



CENTRAL/Talk

November 2007

The newsletter of the Central Baptist Association

It's church..... but not as we know it.

In Welwyn Garden City, for some time people have been meeting over the local branch of Costa Coffee on Sunday evenings. It is a gathering arranged by Christchurch Baptist in the town. It is church with a difference, bringing people together without the traditional trappings of formal services but in a relaxed and familiar setting to create an atmosphere where people, perhaps unused to or even afraid of our church buildings and practices, can meet to talk and enjoy the company. It is literally doing Café Church.

Christchurch is by no means the only congregation experimenting with creative ways of engaging with people in the local community, nor the only example of Café Church. But after discussions with the management of Costa Coffee, Christchurch is offering the opportunity to you to learn more about and perhaps get your church involved with Café Church ventures in conjunction with Costa Coffee.

A training day has been arranged to explore the ideas involved in this type of venture, to share stories and to ask questions. The day is at Welwyn Garden City on Saturday 2nd February (9.30 am – 4.30 pm). Cost £20 (lunch provided). Already seventy churches have signed up. For more information and a booking form, go to www.cafechurch.net



Of course this form of outreach will not suit every congregation nor be possible for every local church, but it does offer an imaginative way to explore fresh ways of breaking new ground.

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PROMOTING HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

Following on from the success of 'Help! I'm a Deacon', we are holding events in different parts of the CBA to present **Fit4Life**, a resource for promoting healthy congregations.

This is aimed at those involved in leadership within the local church: deacons, elders, housegroup leaders, youthwork leaders etc. The intention is not just to present the material as a valuable resource, but to experience part of it in relation to the issue of **effective communication**.

What helps and what hinders our communication? And how do we communicate more effectively when we're together, in our house groups or church meetings for example?



Fit4Life will take place as follows

Wednesday 16 January – *Broadway BC, Chesham*

Wednesday 30 January – *Kingswood BC, Watford*

Monday 4 February – *Loughton BC, Milton Keynes*

Monday 25th February – *Mount Pleasant BC, Northampton*

Wednesday 27 February – *Central BC, Luton*

Evenings run from 7.30 to about 9.30.

The resource will be available on CD to purchase on the evening.

If you are hoping to attend, please get in touch with Geoff Colmer at geoff@colmer77.fsnet.co.uk or by phone on 01908 505032, so that we have some idea of numbers.

CBA EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was held on Saturday, November 3rd at Loughton Baptist church, Milton Keynes to consider the proposals put forward in the Review Group's report on the life and structures of Association.

Although the representative attendance (24 churches) was less than that achieved at the AGM in the Summer, there was much lively discussion in an open and amicable atmosphere with thoughtful and informative contributions from many speakers.

At the end of discussion, a series of straw polls indicated that there was a mixed reaction to the proposals, with some gaining greater acceptance than others.

In the end, rather than take a formal vote, it was agreed to refer the issues raised back to the Association Council for further consideration, noting the varied discussions of the morning.

Stories or information for the next issue of the Newsletter should be given to Stephen Copson by February 28th, 2008

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

INTO CBA

Ruth Bottoms

Sue Buchanan as evangelist at Bramingham Park, Luton – February 2008

Ray Ellis (minister in training) to Borehamwood - July 2008

Stephen Fisher (URC) to Buckingham Well Street LEP

Dan Foster (minister in training) Howlands, Welwyn Garden City

Jason Gain (minister in training) Chipperfield

Heather Pollard (URC) to Woughton LEP, Milton Keynes

Val Pyper (minister in training) to Little Kimble - July 2008

OUT OF CBA

John Bernard, Christ Church Stantonbury Milton Keynes to Coldharbour Lane, Hayes

Margaret Grenfell moved in retirement to Orkney

David Morrell, Tove Valley to Woodville Road, Cardiff

David Ronco from Hertford to transitional ministry

David Staple OBE has died

The Revd Carol Nolan (Spiritual & Pastoral Care Co-ordinator West Herts Hospital Trust) has married and is now the **Revd Carol Page**

Build 25th Anniversary Celebrations

(Baptist Union Initiative *with people with Learning Disabilities*)

Saturday August 4th 2008

Highgate Baptist Church - Birmingham

10:30am to 5:00pm

Over the last 25 years Build has supported churches, provided training, advice and provided material for churches and groups working with people with learning disabilities. Many of our churches in the Central Area have benefited from the work of Build including my own at Rockingham Road, Kettering. I have also visited other churches in our area and through Build have given help and support.

