



Editorial



## Mission 2000

To say that mission lies at the heart of the church is not a new idea. But with so many needs and demands clamouring for time, mission often slides to the margins. World mission can degenerate into a partially invisible missionary prayer meeting, which the vast majority of members avoid. Local mission can become something we take an interest in every five years or so, with an organised outreach. At the end of that period of frenzied activity, exhausted and perhaps even relieved that it's all over, we slip back into business as usual.

The church is not simply mission. The tasks and nature of the church are wider than mission, not least worship, discipleship and fellowship. But the church is only truly the church when it is the church in mission. If as Brunner said the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning, can we not also say that when the church ignores mission it not only turns its back on both Christ and the world, but it also renounces its own claim to be fully a church?

At the time of the reformation there was inevitably much discussion of the hallmarks of a true church. The time has surely come for us to resolve that one of the hallmarks is a living commitment to the fulfilment of the Great Commission. Here are some principles that could be the basis for a mission statement in your church:

### OUR MISSION TO THE WORLD

*We are committed in the name of Christ to evangelism and care, peace and justice around the globe.*

- 1) **To send** short and long term workers on a regular basis, young, middle aged and retired, singles and families. *To this end we pray for one/two/several new missionaries to be sent out from our church in 1992.*
- 2) **To support** our missionaries, before, during and after their service, not least by prayer, money, letters, gifts and, especially for those serving long term, by visiting them and by looking into the provision of accommodation and holidays. *To this end we will develop a world mission team headed up by a key leader in the church.*
- 3) **To give generously** to key mission agencies, both through our regular offerings and, when appropriate, through a World Mission Gift Day. *To this end we will determine what minimum proportion of our total church income should be set aside for world mission.*
- 4) **To explore developing links** with other churches around the world for mutual support and encouragement in our common task.

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#### Reviews:

Church Planting - Our Future Hope  
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The Mainstream Newsletter is designed to encourage life and growth among churches within the Baptist Union. On the understanding that contributors are in sympathy with this aim, they have full liberty of expression. Views contained in the newsletter are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Mainstream executive.

## OUR MISSION TO OUR AREA

*As a church for all peoples, using our buildings as a mission centre, we are committed to presenting the whole Gospel to all who live in the district. We are witnesses by who we are, what we do and what we say.*

1) **To strengthen our provision of welcoming and care, nurture and integration.** We want to be sure that everyone is known, loved and rightly dealt with, and we want converted newcomers to know quickly that they belong as part of our fellowship.

2) **To develop our community involvement,** by offering further care provision and life enriching activities, each with a clear Christian aspect, that we might demonstrate the love of Christ together.

3) **To resolve to communicate the Gospel** in creative and varied ways, backed by much vigorous prayer together, so that we will have taken the Good News to every home in our area by the end of 1995, for everyone to have had some real opportunity to respond to Christ. *To this end we will identify our "target area", particularly with reference to other live churches.*

4) **To decide whether to implement a church planting programme,** and/or multiply congregations, in order to reach as many as possible with the Good News.

5) **To staff for growth.**

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# One Plus One = One

## Establishing a Two-Congregation Church

### David Goodyear

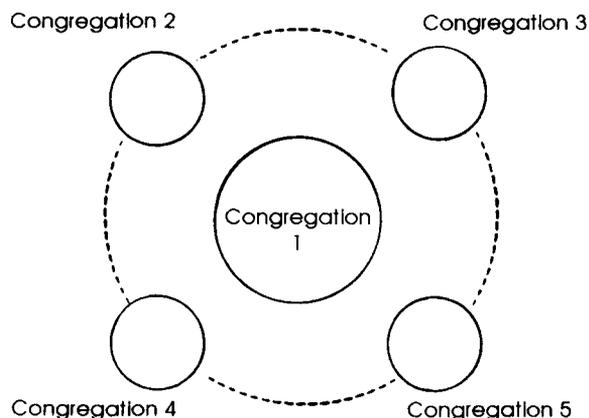
**ONE + ONE = 1** is the slogan we have used at Zion Baptist Church as in recent months we have developed from a single congregation into a 2 congregation church. It has been the culmination of several years of prayer and planning and has been part of our published Church Growth Programme since 1987.

The impetus to become two congregations has chiefly come through the growth of the morning service. Our seating capacity (without having video relay to the Church Centre) is 400 and by earlier this year we were nearing that number. Having looked at two options for spreading the load in our existing premises, we were clear that the way ahead was not to develop into two congregations on the same site meeting at different times but to develop two congregations at different sites meeting at the same time.

We have been clear from the start that the aim was to establish a second congregation and not to plant a church. Moreover we see this as a long term strategy. Unless the Lord indicates otherwise, the intention is to remain one church, whether we are 2, 12 or 20 congregations. This is not a model seen often in this country, though a variation of it is very common in South America. Even there the model for a multi-congregation church is usually one of the mother congregation giving birth to daughter congregations. To use another metaphor they are 'satellite' congregations attached to a central congregation.

Our concept is different. If we were to consider the five-congregation stage in our model it could be represented by the diagram on page three.

Each congregation has equality of status, and



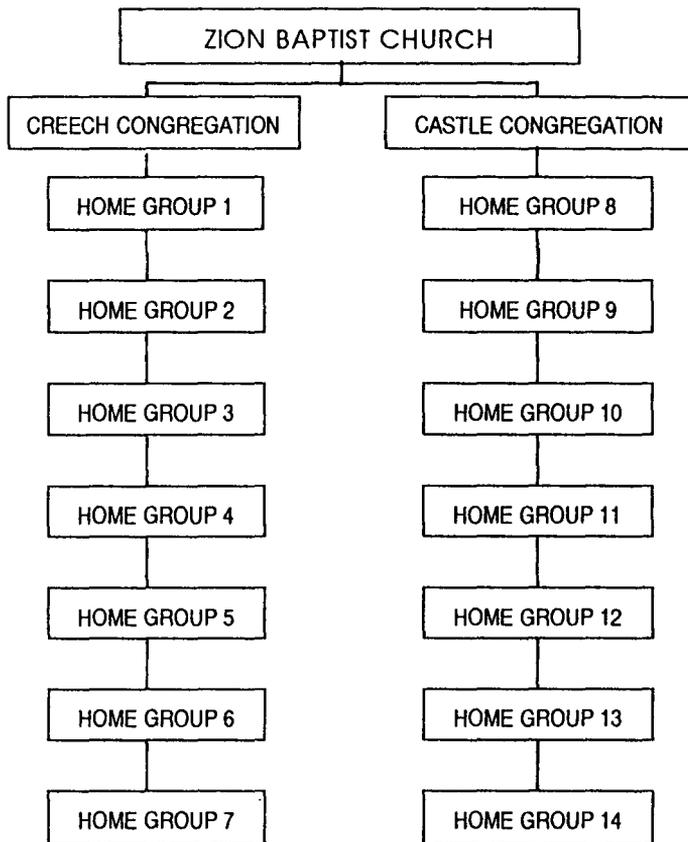
**The Central Satellite Model**

'church' has a weekly physical expression in that the congregations only meet on a Sunday morning. On Sunday evening every week there is a whole church gathering.

