleagues or by lobbying your elected representatives nationally and locally; share your concerns about climate change and lend your voice in support of action to change our economies and our energy supplies

Find out more at: [www.pilgrimage2paris.org.uk](http://www.pilgrimage2paris.org.uk)

## IGNITE

As part of our commitment to equip God's people, Baptists Together are undertaking a significant review of how we enable and resource ministry in the 21st century.



The project title **Ignite** is inspired by the words of St Paul written to Timothy where he encourages him to 'fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you'.

The project is being led by Phil Jump, Regional Minister of the **North Western Baptist Association** supported by a project team drawn from across our Baptist community.

It was launched at the Baptist Assembly in Peterborough, and through a couple of Market Place sessions, participants were invited to reflect on what they saw as important in an effective minister.

It was interesting to note how many placed, what might be called, issues of 'character' above roles and skills.

The **Ignite** project has particularly been encouraging people to share their story, warts and all, so that we can learn from one another's experience how we can better raise up and release effective ministry.

Phil reflects: "At the heart of this project is the vision to be a movement that brings out the best in everyone. Ministry is not just about those who are recognised and accredited, but enabling everyone to fulfill their calling within the community of God's people. This includes equipping leaders who can equip others."

Find our more at [www.baptist.org.uk/ignite](http://www.baptist.org.uk/ignite)

## Kate Coleman's UN role

Baptist minister Kate Coleman has been working with the United Nations on creating leadership development programmes for women leaders.



Kate, who was President of our Union between 2006-7, is the founding director of Next Leadership which has a mission to transform global leadership and equip leaders to serve well.

UN Women, the United Nations organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, has now called on Kate's expertise.

"I have been working with UN Women to develop and design transformational leadership development programmes for women leaders from across sectors, in this case, in South Sudan," she told Baptists Together.

"I was specifically engaged to ensure the gender and transformational leadership elements of three programmes: Women in Peace-building and Conflict Resolution, Women and Economic Empowerment, Women as Transformational Leaders.

"As you can imagine, not only do I feel incredibly privileged to get to work on such a significant endeavour with an extremely gifted and knowledgeable international team, I also learned an incredible amount in the process.

"I am not personally delivering these programmes (although I did deliver a programme for the UN Women country heads for the East and Southern Africa region and another for the international team): this will be done through local partners. But given the history and nature of South Sudan it has been a very exciting (and disturbing) venture."

Next Leadership delivers a number of leadership programmes and offers one-to-one mentoring, including the *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, which has been delivered in a number of associations.

For more on Next Leadership, visit: [www.nextleadership.org](http://www.nextleadership.org)

## All good gifts around us

During September and October, many churches will be arranging harvest services which increasingly include collections for local foodbanks.

**Faith in Foodbanks**, a resource from the **Joint Public Issues Team**, includes a number of ideas and resources that connect our worship and prayers with the ministry of foodbanks. Further ideas for using this resource in a harvest service can be found at [www.baptist.org.uk/foodbanks](http://www.baptist.org.uk/foodbanks)

The Joint Public Issues Team brings together Baptists, Methodists and United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland, working together to help local congregations engage in public life and to be a prophetic voice in our society. Find out more at [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)



## PRAYERS OF THANKS

God who calls  
through heart and mind, body and soul,  
equipping us for every good purpose

### **We give thanks**

#### **that you remain gracious**

when our hearts do not always agree  
with how things are to be done on earth as they are in  
heaven

### **We give thanks**

#### **that you remain patient**

when our minds do not understand  
how things are to be done on earth as they are in heaven

### **We give thanks**

#### **that you remain generous**

when we do not give all of our body or soul  
to how things are to be done on earth as they are in heaven

### **And we give thanks**

#### **that you gift us with the church**

to form our hearts with character  
to equip our minds with knowledge  
to train our hands with skills  
to inspire our spirit with passion

God who calls us  
through heart and mind,  
body and soul,

### **We give thanks that you**

#### **equip us and entrust us**

#### **encourage and empower us**

#### **to accomplish on earth what is done in heaven**

**Amen**

## PRAYER OF FORMATION - (from the Iona Community)

O Christ, the Master Carpenter,  
who at the last, through wood and nails,  
purchased our whole salvation,  
wield well your tools in the workshop of your world,  
so that we who come rough-hewn to your bench  
may here be fashioned to a truer beauty of your hand.  
We ask it for your own name's sake.  
Amen

