

A WORD AND SPIRIT
MAINSTREAM
NETWORK

Magazine Issue 54. September 1995

Issue Theme

Whatever happened to the Decade of Evangelism ?

Introduction: Whatever happened to the Decade of Evangelism?



1995 and mid-way through this ecumenical initiative seems a very good time to ask this question. Writing - I think - for the first time for Mainstream is Keith Jones our Union's Deputy General Secretary and National Ecumenical Officer. That Keith is also currently serving as the acting Head of the Mission Department - now that Derek Tidball has left to take up his new appointment as the Principal of London Bible College - makes him ideally suited to start us off on this topic. Do pray with us for and about the next Head of Mission please. Someone evangelistically experienced, theologically gifted, committee and agenda-orientated and with team-building skills seems a tall order by any standard! The Executive this year have decided to develop still closer links with our sister groupings within the URC and Methodist Churches. Articles considering our theme and introducing GEAR and HEADWAY are also included in this edition of the magazine. Next Peter Nodding writes, from his considerable experience of church planting, on this key topic mid-way through the Decade. The Baptist Union Council in November is setting time aside to debate this whole area of evangelism, we should note.

St Albans is the headquarters of Churches Ministry among the Jews (CMJ). One of the things this means is that we hear very soon first-hand testimonies of Romans 9-11 being fulfilled in our generation. John Fieldsend writes as both

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a CE Clergyman and a Messianic Jew on one aspect of the Decade that does not receive anything like the coverage it deserves in the Christian Media. Interesting isn't it that the Decade nearly stalled over the issue of Jewish evangelism in the early months? Lynn Green, whose secretarial efficiency at telling the Executive what needs to be done is impressive to say the least, writes our 'From Probation' column this month. Finally, we take a closer look at the best established of the Regional Mainstream Events - the bi-monthly Northern one - as well as sharing news from our recent Executive Meeting.

Michael I. Bochenski

St. Albans

Summer 1995

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A LETTER TO THE CHURCHES

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE DECADE OF EVANGELISM?



The list of special years and decades is mind boggling. The United Nations, charities, governments and churches all have bright ideas to make a certain year or a certain decade have a special focus. Fanfares are sounded, expensive introductory packs are produced, the ordinary work of organisations is re-directed to promote a specific feature. As ministers and church leaders we are seen as 'good fodder'. Here are people immediately disposed to take on board the latest idea from this agency or that. Or are we? Whether it be the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women (which still trundles on), or the International Year of the Family, which we emerged from at the turn of the year, I suspect most Baptist churches and leadership groups carried on existing plans and programmes without any massive shift of emphasis or resources. That is no doubt true to our nature and our emphasis on the local. Special church projects and anniversaries get high billing in my estimation as I travel the country, but the impact of the more-than-local is, at best, patchy and more

often than not ignored. Is the Decade of Evangelism any different? Perhaps we would expect Baptist hearts to be strangely warmed. Do we not shout long and loud that we are a mission people? Do not other Christians seek out our contribution because we have a reputation for being fired-up by evangelism?

The Decade - off to a flying start!

A Decade is a long time - however you feel about the topic. A Decade, promoted at first by the Anglican Lambeth conference, and from another perspective, by the Vatican, might not immediately seem to be a rallying cry for Baptists in our own Union. Yet our Mission Department put the plan to the Baptist Union Council and produced a modest pack of materials to be available for those who asked about it. A budget-distorting start to the Decade occurred when the Baptist Union Council took hold of the pack - logo sheet and all - at the Council meeting in Birmingham in November 1990 and said every minister must have one! It was vital for all Baptists to be involved. I pulled my pack off the shelf last week (can you still find yours?) and tried to reflect, halfway into the Decade, what has happened. Given that most Christian traditions, ourselves included, signed up to the Decade, at least as national groups, have we done anything with it? In so-called post-modernist Britain have we focused our resources on bringing the good news of the Gospel to life for that generation which has not learnt the stories in Sunday School, has not sat through a thirty minute monologue focusing on a paragraph of text (even with overheads) and sees the great festivals of the Christian faith either as great shopping occasions or time for a holiday?

The Decade - not about 'how we used to do it'.

The Decade of Evangelism is not a Decade of talking about how we used to do evangelism in a Christianised society. It ought to be about taking hold of the realities beyond our cosy world of church and finding authentic and imaginative ways of presenting the living Christ to impoverished people. It must be the passionate task of sharing with others the faith which inspires us, as part of the process of transforming the earth into the Kingdom of God. Of course, I would be the first to say the Decade doesn't matter at all, so long as we missionary people are being in Christ and getting on with the job. However, which one of us can honestly say that we belong to attractive missionary communities where the good news of Christ is being so authentically lived and shared that others beyond our circle find it compelling and long to know more?

The Decade is focused in action, and later I want to try and list some good things that have happened and some others that have not, or have gone wrong. Yet we cannot act, so it seems to me, unless we are also willing to ask some stark questions about what it is we are supposed to be doing. I remain unsure

as to how far we have been willing to engage in that reflection and when we have done it, take the results on board.

The Decade - some examples of missiological thinking

Early in the Decade, Churches Together in England and the Bible Society published *Finding Faith Today* written by Canon (now Bishop) John Finney analysing research done amongst 500 people who had come to faith. The book looked at how people come to faith, the role of the Bible, the place of the media, the place of the minister and evangelistic events. It ought, still, to be compulsory reading for every church mission and evangelism group because it is a challenge to where we place much of our energy. It points out in stark relief the way many people actually come to faith, as opposed to the methods we employ to encourage them to come to faith. I count this book as one of the successes of the Decade, but too few have read it and absorbed its message. Another source of reflection has been the work by the late David Bosch, particularly his, *Transforming Mission*. I listened to him speak at Selly Oak Colleges not long before his tragic death and was thrilled by his analysis of our contemporary culture and the mission imperative. What I have found myself facing as a result of such stimulation is the horrifying reality that those who become attracted to Christ by our evangelism, our telling of the good news in word and deed, are not transformed as the Gospels suggest they ought to be, into participants in the new community of God's Kingdom. Why? Because we ourselves conform so often to the norms and standards of the world, rather than to the Kingdom community envisioned in the Gospels. Raymond Fung, the Baptist missiologist, points this out in his excellent strategy for congregational evangelism, *The Isaiah Vision*.