This model takes account of the well-known church growth observation that church can exist at three levels, namely Cell, Congregation and Celebration, for the congregations are themselves composed of home groups (cells). Indeed, it is by identifying your home group that you identify your congregation at Zion Baptist Church.

Our Creech Congregation continues to meet in our Chapel at Creech St Michael on Sunday mornings, whilst our Castle Congregation meets in the main

assembly hall at the Castle School in Taunton. During the past summer everyone got into the right 'lane' (home group) in anticipation of the development into two congregations in October. When the time came this major development happened without any difficulty; everyone knew which congregation they belonged to. Moreover since the ministers and other members of the Preaching Team repeat each service in both locations, there is an inbuilt 'sanction' which dissuades anyone following a particular preacher from congregation to congregation.



**Zion Church Structure**

This development has rationalised the fact that about 200 of our folk now come from Taunton, while another 200 or so come from Creech and the surrounding rural area. We see the morning service as our 'shop window' service, having an evangelistic edge, with teaching for Christians on a light and topical basis. The evening service is very much a service for Bible teaching and open worship and tends to be a 2 or 2¼ hour service (that is about an hour longer than the morning service). Every member of the church belongs to a home group and the

Sunday evening Bible teaching is the basis for conversational Bible study at home groups that week, guided by a set of discussion starters published 10 days in advance.

We see the congregations as an expression of the home group structure. Each congregation has been formed to allow the home groups (mainly pastoral in nature) to work together evangelistically, and in terms of children's and youth work.

The immediate effect of the development has been to increase overall attendance at both morning and evening worship by 15-20%, with the evening service developing a celebration atmosphere - the high point in the week when we all meet together.

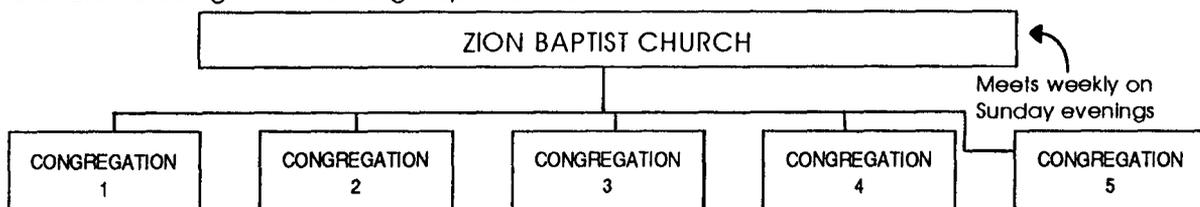
The whole church is very excited about the development into two congregations. Of course, it has resulted in there being spare seats on Sunday mornings but this has had a very stimulating effect. It is a constant reminder of the 100,000 people in and around Taunton who are unchurched, and is proving a stimulus to find new ways of reaching others for Christ.

David Goodyear

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**Advantages of the Multi-Congregation Model for Church Growth**

1. **It allows for indefinite growth**, providing a building can be found to house the growing Sunday evening celebration.
2. **It allows for the appointment of specialist ministries.** Most pastors have to operate as general practitioners and are therefore unable to give themselves to the work of the ministry according to their gift. Under this model, every staff appointment is to the church as a whole. While a member of staff may be asked to have special responsibility for a particular congregation, this will not amount to more than 50% of his time. The other 50% of his time is given to a church wide ministry along the line of his gifting. Thus he, God willing, we appoint a fourth member of full-time staff next year, we shall have a Bible teacher and leader (the Senior Minister), an evangelist and youth worker (Associate Minister), an administrator and a pastoral counsellor.
3. **It allows the experience of celebration** to become a natural part of each Christian's experience. Because of the traditional British 'little flock' mentality, Christians in this country have to travel hundreds of miles to experience 'celebration style' worship in all its power at one of the residential Bible weeks. This carries a dynamic all of its own at one end of the scale just as home groups do at the other end.
4. **It allows society around us to see God at work** on a larger scale than is usually seen in this country.
5. **In New Testament times** all the Christians in a commutable area constituted the church in that area. This model of church growth is in harmony with the restoration of that biblical principle.



# ESCAPE FROM THE WATCHTOWER

You happen to glance out of your living room window and notice coming up the path a couple with a small child in tow, with the husband carrying a briefcase and the wife a magazine entitled "The Watchtower". What is your first reaction? Hide, don't answer the door, remember the last time you talked to them and felt disappointed or even confused at their answers. Or maybe what they said seemed to make sense and they seemed to agree with you on so many points. Yet you know that really they have got it wrong, even if you are not sure where.

What do you think they are thinking about you? Perhaps they remember what you said before. What have they been taught about Christians? About people who say to them, "*I have been healed*", or "*I'm a born again Christian*" or even "*Jesus died for my sins and I know I'm assured of salvation through him.*"

Let us first look at some of the things they do believe and have been taught, and then consider how to make our witness more effective.

It has often been called a religion of denials because it is easier to say what they deny regarding the Christian faith than what they believe.

They deny that Jesus is God and teach that he is a god and was created by Jehovah God. They deny that salvation comes from Jesus alone but state that it has to be accompanied by works. They deny that all who believe in Jesus will be resurrected in heaven, saying this is only for a limited number, that is 144,000. The rest who have proved themselves worthy by doing the door to door work live forever in an earthly paradise.

They deny the person of the Holy Spirit, referring to him as an active force. This obviously brings them into contention with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which they declare to be an invention of Satan.

They deny the existence of hell and teach that those who reject Christ and the teaching of the Watchtower will suffer total annihilation and will cease to exist. They quote 2 Thessalonians 1:9 concerning the punishment of "eternal destruction" and Romans 6:23 - "*The wages of sin is death.*" To them this means that the damned will cease to exist.

They deny that Jesus will return in glory because they believe that in actual fact he returned invisibly in 1914.

They have teachings which are unique to their movement, e.g. Jesus was hung on a stake rather than a cross. They refuse to celebrate birthdays and Christmas because of the bad connotations regarding birthdays in the Bible, e.g. Pharaoh's birthday when he hanged the baker and Herod's birthday when John the Baptist was beheaded. They claim that it is a pagan custom to observe such rituals and state that Christmas was never celebrated by the disciples.

They say they have the truth regarding what the Bible teaches and follow the commission of Jesus to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). They feel they have a responsibility to warn the world of God's judgment and the battle of Armageddon ahead.

What is not so commonly known is their teaching regarding Christianity and Christians as a whole. Because of this they were once described as a religion of hate.

They openly teach that: The clergy are part of Satan's world, all of them whatever their status, i.e. Popes, Protestant preachers and priests all share responsibility for the religious sins of Christendom. They consider them all to be "*followers of the desire of their father Satan*" (Watchtower, February 1990).

The Watchtower magazine has a circulation of 13.9 million in 107 languages. Each issue would include such statements as follows:

Christendom is portrayed as controlled by Satan. Nothing good can come from it. Its teachings are derived from paganism, e.g. they suggest the concept of the Trinity originated in Babylonian religion. They say that all such untruths will be done away with through the final great battle of Armageddon.



