



11 October 2017

News:

**Movement Day UK: seeking God together for the future of our places
Christians have been challenged to strive for greater unity and co-ordination in
order to transform the places where they live**

The call came as part of Movement Day UK, a two-day gathering which took place at Methodist Central Hall in London last Friday and Saturday (6 and 7 October).

The event's vision was 'a passion to see our places transformed in every area of culture,' explained Baptist minister and Movement Day director Roger Sutton.

The event brought together around 1,000 people including church leaders, leaders and practitioners from different spheres of society. It consisted of plenary sessions, seminars and live-learning track sessions which aimed to connect people working in similar areas.

It also included an ecumenical prayer gathering took place in Parliament Square on Friday afternoon.

Roger said the hope was to increase our understanding of how 'we can release and enable the Body of Christ to engage with different spheres of society such as the arts, politics, business, education, health and media.' Holistic transformation across our places 'requires the whole body with the whole gospel to reach the whole city.'

'More than ever, we need to be operating as one body, in a prayerful, strategic and coordinated way,' he continued, 'Movement Day UK is about the future of our places, each having their own unique set of challenges and opportunities.

'It is about God's promise; that wherever we set our feet, He will give us the land.'

In the opening plenary session Roger praised the different ways churches already serve their communities. But he said it's not as co-ordinated or strategic or unified as it could be, and at its worst, can be competitive.

'We are arguing for more strategic co-ordination,' he told delegates.

In some places this is already happening. He spoke about the number of examples of Christian unity he had witnessed in his role as director of Gather, a national network of Unity movements across the UK, and his amazement at the depth of friendships he had witnessed. The stories have been collated in his new book *A Gathering Momentum*.

But he believes much more is to come. 'We believe this is a movement of the Holy Spirit. God is drawing His people together to bless our places with His love.'

There were several messages for churches. They were encouraged to 'release' their people, recognise their mission field and the importance of whole life discipleship. Worship doesn't end on a Sunday. As an example, Roger asked when was the last time we gathered the Christian teachers in our places, and prayed for the 10 worst schools? Churches both small and large were encouraged to recognise their place in the bigger picture, explore different opportunities to collaborate and develop relationships with others.

In the final plenary session Roger invited Lynn Green, Baptists Together General Secretary to reflect on what happens next. Two things stood out, she shared with delegates. Firstly the importance of communicating what's happening around the country in order to inspire others. The second thing was conversation: how do we need to be as a movement in order to bless and encourage this kind of collaboration in our towns and cities?

The true fruit of the gathering wouldn't be measured until several years down the line, Roger said. He encouraged Christians to consider having local Movement Days.

'What about gathering the church, Christian organisations, and more importantly Christians in education, the arts, politics and government for an event and having a conversation about the future of your place? What would your place look like in 15 years time if we really got our act together?

'It's been an awesome time here – that could be an experience for you. Movement Day is a stunning way to look at the future of your place.'

Register your interest by emailing Roger at joinus@movementday.uk.

Visit <http://movementday.uk/> for more information.

50th home for Hope into Action

A Christian charity which provides homes for the most vulnerable in society in partnership with local churches has reached a new milestone

Hope into Action is opening its 50th home this week, in World Homeless Week, meaning 120 vulnerable people are sleeping in its homes every night. In total it has now partnered with 46 churches to open them.

The idea is that the church, or a church member, releases some of their investment capacity to buy a house. Once occupied, the church provides community, non-judgemental relationships, mentoring, practical support and prayer.

It results in people seeing their lives transformed, said founder and chief executive Ed Walker.

‘We have shown, through consistently capturing our results, that churches can have a transformative effect on people in a vulnerable situation by surrounding them with a richness of relationships and non-judgmental love.

‘Lots of services offer somewhere to sleep and a professional – very few offer a home and a community of people to accept you as you are.’ He said that 82 per cent of tenants have improved relations with their families last year; 81 per cent of those with previous drug/alcohol misuse have reduced their intake; and 89 per cent of former prisoners did not re-offend.

One resident commented, ‘HIA helped save my life, not only housing me when I needed it, but their continued support after I left. They have loved me at my worst and fought for me continually and encouraged me endlessly.’