Talking with a non-Christian friend recently (I am conscious how few I have - I live smothered by church and church people as you no doubt do) I was struck by the fact that though there were certain minor differences between us related to personal morality and lifestyle, by and large the Christian community is not radically different from other groups of people in post-modernist, consumer Britain. We do not present the attractive radical alternative offering good news to the poor, a transformed Kingdom community. Our President, Peter Tongeman, has challenged us about the disturbing side of the Gospel. The Decade of Evangelism may be an uphill task because we are such poor witnesses. Then, as an 'ecclesiastical bureaucrat', (I have been asked by Mainstream readers 'what does it feel like now you have left the ministry and become a pen-pusher?'), I wonder how far our evangelism is flawed by institutional anxiety and a desire to recruit to keep numbers up so we can pay for all the many demands to keep the church going? Is our motivation right? Are we just predominantly middle-class communities in a monochrome church continuing in decline? Are we really setting our eyes on Christ and seeing His love and compassion for the world which was not about statistical growth, but

about transforming people with love and hope? If we come at the task from the wrong motivation we ought not to expect success.

Of course what all the missiologists make clear and what my own experience confirms is that the good news has a dynamic effect in people's lives when they experience people of faith engaged in Christlike action and willing to spend time with others, giving account of the faith that is in us. We have come to describe this as a holistic approach, but far too many of us still want to separate mission and evangelism - a denial of the methodology of Christ. It seems to me that here the word evangelisation, which is used in our Declaration of Principle and by the Roman Catholic Church as their title for the Decade, offers an insight. For in the concept of evangelisation I believe we move from a narrow understanding of 'telling a message' into a pattern where action and word are involved together in making real the work of Christ not only to those being evangelised, but to those who are living out and telling the Good News. The whole framework is about the Gospel and its metanoic power, for the honest truth is that we have not adequately heard and responded to the Gospel ourselves - we need the converting power of God in our lives to transform us into those women and men who are Christlike in every aspect of our lives.

The Decade - missed opportunities

So, I find myself disappointed by the Decade. I believe the idea was an opportunity to stimulate local reflection and action on how we become true missionary communities and congregations. I think too many of us have let the opportunity pass in favour of just doing the rounds again of well-used programmes of evangelism. When will we ever be willing to engage in some honest evaluation of what we do as churches? Not only 'did we enjoy ourselves', but did it actually work? Here, the AIM programme offered a vital tool. Only 700 churches took it up. How many of them have returned, a few years on, to re-evaluate their communities and their missionary programme? Depressingly few, I judge. Yet it would be wrong to write only of the disappointments and the lost opportunities, for there have been, from my perspective, some real achievements in the Decade.

The Decade - Successes

I offer some 'bullet points' of affirmation:

- The development of town and city festivals of faith in places like York, Leeds, Wakefield, Winchester and Plymouth, bringing together a wide range of Christians within and beyond the traditional ecumenical groupings to celebrate Christ and to share good news in multi-faceted ways.
- The Group for Evangelisation (GFE) of Churches Together in England.

Under-resourced, but turning into a real place for dialogue and brainstorming. Again, spreading beyond the traditional alliances and including some new church and black-majority groups.

- Initiatives arising out of GFE and the denominations such as 'On Fire' and 'Roots'.
- Finding Faith Today - insights into how to be authentic in sharing Christ and winning a response.
- The pressure on denominational Committees to keep mission at the top of the agenda (note that it is the first of the Aims in the Towards 2000 Baptist Union Statement of Intent).
- The recognition that we Baptists are not the only people interested in sharing faith and that there are some things we can learn from others.

The Decade - do not despair

So, half way through this Decade may be one more talked and written about than acted upon, but I dare to go on believing that we can still keep pushing the message that authentic missionary congregations who engage in holistic evangelisation can be born that the world might believe.

Keith G Jones
*Deputy General Secretary and Acting Head of the Mission
Department of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.*

St.Peter's Day 1995

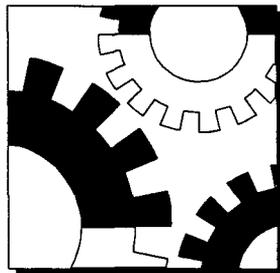
Declaration of Principle



The basis of this 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.
2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again on the third day".
3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelization of the world.

G.E.A.R.



My thanks to the Editor for asking me to write this article. G.E.A.R. (the Group for Evangelism And Renewal within the United Reformed Church) has not had a lot of formal contact with Mainstream, although one of your co-chairs Rob Warner was the speaker at our Swanwick Conference this year and there has been a lot of fellowship at local level between 'members' of the two groups. It is worth reminding you how the United Reformed Church (URC) came into being. It was formed on the incoming tide of the ecumenical movement in 1972 when the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England joined together. In 1980 it was joined by the Reformed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland and that produced the URC as it is today. GEAR was formed shortly after the URC came into being by a small group of evangelicals (mainly ministers) who felt the need for an evangelical witness within a Church which had, for the most part, taken a liberal stance in most areas of its life. The Congregational Church had gone through a previous metamorphosis and experienced a drop-out of more independent evangelicals. The union with the Presbyterians had a similar, although less significant effect. However, it is true to say that the evangelical witness within the URC was very small in 1972 and those who formed GEAR represented a tiny minority within the new Church.

The emphasis in those days was on 'a personal relationship with Jesus Christ', 'Bible study and prayer' and encouraging 'evangelism'. Today, alongside those initial aims, there is also a clear doctrinal stance and an emphasis on 'personal and corporate renewal'. Today, there are many more who support the work of GEAR and even more who are sympathetic. The URC, like all the denominations, has moved towards the evangelical position, but it remains very 'middle of the road' and GEAR remains a minority within the life of the Church. It seems to me that the URC is just as much a 'middle of the road' Church as ever it was, it is just that the road has moved over a bit. Technically, GEAR consists of the eighteen members of its national committee, of which I am the Chairman. At the moment there is no membership of GEAR; it attempts to be a movement, not an organisation, and those who are involved in its life are ministers and members of the URC. Having said that, the question is under review at the moment and there is a proposal that individuals should have the opportunity to have some kind of covenant relationship with GEAR. There are Provincial groups and sub-groups and a whole host of activities go on in the name of GEAR generated at Provincial and District

levels. It is difficult to describe the nature of the beast, therefore, but in practice GEAR influences the life of the Church at every level.

My brief was to tell you something about GEAR and to do so in the context of the Decade of Evangelism. If anyone had an expectation that the Decade would issue in hundreds of local URC's being involved in local evangelistic initiatives then they would be sadly disappointed. The liberal ethos of the Church and the number of small ageing congregations using all their energies to maintain their current life, militates against such a thing. Of course, there are exceptions, and 1994 in particular, provided the opportunity for some to take part in 'From Minus to Plus', 'The JIM Challenge', 'On Fire' and 'Lenten Group outreach'. The URC's commitment to ecumenism has meant that churches have had to take the Decade seriously where other denominational churches have set up local initiatives. Where Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches have consulted about evangelistic projects, the local URC has been drawn into them and you and others are helping to renew the whole Church where you take the right kind of lead. Despite this, and the fact that the denomination has had a Decade of Evangelism Working Group trying to stimulate local evangelism, many churches have managed to ignore the Decade completely.

