

CENTRAL

NEWS

GOOD NEWS STORIES from the CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION



Autumn 2018

Over the next few editions we will be considering an aspect of the Seven Fruitfulness indicators from the CENTRAL NEWS Mission Review. If you missed it, a copy is available on-line at www.tinyurl.com/ybzowzhr. Here, Stephen Walker-Williams, one of the Ministers at Gold Hill Baptist Church and also of a church plant called HOPE Community Church, reflects upon 'statistics'.

In both the churches I have the honour of being in leadership of (one large, well established with a rich history and heritage, the other a young church plant meeting in a school) **we have started the process of using the fruitfulness indicators to aid us in our ongoing reflection and desire for kingdom fruitfulness.**

The document has proved to be a really simple & helpful way of asking some important questions about where we are as

churches, where we could be, and how we are going to get there. The first element mentioned in the document is 'statistics' and I want to take a moment to explore a little how having a look at stats might prove useful.

It is important to look at the right stats not just the 'official' ones.



Data can be gathered on so many things in church life and the review document lists a number of examples. We found whilst counting numbers (e.g attendance or finance) are important figures to be aware of, that counting the things that show kingdom impact is of greater importance. This is the fruitfulness statistic. So for us noting that Gold

simply to the Sports Club or office.

Thinking of smaller churches it might be that the members feel discouraged with the 12 people in regular attendance (and the 'statistic' that appears in annual returns), but this stark figure may disguise the larger story - the 20 children that attend their weekly After School Club

and the families that are being reached with the Gospel as a result, or those that they touch week by week in faithful, humble ministry of care.

These perhaps hidden pieces of information are the sorts of things that are important to include as you consider stats. It reminds us that it is crucial that

we count the right things, and then ask the right questions of the things counted. One of which might be ...

What story do the statistics tell? The mission review begins with this fruitfulness indicator because it helps us to begin to tell our story truthfully. Actually telling 'our' story can be very encouraging as well as shining a light on things we have not faced up to.

cont'd

STATISTICS

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Hill has a large membership is interesting, but the much more important stats to know are related to questions about whether we are being fruitful in terms of disciple-making and kingdom impact.

That might mean counting the 156 bacon butties served at an outreach event, or the 17 non-church members that came. It's useful to know how many cups of coffee are served on a Sunday but probably more importantly the cups of coffee that our members sit down and have with a neighbour or colleague. So when it comes to the stats we measure, it will not only be counting those that come to us on a Sunday, but also those that are 'sent out' into the mission field to be fruitful, be that to another country or

Going further

Once you have one set of data and you ask the missional fruitfulness question you may need to go and research some more. When I was a teacher, I would often encourage my class to use what they know about a given problem to find out what they don't. Applying that here, we need to use the statistics that are gathered to indicate further possibilities for kingdom fruitfulness and to plan accordingly. An action pathway could be developed: REALITY, OPTIONS, PLAN. (See the back page of the Review document)

One of the pieces of data that I am currently exploring is how many of the 16 people I have baptised in the last five years have continued walking with closely with Jesus and how have they gone on to bear fruit in their lives and in turn making more disciples? (WHAT'S THE REALITY) This raises the action points in terms of a discipleship pipeline. (WHAT OPTIONS ARE THERE? WHAT'S THE PLAN TO GET THERE?)

Moving forwards together

Colin wrote 'We are not in the business of saving an institution... but

serving the Kingdom of God and seeking to join in with what God is already doing.' We need to do this together; moving forwards as one with God and His Kingdom as our focus.

Stephen Walker-Williams



Well Being Café

'Quiet shared spaces where it's Ok not to be Ok'

(The strap line of Renew Wellbeing)

Life is not 'OK' for many people, for all of us at some time or other.

'Wellbeing' and 'Happy' Cafés are opening up around the country, providing welcoming hospitality, non-judgmental support and a safe place to 'be' – particularly for those who can struggle with their mental health.