The charity, which has also been shortlisted for a Guardian Public Service Award, began seven years ago when Ed used an inheritance to open a home in partnership with his church, Bretton Baptist, in Peterborough.

Formerly of Tearfund, Ed had returned to England to be with his young family in 2010. He was so moved by the story of a homeless man in his local park that he was called to do something about it.

The original home had a heart for men coming out of prison, but since then the charity has homes for a wide range of ‘homeless’: people in recovery from addiction, people sleeping on the streets, women and children fleeing domestic violence, people coming out of rehab, former prostitutes, refugees, and those suffering mental health issues, survivors of human and sex trafficking.

Hope into Action supports 16 homes in Peterborough with the rest across 14 towns or cities. The plan is to be in 20 cities by 2020.

Ed explained it has been achieved by using Christian wealth, a hitherto, ‘largely, untapped seam of wealth for the Kingdom of God.’

‘Many Christians have savings, wealth which they want to preserve,’ he said.

'There is no widely accepted theology or Christian teaching on what to do with this. Therefore billions of pounds of Christian wealth is stored in banks or shares and thereby shared with the rich.

'We want to undam that money and share it with the poor. We want to see a revolution in how Christians think about and use their wealth so it becomes normal to have some of your wealth shared with the poor by investing in a house for the homeless.'

'We have shown that churches have the latent wealth, which can be invested to help the homeless... because what they really need is a home - there is a reason we don't term them: hostel-less, or 'shelter-less' or even 'house-less'.' So far the charity has raised more than £8m to buy the homes.

The Hope into Action model has been commended by Steve Clifford, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, who said, 'The way out of homelessness is actually through relationships.

'What home can offer is family. What family can offer is relationships. And when you put that together with the local church, I would suggest it's a dynamic of heaven that is at work there.'

**New Baptist tutor for the north east
Northern Baptist College (NBC), the Northern Baptist Association (NBA) and
Cranmer Hall are pleased to announce the appointment of the Revd Linda
Donaldson as the part time Hub Tutor for Northern Baptist College at Cranmer
Hall, Durham**

Linda will be taking over the role of Hub Tutor from the Revd Roy Searle who helped to pioneer the partnership between NBC, the NBA and Cranmer Hall, where there are now five Baptist ministers in training.

Roy is currently in conversation with NBC about a possible continuing role at there alongside his role as one of the Free Church tutors at Cranmer.

Linda is minister of Portrack Baptist Church, Stockton on Tees. She trained at Northern Baptist College from 2011- 2014 where she completed an MA in Contextual Theology.

Her undergraduate study was undertaken as an independent student at Cranmer Hall. It was during Linda's studies in Durham that she recognised God was calling her to ordained Baptist ministry.

Roy said, 'Linda is an example of a fine Christian missional leader. She possesses a deep love for God and a real desire to see people come to know Christ and grow in

their faith and realise the potential he has given for their lives. She is really passionate about developing leaders, shaping present and future generations in serving Christ and his kingdom.

'I believe that she will also, given the opportunity, enrich and contribute much to the life of the colleges, the NBA team, the wider association and Union.'

Linda said, 'I am delighted to be appointed as Baptist Hub Tutor and to have the opportunity to work with both colleges and to be involved in the development and training of future Baptist ministers in the north east of England.'

In her spare time Linda loves walking on the beach with her little dog. And going on holiday!

Girls' Brigade responds to Girls' Attitudes Survey

Girls' Brigade Ministries has issued a faith-based response to Girlguiding's annual Girls' Attitudes survey results

Girls Attitudes Survey Girlguiding's survey is the biggest survey of its kind in the UK, asking the opinions of more than 1,900 girls and young women aged 7 to 21 (not just members of Girlguiding). It gives an insight about how girls feel about a range of issues, emerging pressures and what they need to support their happiness, wellbeing and opportunities in life.

Three key messages from the latest survey were:

- girls feel pressure to conform to gender stereotypes in certain aspects of their life, such as career and sports;

- girls don't always feel safe because they're facing threats to their own personal safety and well-being;

- and girls are demanding change and are passionate about transforming the culture that surrounds them.