What it has done has been to put evangelism back on the agenda as far as the URC is concerned. There was a time when mission was what people did 'over there' but now the central organisational unit of the URC is called 'The Mission Council'. There was a time when only evangelicals talked about evangelism but now it is talked about by those from all theological streams (albeit some call it evangelisation). Evangelism is on the map and there is no doubt in my mind that it is the Decade which has made an immense contribution in putting it there.

Because of the nature of the URC evangelicals within it have had to think through their theology of evangelism to good effect. If you live in a Church where pluralism is accepted and the uniqueness of Christ cannot be taken for granted you need a clear apologetic for that uniqueness. It is good for you. If you live in a Church where triumphalist expressions of the Gospel are challenged and much quoting of Matthew 28:19 or trotting out a few proof texts is not acceptable, then you need a much broader base to provide a mandate for evangelism. It is good for you. If you live in a Church where the service of the local community is seen as the Gospel priority then it is important that the relationship between evangelism and that right social concern is carefully worked out. It is good for you. We have had to work at all these areas and it has indeed been good for us.

There is no doubt that the Decade of Evangelism has made a very positive contribution in all of these areas. My analysis would be that, at the end of 1994, we reached the point where the Decade had done all that it could for us

through its natural momentum. There might be a continuous trickle of churches taking or sharing in local initiatives but for the vast majority of churches to be moved forward it would take a fresh stimulus at national level OR a major move of God in sovereign power. I don't see the former coming at the moment. I pray for the latter - and it is just possible that it has already started.

Revd. John Hall, *Minister, Boundary Road URC Beeston, Nottingham.*
URC Chaplain in Nottingham University.

Chairman of GEAR.

HEADWAY

Martin Turner *the Chair of Headway - and almost as important a near neighbour of the Editor! - writes:*

Headway is now the sole evangelical grouping within Methodism. The roots of Headway come from two sources. In 1947, in a time of great spiritual barrenness after the war, an ex-forces Chaplain, the Reverend John Barker, called together a group of Methodist people to study, prepare for, and pray for revival. This group was called The Methodist Revival Fellowship (MRF) and carried the hopes of evangelical Methodists for many years. The arid liberalism of the 60's led many to leave Methodism, including many MRF members. In response to this trend the Reverend Donald English called together a group who were prepared to be committed to work firmly within Methodism, endeavouring to offer an evangelical and biblical view on social issues, and Connexional matters and policy. This group came into being in 1971 under the title Conservative Evangelicals In Methodism (CEIM). In 1987 these two groups (MRF and CEIM) came together under the then chairmanship of Reverend Brian Hoare, this year's President of the Methodist Conference, and came to be known as Headway. In addition, the Dunamis Renewal Fellowship was made up of those subscribing to a newsletter focusing on renewal, the first letter coming out in 1970. This was by the 1990's really a mailing list rather than an organisation and after 25 years the last newsletter has now been produced and Dunamis members have been invited to join with Headway. Headway is thus the sole grouping now standing on the evangelical wing of the Church; it comprises of 1,940 members, of whom around 350 are Ministers. Significantly, a very high proportion of those ordained in the past five years or at present in

Ministerial training, are also in membership of Headway. Headway subscribes to the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Alliance, non Methodists are welcome as associated members.

For evangelicals within Methodism the crucial focus came in 1993 when the Methodist Conference debated human sexuality. This was a turning point as so many evangelical Methodists at last were prepared to stand up and become involved in denominational structures. In the past two years evangelical influence has grown enormously within the denomination, partly because we are now significantly a larger group but also (so I am told!) because evangelicals were perceived by the wider Church to have responded sensitively and creatively in taking their full part within the life of the denomination. Many issues are still there to be grappled with - for example a lack of representation of Conservative Evangelicals amongst theological staff and District Chairmen, but at last the arid liberalism, for which Methodism has long been renowned in evangelical circles, has moved from centre stage and the broader Church is coming into being. I feel sure John Wesley would have been pleased.

Philip Clarke, Director of Evangelism in The Methodist Church, continues:

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE DECADE OF EVANGELISM?

To get an accurate overall picture of the Decade of Evangelism is very difficult. The level of enthusiasm for the opportunity created by the Decade to get evangelism higher up the agenda of Districts, Circuits and local churches in Methodism is variable. Generally speaking, where there was already an interest in evangelism the Decade has given a focus to concern and activity. Where evangelism is an unpopular idea, mainly due to bad experience in the past, prejudice or pluralist theology, then leaders and churches have remained soundly asleep. The discussion of what is meant by evangelism has had some benefits in broadening the view of some evangelicals to incorporate mission in a more general sense, whilst some liberals have a growing awareness of the need for personal commitment to Christ. Prior to the Decade of Evangelism, work by the Methodist Home Mission Division, *'Sharing in God's Mission - a Programme for a Living Church'*, helpfully combined the theologies of creation and redemption in a way which was accessible to many church members and provided a basis for putting mission on the map of the local church.

The Bible Society's *'Person to Person'* evangelistic training course has been used by many churches but again this has been largely in places where there is already a vision for outreach. The four evangelism projects in 1994 - *'On Fire'*, *'JIM'*, the Churches Together Lent Course entitled *'Have Another Look'* and *'Minus to Plus'* - were too close together for most churches to be involved in more than two. The exaggerated claims for the effectiveness of *'JIM'* and *'Minus to Plus'* have been a real turn off, though certainly some good accrued.

The Lent Courses generally failed to attract non-Christians - course members found it hard to invite their friends. 'On Fire' events, despite a very wet Pentecost weekend, did mobilize congregations and some repeated 'On Fire' in 1995.

These events should really be just part of the on-going mission strategy of congregations:

- **SHARING** in God's mission to our community through evangelism, social caring and the struggle for justice.
- **DISCOVERING** more about our faith and the varied gifts God has given to help us express it.
- **TELLING** the story of our faith to family, friends, colleagues and neighbours as opportunities arise.
- **PLANNING** activities designed to help others to discover and experience Jesus Christ for themselves.
- **WORKING** with Christians from other churches to engage in common action and to share our common faith.
- **PRAYING** for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit to inspire and enable our witness.

Some Methodist Church leaders suggest that congregations are becoming tired of being challenged to evangelism without being really envisioned for the task. What is needed are leaders who not only talk about mission but model it. Therefore, we need pastor-evangelists holding together the work of local pastoral ministry with a missionary zeal for those who have never responded to Christ. With all this in mind Methodism is establishing mission enablers in nine Districts. These people will have a variety of styles and roles determined by their local situation. Some will be evangelists majoring on a ministry of proclamation, others will have the role of enabling churches and individuals to discover their evangelistic gifts. A Forum of Methodist Evangelists has been meeting at Cliff College since 1988 to offer training and support to those engaged in specifically evangelistic ministry in the Methodist Church and the College itself continues to train people of all ages and backgrounds in biblical and evangelistic ministry in the context of a Decade of Evangelism. Particularly at a time of some shortages of ministers, some circuits are looking to appoint lay evangelists and youth outreach workers to move the church out of a survival mentality and into outreach.