Worldwide there were 3.6 million Jehovah's Witnesses going door to door in 1989 which was an increase of 5.6% on 1988 figures. "Publishers" is the name given to those who do door to door work and they are expected to do ten hours per month. Yet there are those in the organisation who do 60-90 hours unpaid work per month, selling magazines and instigating Bible studies. This is certainly because the more you do the more praise you get and the more certain you are that you will escape Armageddon.

The total number of people who believe in Watchtower doctrines is much larger. 9.4 million people attended the annual memorial supper held at their local Kingdom halls. This number includes "publishers" and those who are less active but still believe most or all of the Watchtower teachings.

With this in mind you can understand a little more of the thinking of the JW's who are walking up your path, when you mention to them you are a Christian. They have been taught that basically most Christians don't know what they believe, and that they have been deceived by the clergy. Only JW's have the truth so there is not a lot of point listening to what the Satan-inspired people have to say. What they tend to do is run through what they consider the inconsistencies of the Christian way, e.g. war when God is a God of love, the Trinity when the word "trinity" does not appear in the Bible.

Such points can easily be countered if you can get them to listen. That is always the major stumbling block. Because it is so hard to get them to listen most Christians give up before they have started. It is better to shut the door than to get angry!

The only problem with this approach is that you play into the Watchtower's hands as they teach that Christians don't have the truth and the proof is that Christians never talk to you about it. They are taught to expect Christians to say, *"We are Christians, no thanks."* This proves to them that the JW's have the truth.

If you declare you are a Christian and start a conversation, they have a number of questions provided by their book *"Reasoning from the Scriptures"*. *"That means you expect someday to be with Christ in heaven, doesn't it? Have you ever wondered what those who go to heaven will do there?"* Or *"If there are kings (in heaven) there must also be subjects over whom they will rule. Who will these be?"*

If you say to them *"Have you been born again?"* they have three ready made answers which they know off by heart. Those of the heavenly class could reply, *"Yes I am, but the Bible cautions all of us not to be over confident of our position. We need to keep examining ourselves to be sure that we are really doing what God and Christ require of us"*

(1 Corinthians 10:12).

They expect you to say what you say and they have answers for you. To mention to them that you have been healed by Jesus will usually make them sure you have been deceived into believing that it was Jesus when in fact it was Satan.

They come to your door without any love for you, but with the express purpose of making converts or leaving literature. If in any way they are prevented from doing this they cease to be interested in you. They have an ulterior motive - *"to make converts"*.

What does this mean for our efforts of witnessing to them when our position has been portrayed as followers of the great Satan? Any literature we show them which explains the inconsistencies of JW teaching will not usually be read or even looked at. It would be a serious offence even to have such material in their homes. How then do we proceed?

When the knock on the door comes we need first of all to be prepared. Be polite to them and listen to what they have to say. If you have time invite them in and offer them a drink. This will immediately ring alarm bells in their heads. This is not what is meant to happen when they meet a Christian. Remember, they have been taught you will be rude, not polite.

Let them deliver their prepared speech replying briefly but politely, being careful to avoid being drawn into a debate. You need to be aware that they will have practised beforehand how to answer questions as taught by the Watchtower on the subject which has been set for them to deliver.

Try to talk to them about themselves and be genuinely interested in what they have to say. However, if you are drawn into a biblical discussion take time to pray with them using God's name Jehovah, asking for guidance and help from the Holy Spirit. This form of praying is likely to prompt questions from them about your own faith.

Try to keep the first meeting brief and encourage them to come back again specifically to look at a subject or book of the Bible which you think would be helpful for them, e.g. Galatians, or a study of sin, its consequences and redemption through Jesus Christ. Try to avoid discussing blood transfusions, birthdays, Christmas, or side issues which will lead you away from the important matters. If you choose to share your testimony with them try to avoid making them feel inferior by your special and intimate relationship to God through Jesus.

A problem that is encountered but not always recognised is the similarity of terminology that we both use but which carries different meanings. Encourage them to explain what they mean by

what they say and in doing this you will probably find that they don't really know what Christians believe even though they think they do. (They believe Christians worship a three headed god.) Try to close your time with them by praying for them and finding out if there is any way in which you can help them or meet any of their needs (see 1 John 3:18).

An elder that I met from the Kingdom Hall said that in twenty years of door to door work he had never been invited into a home and talked to about the Bible in a friendly way. As James reminds us, "Anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it sins" (James 4:17).

May I add a word of warning about your attitude when you start to meet with JW's and listen to their teaching. "If you think you are standing firm be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

You will find it helpful, but it is also very important, to let others know what you are doing, so that they can pray for you or even support you by joining in the discussion. In meeting with the JW's you will be

entering enemy territory armed in Christ's name with the aim of setting captives free.

A former witness reported that she encountered three types of response in her work for the cult:

1. Those who slammed the door in her face. (These made her feel good because she felt persecuted for her faith).
2. Those who argues with her. (These made her feel stronger in her convictions because she had stock answers for them).
3. A third group gave her a personal testimony of their faith in Christ. (These made the most lasting impression on her. When she went to bed she would think about these people and reflect on what they had said).

Surely we can at least do the same. 69,000 people left the JW's in 1988, while during the seventies and eighties nearly two million were disfellowshipped or left the organisation. How are we helping these people? They may suggest to you that they are contented and happy but statistics show that nearly one in four is dissatisfied. Surely it is our responsibility to show Christ's love to these people and not deny them by turning them away.

Victor Allen

## **PRESSURES v PRIORITIES!**

"I simply do not have the time!" I've lost count of the number of times I have heard that comment made by Christians. And it is certainly true, our



diaries are fuller with more and more demands on our time and resources. The pressures are real. We are pulled in so many directions, family, friends, work, sleep, Church and so on. All of them demanding more time, more commitment, more attention. The results are disastrous. A decay in family life,

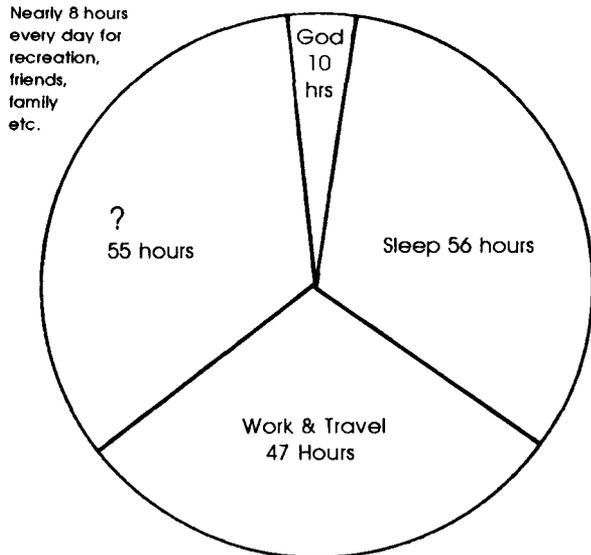
breakdown of relationships, nervous breakdowns or other serious health problems occurring at younger ages.

So what is the solution? As the minister of a Baptist Church, the solution which I hear time and again is this, "I must cut down on my God Time. I must cut down on the time I give to God. That is what must go". Having heard such comments so often, I thought that I should sit down and look very carefully at whether I was expecting/demanding too much time from the members of my Church? I didn't think I was, as it seemed that people had the time from somewhere to take on new job responsibilities, go to parties, take up new hobbies etc., yet I needed to

have figures to back it up. The results were amazing and I will outline them below. I realise that these are only average figures and you may well spend more time than stated in some of these sections, in which case write down your own figures as we go along.

