

HOME MISSION

GOOD NEWS STORIES

Autumn 2015




**CENTRAL
BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION**

Welcome to this first edition of a Central Baptist Association (CBA) produced Home Mission News - one focused mainly upon what Home Mission (HM) is helping to

provide within this Association. You will find stories from situations directly supported by Home Mission, but also from other churches in the CBA area simply because we believe that EVERY church benefits from HM. This may be through the **National Expertise** rooted in the Didcot teams, the **Regional Support** of the CBA team or the **Local Impact** made through churches and other initiatives near you. Hence the message below.

We want to encourage, stir faith and prompt action through the telling of these stories. I have been in post for just about a year, and I have to say that I only wish you could all have the privilege of seeing what I have seen as I have visited churches. Let me encourage you—there are some really brave, faithful and imaginative things going on in our CBA community — and it does us good to hear about them. I was at a ministers' gathering recently that stirred faith simply because of the stories told, of a week's Mission in Rushden, of individuals being impacted, of ideas that worked, of daring greatly, of a faithful God. It seems to me that such storytelling and 'provoking' is one of the key benefits of 'association'. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds " (Hebr 10:24)

Colin Pye

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*A reminder that you
can download
a PowerPoint
presentation and
video clips for use
within church
services or Home
Groups from
www.centralba.org.uk
THANK YOU so much
for all you give*

CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
walking together in ministry & mission



YOUR CHURCH
really is a HOME MISSION CHURCH
benefitting from

**National Expertise
Regional Support
Local Impact**



 centralba.org.uk

Houghton Regis has reached the joyous point of no longer needing a Home Mission Grant

David Skinner, the minister of Houghton Regis, reflects “we are thankful for the fruitfulness Home Mission support has brought to our church and conscious of the substantial opportunities ahead of us. We have undoubtedly grown! In 2009 we were a congregation of 60 adults and children. Today we have 170 people who worship with us sometimes, a third of them under 18 years. We’re located between two large social housing estates set in the three most deprived wards of Central Bedfordshire. It’s been a white working class population but it’s changing as black and minority ethnic communities develop. Looking back we can celebrate many different people joining our church. Some have been away from church for a long time, for others church is completely new. We’ve also seen people joining us from a diverse range of backgrounds. We now have 10 nationalities amongst us.

Working at that ‘Sunday Welcome’

We’ve worked hard on our ‘Sunday welcome’ but still need to develop a strong cultural understanding that can bridge our different ethnic and church backgrounds. A key priority is to enable everyone to own our church life for themselves. Many attend on Sundays but fewer than half the adults are in membership. The autumn saw many new arrivals but so often those who have come have no experience of membership. Church meals do seem to universally work and are a particular joy with a fantastic range of food. As the church develops it’s vital we identify people to lead from across our congregation to maintain our momentum. With this in mind we’re engaging with BMS in 2015 to help us deepen our fellowship as we set out on a new phase of mission together.



New Build nearby

In the coming months building work will start on 7,000 new homes - doubling the size of Houghton Regis. We’ve been leading the discussion with the local authority about the provision by the churches of a community building in the new development, which would also house a new church. This would be close to where our church stood in 1750. The original houses are long gone but a new community is about to be formed nearby and we’d like to be present to help welcome, build and nurture a new healthy community with a church at its heart.

We’re also discussing other ways of developing a Christian presence across the new estates. We’re exploring how local congregations can support pioneer initiatives as the new residents arrive. It’s a 15 year vision for community building, church planting and Christian witness. The task feels overwhelming but it is helping us to focus on what is important and it is raising the profile of the church in the public sphere. At Christmas our church was full for the carol service, for the first time in many years, and amongst the congregation were a number of town councillors.

Looking ahead we continue to seek God’s way, believing he is calling us on towards this great vision. We will be looking to quickly become a church that can play a significant part in this task. But we will be hoping that the Baptist family will once again be able to play a vital role in supporting a new strategic initiative to shape a community and establish a Christian witness among the many who will be moving here.”

Highfield Clowns Around

“What a wonderful evening! On Friday July 10th we held a very special event for our community. It was part of a Council of Churches week of mission in Rushden, with many churches holding events that interacted with each other. Our’s went under the heading of **Messy Church**.

We started with a barbecue outside our building, with drinks and a craft in our hall. Then everyone moved into the main church worship area for an hours presentation by **Roly Bain** (supported by a **CBA Mission Initiative Grant**). A mixture of slapstick, recalling bible stories and walking a slackrope enthralled the audience - made up of people ages 4 - 94. In total around 80 attended, with half having no church they usually attend. Afterwards folk were encouraged to come along to our next Messy Church in August. .

One woman who brings her family to Messy Church wrote on our FaceBook page: "Fabulous night, **Roly** was outstanding, very clever" Others wrote: "Amazing lots of fun, fellowship and friends and family and Roly was so funny amazing ministry so blessed"

This has certainly given our Messy Church a big boost and we look forward to attracting many people and pointing them to Jesus.”