There are signs that the church is turning from maintenance to mission and that the Decade of Evangelism is helping in this process, though as one mission minded minister said of his work among his congregation, he felt as though he was steering a battleship with an oar attached to the back of the ship! The vividness of the picture illustrates the impossibility of accomplishing the task by human strength and resources. Thank God for Pentecost!.

Editorial

Whatever happened to the Decade of Evangelism?

It has got lost in all the routine maintenance.

Maintenance versus mission has become a cliché in Baptist and other circles. Cliches are usually true however! Too many of us at national, regional and local church level spend too much of our time trying not to drown under the tyranny of the urgent, the important and, too often, the frankly unnecessary. In the process, re-structuring our church/es on Sundays and midweek to prayer, social action and appropriate evangelism gets relegated to the pending file. Out of sight and out of mind. There are so many far more pressing things to be done looking after the 99 we already have, never mind the 999 of those who are not members of ours or any church. God forgive us.

It is a casualty of the spiritual battle.

For over 25 years my experience has been that most attempts to mobilise local churches into direct evangelism are met with unexpected obstacles, opposition from unlikely places, surprising circumstances not anticipated and the emergence of a pre-outreach hurdle and assault course which not all succeed in negotiating. We can dress this up in all the fancy theological language we like. Ephesians 6:10-20 explains it. This battle is real, unmistakably personal and at times quite frightening. If, as we say we do, we believe the New Testament, then we are actually about rescuing people from the kingdom of darkness. Any Mainstream reader who has seen the Alien trilogy of films and remembers Sigourney Weaver trying to rescue victims from the mother lair will understand more of what this means in practice. These problems should not really surprise us. But they do.

Training and encouraging confidence has not happened anywhere near enough.

There is a crisis of confidence in many of our members. The constant onslaught of media bad news, the presence all around us of alternative world-views and perspectives, the failure of still too much preaching and teaching to face up to people's doubts as well as their certainties all contribute here. Courses in personal faith-sharing using gospels, booklets, testimonies and life experiences are still unused by the majority of Baptists. This has not been for want of quality resources and leadership from Didcot and certainly not for want of trying. Too many of us have lost our evangelistic nerve as individuals, as leaders and as churches. It shows.

The culture gap has widened.

We are ministering now at a time when some 95% of those in their twenties attend no church of any label. Ministering to a generation whose parents did not hear the stories of Jesus, didn't themselves and whose children probably



will not either. Perhaps too, the growing army of Third Agers (50+) will be recognised as an evangelistic priority area as much as youth or young families? Perhaps not. We are ministering in an age when so much of life has become individualised and when the idea of belonging to families and communities and groups no longer means what, arguably, once it did. Perhaps New Labour - how the phrase trips off the tongue a year or so into Blair's leadership! - will help us all to rediscover communitarianism. Perhaps then socially active churches will have new opportunities to make contact and to demonstrate true community in Christ. Perhaps not. Perhaps the church will get its act together in this Euro News, CD ROM, internet, modem and Nicam stereo decade. Perhaps not.

The culture gap is in places a chasm.

Perhaps the Church will learn to communicate with the very different world of some tower block culture described recently in "The Independent": truancy, racism, drug cocktails, graffiti, teenage pack warfare and all. Depressingly, that expert in the Gospel and Culture debate Lesslie Newbiggin, once concluded that Britain is uniquely resistant to the gospel. Perhaps our call then in Europe will remain one to evangelise without much fruit to be seen for all the prayer and enterprise and yes, the creativity and energy. If I read my NT properly it is sharing the gospel faithfully we are told to do. The responses to it we are not responsible for. Or, please God, perhaps Revival will come...

The Spirit is moving

Elsewhere in the world it has worked better! The decade has produced and is producing some quite spectacular results over the 1990's. Less nationalism as well as denominationalism may be part of the answer to this question for us all. Recently at our Summer Forum of Churches Together in St Albans we heard the Diocesan Missioner, Carl Garner, reminding us all that the decade was an international initiative as well as an ecumenical one. He shared glimpses of exciting growth and conversions in places as far apart as Nigeria, Nepal and South India. My own contacts with Baptists in post-Communist Poland also suggest that some very exciting things are happening in the Second World this decade. For example. As we struggle, as we must, with new and appropriate ways of being church in the First World perhaps it really is in Second and Third World Christianity that our destiny and at least some of our answers lie?

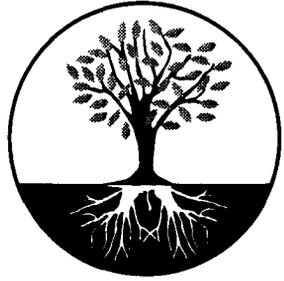
Whatever happened to the Decade of Evangelism? The same as happens in any Christian decade! Some get on with the job, do it well and the Lord works with them confirming the Word with signs following. There are some marvellous examples of this in contemporary Britain. The rest of us struggle. Ah, but some of us will never give in

Michael I Bochenski

St. Albans

Summer 1995

CHURCH PLANTING - TAKING ANOTHER LOOK.



I have been asked to reflect on my experience of church planting over the last ten years or so. When we embarked on this enterprise at West Bridgford Baptist Church in 1983 there were very few models in Baptist circles to guide us. Clearly, important lessons have been learned. Here then are seven of them.

1. *All of us who have a commitment to planting churches are required to reflect on what we are doing as part of the process. Certain key methods are important to embrace and endorse, but flexibility of approach is invaluable. West Bridgford spawned five new congregations between years 1983 and 1991, the furthest being eight miles away. Two have now become independent and a further two are likely to consider branching out on their own in the next couple of years.*

Lesson No.1: The model that we operate needs to be flexible.

I am still committed to a federation of congregations sharing the same vision and resources (sometimes referred to as 'One Church but Several Congregations'). However, if a congregation is going to be more effective operating independently, then this course should be followed. There are a variety of reasons why this may be the case, which I cover in my book in more detail. (See 'Local Church Planting', published by Marshall Pickering).

2. *Since coming to Guildford in 1990 we have planted three new congregations. Each is in a recognisable geographical community and no more than three miles from our town centre church.*

Lesson No.2: It is important to maintain a strong centre congregation (or mother) or the related congregations will not be well served.

Ichthus Christian Fellowship discovered this and have restructured their church life accordingly. Central resources were stretched and a number of the congregations were not functioning effectively on their own.

3. *In Guildford there are several churches who are committed to church planting. This has meant that we have been led to adopt a united approach and search for a vision for Guildford as a whole, and not merely our part of it.*

As a group of Church leaders we enjoy excellent prayer, fellowship and planning together, and this can only benefit the overall ministry.