First of all I began with the total number of hours in a week, 168. I reckon that on average people will sleep 8 hours a night so I took off 56 hours. Then I reckoned that most people would be contracted to work 37 hours a week, but I also added 5 hours a week overtime plus 5 hours a week travel. Take these figures from 168 and we are left with 65 hours. Putting that figure to one side for a moment, let us look at the time people actually give to God. I'd suggest that for many 3½ hours would be more than average for Sunday Church Services, 2½ hours mid-week Bible study, 2 hours a week quiet time/prayer, and 2 hours for some other activity. That makes a total of 10 hours for God each week. Let us then take that figure from the 65 hours we had left above, we are then left with 55 hours in the week. Nearly 8 hours every day, for family, for watching T.V., for sport, for our hobbies. Eight hours every day, yet so often when we are under pressure we say it is part of our GOD SLOT that should go which as we've seen only gets 10 hours in total! So now maybe you will understand my concern.

Some people piously try to excuse themselves by saying, "Well all of my time is given to God". It is of course true that wherever we are and whatever we are doing we should be a witness to God and looking for opportunities to serve Him and so on, but at the end of the day, our primary reason for going to work is to get money at the end of the month to live. We play squash, not to serve God or to make contacts but for our own enjoyment. So let's not fool ourselves that we are doing more for God than we really are.

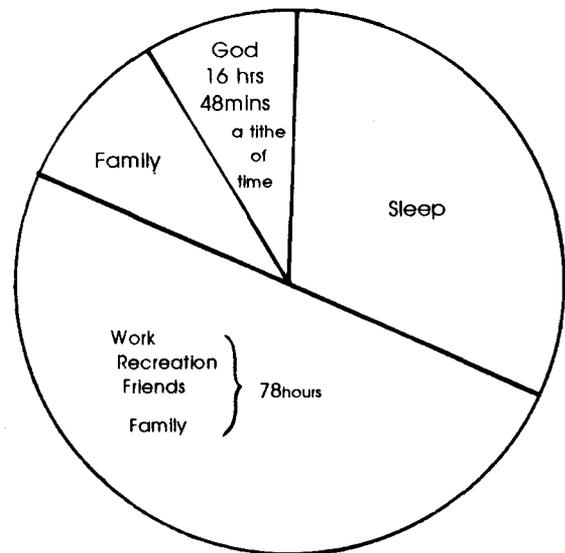


"Well", you may say, "we all have different priorities". In one sense we do, but only after we have put our top priority in its rightful place. The problem boils down to 3 things; a) we are doing too much in our work context, b) we are simply very badly organised, and c) we have not fully understood or taken on board Jesus' words, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his Father and Mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14 v 26). So many people read those words and say, "Well Jesus didn't actually mean that". They don't stop to ask; well what did he mean?

To put it very simply, Jesus was saying that unless God is our top priority, unless God takes first place over against everything else, then we could not be one of His disciples, we would not be fit for His Kingdom. When work, or hobbies, or sport or even family take priority, we are not fit for God's Kingdom. The problem often stems from the fact that so many people have been offered and have received a cheap Gospel, A Gospel outlining the benefits of faith such as forgiveness and eternal salvation, yet they've never even been told about the cost let alone accepting it. Salvation has been rightly explained as a free gift but the concept of submitting our lives under the Lord's direction has been

omitted. Subsequently we want the rights of God's Kingdom without the rule of the King; the riches of His Kingdom without the reign of the King; and the royalties of His Kingdom without responsibility to the King.

So what should we do? I believe that we should all think through very carefully how God wants us to use our time. He doesn't want us to be under all these pressures. He wants us to have life in all its fullness. "Well life is full", we may think, but that's not quite what God meant. I would encourage you to construct your own timetable. Start with 168 hours. Obviously we all have to sleep so take off 56 hours for that. Next, I'd encourage you to consider the idea of tithing your time for God.



We are all familiar with the concept of tithing our money by giving one tenth to God, I believe we should also prayerfully consider tithing our time. In other words, to give 16 hours and 48 minutes to God each week. This could be done by increasing your quiet time, by offering to serve in some way in the Church, as well as of course Sunday attendance and mid-week Bible Study. Next I believe we should also consider tithing our time to our families, particularly people with young families or children who very particularly need quality time with their parents. You may be thinking, "Well I'm running out of hours and I haven't included work yet!" Do not worry, there are still 78 hours in the week left, over 11 hours every day left to do work, to do the garden, to meet friends, to do whatever you want. It is here that our priorities will differ. Some will want to spend many of those hours at work. Others will want to do more round the house, while others will choose to be with friends. We must sit down and prayerfully seek God's way in this matter. I'm convinced that He doesn't want us to be under so much pressure, so



that means somewhere along the line our lives are outside of His will. If He had wanted us to do so much he would have made a 25 hour day..... but he didn't!

Next time you are tempted to say, "I'm under too much pressure, I've got too much on, I'll have to reduce my 'God Time'" or when you feel your minister or Vicar is expecting too much from you, then pause and carefully ask "How much am I really giving to God?" and then make your decision.

Andy Twilley

# CHALLENGE TO CHANGE

## A STUDY GUIDE

### Chapter 1 On Being a Baptist

\* Is there a place for a distinctive Baptist identity in the current ecumenical, evangelical and charismatic climates?

\* "We find our own identity and an understanding of God's purposes for us when we look to our own origins. Where we are going has something to do with where we have come from. To examine our own origins is bound up with knowing who we are and what we must do in the here and now." (p17).

Take a few moments to reflect on where the church has come from, its origins, history, traditions and experiences that have shaped and contributed to what it is today.

\* "When the excitement of being a pioneering venture has worn off, the question of who we are looms large." (p18).

In the midst of change are we still pioneering or have we settled and if settled what as? What are we identified with? How does this affect our identity?

Nigel is calling for renewal to re-appropriate and re-express the Baptist values he sees as fundamental to our local church and denominational life. He draws from the Anabaptists and English Baptists to cite the essential components of a truly Baptist identity.

1. "the supreme authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and conduct." (p22).  
How do we react to the statement that "Baptists cannot and should not do things because they are the Baptist thing to do, but because they are deemed to be biblical." (p24).  
"It is impossible to be truly Baptist without being evangelical". (p26) Discuss.

2. "the true church of Jesus Christ is composed of believers and therefore baptism should be the sign of freely chosen faith." (p27). This "believers church" or "free church" principle addresses a number of issues including what it means to be a Christian and Christian initiation. How important is believers baptism and how important is it to stress its significance in the current ecumenical climate?

3. "the priesthood of all believers and the autonomy of the local church" (p32) (see outline notes in Chapter 4).

4. "freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state" (p34) (see outline in Chapter 8).

1. to 4. taken together constitute a distinctive understanding of Baptist identity and how to be the church. If it rings true and finds an affirmation in our hearts then "Challenge to Change" is not, as Nigel points out, a call to change from what he contends are basic Baptist principles, but to allow our lives and those of the local church, association and denomination to change in order to recover and embody them in the contemporary setting. What issues do we need to address if we believe we are called to conform to such principles?