© Iona Community

## GLIMPSES

Lord, we can see glimpses,

in the library is every book that's written,  
on the stage the orchestra is unpacked,  
in the gym is an array of exercises,  
in the studio is every brush and pallet,  
in the kitchen, all of the ingredients,  
in the church are bibles, bread and wine

Lord, we can see glimpses,

of equipment assembled  
But no teachers, musicians or athletes  
no artists and chefs, prophets or disciples

Not without their first choosing,  
and before that being chosen.

Not without their first forsaking  
the enticing surface of endless possibilities  
and diving deep into decision and danger,  
embracing the slow formation  
that is alive to the reality of death  
and dead to the risks of resurrection

Lord, we can see glimpses

of an unglamorous movement,  
whispered by the Spirit,  
secreted in prayer,  
hidden in service,  
disciples transformed by the coming of Shalom

Lord, we have had glimpses

But we long to see more  
just as we yearn to be more  
of the people you have equipped us to be

## WITH AND WITHOUT

God who is with us,  
**equip us to live  
 without so much equipment:**

without heavy helmets and unwieldy swords  
 the spears and armour  
 of programmes and processes  
 with which battle was once done.  
 Grant us smooth slingshots  
 of imaginative grace  
 and disarming peace  
 that topple giants  
 knowing that less is much more.

God who is with us,  
**equip us to live  
 without so much equipment:**

Instead lead us out,  
 travelling light in the world  
 without purse,  
 without bag,  
 without sandals,  
 but with a spirit of peace  
 a kindness for strangers  
 and a perception of things that are hidden  
 from the wise and the learned.  
 Bring us home to the church  
 with a wonder at your ways  
 and to worship at your feet.

God who is with us,  
**equip us to live  
 without so much equipment:  
 but closer to you.  
 Amen**

## BLESSING

May God the Father equip you  
 with a vision for every good work,  
 May Christ the Son engage you  
 with those far from the kingdom of heaven,  
 May the Holy Spirit empower you  
 with the strength to carry on  
**Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,  
 Equip, engage and empower us  
 So we may bring blessing to your world**

## CHANGING GOD

God of change  
 Help us to turn

Swords into ploughshares  
**Equip us for peace**

Suspicion into trust  
**Equip us for faith**

Resignation into vision  
**Equip us for hope**

Apathy into passion  
**Equip us for love**

**God of change  
 Help us to turn**

Compiled by Craig Gardiner,  
 a Tutor in Doctrine at South Wales Baptist College

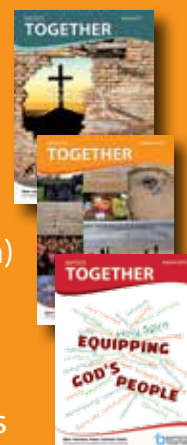
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# What is it you want?<sup>1</sup>

Asking questions was one of the ways Jesus taught vital spiritual truths.

In his 2014 book, *Jesus is the Question*, author and pastor Martin Copenhaver highlights the 307 questions Jesus asked (and the three he answered).

'Jesus is not a giver of advice,' he writes. 'He doesn't give us a neat list of ten ways to be closer to God. He does not provide easy answers. Instead he asks hard questions, questions to take us beyond the obvious to something deeper.'

## Where's Jesus taking you today?

**Bible References:**

- 1: Matthew 20:21    2: Matthew 6:27    3: Matthew 8:26    4: Matthew 9:28    5: Matthew 20:32    6: Matthew 22:18
- 7: Luke 2:49    8: Luke 8:25    9: Luke 22:27    10: John 4:7    11: John 6:70    12: John 21:17

Mysteries and prophecies...  
...foretellings and re-tellings,  
Legends, dreams, miraculous happenings,  
and unearthly signs,  
A web of wonder spins across the night-sky  
in a filigree of light.  
There have been many stories about Christmas...  
...but never one like this.

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