Lesson No.3: Church planting should not be done in isolation from other parts of the Body of Christ.

Why?

Christian courtesy

- ⇒ Increased blessing from God as we work in unity
- ⇒ A bigger vision emerges
- ⇒ The encouragement of sharing closely with others in the task

Opportunity arises for Christians living in the same locality to fellowship and evangelise together.

It has not been possible to work closely with every church within the inner wards of Guildford for reasons of theology and style. We all know how difficult it is to agree about evangelism in local fraternals. However, among those of us who have committed ourselves to work more closely, we have made it very clear that the 'door is always open' for others to join with us. Conversely, special effort is taken to encourage and support evangelism, whichever church is sponsoring it.

4. Our method is usually to encourage members who live in a particular locality to consider planting a church. This is after we have sensed the Lord pointing us towards that particular area. However, as they are usually busy with jobs and families, only limited time can be given to establishing the new congregation. Although their commitment to Christ and the vision is high, there are inevitable time and gift limitations.

Lesson No.4: Gifted people with time available are essential in the planting process.

A gifted leader (sometimes referred to as 'a break-through person'), ideally full-time, is key to the planting of an effective church. If a church, or group of churches, cannot afford to set aside such a person, the right sort of gifted person with at least half a week available should be found, before embarking on the task. It is relatively easy to set up a new congregation and fulfil a Sunday commitment with a group of dedicated Christians, but if real progress is to be made, gifting and time are crucial.

5. The DAWN (Discipling a Whole Nation) strategy has several commendable aims and I am committed to their general overall goals. In Guildford the group of churches mentioned above have committed themselves to 'a church for every people and the gospel to every person by the year 2000'. Since 1989 six churches have been planted and two re-planted. Chris Forster - Co-ordinator of DAWN in this country - has identified four essential elements for a local evangelism strategy. These are:

- ⇒ a commitment to church planting;
- ⇒ prayer
- ⇒ research
- ⇒ training.

Lesson No.5: Training and research cannot be overlooked.

Those who have planted a church have usually done so with a conviction that planting churches is the right way forward and that prayer is essential.

However, we are often weak on the aspects of research and training.

In our latest new congregation we have purposely not set a date to begin on a Sunday. Time has been given since December 1994 to find out more about the community and to make friends within that community. A service was held in May to test the water, but no plans have been made, as yet, for beginning regularly on a Sunday. What do I mean by research? First, surveying the people who live in the locality to discover what are the local issues and, in effect, what makes the community tick. Where are the meeting centres? What are some of the felt needs? The church is 'for them', so what are 'they' like?

But as well as surveying, training is necessary. In 1993 five churches established a full-time training course in evangelism. It is called "G.E.T. (Guildford Evangelism Training) Going" and employs a full-time Director (Andy Hall, previously YWAM National Evangelist), and its students pay for the course.

The students' time is divided about equally between study and practical church planting experience. This has meant that we have had considerable man (and woman) hours available alongside the lay people in planting the new congregations. It has also meant that at the end of the course, trained people are released into the Church in Guildford.

6. In a church plant a great deal of time and effort goes into the Sunday Service. The service of most of the congregation members is devoted to preaching, children's work, worship group, administration, etc. So very little time is available for mission in the community.

Lesson No.6: Friendship-making with the unchurched must take a high priority.

Our church have recently made a commitment to re-think the way in which we organise our mid-week life, so that more time is available to enable us to be involved with friendship-making in the world. This has always been true for the congregations, but we have now extended it for the whole membership. It is proven that most people become Christians through a friend. But if the church has no real friends, it follows that not many people are going to become Christians. Until we grasp this nettle, challenging one another to take it seriously and being willing to change our Sunday and mid-week church life, we are going to make little progress in conversions.

7. Most church planting adopts what is known as the 'mother-daughter model'. This is inevitable and will be the way that most churches continue. However, it has its limitations. We tend to plant ourselves in another place.

The new congregation often shares the same ethos and values of those who sent them out. When they are trying to reach a similar community this will be

effective. But when the culture is different, another approach is required.

Lesson No.7: We need 'new' churches - not just similar churches.

We will only find our way into a different culture, or sub-culture, and plant a church among them, if we are ready for harder work. That means loving people deeply, and allowing a church to emerge with different values and style.

A group of young people in Guildford, from different churches, is trying to plant just such a church. Meeting on a Monday night in a pub, they call themselves 'Connection'. Connection targets 16 to 25 year olds and we expect that a very different sort of church will emerge. Some will want to argue that this is not a church if its membership reflects only one age group. I totally agree. So we would envisage that such a 'congregation' should be set free to reach its culture, but have vital relationship and oversight from the other parts of the body of Christ. The Gospel is for all people groups. Jesus Christ will be both Saviour and satisfying to every individual. We have learned that church planting requires more thought, commitment, serious prayer and gifted leadership. My enthusiasm has not diminished and my conviction that the world needs to see the Church in community remains central.

Peter Nodding,

Pastoral Leader, Millmead Centre, Guildford



Evangelization of Jewish People.



Do Jewish people need to hear and respond to the Gospel? Is the way of salvation for them also only by the grace of God through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross? Or do they have their own relationship with God which makes faith in Jesus not necessary? The decade of evangelism has highlighted the fact that there is considerable divergence of viewpoint on this question, and even within the evangelical constituency opinion is far from unanimous.

SOME OBJECTIONS TO EVANGELISATION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

- a) **Two Covenant Theology.** Briefly stated, this position is that Jewish people have their own covenant relationship with God, whereas for Gentiles God's covenant is received through faith in Jesus. It is agreed that salvation for the Gentiles came through the Jews, but it is not the way for the Jews.
- b) **Dispensational Theology.** There are some aspects of this teaching which emphasise that we are still in the dispensation or age of the Gentiles. The time will come when the age of the Gentiles will be complete - then, and only then, will all Israel be saved. Therefore to seek to evangelise Jews now is premature. There are others who are so caught up in the whole area of prophetic fulfilment that evangelism becomes something of a secondary issue.
- c) **Replacement Theology.** In this teaching the Jewish people have fulfilled their part, others would say they have forfeited their place, in the plan of God. They have been replaced as the people of God by the Church, the 'New' Israel. Either way, they have no special place in the plan of God, and are simply one amongst many 'other faith groups' in our society, and should be related to as such.
- d) **Guilt Paralysis.** Anti-semitism has existed in the church throughout its history. This was especially true during the involvement of the Church in the Holocaust, either by the direct involvement of the few, or the abdicating silence of the many. Despite the positive protests of the very few, the Church is so caught up in guilt that it has no right to proclaim the Gospel to Jewish people.

We can summarise the above objections to Jewish evangelism into three broad categories.