### Chapter 2 An Agenda For Baptist Christians

God is in the change business. "We are being transformed into the Lord's likeness with ever increasing glory" writes the Apostle Paul (2 Cor 3 v 18). Whilst change for changes sake is not productive, change with vision and purpose is necessary and healthy. Yet as human beings we are often resistant to change. Change is threatening, we cling to what is familiar. The church becomes an institution we wish to maintain as opposed to God's vehicle for

converting the world. There is need to keep before us a biblical vision: an ultimate vision in the purpose of God to bring "all things in heaven and on earth together under one head even Christ." (Eph. 1 vs 10); a penultimate vision, in which the church exists in the world as a sign of the saving activity of God and as the herald of the gospel good news; an immediate vision in which recognising the future before as we seek to shape our present.

The principles that need to be worked through if such vision is to be fulfilled are renewal (from the brokenness of admitting that things are not as they should be, there is new life); reformation (a continual process, involving local church and denominational structures); restoration (that the church needs to be restored to the New Testament pattern is a fundamental Baptist principle); revival (the work and mission of the church is not a question of human effort but of divine power); reconstruction (existing not for itself but for others the end work of the church is reshaping human life in the image of Jesus).

Making the shifts involves a wisdom to know what must change and what must be preserved. We need to think of transition in the areas of worship (from the solemn to the celebratory); structures (from the institutional to the charismatic); government (from constitution to consensus); evangelism (from programme to power); mood (from formal to informal); lifestyle (from conformist to Christian).

#### To Consider:

1. Consider the pressures resistant to change. What factors must be at work to enable change to take place?
2. If vision for the future rather than the culture we have inherited should shape our direction consider:
  - a) a biblical vision of the church.
  - b) a vision for your own church fellowship.
3. Matching present reality in your local fellowship against such vision what are the areas of change?  
Considering the principles of renewal, reformation, restoration, revival and reconstruction what practical steps need to be taken to assist any vision to come to fruition?
4. Consider the agenda for change mentioned in this chapter. In the areas of worship, structures, church government, evangelism, mood, lifestyle ask:
  - a) Where are we now?
  - b) How does that match against a New Testament expectation?
  - c) How any changes can be facilitated?

5. Are the areas in 4 above the crucial areas for change? What would you place on the agenda for Baptists in the 1990's?

### Chapter 3: The Ideal Church



Pleasant dreams or nightmare?

Given the biblical warrant for the young seeing visions and the old having dreams - what would your ideal church be?

### Chapter 4: The Centre of Gravity

One element in the make up of Baptist identity is church government and an understanding that authority in a church (under Christ as Head) rests in the local church as a whole rather than any internal or external leadership. Such congregationalism is often seen as having its focus in the church meeting, a specific meeting where guided by God's Spirit decisions are taken. The concept though of the "gathered church" widens such understanding for it takes seriously the truth that whenever the church gathers there is the promise of and so authority in Christ's presence. (Matthew 18 vs 19-20).

Such a principle of church government has been challenged on various grounds. It is said to be unbiblical (authority in the New Testament seems to be invested in apostles and elders); unspiritual (it treats every members contribution as of equal value and there is no submission to leadership); impractical (there is a built in conservative bias). Further there seems in many churches a real credibility gap between theory and practice.

Yet it is contended such challenges are based on misconceptions. There is in fact a concern for God's guidance, discernment of His Will, and leadership vested in those called, recognised and gifted. Distortions arising in practice (membership seen as legal status not functional reality: a decision making process owing more to the board room than to the New Testament, an unwillingness to submit to mutual discipline and correction) need to be dealt with, the principles do not need to be jettisoned. Such principles are based upon the teaching of Jesus (His understanding of the church, Matthew 18 vs 15-20: of church discipline: of leadership Matthew 23 vs 8-12).

- the teaching of the New Testament (Jesus is head of the church, e.g. Eph. 4 vs 15; of all believers 1 Peter 2; the anointing of all believers 1 John 2 vs 20, 27; the ministry of all believers 1 Cor. 12; the ability of all believers to make godly decisions as they grow in maturity, Hebrews 6 vs 11-14).

- the example of the early church as seen in Acts (6 vs 1-7, 11 vs 29-30, 15 vs 1-35).
- the freedom of those in Christ.

The present situation can be redeemed through teaching, through a commitment to consensus, through a new pattern of church meeting encouraging active participation through a reforming of the content and structure of such meetings and through effective communication.

#### To Consider:

1. Arguing from scripture, present a case for congregational church government.
2. Is there (to quote) a "yawning credibility gap" between Baptist theory and practice in the matter of church meetings? What are the strengths and weaknesses of congregational church government.
3. If the church meeting is in fact the gathered community of the local church, who should be entitled to be present? What should be the content of any typical gathering?
4. In your own church, suggest ways the church meeting might be improved. What practical steps will need to be taken to enable such change to take place?
5. "Current practice among Baptists says something about the spiritual condition of the church". Is this true? How can a better understanding of the privilege and responsibility of church membership be encouraged?



### **Chapter 5: Renewing Association**

The 1980's and 90's have evidenced considerable change in both the Union and local church circles but what of Association? This chapter helps to argue the case for an examination and review of association life.

- \* With the emphasis in Baptist circles on the autonomy of the local church and the necessity therefore to think local, the danger is surely one of courting parochial..... "apt to imagine that the church begins and ends with our little congregation."  
How true is this of our congregation?
- \* "What is of genuine and indisputable value.... is that local churches have enhanced appreciation of the wider dimension of church life when they belong to a network or fellowship of churches. If the local church is not to become isolated it must participate in some

effective form of fellowship. The localism of the local church needs to be balanced by the catholicity of a wider grouping and of the whole so that the local may be enriched by the whole. Whatever may be said of the name of such a grouping or the manner of its existence, it cannot be denied that such solidarity is biblical, helpful and necessary. Nor can it be denied that Baptists, with their bias towards the local, need to capture a new vision of the catholic and ecumenical." (p135).

Discuss with its implications for our local congregation.

- \* Early Baptist congregations expressed their interdependence rather than independence by associating together for mutual benefit, but where no church had power or authority over another. As Nigel points out "*The only true power is that of love and mutual service.*" Do we agree with this statement and if this was the basis of association among our Baptist forefathers, is it still and if not, why not?
- \* "Association is about working together with people and their churches (not domineering them) that their joy and faith might increase. It is about churches being in strong relationships so that they might support, correct and care for each other. It is about expressing the unity which we have in Christ. There is not much wrong with this concept. It is biblically, theologically and practically necessary." (p140). Clearly difficulties have and are encountered in many an association as expressions of relational unity have moved from the organic to the organizational. Churches are urged to relate because they are in an association, rather than to associate because they are in relationship. What relationship and fellowship exists can so easily become legal and institutional. Nigel gives example of some of the recent trends among restorationist groups who are committed to a baptist understanding of the church. He points to the emergence of Networks that are non-institutional, relational, gathering leaders and congregations together for events such as celebrations, Bible weeks, leaders' days, training and encouragement, along with a commitment to mission. Some such networks have and continue to provide considerable and effective mutual support and aid to their adherents. Isn't there a place in the call to return to our roots to see these Networks as relevant, contemporary models for Association?
- \* How do we build and develop good, heal-

thy, supportive relationships between churches and their leaders?

