

CENTRAL NEWS

GOOD NEWS STORIES from the CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2017



MONEY MATTERS

I have been in post as the Association Treasurer for almost a year now and it has been a busy year full of new experiences, learning and adjustments. As well as this role, I am a wife, mother to two children 13 & 8 and a member, deacon and treasurer at the Abbey Centre Baptist Church. Professionally I am a qualified Chartered Management Accountant and I work 30 hours a week in the finance team for Spurgeons, the Christian children and family charity based in Rushden.

The Association Treasurer's role has a number of threads to it, there are various meetings to prepare for and attend - Finance Group, Council, Assembly and Association Treasurers. It is a privilege to serve on these and work with and learn from others more experienced in matters of the Baptist family life and finances. There is the day-to-day preparing of accounts, though I am supported in this by a firm of book-keepers in Milton Keynes, and the wider strategic work of ensuring that Association funds are being utilised to best serve the work of the Association. It is a pleasure to get letters from church treasurers enclosing cheques for Home Mission and hearing about what the churches are doing to raise funds. Thank you to all for your continued support for Home Mission.

There is also the work of receiving and processing grant applications and it is specifically on this point that I wish to expand. The Council has decided to refresh the grant offering, maintaining one existing grant and

launching three new grants. In summary, the new grant offerings are,

Community Mission Grants: Do you have a vision to relate more closely to your local neighbourhood? Are you aiming to provide an activity with social or community benefit?

Smaller Church Fabric Grants: A small church is defined as one with an annual income of less than £20,000 per year. Support with the cost of maintenance and repair

Evangelism Grants: Do you have an idea for an evangelistic initiative? Are you looking to promote the gospel outside the church fellowship?

For all of the above one-off grants of up to £500 will be available to support an activity in line with the aims and objectives.

The Association will be continuing with the **Training Grant** which can be used to support the development of members of the churches, enhancing their gifts and skill to benefit themselves and the church. For these the maximum grant is £200 and should not exceed 1/3rd of the cost of the training.

Further details on all the grants can be obtained from <http://centralba.org.uk/grants/>. Applications should be made to myself and will then be considered by the Finance Group and Council. Over the year there will be four deadlines for receipt of the grants and these will be published on the website and in the various CBA communications.

I would once again like to say thank you for the support and prayers that you all have provided me with over this year.

Karen Hopkins

Latest Home Mission Video

I recently had the privilege of meeting & filming Steve & Ali Pearman as they reflected upon their work in **Highfield Rd Community Baptist Church**, which is situated on what has been seen as a needy estate in **Rushden**. Eighty years ago they had away day as a church and as a result decided they needed to become more of a 'community' church, seeking to make the people of the estate feel more a part of all that was going on. They changed their name, inserting the word 'community', and engaged in a number of initiatives that have helped this to become a reality. I am not going to spoil the video by saying too much here, but please do watch it and show it to your church - www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z-1GJmQUFc. Steve ends the video by saying "I do want to thank those that give to Home Mission because it does make a huge difference. Your giving means that ministry can go on on this estate, and it is a very important ministry to be involved in." Please pray for this small church as it seeks to be an effective witness in the part of Rushden in which they have been placed. (Colin Pye)



BAPTISTS TOGETHER

4th March 2017

Welcoming People with Additional Needs

Rev Jonathan Edwards,
Former Ambassador for Prospects

[largest Christian Learning Disability Charity in the UK],
Transitional Minister of Caversham Baptist Church

- consider what the Bible teaches us about disability and welcome
- explore both challenges and opportunities
- reflect on a strategy for your local church

The Church of Christ the King,
Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6HG

A new name for **FOOTSTEPS**

FURTHER DETAILS TO FOLLOW FROM ANNE LANE — anne.lane@regents.ox.ac.uk

FOOTSTEPS

DEVELOP YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS

Now is the time to start thinking about whether you should be coming on the next course starting September 2017

more information see centralba.org.uk

OLNEY – Building Matters!



Building in the springtime

Every year we see a number of requests for information about insurance and building work as the better weather approaches.