- i) That the Jewish people do not need evangelising.
- ii) That the Church has no right to evangelise the Jewish people.
- iii) That the Jewish people are no longer a special people group as far as the evangelistic strategy of the Church is concerned.

With this as background for our understanding we will now propose three statements and give a positive biblical apologia to support them. But we need also to understand that current missiological thinking does not view the subject of evangelism in isolation. Rather the emphasis is holistic, linking evangelism with church planting, Christian discipling and nurture. We cannot therefore look at evangelism outside the context of ecclesiology. We do not just bring individuals to faith in Jesus, we integrate them into the Church. So inevitably we have to ask questions such as 'What is the relationship between the Jewish people (where we are doing our evangelism) and the Christian community (into which we are seeking to build the fruit of our evangelistic ministry?)' What does it mean for a Jew to be 'converted'? Does conversion to Jesus mean conversion from Judaism? Unless we grapple with these issues our evangelism will give confused signals.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR JEWISH EVANGELISM - three statements:

- i) There is a specific missiology of Jewish evangelism.
- ii) There is a specific ecclesiology for the fruit of Jewish evangelism.
- iii) This ecclesiology has relevance for the traditionally held views as to the doctrine of the Church.

These three statements are, in fact, so closely related that they will be considered as forming one coherent train of argument. The New Covenant, upon which the Gospel is founded, is built upon the covenants which God gave to Israel and is specifically promised first to Israel, Jer. 31:31-34. Its 'newness' is not that it is different in kind, or given to a different people. Its newness lies in the fact that it is the same but 'internalised' by the Spirit. The whole 'Sitz in Leben' of the Person of the Gospel, the One in Whom salvation is incarnated is Jewish, and Jesus saw His ministry as primarily to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Great Commission began with Jerusalem, and the apostles understood this as a theological principle to be worked out in their strategy, not just a starting point from which to move out into the wider world. Thus in His evangelistic ministry to the Gentiles Paul made it a point of principle always to go first to the synagogue. Only when the synagogue in an area had had the opportunity to respond to the Gospel did Paul feel free to go to the Gentiles, but on the next evangelistic occasions he always maintained the principle 'to the Jew first'. (Acts 13:4, 18:6, 22:21, 28:28). This principle he encapsulated in Romans 1:16, in the Olive Tree symbolism of Romans 11 and in that telling statement of Romans 15:7. Thus this priority is made a matter of "God's truth". We draw two deductions from these passages:

Evangelisation of the Jewish people is not just a matter of Biblical principle; it is a matter of Biblical priority.

The Gospel, though universal in its scope, is at heart something that is already essentially Jewish in content and cultural expression.

Current missiology rightly lays stress on the need to contextualise the Gospel into the culture to which we are witnessing. However, when we are witnessing to Jewish people we are not so much contextualising the Gospel as restoring the Gospel in terms of the culture in which it was originally given. As Dr. David Stern graphically describes it, *we do not have to clothe the Gospel in Jewish garments; we simply have to remove the Gentile overcoat!* The outworking of this becomes clearer when we consider the ecclesiological implications. In Romans 11:5 Paul identifies the root nature of the Church as the faithful remnant within Israel, by which the life of Israel as a whole is maintained in existence. The Church will grow into something bigger and wider, but it will not grow into something that is radically different from its beginnings. The doctrine of the faithful remnant, or more accurately, the remnant of grace, is essential for a right understanding of this, and we will cite just for example Ezra 9:8, 9:13, and Isaiah 10:20ff. So today, as part of God's ongoing purpose for the Jewish people they are kept in existence by reason of their "remnant of grace", those who believe in Jesus. It is therefore important that those Jews who come to faith in Jesus remain an identifiable group within Judaism as well as being a part of the body of Christ.

The evangelisation of the Jewish people is equally important for the health and wellbeing of the Church in that its Gentile members are described as being grafted into what is essentially a Jewish tree. Further, the whole sweep of the movement in Ephesians 2:11, 3:6 is of a Gentile incorporation into the Covenant that God made with the Jewish people. In particular in 3:6 the union envisaged is that Gentiles are heirs together with Israel ... in the promises and not that Gentiles and Jews together become heirs together of something new. This is not hairsplitting obscurantism. Yes, the Church is a new creation but it was not created in a vacuum. God did not reject His people whom he foreknew (Romans 11:2). Rather He renewed a remnant from within His (Jewish) people and has grafted into that body believing Gentiles. It is for the wellbeing of that body that its Jewishness be maintained and constantly renewed by the fruit of Jewish people coming to faith in their Messiah.

In bringing Jewish people to faith in Jesus, God is fulfilling His purposes:

- 1) He is demonstrating his faithfulness to the Covenant He gave to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as renewed in Jeremiah 31:31-37.
- 2) He is fulfilling the word He gave through Moses in Deuteronomy 32:43 and quoted by Paul in Romans 15:10 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people'. Only as Jewish people come to faith in their Messiah can this rejoicing be complete (Philippians 2:2).
- 3) He is showing forth Jesus in the fullness of who He is - 'A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel'. Luke 2:32.

THE GROWTH OF THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 and 134 the Gospel made its major headway amongst the Gentiles, though there have always been Jewish believers in the Church. However, in the middle of the 19th Century Joseph Rabinovitch, a Jewish lawyer from Kishineff, came to faith in Jesus whilst on a visit to the Holy Land. On his return he shared the Gospel with his own people in many parts of Russia, and through this ministry an indigenous Jewish New Covenant movement was founded, and made headway in many parts of Eastern Europe. Were it not for the upheavals that shook Europe and Asia, leading up to the Second World War, the movement in Kishineff would have been indisputably recognised as the forerunner of the Messianic Jewish revival of our times. Then, in the 1960s the Holy Spirit began to move amongst the "flower power" dropouts of the USA, many of whom were from Jewish communities. Again Jews, with little or no contact from the Christian Church, came to faith and began to form their own fellowship communities and networks, which became the embryo of the Messianic Jewish movement which is now established worldwide wherever there are Jewish communities. In the USA the number of Messianic Jews is in six figures, worshipping in hundreds of Messianic Congregations. In Israel the number of congregations is in the mid thirties, with a membership of several thousand. In England the movement is less structured, though the number of Jewish believers in Jesus who share in the life of Messianic Congregations and fellowships is in three figures. In Europe belief in Jesus as Messiah is again becoming part of the Jewish scene and congregations and fellowships are coming to birth. There are also congregations in Latin America and South Africa. The growth of faith in Jesus in Russia is well known, and this is true especially amongst the Jewish people. In Moscow and in other major cities like St. Petersburg, Kiev and elsewhere, the number of Messianic Jews now numbers thousands, and the number grows daily.

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Where do we go from here?

The author would be happy to respond to further enquiries, which should be addressed to him at CMJ, 30c Clarence Road, St.Albans, Herts. AL1 4JJ . Please enclose a large s.a.e.