- \* If change is to be effected, what commitment is there to working within the structures of our present association?

What experiments and initiatives are there which can be offered to the association that would help in the cause?

When is it right to reform from within or to introduce an initiation from outside?

- \* In the steps Nigel advocates (see pages 147-149) as a means to a process, what are the implications of : pastoral leaders meeting together? churches coming together?
- \* What are the implications for our existing Association?

### **Chapter 6 Reforming the Powers that Be**

The weakest part of the Baptist doctrine of the church (p162) concerns its national denominational structure. Theologically to state that the Baptist Union is an association of associations is to stretch a point: relationally the Union is too remote from the local churches it is supposed to serve.

Though early objects of the Union might have been laudable (to achieve more good together: the development of love and co-operation between ministers and churches; support for missions) Union Life has been sapped by various questions, including:

Theological commitment - is there a tension between an adherence to historic Christian beliefs and the freedom of conscience and autonomy of the local church?

Centralising tendencies - the union has developed a bureaucracy of its own.

Pragmatic decisions with no theological undergirding.

A search for institutional ecumenism.

Such a background, and a fear that Baptist Christians may surrender their insights into the true nature of the church, calls for recovery of an explicit evangelical identity and a new reformation could only occur through the Union's self-denial, including a shift of financial resources to the associations and the direct employment of area superintendents by the churches of their own area. The Union could then become a resource agency providing opportunities for Baptist Christians to gather together for inspiration, communication and teaching; funding the consultations between associations, producing

literature; resourcing legal technical and financial services; identifying the forms of ministry and mission needed today. Encouraging associations, churches and pastors to take up the visionary challenge.

### **To Consider:**

1. Is there a tension between a Baptist understanding of the church and the existence of a national denomination structure?  
What should be the purpose and power of "the Union"?
2. Is it often assessed that the denomination is a broad denomination theologically? Is that true in your experience? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the denomination at present? Should we be seeking to recover an "explicit evangelical identity"?
3. It is contended that "relationally the union is too remote from the local churches". Is that true? What improvements in practice would you wish to see? What should be relationships between church, district, association and Union?
4. In the summary of a vision for the Union (the final paragraph above) with what would you agree or disagree? How much of that happens already? What are the greatest areas for improvement?
5. What questions would you wish to address to the officers of the Union regarding the state of the Union today and its future?

### **Chapter 7 The Case for Baptist Bishops**

- \* Having dispensed with the collar, the gown and the wellies we look at the mitre and rings on our fingers!  
Do we sense the need of bishoping?
- \* What case can be put forward for the recognition of an "apostolic" or bishoping role to serve local churches in their discerning of God's, will in the way in which Nigel enumerates in "functional episcopacy"? (see pages 174/175).
- \* How do we react to the assertion that the early church evidenced great flexibility and diversity of Christians adapted to various cultures? How guilty are we of assuming that what we do is the New Testament pattern, whereas the New Testament offers us a whole variety of patterns of ministry or as Nigel states "principled flexibility"?

- \* If we agree that there is a case to be made for "apostolic forms of ministry functioning translocally, that is, with responsibility across a number of churches and not only in one" (p177) how is this to be exercised within the present Baptist context? Where is the recognition of the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers as in Ephesians 4: 11?
- \* Given the historical perspective on apostolic ministries, termed "messengers" in the 17th and 18th centuries, with their emphasis on church planting and evangelism, is there not a strong case to be made for the resurgence of such ministries in this decade of evangelism which is clearly going to see church planting to the fore in many church circles?
- \* "where we choose to invest our best resources of people will determine the shape of the future." (p182)  
Where do we, either in local church or association, invest our resources; are they to benefit the status quo or to produce results beyond our orbit i.e. in new growth, evangelism, church planting....?
- \* Would the recognition of apostolic ministries really help to move us at local church or association level from maintenance to mission?
- \* Would a bishoping or apostolic ministry help those situations of conflict, direction and doctrine as outlined on page 183/184?
- \* is there a perceived need for greater care to be expressed for church leaders, especially pastors and if so how would a bishoping apostolic ministry aid this?
- \* Do we agree with Nigel's observation and comments on the role of area superintendents? (pages 186/187)
- \* How tenable and realistic are Nigel's proposed new patterns of ministry? (pages 187/-188)
- \* "A draw back of the congregational approach to church life is that we hold such people (that is of apostolic/bishoping ministries) back by not allowing them sufficient scope for leadership or by failing to encourage them along the way. Yet such leadership is needed."..... "The recognition that the apostolic ministry - that is, the ministry in the church of which the New Testament speaks - in broader than the local

and that we all need to benefit from it may be the soil out of which the next generation will grow." (page 190) Discuss the implications for individuals, church, association and Union.

### Chapter 8 Called to Nonconform

"Baptists must rediscover their own non-conforming heritage, including some of the issues which have concerned them in times past, and should develop their thinking further about the call to non-conform. The pressure is on no longer to think of ourselves as non-conformists." (p207)

Having traced the spread of Christendom and the establishment of the church we are reminded that Anabaptists expressed their non-conformity in three symbolic ways; a refusal to take up the sword; a refusal to serve as magistrates; a refusal to take oaths in a court of law. This led them to disengage from the power structures of their society. By contrast many English Baptists practised a non-conformity which led them to challenge power structures, convinced that there is no strict boundary between religion and politics, that politicians should be of the highest character and that the state should promote the moral welfare of its citizens. Such conviction led to the so called non-conformist conscience. Yet such non-conformity was mainly negative, they knew what they were against, less certain as to what they were for. The agenda was set by the state not the church.

A re-appraisal of non-conformity has to be made for today and this presupposes three issues have been faced:

- the relation between Christian faith and politics
- the development of a true understanding of the state and political action
- the role of the church

The proposition of the chapter is that it is the duty of state to renounce any form of coercion or discrimination; the state is seen in secular terms for the cause of true religion cannot be advanced by worldly power. The state must deal even-handedly with those of any faith or opinion. The church is the prophetic community of God's people in the midst of the nation. As such, we are called to a non-conformity which whilst having a negative side is essentially positive, salt of the earth a fertilizer causing that which is good to grow.



#### To consider:

1. Whilst Baptists may have a non-conformist heritage, "the Baptist Church" is now seen as respectable and part of the establishment. Would you

agree? What are the strengths and weaknesses of our current position?

2. Consider the two expressions of non-conformity suggested in the chapter, disengagement from the power structures and challenge to the power structures. Are they mutually exclusive? How should a Baptist Christian decide upon which approach to take in any situation?
3. Discuss the issues raised by the chapter regarding:
  - a) Christian faith and politics
  - b) The role of the state
  - c) The role of the church

Can you support your views from scripture?

4. What are the issues facing Christians today?
  - a) Internationally
  - b) Nationally
  - c) Locally

What can/should individual Christians, churches, districts, associations, the Union be doing to address them?