If you're thinking about major alterations, renovations or repairs this spring, it's important to let us know as soon as possible. We can then check you have the right level of cover in place for what you have planned.

In most situations the work will be the contractor's responsibility. However, if you have signed a formal contract you may be liable for certain additional responsibilities and your policy cover may need to be extended to reflect this.

To find out more about construction work and insurance, please just visit our website at baptist-insurance.co.uk/buildingworks



meeting rooms and upstairs classrooms - not forgetting much nicer toilets, all of which are light and attractive.

In the last year we have started some new outreaches - Cameo (come and meet each other) and a craft group, work among children and fellowship meals. There are plenty more ideas in the pipeline including a Christianity Explored course in the new year.

So, was it worth it? A resounding 'Yes!' - it has strengthened the church internally as we have prayed, talked, listened and given financially, and we have a resource we can use to reach out and bless our town with the love and good news of Jesus.

Rev Ian Field:
Minister of
Olney Baptist
Church



If the saying is true that 'the church is what's left when the building burns down', what are we meant to think about a church building project - is it a distraction or an end in itself? Or is it an opportunity to grow, to give, to pray and become stronger as a fellowship and almost as a by-product have a more useful space for the church's ministry and outreach? I suppose honestly it could be either - but the reason I am writing this is because for our fellowship it has been the latter.

Olney is a lovely market town, with one of the oldest Baptist churches and a remarkable 'hall of fame' of men who have shaped the spiritual landscape of the UK: John Newton, William Cowper and our less well known John Sutcliff, who mentored and encouraged a young William Carey into ministry and mission.



'building team', who walked the church through the myriad decisions to be made from the size & shape, to the scope of what we wanted to use it for.

This done we had a long period of excavation (and exhumation), 'groundworks' and foundations (plenty of sermon illustrations there!) and then the above ground work took place.

While this was happening we had to relocate and spent best part of a year with our good friends from Cowper Memorial URC. With a much earlier start time, a different venue and facilities there was the opportunity to grumble, but again the church pulled together and became stronger because of it.

In the summer of 2015 things started to come together, we were able to use some of the building for our annual Holiday Bible Club along with the other churches in Olney, and in September were able to move back in and have our grand opening the first week of October. We had hundreds of people come and visit and look around, and were able to have a dedication service which included a thanksgiving for those brothers and sisters who had run the race before us, whose witness and worship we are continuing.

The new extension has a large welcome area, leading into a café style meeting area with a much larger hall at the back, we have a well equipped kitchen,



When I came to the church in 2008 the church needed more space for its current activities and wanted a more flexible space to do new things to reach out into the community.

With the scriptures about 'Unless the Lord builds the house...' and 'No-one builds a tower without counting the cost', we set to talking about what the purpose and vision was; did we just need more space for now or the future? did we anticipate growth? How would we use it for outreach?

These church meetings were the ideal of talking, debating, sharing and praying - even if we hadn't built the extension, the church was being built up.

We were especially blessed by having an experienced and resourceful

Great Missenden: The Building is the Mission

The church building is located just along the High Street from the Roald Dahl museum, set back a little from the road. Over the last year we have been exploring what we feel God is calling us to be involved in. We have recognised a need to be a 'missional church'. The problem for us has been to understand how to be missional when we are... essentially an older congregation and small in number. We can't embark on large projects - we don't have the energy required. And we can't get involved in organisations like night shelters because

Our building would be the gift that we could give the community

we are too far away from the larger towns which run them. We don't have many people living in relative poverty to whom we can minister because our village is so prosperous. **So we prayed! Lord, what can we offer? What can we do? How can we serve?**

To know what we might be able to offer we realised that we needed to look at our resources. Rather than thinking about what we couldn't do, we

considered what we could do! We had a manse that we weren't using because it is so draughty and unsuitable for a manse. We also have a substantial, but slightly shabby church building with a big hall, a kitchen, and several other rooms. We decided that compared to some churches we had considerable resources, so we prayerfully and faithfully decided to sell the manse, buy a cheaper manse and use the capital to update and improve our church building, in order that more people in our community could make use of it. **Our building we decided would be our mission. Our building would be the gift that we could give the community.**

And that is what we are doing. We are extending and improving the kitchen, enlarging and updating our toilets, and will be decorating our hall and creating artwork to make it clear that all areas of the building are a part of our church. We even have a plan to turn our garden into an allotment.