John Fieldsend, Minister at Large, the Church's Ministry among the Jews

FROM PROBATION.



At the beginning of the 1990's I was happy and content to be 'pew fodder' in my local church, but this is not to say that I was a fully paid up member of CII (Christians Inert International!).

On the contrary, I had all the passion and zeal (delusions?!) of the early 20's and heady ideas of changing the world for Christ. It was true that I might not quite be able to manage this feat single-handed, but

I sure wanted to be part of the action. In those passionate days, the concept of the Decade of Evangelism seemed like a brilliant idea to focus our mission and evangelism for a new decade and I looked forward to seeing many people becoming followers of Jesus Christ. Now, five years down the line, I have been a Co-Pastor of a Baptist Church for all of nine months and 27 days as I write and things look somewhat different... I hope I still have the passion with which I started the decade, but now I'm staring in the face of the YHB Factor (Yes But How!). My personal reflections on half a Decade of Evangelism, however, have left me with two main impressions.



What we are getting is GOOD!

It is undoubtedly the case that the Lord is working through the personal witness and corporate programmes of evangelism that we are engaged in as churches. People are becoming Christians, being baptised and committing themselves to local fellowships. People are eager for discipling and have a desire to grow in their faith. Praise the Lord! Perhaps this is just me though, but half way through the Decade of Evangelism I feel we've hardly been seeing the all-out evangelistic offensive that I'd fondly imagined would take place. What we're getting is GOOD, but I cannot help noticing that there are so many, many more people stumbling through life without Christ. But what's the answer?

This Easter I bravely went forth where angels fear to tread and, together with our youth leaders, accompanied a group of young people to Spring Harvest. We all had a challenging time together (!) and I even discovered a latent ability to thrive on late nights and early mornings! But miraculous though this is, this is not the point! Over one mealtime one of the girls, with all the clarity and freshness that youth can muster, told me that today she had discovered the way to sort out the tensions over worship in churches... (pause here for all church leaders to adopt a patient but rye smile!)... It was quite simple, she explained, it was no good just changing the music and songs, what

we needed to do was to change the people. Ten out of ten for accurately assessing the problem, nought out of ten for telling me how I'm going to achieve it! My point is that we are in the same situation over evangelism as we are over worship. The concept and programmes of the Decade of Evangelism are fine, but the real issue is how to get people enthused and motivated for evangelism. I want to stick my relatively youthful neck out and say that the first half of the Decade of Evangelism shows that on our own we can't.

"I thought this was MY ministry!"

Whilst I would not describe myself as a raving Charismatic in the churchmanship sense of the word, it has become clear to me that I am incredibly fortunate to be starting ministry during a time when we are discerning new moves of the Spirit. I came out of College last Summer having been well grounded in both the theological and practical aspects of ministry, I was looking forward to joining a new congregation and making my contribution to the mission of the local church. An activist by nature, I was full of energy and enthusiasm and ready to give my all (well most of it anyway as I'm only part-time!) for the cause of the Gospel; some serious strategic planning together with hard work and we would soon see the conversions coming. Things have not panned out quite as I'd imagined because I hadn't bargained for what I would soon be hearing about with regard to this current move of the Spirit. My cautious exposure to such things led me to notice three key features of what seemed to be going on.

First, this move of the Spirit seemed to be targetted initially at leaders. Humility and an awareness of the awesomeness of God were two of the things that struck me most about the testimonies I was hearing from respected and established leaders. Secondly, my activist/independent streak was challenged by the emphasis on prayer. Up until this point I had considered that asking for prayer for myself was an emergency measure and only to be called upon as a last resort! The concept of being prayed for just for the sake of it, just so that you might continue to grow in your relationship with God, was a novel idea to say the least. Finally, having broken through the 'prayer barrier' I discovered for myself not only the tremendous sense of equipping that prayer brings, but also the effect it has on your time. The mystery of the Gospel, as far as I'm concerned at the moment, is that the more time I spend with God, the more effective I am in ministry.

How is this all relevant to the Decade of Evangelism, you ask. Well, it seems to me that whilst I came out of College with certain expectations of what I would do in ministry, the reality is that God has sort of seized hold of my ministry. There have been many occasions when this realisation has left me protesting weakly, "Hold on a minute Lord, I thought this was MY ministry!" As I am attempting to let God seize me and use, rather than asking Him to

help me out when I get into a tricky spot, transformational things are beginning to happen in our church that cannot be accounted for in terms of human effort. Quiet but significant spiritual breakthroughs are being achieved in the most unlikely quarters. People are being moved to pray and fast with new or renewed faithfulness. Still others are beginning to realise just how dehydrated their spiritual lives have become. Basically, what God is achieving amongst us is out of all proportion to the human effort that is going in, and so I want to relate what I am learning on a personal level to the Decade of Evangelism.

It has become increasingly apparent to me that the risk of the Decade of Evangelism is that we've been busy letting God in on OUR plans and programmes, and although this is good and brings some results, we could be seeing much more. So perhaps it is time to really let God seize hold of what remains of this Decade, to let God set our agenda, to let Him change us and our congregations, so that God's transforming power and love will pour naturally and freely out of our lives to others. We cannot change people, only God can do this through His Holy Spirit. We all need to be transformed and equipped by God so that what remains of the Decade of Evangelism might go down in history not as a programme that we asked God to bless, but the most amazing revival we have ever seen.

I praise God for what has already been achieved, but I also seek the Lord and pray 'More Lord, more' and long to see the world transformed for Christ before the end of the Decade.

Lynn Green

Wokingham

June 1995



MAINSTREAM NORTHERN LEADERS' MEETING



THE STORY SO FAR.

Try this for a trivia question - What do the following have in common? Mecca, Wembley, Gracelands and Skipton - they are of course all major world centres of religious pilgrimage! For an increasing number of Baptist ministers and others, the bi-monthly trip to the town which advertises itself as the gateway to the Dales, has become a fixture in their diaries. What's more, unlike the early days you don't have to be under forty to get in! When the Mainstream Executive started the under 40s forum in the early 1990s to provide an opportunity for younger Baptist leaders to work together at thinking theologically about real life, pastoral and mission issues, it was never envisaged that the current leaders' days would be the outcome. Those early meetings saw no more than 10 or 12 ministers from across the north of England joining together every couple of months to grapple with issues facing them and their churches and to offer mutual support, encouragement and a measure of accountability in the context of friendship. However, it quickly became apparent that there was a need out there amongst Baptist Ministers which, for whatever reasons, the formal District and Association structures were failing to meet.