Preparations are underway for this **25th Anniversary Celebration**. The keynote speaker will be Revd Jonathan Edwards, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union

The celebrations will include and involve people with learning disabilities, their carers, parents, together with churches seeking to include and involve people with learning disabilities in their life and witness. More details available from David Buckingham the secretary of Build on buildtogether@northern.org.uk.

Further help with starting a group, or with teaching materials can be obtained from me, Revd Tim Burt your local BUild contact in the Central Baptist Association area at timothy.burt@ntlworld.com.

CBA ASSEMBLY

Saturday June 7th 2008

Speaker: Revd Dr John Weaver (President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain)

A CHURCH FOR THE COMMUNITY

Grange Park Church (GPC) Northampton is a thriving Anglican-Baptist partnership seeking to be good news in our community, making itself welcoming, relevant and accessible to the lives of the people on Grange Park and beyond. GPC is committed to mission and practical engagement with the community.

On August 30th this year the church unveiled its plans for an innovative building project - the Kairos Centre - to build real community. The event was attended by church leaders, the MP for the constituency and owners of local businesses.



The public announcement came at "Kidzone" – a three day event attended by over 400 people – followed by a formal opening with ribbon-cutting and a buffet lunch.

The building formerly assigned as a library, lies empty and undeveloped. Subject to landlord approval, GPC and South Northants Council will work in partnership to develop the building and facilities that will be run by GPC.

Our vision for this building is to provide a place where anyone can come and take time out from the busyness of life and be restored physically and spiritually.

The building will provide a much needed centre of operations for the thriving church, enabling it further to support and improve its active community, children's and youth work. It will offer additional space for a wide church events and activities, including worship.

Building on its already strong relationship with Grange Park's health professionals, GPC will seek to use the facility to offer wellbeing and lifestyle events for all ages together with other support opportunities linked to local health and social services as mental health and debt management. The building will also offer a quiet place for people who need to think or pray. Parent and Toddler activities, children's work and youth opportunities will also be at the heart of our service to the community.

Also we plan to run a community café, offering a place to unwind and meet with others over tea or coffee and make available affordable; meeting and conference space.

Grange Park Church has begun a campaign to raise the necessary £250,000 to develop and furnish the interior. Annual costs will be met by church members and other supporters of this exciting project, and we hope to have the building open as early as Spring 2008.

Mat Hussain (minister, GPC)

Herts Fellowship of Baptist Preachers

Mark Greene

(London Institute of Contemporary Christianity)

**UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S CULTURE
at Markyate Baptist church
on May 10th 2008**

**For info, contact David Edgington on
01582 763219 or email
david.edgington@onetel.net**

CBA YOUTH WORKERS WEBSITE

Check out www.cbayouth.co.uk for latest news, information and resources for every church working with children and young people. Helpful event listings about what is happening in your area along with downloadable resources and example policies. A must have for all church youth and children's workers.

And coming soon.....
loads of Christmas/New Year resources and ideas. Check out www.cbayouth.co.uk or contact Jon on 01923 202137 or the.bishop@mac.com

Jon Bishop

WATER 4 AFRICA



It is always a time to celebrate when any organisation reaches 100 years and so it was in Amersham Free Church last January when we started to mark this

momentous twelve months in the life of the church with a centenary service to which all previous ministers and members of the congregation who could be contacted were invited.

Centenaries, however, should not just be about celebrations; they should also be a time to give thanks and to remember those in our world who are not as well off as we are. Therefore, a centenary challenge was laid before the congregation - to mark the year by

raising £50,000 to fund a WaterAid project to bring life-changing safe water and proper sanitation to 10,000 people in Uganda. And so Water 4 Africa was born.