What is interesting is that the more we have thought about improving the building, the more ideas we have had about ways we can use the building for mission.

We have established a lunch for local people to meet and eat together each month. We are beginning a supper club

for a small group of local mums and children who are struggling a bit. Hopefully they will begin a gardening club using our allotment garden to feed themselves and their families.

Improving the building has helped us to build relationships with the groups who already use our building, and we hope to encourage more groups to come along and be blessed by the building we want to share.

Our vision **to make our mission our building** may seem like a cop out to some, but to us, it has given us a workable and realistic place to start, and to feel that we can still make a difference for Christ in the community we serve.

Rev Helen Baker: Minister of Great Missenden Baptist



Church Eco-Cycle

I recently did a church leaders away day where we considered the subject 'where next?' It was really an exploration of the past, the present reality, and possible future for this particular church. We used a number of 'tools' during the day to help reflect upon where the church is right now, and consider

possible ways forward. One of these 'tools' was based on the diagram below that looks at what has been called a church eco-cycle - the thought being that there are *seasons* within a church's life. We asked the following questions:

1. What seeds of ideas are with us now?

Things that haven't yet started – our dreams, our 'daring greatly' imaginings, our 'let's have a bash' thoughts.

2. What is germinating?

Things that are just beginning to take shape that need nurturing.

3. What is mature?

Things that are well underway, established and mature – still to be valued and worked with.

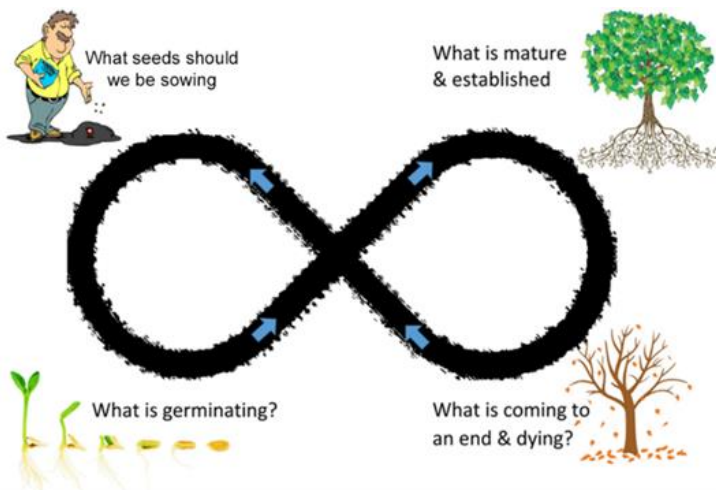
4. What is dying?

Things that are coming to completion and ending.

I wonder if at the beginning of this New Year it might be helpful to examine your 'church life' (or even your own personal life) under these headings and use them to help determine where to focus energy in the coming year. Will it be on those things that give life (or have the potential to do so), or on those things that drain energy and no longer bear fruit?

It takes courage to ask such questions of ourselves, but the result of not doing so is that we end up perpetuating the same old same old, often leading burn-out. Many of our members are tired, so to release them from the burden of non-fruitful activity may be a jolly good idea and even enable them to do some sowing or tending of new shoots which is so much more life giving.

Colin Pye



A Grain of Wheat

When Kingswood Baptist Church, Watford stepped out in faith and called me (as Minister-in-Training) to be their first minister in over four years it was easy to turn to Isaiah 43:19 and say with joy, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." It was not so easy to say five years later when we closed the church.