This impression strengthened with the steady growth of the number of people wanting to join our gatherings - especially those who were over forty. (Contrary to vicious rumours suggesting that the under forties label was dropped because founder members were themselves approaching the brow of the hill, it was the repeated requests from our more geriatric colleagues which led to the opening up of the group to ministerial wrinklies!). From a base of about 12-15 our mailing list soon climbed into the 20's and 30's and we decided to settle on Skipton as a regular base for future meetings. People gave a number of reasons for wanting to get in on the act; the sense of friendship, the ability to take a number of core beliefs about the church, faith and the gospel for granted and thus to begin by standing on a big chunk of common ground, the refreshment that came from the prayer, the worship and the theological discussion of relevant issues, and of course the food!.

Essential Excursus - Food at the Skipton Days

The doughnuts (jam or apple) which are served with coffee on arrival have always been an essential part of our liturgy. In other respects though we have developed our practices as the Spirit has led us. At first we were treated to two course meals in a Skipton Restaurant of the Nouvelle Cuisine school (really tasty, very pretty but not a lot of it - still Lobster Thermadore followed by a sweet for less than a fiver isn't bad!). Later the Lord guided us to devote ourselves to proper Yorkshire snap at the local chip shop. (Word from the Lord - 'look up Phil 3:19 and get on with the article!'). As we settled on Skipton as our long term base and as numbers continued to grow, it became apparent that we needed to change our approach to running the days. The emphasis shifted from in-house introductory papers for discussion, to invited speakers who were asked to give input and to lead in ministry. An excellent range of leaders including David Coffey, Gerald Coates, Alan Kreider, Stephen Gaukroger, Roy Searle and Mike Huck have helped us to look at a variety of issues including prayer, mission, leadership and community. In September we are looking forward to Elaine Storkey being with us. A recent departure was our April meeting when Rob Warner and Norman Moss led us on the theme of the current times of refreshing. A well attended day time programme, with Ministers encouraged to bring their deacons, elders etc. was followed by a packed evening celebration with folk from a good number of churches making their way to Skipton for what was for many a very significant encounter with God.

As numbers have continued to increase - a mailing list of 75 + and attendance normally between 30 and 50 at each gathering - we now have a slightly more formal leadership group of about half a dozen who meet from time to time to try to give the gatherings a sense of direction. What's more, we now actually plan and prepare for the times of worship! The days themselves (9.30am - 3.00pm), although always including worship, prayer, input from the speaker and opportunity for casual conversation, do vary in style and content. There is often opportunity for sharing and prayer in small groups as well as times of ministry. It seems that people rarely leave without receiving something of significance from the Lord.

Our hopes for the future?

To see the gathering grow by attracting others who find that it is scratching where they itch.

To continue to provide a spiritual oasis and meaningful support through friendship for all - especially those who are working away in small, difficult or struggling situations.

To develop further our input into deacons, elders and other leaders.

To find effective ways of bringing our churches together for celebration, encouragement and vision building. To continue to be open to folk of other traditions - people from House Church, Methodist, URC fellowships from time to time come to pay us a visit.

To provide stimulation and vision for churches in their missionary task of reaching the North of England with the gospel of the Kingdom. To continue to hold together the Word and the Spirit, modelling what it means to be both evangelical and charismatic.

To stimulate renewal for the sake of mission in churches in the North of England.

To explore our ever developing new pattern of associating without seeking to threaten other patterns where they are working well and meeting the needs of Ministers and churches.

To encourage through Mainstream the development of other, similar, regional gatherings around the country.

Glen Marshall

Wakefield

June 1995

Glen is the Northern Chairperson of Mainstream



News from the Executive:



The Baptist Assembly Mainstream fringe fulfilled a real need. That some delegates were in need of prayer, ministry and of an encounter with the Lord did not surprise us; nor did it that some came and left sceptical. We hope to provide opportunities for prayer and ministry as part of the 1996 Mainstream programme at the Blackpool Assembly though we hope that such provision might be made 'officially' as well.

The programme for the 1996 Conference was finalised. The inaugural meeting of the new Mainstream Council of Reference will be held on Monday January 15th between 11am and 4pm. The Conference outline programme is as follows: Terry Virgo will lead the Bible studies; Nicky Gumbel will speak at the Monday evening session; David Coffey will be invited to speak to us twice on the Tuesday. Seminars will include women in leadership...generation X...teamwork 2000...downwardly mobile mission ...mission metropolis...and the perfect couple: seeker services meet alpha! Patrick Dixon will close the Conference with a keynote address entitled 'Millenium Mission'. In addition there will be opportunities for prayer ministry and for implementing the next phase in the emerging Word and Spirit Mainstream Regional network. *Please note that the Conference is open to other than Baptists.*

Conference places are filling up and churches are invited to register people now on a first come basis. Dates: January 15-17 1996. See also the flier enclosed with this magazine. There are now no restrictions on numbers per church. Cost: £70 or £90 depending on the type of accommodation booked. Please send £10 deposit per booking to Derek Wick, our new Treasurer and old! Conference Administrator at 12, Barnard Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands or telephone him at 0121-378-3020 (home) or 0121-355-5088 (office).

Those who have already accepted an invitation to serve on our new Council of Reference, albeit with some provisos about availability, are: Stephen Gaukroger...Michael Quicke...Peter Swaffield...Dave Cave...Ian Coffey...Rupert Lazar...Harry Weatherley...John Brewster...John James ...Susan Stephenson...Roger Standing...Peter Nodding...Terry Griffiths...Stephen Ibbotson...David Spriggs and John Lewis. This list is incomplete: some replies are outstanding and further invitations are being issued over the Summer.

It is our prayer that the 1996 Conference will see teams emerging to help us to build new Word and Spirit Regional Networks over the next few years. Initially, the hope is to establish or consolidate them in the following Regions: North, Midlands, Central, London, South East and the South West. In time we hope that the Executive can be strengthened with a much stronger Regional representativeness.

The planned consultation on Human Sexuality has had to be deferred to 1996. More details in the January 1996 Magazine.

The Executive were pleased to learn of the 'Leading Edge' Baptist Summer holiday initiative for August 1996 and agreed to offer publicity and support to the organisers wherever we could.

The Executive meet again on Friday, October 13th at Didcot.



Press Release for the Baptist Celebration Orchestra

The Baptist Celebration Orchestra invites applications for all sections - Strings, Woodwind, Brass and Percussion.

The Orchestra is planning an exciting programme for 1995/96. This will start with a Christmas event in Cambridge, include concerts in the South and North of the country, and finish with a Christmas celebration in the London area. A regular feature in the Orchestra's diary is the annual Baptist Assembly, where the Orchestra makes a major contribution to the worship.

Applicants should be Christians aged 16 years and over who have attained Grade 8 standard in their instrument. All enquiries to Alison and Andrew Larkham, 10 Twineham Gardens, Alderbury, Salisbury SP5 3TF.

The Baptist Celebration Orchestra would be grateful if church leaders could be informed if this opportunity.

Issued by DAVID COFFEY, General Secretary, Baptist Union

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