To raise this fantastic amount a task force was set up which planned a series of events throughout the year and at the same time it was suggested to the congregation that every person consider how they could contribute individually. A logo was designed, a banner erected on the side of the church along with a water meter and pages set up on the church website. We also tried to involve the local community with visits to schools and other groups and efforts were made to seek support from local shops and businesses.

Such has been the enthusiasm with which the congregation has embraced Water 4 Africa it can now be reported that after just 9 months the total of £50,000 has now been raised and with more events planned in the next three months plans have had to be made for Water 4 Africa 2. That wonderful news means in Amersham Free Church for the rest of 2007 we can make it a double centenary celebration.

Willie Reid (Amersham Free)

To the Glory of a Giving God

A one day pre-Lent retreat with a focus on God's gracious giving to us and on our response to God.

Saturday 2 February 2008
10.15 for 10.30 am to 4.00pm
St Andrew's Church, Kimbolton Rd
Bedford MK40 2PF
£15.00

(Cost includes tea and coffee; please bring your own lunch)

Led by Kerry Smith and Stephen Heap

Come and join us for Bible study, prayer and quiet self-examination. To book, please contact Stephen Heap on office@beliefbeds.org.

www.beliefbeds.org.uk

NEWS FROM AROUND CBA



Regents Park College is offering a Ministry Seminar Week in Oxford in 2008 where Roy Searle will lead a series on “*Deepening Spirituality for ministry*”.

Roy is leader of the Northumbria Community and a former President of BUGB. Attendance is restricted to sixteen, so book early. Date September 15-19. More details and to reserve places, contact Anthony Clarke on 01865 288120



A celebration at St Albans Cathedral to mark 100 years of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be held on Sunday 20th

2008 from 4pm, with a thanksgiving service at 6.30pm where the speaker is Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP. All welcome. Contact 01727 860780 for details.



Dagnall Street St Albans hosted a service to mark Baptist Women’s World Day of Prayer on November 5th.

Speaker Dawn Brown (*Markyate*) took the theme “*God’s Compassion: seeing with new eyes*” using service material prepared by Baptist women of Africa.



In partnership with Scripture Union, Shefford Baptist church hosted an evening in November to learn about practical ideas

for exploring creative expressions of worship with adults, young people and children.



Shenley Christian Fellowship in Milton Keynes has become the latest member church of

Central Baptist Association.



Highfield Baptist church in Rushden has had a change of name. At 71 years of age, it has now become Highfield

Community Baptist Church. The re-titling is one way of emphasising its links and commitment to the people of the local area.



Beechen

Grove, Watford celebrates 300 years of witness in 2007 and organised a series of events to mark the occasion.

Anniversary Day saw a good morning congregation and the building almost full for the 6.30pm service, where David Coffey preached. Several churches had closed their own evening service in order to attend. There was a late evening event of a contemporary flavour for younger people.

Lots of people, including the local MP and elected Mayor and museum representatives, visited the excellent historical display and the Watford Observer ran two articles. The day was the highpoint of a year’s events to mark the tercentenary.



Bovington Baptist church has been adopted as “*Church for the Year*” for Hertfordshire in 2008. The church is developing its premises and the appeal is intended to fund improvements to

toilet facilities.



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“All Aboard”

It was all hands on deck for our Holiday Club, our first as an independent church. We tried to draw all the leaders from within the congregation. At first we thought we had to send out a ‘press gang’, however volunteers did flow in. This was the first blessing among many, for several of our workers were fairly new to the faith and others had never seen a holiday club, let alone being active.

So with the ‘ship’ well manned, we set sail. As you can probably gather the club had a nautical theme and so with the aid of the willing workers for a week the church hall became a liner sailing in the Caribbean.



Over three days we ministered to a steady group of about 50 children ranging from school reception to year 6. Our intention was to show the difference that can take place when you have an encounter with God. We used song, puppetry, drama, Bible teaching, film, craftwork and games. It was such a blessing to see the children and workers in harmony throughout the days.