Renew37 was the first Wellbeing Café – it was set up in Nottingham in September 2015 by Ruth Rice, a Baptist minister. Their website (www.renewwellbeing.org.uk) says "The space combines a community Café run in partnership with the local mental health team and a prayer room to help establish good inner habits." There are now also Wellbeing Cafés run by churches in Derby, Sheffield, Kent, Doncaster,

Northampton ...

Action for Happiness was founded in 2010, their website (www.actionforhappiness.org) says 'Our vision is a happier world, with fewer people suffering with mental health problems and more people feeling good, functioning well and helping others'. Some commercial Café s are registering as 'Happy Cafés', offering an atmosphere of acceptance, positivity and support, providing simple activities and resources to help people develop and maintain better mental health. They produce a monthly calendar with a thought for each day such as July 9th 'When things get tough, say to yourself "this too shall pass".' Or July 16th 'Set yourself an achievable goal and make it happen.'

Be honest - mental health is a big issue. "Mental health issues are a normal part of life. In any one year approximately one in four people experience at least one diagnosable mental health issue, and the World Health Organisation forecasts that by 2030 depression will be the single leading cause of the global burden of disease." (from the Adult Manual of Mental Health First Aid published by MHFA England).

Christians are not immune to mental illness; sometimes our church families help us, sometimes they fail us and make us feel more isolated – maybe through fear and lack of knowledge, maybe by over-emphasising a too simplistic view of



strength and victory, maybe by being busy places of 'doing' not just 'being', or just because none of us are perfect.

What could your church do to promote mental health? Would setting up a monthly or weekly wellbeing/happy café be something you should consider?

Become more aware of mental health issues ... be inspired by what others are doing ... reflect together ... know your context ... borrow ideas ... listen ... discern what following the one-who-sought-out-those-who-were-'not OK' might look like in your situation. We are, after all, about 'life in all its fullness'.

What might church look like in 30 years time? None of us know but I can't help thinking it might be something a little bit like a good wellbeing café.

Nikki Jenkins
Chaplain, Berrywood Hospital

Housing expansion brings new opportunities

The south Midlands is undergoing a revolution. There are new transport networks being developed to link Cambridge with Oxford passing through Bedford, Bletchley, Buckingham and Bicester. The new 'expressway' is in response to a wave of house building in this 20 mile wide 'corridor' of development. So, not surprisingly, there is a need for the churches in these areas to revolutionise themselves to reach and nurture growing populations.



In Newport Pagnell, Stony Stratford, Buckingham and Milton Keynes (to name a few) there are major new Baptist church building projects at different stages of development, designed to reach the local communities they serve. Cafés and sports facilities, with a strong community focus, epitomise these exciting multi million pound developments. But what's involved in making this revolution happen? Perhaps there are three key elements:

Passion for outreach. A congregation needs to start by having a passion for their local community. A sense of being there to serve them and meet their needs. If the building doesn't do that, why would they come in when it opens? It's a return to the medieval days when the church building was the focal point of the community. It provided a social meeting place as well as a place to

worship and for people to find faith.

Faith and sacrifice. A major new build is ultimately a spiritual journey for the congregation. It nearly always involves God teaching a combination of new things about faith and sacrifice. The faith to believe that God wants to develop a new wineskin, a new tool, to serve the community. That, combined with the challenge of sacrificial giving of time, money, energy, prayers and, dare one say, preconceived ideas about serving unchurched communities. No multi million pound project is ever going to succeed unless the congregation journey together on what God is wanting to teach them. Giving significant sums of additional time and money over and above the norm. The need

perhaps for a fresh understanding of "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Is God ultimately more interested in the congregational response to this challenge than the actual details of the building?

Vision and perseverance. The journey is often a long one (typically ten years from start to finish) but immensely rewarding as you witness a congregation's faith grow as they witness the plans come together. But it takes a strong vision to keep the momentum going. A tenacity that the Promised Land is better than the desert wanderings. A realisation that God works in individuals and congregations throughout the



Shenley Christian Fellowship Milton Keynes

journey. Sadly, also a recognition, that some don't want to travel on the journey for a raft of reasons; the challenge is too great, the money could be spent better elsewhere, the vision isn't right, the sacrificial call is one step too far... or a need to bury their father.