In response, Girls' Brigade President Rachel Gardner said, 'Just like Girlguiding, we at GB want to encourage a more hope-filled narrative for girls and young women. It matters that 55 per cent of 7-21 year old say the negative messages in culture about how they should look affects their ability to say what they think. It matters that 54 per cent of 11-21 year olds have come across violent or graphic images online that made them feel upset or disturbed.

'Jesus offers life in all its fullness, and at GB we do exactly that - work with girls inside and outside GB to explore their God-given potential and worth. Women who have been through GB have gone on to lead companies, churches, and families. They've

become parents, teachers, aeronautical engineers, athletes, attentive neighbours and innovative creators. Our GB groups engage girls in activities from rugby and advocating in Parliament on issues that matter to them to talking about coping with anxiety and building resilience.'

GB Ministries is home to four key initiatives that specialise in enabling this generation of (primarily) girls and women to openly explore and engage with real life and Christian faith in a fun, informative and hopeful way.

Reflection

The Reformation - and the Declaration of Principle

The 500th anniversary encourages Baptist minister John Smuts to revisit the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle afresh - with surprising results

Like many others I have been reading up on the Reformation. Digging up church history notes on how much Luther loved beer. Working through new books on the subject. Even listening to lectures online.

As we mark 500 years since Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg it is only natural to look again at the past in order to view the present with more clarity.

One thing that struck me has been how much the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle is a reflection of 'Sola Scriptura'.

(Sola Scriptura is a Latin phrase that emerged as one of the five slogans of the Reformation. Over time these five slogans - often called the Five Solas - have become helpful shorthand for key doctrines of the Protestant Reformation. Sola Scriptura means 'by Scripture alone' and claims that the Bible alone holds ultimate authority in matters of church doctrine and practice. It does not mean that all other sources of authority are to be rejected by Christians, rather that the Bible has the last word ... it is the 'norming norm'.)

Now, as any good historian will tell you when examining past documents, it is important to explain what is unusual; to consider what is not there as well as what is on the page.

I hadn't noticed it before but the first point of the Declaration of Principle has a very strong Sola Scriptura smell to it:

The Basis of the Baptist Union is:

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.

Ulrich Zwingli, a reformation leader could have drafted that himself! In 1522 he wrote The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God where he argued that Christ ruled the church, through His Word, not the Pope. (Although, judging from the analogies he uses, he was more of a wine than a beer man himself.)

Of course, in the context of the Reformation, the main contestant for authority was the Church. However, in 1873, when the Baptist Union first introduced the Declaration of Principle, other appeals to authority were widely recognised. Along with the oecumenical creeds and the tradition of the Church, 19th century believers also looked to reason and experience in their pursuit of the truth.

Hence the Declaration of Principle is very significant in what it does not mention. It is the Lord Jesus, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, who is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice. Wow! I hadn't noticed before how strongly worded it is.

Baptists tend to emphasise the freedom of the local church in interpreting the Scriptures without paying much attention to the limits the first part of the statement imposes. The aim of the church meeting is to discern the mind of Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We have freedom to interpret them as we feel the Holy Spirit guides us but in so doing we cannot appeal to reason, experience, tradition or any number of other authorities to do so.

The more I think about that the more I wonder how many of our churches are breaking the Declaration of Principle on a regular basis? Including the church where I am pastor! While the Scriptures give no specific commands as to the colour of the carpet or how much to spend on the new projector, we frequently discuss matters directly addressed in the Bible where 99 per cent of the discussion concerns what society thinks of the issue, what science tells us, or what the latest social research demonstrates.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't be engaging with all those other sources – it is the weight we give such things in our church meetings that is key. The Reformers did not reject general revelation or the use of reason either. Sola Scriptura simply stated that the authority of the Bible trumped them all.

And I'm quite surprised by how Sola Scriptura the Declaration of Principle is.

John Smuts is currently the Pastor of Rayners Lane Baptist Church in Harrow and has previously been a pastor in Scotland and Australia. He is married to Emily (who works at the London School of Theology) and has two daughters.