Friday ended in a family/community barbecue. It was difficult to count the people who turned out but there was a larger number than at holiday club. But with great expertise our catering team fed, and fed until everyone had their full.

Then on the Sunday we celebrated the week by having a ‘Holiday Club Sunday’ where everyone joined in the activities.

If I can encourage you, to see young people reached with the good news, to see

members of your congregations motivated into ministry, to see the church combined in mission, to see new Christians being used by God and enjoying it - then Holiday Club is well worth it. Some of the first time workers are looking forward to our next holiday club already and even pushing for the whole five days.

It need not cost the earth to put together. However we do thank ‘Green Shoots’ (the Baptist Union Fund) for the generous gift.

All it takes is believers with a little vision who are willing to work hard to see it through. Starting small, or within your limits, is fine, ‘Do not despise the day of small beginnings’ because experience will bring growth.

This was my first ‘Holiday Club’ as leader and yes there was some hard work but to see the Lord at work is reward enough.

**David Wheatley, Letchworth
Community Church**

Continued from back page

Next September Phil is going to work full-time in the newly formed Nazareth Centre for Christian Studies. This is an exciting development in training pastors and lay leaders – a vital task for the future wellbeing and growth of the churches. Phil has been asked to be responsible for ministry training and pastoral studies. With his many years of pastoral experience and long involvement with the Arab churches and leaders, Phil has much to offer. Seeing this as a clear calling from God, he and Angela are offering their service there for the next few years. Pray for them as they face this important challenge and seek to raise the necessary funding.

It is a privilege for the CBA to be involved with the Arab Baptist churches. They greatly value our partnership in the Gospel and all of us involved in Baptist Twinning in Israel have also received so much. If you want to know more about our links with the churches in Israel, please contact me on **david.ronco@hertfordbaptist.org.uk** or take a look at these websites **www.centralba.org.uk/Twinning** and **www.nazarethcenter.com**



David Ronco describes some recent developments

Bromham & Akko

Back in August a group of six from Bromham visited Israel to strengthen their twinning partnership with the small Arab Baptist Church in the ancient port of Akko, just north of Haifa. The relationship between the churches has developed over the past 5 years in a variety of ways and the fellowship at Bromham has gained so much through twinning with their Arab brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not just a one-way flow, but through visits and contacts real and caring friendships are beginning to form. BBC supports the church and the pastor financially and where possible has also provided some practical resources and skills. Exchange visits have helped to form a special bond between the churches as well as a strong friendship between the pastors, Mark Hatto and Hanni Sayegh.

A special feature of this trip was an opportunity for the Bromham folk to lead a short church conference for Akko in a Nazareth hotel. The time away together was very special as the Lord touched people's lives in significant ways – including a memorable baptism of 6 Akko folk in the River Jordan which Mark shared with Hanni.



Amphill & Shefaram

Another Bedfordshire church is just starting to develop a twinning partnership with the small but growing Baptist Church in Shefaram – a town of 32,000 just north-west of Nazareth.

Last November two Amphill members went on one of our Association's Familiarisation trips to Israel. Enthused by the visit, they challenged their fellowship to get more involved. The pastor, Stephen Plummer, and others had been interested in twinning as a way of broadening their world mission involvement so this seemed the right moment to take things further. The church meeting agreed and a core group is now starting to develop the relationship between the two fellowships. As a next step I will be leading a group from Amphill on a 9-day familiarisation trip next May. There will be chance to sightsee in Galilee and Jerusalem as well as time to visit some Arab Baptist churches and especially spend time getting to know the fellowship at Shefaram.

Leighton Buzzard & Nazareth

Phil Hill, the Senior Pastor at Leighton Buzzard, has been fully involved in the Baptist Twinning initiative since it began over 7 years ago. Through many visits he has given much valued leadership to the Association of Baptist Churches in northern Israel as well as develop a good partnership between his church and Haifa Baptist Church. Now an exciting new twinning chapter is starting. *(continued on page 7)*