Any project of this size needs to include the right mix of gifts and skills, governance and leadership. Buying in the right skills from consultants to architects and managing them appropriately isn't for the faint hearted. Holding on to



the focus of the mission during a time when significant energy is channelled elsewhere.

That's why a website www.churchbuildingprojects.co.uk has been set up to provide free materials to assist the leadership of a church on the journey. **Jim Hammett**



Jim Hammett is a Christian consultant who is responsible for advising a number of Baptist churches undertaking substantial new build projects. Jim is available as a consultant. Details at www.christianconsulting.org.uk.

New Publication



Some questions seem like massive obstacles to faith and to exploring Christianity further. How would you answer these:

- Is there a God?
- Hasn't science made God irrelevant?
- How can a good God allow suffering?
- Isn't Christianity basically just a myth?
- What is the meaning of life?

Big Questions outlines a 5-week course for any church to run, exploring and engaging with some of the biggest questions which our

friends, family, colleagues and culture ask. Clearing the way to presenting and hearing the very good news of Jesus Christ is always important. This course encourages and enables the church, bringing all the materials and practical tips together to make Big Questions happen.

Hopefully, this is an accessible, thoughtful introduction to these key questions, to equip the church and engage your community. The book is aimed at the church but also suitable for individuals exploring these questions.

The book relates to an event we created here at Ampthill Baptist Church in Bedfordshire. We've run a 5-week course exploring some of the biggest questions people ask and seen very encouraging responses in terms of conversations, engagement and attendance. Over the past 3 years we've had over 120 different guests, the huge majority with no prior church connection.

Andrew Goldsmith
Minister of Ampthill Baptist Church

Available on Amazon as print edition or for the Kindle.
<http://tinyurl.com/y94d3qyj>

Asbestos are you aware of the risk?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring, fibrous material, which, if inhaled, can cause serious diseases.

When disturbed, damaged or in a poor condition, there is a high risk of exposure - not only to those carrying out general repairs, but also to anyone using the building.

What should I do if there is asbestos in my premises?

Your church may contain asbestos and you have a statutory duty to manage the risk from any asbestos that might be present.

This duty is set out in the Control of Asbestos Regulations.

To meet the duty you must take reasonable steps to:

- find out if asbestos is present and assess the risk of anyone being exposed to fibres, making and keeping suitable records
- prepare a plan that sets out in detail how the risks from these materials will be managed, taking the necessary steps to put the plan into action and reviewing it periodically
- provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them.

It is important that any arrangements you currently have in place are reviewed to ensure that you are able to meet your legal obligations.

For more information please call **Baptist Insurance** on 0345 600 7531, e-mail us at risk.advice@baptist-ins.com or download our Health & Safety Guidance Notes from our website www.baptist-insurance.co.uk



This News Letter is produced / edited by Colin Pye. He can be contacted at colinmpye@gmail.com

IN 2017
OUR
CHURCHES
GAVE
£316456
FOR
HOME
MISSION



THANK YOU

We are so grateful for all that our churches give towards Home Mission. A reminder that your money helps towards supporting ministry in three key areas, namely the Specialist Teams at Didcot; the three Regional Ministers of the Association, and of course a number of local ministries including those in Bovingdon, Gretton, Hackleton, Letchworth, London Colney, Christ Cornerstone Milton Keynes, Newton Longville; Highfield Rushden, and New Mill Tring. It also supports the Milton Keynes Mission Partnership, Chaplaincies at London Luton Airport, the University of Beds and the University of Herts.

This year the Association has also committed to resourcing four other situations that have as yet to come on-line, including a pioneering situation in a vast new build area near Houghton Regis in Bedfordshire. Watch this space!

Churches rightly wonder where their money goes and the above gives just a brief reminder, but it is important to remember that **EVERY CHURCH IS A HOME MISSION CHURCH**. i.e. it is not only those churches that receive grants, but actually every church benefits in a whole variety of ways, whether it be through Safeguarding training, the FOOTSTEPS course, or having a Regional Minister visit or provide support in times of crisis or opportunity. Thanks again.