But it was still possible to say it with joy. Why? Because this was all still about God. About God doing a new thing. And not about us failing. And as long as we remembered that, we could face the future with confidence. Perspective was everything. This work of bringing in the kingdom was and is God's work; it is his mission and while the message of the gospel does not change, the way in which it is presented will.

means that everything is for a season... including sometimes a church building

Which means that everything is for a season...including sometimes a church building and the particular group of people who have gathered there. Ecclesiastes 3, verses 1-11, is a passage that is loved and read for all sorts of reasons and in all types of circumstances. And we're quick to read verse 2a, "...a time to be born and a time to die..." at a funeral and acknowledge that no-one lives for ever (on earth); so what gave us the right to expect that our church should go on for ever?

Endings herald beginnings so we trusted God's promise that he was doing a new thing. We trusted in the words of Jesus: "Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." We trusted that the willingness to die would allow God to use seeds which would never have otherwise been produced. And that it would allow others in the Baptist Union to use resources which would never have otherwise become available.

In the CBA during Lent this year we were encouraged to "Dare Greatly". I'm sure that closing a church was not what the creators of that initiative had in mind, but I can assure you that it



Rev Jane Robson

is unlikely that we will ever be called to dare more greatly.

So, be attentive to the signs (of the past and present) and listen to the Spirit individually and corporately. Do not be afraid to bring to a good end a ministry that has known times of fruitfulness, which has impacted a community and the world in ways beyond your imagining; for that action will also have kingdom significance in ways beyond your imagining. It will be painful. It will be hard. It will be sad. It will provoke comments of "What a shame" from the community who've frustratingly failed to be supportive in the past. But obedience to God, whose own son was obedient "...to death – even death on a cross..." is sometimes painful and hard and sad. But being obedient is what we are called to be.

"Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else."

And God? God will do a new thing with our endings. Look what he did with the 'ending' that was the death of Jesus Christ!

Rev Jane Robson: Now of Tilehouse Street BC, Hitchin

Chrysalis

A Pioneering Adventure in Potters Bar

My wife, Jenny and I have backgrounds in middle class Britain; in retail, special-needs education, and in youth work, business, ministry respectively; and in joint engagement with church over four decades. Yet we got to a place where our assumptions were upended by God, leading us in a direction we'd simply not expected.

We found ourselves living on a housing estate in Potters Bar. We've discovered friendships and acquaintances we never expected, amongst people whose lives are framed by a radically different set of norms and expectations to our own – who seem to us chaotic and unstructured, but that's about our value system, not theirs. We've realised that the church-bubble we've lived in for most of our lives is simply irrelevant to the people here – and the Jesus worshipped in that bubble has often been watered down and tamed from the one we see striding through Palestine in the Gospels.

We are what has been called a pioneering ministry, linked with 'Urban Expression', a network of contacts and shared experiences whose support has helped enormously. Local community groups and organisations have embraced us, we volunteer in all sorts of ways, and initiate

new projects where we can. We are regular contributors to the local primary school, children's centre, and community centre. The local churches have encouraged and welcomed us, been generous, and listened to our questions. We continue to listen, and learn, and find our faith (and its relevance) continually challenged.

As we stand here, and look back, we'd share 3 things we've learned:

Faith is geographic. It's rooted in a place. Here. Where God has called us to live. When John 1 talks of "the Word



became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood" he doesn't just mean Jesus and Palestine, but also you and me working out our faith in this place

Faith is transformative. "Do not conform ... but be transformed" is an ongoing journey as we love and learn the people around us. We've taken the name "Chrysalis" for our work here, because Paul uses the same root word as we use to talk about caterpillars being radically remade into butterflies – and (sadly) it feels as if we have spent much of our life as butterflies behaving like the caterpillars we used to be.

Faith is communal. We cannot follow this Jesus alone. We need the people that live around us, and we need other followers of Jesus to share this journey with us and them. This is not about Sundays & Sanctuaries, but Life & Love. Let's explore travelling together.

We would value your interest and prayer support as we seek to incarnate something of the love of Christ in a corner of his world that is in desperate need of it.

Rev Roger Taylor: roger@kenora.co.uk



Rev Roger & Jenny Taylor