## **Chapter 9 Anabaptism a Source of Renewal**

In the quest for an identity our history is a helpful indicator. This chapter, giving a brief overview of the Anabaptist movement appeals to us to consider its values and relevance as a source of renewal and as a means of providing, "models for church life in an age when nominal Christianity is bound to decrease and true faith must come into its own. As once it was like a 'strong wind' blowing upon the 'tumultuous sea' of the seventeenth century, so may it be again. Although the Anabaptist movement belongs to history, the Anabaptist vision belongs to the present and to the future and is able to inspire us and help towards the renewal of all the church in the service of Christ." (p234)

Singling out evangelical Anabaptism as the significant stream in the movement the chapter makes fascinating reading as pen portraits are given of the movements leaders, (pages 216-221)

- \* What impressions do we glean of these men? Are they 'heroes of the faith' who stimulates us by their lives?
- \* Of the three basic answers to the questions about where Anabaptisms came from and what is its essence;
  1. "that Anabaptism is the completing of the Reformation". (pages 221/222)

2. "that Anabaptism represents a bubbling to the surface of subterranean forces which have been present in the church since the fourth century." (p223)

3. "that Anabaptism has its roots in the monastic experience and is a form of laicised monasticism whereby monastic values are made accessible to the ordinary person." (pages 223/224)

Which view predominates in our understanding?

- \* As to the links and influences of the Anabaptists on the English Baptists, (as discussed on pages 225 - 227) Nigel alludes to several basic similarities between the two, not least the believers' church, believers' baptism and freedom of conscience. He comes to the conclusion Baptists and Anabaptists belong together, "in the same family of spiritual life and aspiration." (p228)

How do we react to this?

- \* Does Anabaptism as a source of renewal challenge and teach us about; discipleship... evangelism... zeal... the way of peace...? (as outlined in pages 228-232).

If so what are the implications and how do we embrace these positive challenges, whilst resisting the negative lessons from the Anabaptists in today's setting?

- \* Are we prepared to face the challenge of change that has emerged through this chapter?

## **Chapter 10 Towards Transformation**



This is a time of opportunity; there is an apparently turning spiritual tide. As such the Christian has to both have a continued readiness (this could be the day or hour of God's coming again in Christ) and a longer term view and prudence (we may only be at the beginning of church history). We need to learn from the past in order to advance in the present and the future. We need to be about building the kinds of colonies of heaven that are best able to represent the Lord here and now and do His work.

Baptists have a distinct witness to make in the church scene of tomorrow and too have much to learn from other Christians. Likewise we have to have a commitment to live in the world as disciples of Christ, for God has chosen to use the church as an agent of social transformation. To be such an agent the church itself needs first to be transformed. The Spirit broods over the church seeking somewhere to rest and fulfil His mission. His work among

us will be quenched if we are unwilling to change, if we imprison Him within our attitudes, traditions and structures. We have to take up the challenge to be transformed in order to fulfil the transforming mission on which we are sent.

To consider:

1. What indications are there that this is a "time of opportunity", and what are the opportunities now before us as Baptist Christians?

2. What kind of "colonies of Heaven" do you see as appropriate for these coming years? What changes would be necessary to enable the church today to be such colonies?
3. If Baptists have a distinct witness to make, what is it?
4. As a result of the challenges of this book, what changes will you be seeking:  
personally?  
in your local church?  
in district and association?  
in the Union?

Steven Hembery  
Roy Searle

# NOWHERE TO LAY THEIR HEADS?

## CREATIVE IDEAS FOR HOUSING CHURCH PLANTERS AND ADDITIONAL STAFF



This information sheet aims to address the problem of providing accommodation for additional Church workers. As a Church expands in size or ministry or plants another congregation additional workers will be required. The Church may find itself in a situation where a salary is available but suitable accommodation is difficult to identify and its cost is prohibitive.

We have contacted a number of individual Churches and various organisations to find out how they may have addressed this problem. The result of our enquiries are set out below in 2 main sections.

1. The first section lists some basic questions which need to be asked before any further step is taken. These questions may seem obvious but we feel are worth emphasising. This section also contains a "word to the wise".
2. The second section is designed to be a list of ideas which a Church may pursue further. The section is only intended to identify possibilities and does not give an A-Z of how to go about it. The Church will almost certainly have to make fuller enquiries before adopting any particular option. We recognise that the usefulness of this sheet to any particular Church will depend on the size of

a Church and its resources; denominational considerations; its location; and the type of accommodation required among many other factors.

After reading this we invite you to share your ideas with us and so enable us to produce improved information sheets in future months.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

1. What accommodation is needed?
  - What type?
  - What size?
  - What location?
  - Any special facilities?
2. When and how long?
  - When does it need to be available?
  - How long will it be needed for?
  - Is there a possibility it may have to be disposed of early or time extended?
3. What resources are available?
  - Financial? Is there potential for fund-raising?
  - Professional?
  - Manual?

4. Special considerations.
- Are there any denominational considerations?
  - Is there anyone else we need to consult?

5. "A word to the wise"

The location, acquisition, ownership, management or simple use of property today are complex areas and the wise person will take qualified professional advice at all stages. This advice is expensive and some of the cost is "up front" and may lead you to a decision not to pursue an option. Nevertheless careful planning and consideration now may prevent an expensive disaster later!

**IDEAS**

1. What is available in the area? - start at home, the obvious place!

The simplest steps should always be taken first:

- a) Inform your congregation of the need and ask for ideas. Has anyone got spare capacity in their home; does anyone have an empty annex.
- b) Check all the notice boards in your area for advertisements.  
Someone may be going away for a long time and need to rent out their property or just require house sitters. The newsagent, local Christian book shop and Town Hall are all good places to start.

2. Advertise and ask around

- a) Use the press to advertise your need. The local paper, the Parish Magazine and the Church notice sheet should all be considered.
- b) Make contact with other Churches in the area. Can they help, or could you pool your financial resources and share a worker?
- c) Identify and make contact with any local or area co-ordinating organisation for example: Evangelical fellowships (inter-Church); Area Baptist associations; Church of England Diocese offices etc. They may have an easy way of advertising your need.
- d) Identify any local or area Christian events at which you could give a notice.

3. Jobs and homes

- a) In the event that a married couple are moving to the Church, it may be that one partner could work in a job that includes accommodation as part of the remuneration freeing the other for ministry in the Church, e.g. Wardens of sheltered accommodation, schools etc.
- b) Alternatively, the Church could consider

setting up a Christian Charity or Coffee Shop in a property that includes residential accommodation above. Cornerstone Christian Charity have a lot of experience in this area.

4. Space planning/refurbishment and new build

Make a careful assessment of your existing Church buildings and land. Could some of the property be converted for accommodation? Could some of the land be released for a development or sold to raise capital? This is a complex area and as has been said before, professional advice is required.