Minister: Steve Pearman



Roly Bain in action

Situations supported this coming year in CBA

New Mill, Tring
London Colney
Gretton
Bovingdon
Totteridge, High Wycombe
Newton Longville
Kings Community, Letchworth,
Toddington
Howlands, Welwyn
Garden City
Hackleton
Broughton
Sandy
Highfield, Rushden
Great Ashby, Stevenage
St Andrews Bletchley
Wellingborough
Christ the Cornerstone, Milton Keynes
London Luton airport chaplaincy
University of Bedfordshire
University of Hertfordshire
Milton Keynes Ecumenical Director of Mission

Gretton Church puts on village Christian festival

Three and a half years ago a small group of us came out of a prayer meeting with a vision for a village Christian festival. Gretton holds a flower festival, music festival and a beer festival so why not a Christian festival? I was not sure whether we were joking or not at the time but we have just held our third and each year it has become more uplifting and developed our church life further. It is probably true that this year it had a bigger impact on the wider village as I had more people unconnected with any church ask how it had all gone than in previous years.

We followed a basic format of main meetings with a guest speaker and worship band on the Friday and Saturday evenings (12th and 13th June). During the Saturday there were men's and ladies'

breakfasts, a Bible study led by another guest speaker, Messy church, and a Taize style service. There was also an art and craft session for adults, ukulele workshop and a display of the history of the chapel all of which were aimed at drawing in people from the village who may not come to anything else. On the Sunday we held our usual morning service followed by a "Bring and share" lunch.



Hungry for more

We would all say that each time we have held it the church has taken a big step forward as a result. It was certainly true on this occasion as people have been buzzing ever since, hungry for more and with a broader vision for the future.

As minister of the church there is no doubt in my mind that it is something God has used to move us forward and I see a future where it will be more accepted by the village and the outreach aspect may take a different form. We really believe that God has called us to do this and blessed us each time.

Walking Together Literally

Mary Moody, minister of Bovingdon Baptist (one of our Home Mission supported churches) decided upon a unique way of spending part of her sabbatical. She decided that she was going to walk the Chiltern Way & Garden City Greenway in support of Home Mission. That is 166.5 miles walked in Herts, Beds, Bucks, Berks & Oxon – which worked out at about 1 mile for each church in the Association. She was supported in this by 30 people, ages 8-81 & 4 dogs. Mary raised £535 for BUGB Home Mission in the process which is approx. £3.20 per mile.



New Life at New Mill?

No-one knows when they replaced the old mill, but a group of Baptist believers were first recorded as meeting in New Mill, Hertfordshire in 1655.

This first group had grown so much that in 1818 the Baptist Annual proudly reported that a new chapel to seat 700 people had been opened, the building which New Mill Baptist Church uses to this day.



Since then, the church at New Mill has experienced many ups and downs. The local town of Tring has grown and the settlement of New Mill was swallowed up by successive housing developments in the 1970s and 80s. When the current minister, Andrew Openshaw arrived as a Minister in Training (MiT) in 2011, the church had been without a stipended minister for some years and the membership was under 30.

Indeed the church was only able to take on a MiT with the help of Home Mission (HM), support which has since continued, enabling the church to call Andrew as their full time (80%) minister at the end of his 3 year training. So what difference has Home Mission made in this context? Why support New Mill when there are other, perhaps more obviously pressing needs for HM support, and more pertinently even another church of our Union a mile away in the centre of Tring.

“the church feels called to be a church of the community - not just one that happens to be located in it”

Prior to 2011 and more so since, the church feels called to be a church of the community in New Mill, not just one that happens to be located in it. With a minister as focal point the church has been able to re-start some community focused activities and

encourage use of the buildings by non-church groups. This has been especially valued by local organisations as the only community venue in New Mill closed around the same time. From being used only occasionally, the church buildings are now used around 40 hours a week. Andrew has also been encouraged by the church to take on community roles; he is a governor in two local schools and is very active in Churches Together in Tring.

The creation of “The Mill” Community Café, run each Thursday, has also proved a great way to create and maintain links with the community. Using a **Mission Initiative Grant** from the Central Baptist Association the church were able to purchase key equipment such as a soup kettle, panini machine, coffee machine, freezer and larder fridge, allowing them to offer quality meals and drinks at reasonable prices. The café has proved a great success, a place to which people can be invited and where relationships can be built gradually in a safe and non-threatening way; something not always possible on a Sunday.

With HM help New Mill BC will continue to be about invitation rather than attraction; to be seeking to blur the edges, so that there is no “outside” or “inside”; to be looking for opportunities grow a missional community as a natural part of the community in New Mill.

‘The Ark’ community café in Kettering

Inspired by the video from New Mill, Tring, and with the aid of a **Mission Initiative Grant**, Rockingham Road BC in Kettering recently opened the doors of a new community café .

Their minister, Laura Staves commented: “We had been **seeking God** on how to reach out to the community around the church & what caught people’s imagination was the idea of setting up a community café running one day a week in term time.



At the same time the leader of ‘Accommodation Concern’, a local charity helping the homeless and those with housing needs, came and spoke about their work at a morning service. She spoke of the need for another place for a drop in. As a result two of their volunteers have been coming every week to join the team running the café.

Our aim is to provide a welcoming environment for those in our community, whether they are lonely or have just dropped children off at the local school or pre-school, or just want a good cup of coffee. It has started slowly but well and has proved a good platform for building links with those around. All those involved are enjoying the experience and keen to see where God leads us through ‘The Ark’.”