5. Ideas for the adventurous

During our research we have become aware of various new schemes being developed as a response to the accommodation problem. The general concept of these is as follows.

a) LONDON CHRISTIAN HOUSING PLC

London Christian Housing Plc. has been formed to raise funds under the terms of the Government's Business Expansion Scheme (B.E.S.) for the purchase of residential property in Greater London which will be let, on Assured Tenancies, to urban Church mission workers employed by a limited number of organisations. Clearly this idea is limited in effect as it is restricted to the Greater London area and could only be used if your additional worker was employed by one of the listed organisations.

b) BUY A BIT SCHEMES

During our research we have heard of two schemes which in general terms seek to raise money by asking individuals, businesses and trusts to purchase units of a set amount. The money raised is used to purchase either part or the whole of a property for a Church worker. After a set maximum time the property is sold and investors receive back their original contributions, plus profit, according to the sale price of the property in proportion to their original contribution.

In one scheme the individual is using a financial consultant as the co-ordinator. In another the individual is working with a Christian Housing Association, which provides the administrative and technical help and additional advertising and fundraising through their contacts.

6. Other organisations

a) HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Find out which Housing Associations operate in your area and discuss your plans with them. This information is usually available at the Town Hall.

b) LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Approach the Planning Research and Development section or the Housing Section and ask whether there is preferential housing provision for workers whose jobs entail "Key-worker status" or "Priority Worker Quota". This differs from authority to authority and from time to time, but might include Church related community workers.

c) CHRISTIAN BUSINESS ALLIANCE

This organisation brings together Christians in business, in all trades and professions, from all parts of the country so they can work together and support each other through fellowship and inter trading. They produce newsletters, magazines and an Annual Directory. They also operate a freephone number which could be used to identify Christian businesses in the area who may provide finance or professional help.

David Glen is currently on a short term assignment with the Oasis Trust, working with the homeless. Part of his work has involved him in working with Rev. Stuart Christine, a lecturer in Church Planting at Spurgeons College to develop this document. His working background is mainly in property and he is currently applying for ordination in the Church of England.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. UK Christian Handbook
2. The Baptist Union Directory
3. Christian Business Alliance  
69 Southend Road, Hockley, Essex. SS5 4PZ.  
Tel: 0800 833 331
4. Baptist Housing Association Ltd.  
1 Merchant Street, Bow, London. E3 4LY.  
Tel: 081 980 2700
5. London Christian Housing Plc.  
Enterprise House, Ashford  
Road, Ashford,  
Middlesex. TW15 1BR
6. Cornerstone  
Cornerstone House,  
5 Ethel Street,  
Birmingham. B2 4BG.  
Tel: 021 643 1984

### FEEDBACK



We have only aimed at setting the ball rolling. In order for this to become a more comprehensive and useful document, we invite you to write to us with your ideas and experiences. Please include basic details of your Church, its name, address, membership and the number and role of the full time staff. Please let us know how you have provided accommodation for your staff. How did you search for it? What ideas did you have and which option was chosen?

Please send your information to:-

David Glen,  
c/o Network of Baptist Church Planters,  
Spurgeons College, 189 South Norwood Hill,  
London. SE25 6DJ.



### BOOK REVIEWS



#### "CHURCH PLANTING - OUR FUTURE HOPE"

by Charlie Cleverly  
(SU 1991, 189pp, £3.50)

"It is now widely recognized by Christians around the world that the most effective way to evangelize, or re-evangelize, a society is by planting churches." So says Roger Forster in his foreword to what must be the most readable book so far on this subject. To anyone who replies, "Well he would say that, wouldn't he!" I can only suggest that they read on and catch some of Charlie Cleverly's infectious enthusiasm for the whole church-planting enterprise.

A brief yet wide-ranging appraisal of the benefits of church-planting includes the obvious (it expands a full church and promotes growth among those who form the new congregation) and the not so obvious (it's a chance to break with off-putting traditions and it also promotes growth among those who stay in the main church).

This leads into a sort of DIY guide to setting up a new congregation. The principles outlined are good solid stuff, though one wonders whether it is providential or accidental that they all begin with the letter C. The writer appears to under-emphasise leadership at this stage, but this is remedied in a later chapter

devoted to the issue, which includes a most useful checklist of 'non-negotiables for a church planter'.

Anecdotes from the writer's own experience of launching new congregations provide lively illustrative material throughout, though two chapters on current UK initiatives in church planting give an insight into what's happening on a wider scale. (Nice to see Baptists featuring prominently in this bit).

The latter part of the book is devoted to four priorities for new churches (worship, fellowship, evangelism and training), with brief but stimulating essays on each. The chapter on worship weaves in quite a few of the writer's own preferences and doesn't really tackle the question of how the new congregation develops/ignores the worship style it has learnt in the sending church. This, however, is more than compensated for by an excellent section on sending out faith-sharing teams - portrayed as a natural progression for churches that have learnt to send (and release!) people to form new congregations.

In all, it's a worthwhile read from someone who's been there, planted the congregation and now written the book.

Martin Hodson

## FAITH AND FESTIVITY

A guide for today's worship leaders  
by Paul Beasley-Murray  
(MARC/Monarch 1991; £7.99)

Although our bookshops have been inundated in recent years with books on worship - what it is, how to do it, how to lead it - very few are worth picking up. This is one of the exceptions.

Along with Eleanor Kreider's *Enter His Gates* and Barry Liesch's *People in the Presence of God*, this book should be on all our shelves and in the hands of any who lead or contribute to worship in our churches.

It is strange that in an age when so much has been said about worship, so little has been done to raise what happens in our churches Sunday by Sunday above the level of the mundane and the predictable whether our diet consists of the hymn-prayer sandwich or the celebration burger.

The focus of worship appears to have been narrowed down to mean singing. "Let's have a time of worship" is a euphemism for let's sing a few songs. Beasley-Murray tackles this syndrome head-on with chapters that deal with prayer in worship, reading scripture, celebrating the Lord's supper and rites of passage (infant dedication and baptism).

But more than this he firmly asserts that worship today has become very man-centred, dominated by our feelings. He calls us to refocus our worship on God and on the great, central truths of our faith.

Having spoken in general terms about what our gatherings should consist of - and having stressed the need for variety and quality, two things sadly lacking in much that passes for worship these days - he goes on to talk about how we can celebrate the major Christian festivals. Here he has in mind not just Christmas and Easter but also advent, harvest, Trinity Sunday and the ascension.

This section is the more disappointing of the two halves of the book because of its brevity. I was pleased to see a chapter devoted to celebrating Ascension day and Trinity Sunday but at four pages it felt a little thin. Perhaps a second edition could expand this second section with more ideas, suggestions and pointers.

That said this is well worth reading. Oh, you won't agree with everything - I certainly didn't - but that's what makes a book worth reading because it makes you think which is what this one did for me. And for that I am grateful.

Simon Jones



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**MAINSTREAM CONFERENCE 1992 13TH - 15TH JANUARY**

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I wish to book .....places (Maximum of 10 per church) for the Mainstream Conference. I enclose a deposit of £10 per person (cheques payable to Mainstream).

Twin-bedded rooms with en-suite facilities £62 per person Number required: .....

Single and twin-bedded rooms with wash basins £53 per person Number required: .....

Where a multiple booking is being made, please enclose a list of names of all delegates, and indicate who is the contact person for the bookings.

Accommodation will be allocated on a first come first served basis. We regret that we will be unable to offer any day visitor places until December 1991, if at all.

Completed forms should be returned to:

John Weaver, The Manse, 35 Highfield Road, Rushden, Northants. NN10 9QD.

Tel: No. 0933 53493

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