

CENTRAL NEWS

GOOD NEWS STORIES from the CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 2017

My name is I was born in Tehran, Iran.

"I married in 1975 and we had our first child the following year and we were very happy. In 1979 the revolution started and our problems began. In 1980 my husband was executed at work, no details were given, nor were we presented with his body. I was pregnant with our

months in prison. Towards the end of my sentence I received the lashes, luckily, reduced because my lawyer bribed one of the officers. I was released and slowly recovered.

I began to lose faith in my religion having been imprisoned, mistreated and left without a husband. I wanted help but I felt distanced from Islam. In the area where we were living, there were many Christians, and some were my friends. One of these would talk to me about her faith and

round. It's hard to describe what happened then - I wasn't asleep and yet I was dreaming. A man told me "get up, my daughter. Pack your belongings - you're going home - I'm your freedom". My cellmates told me that I was talking to myself. "No, I'm going home!" I shouted. At 6:30pm that day my name was called. An officer told me to sign my name on release papers. I saw my first name but the rest of the details were incorrect. It was clear to me that they had made a mistake, but I

TESTIMONY

second child and could not believe that he was dead. I continued to look for him for 5 years.

In 1985 I was given permission to approach a particular prison to ask about my husband. They didn't help, but while there, an incident occurred with one of the prison officers. They handcuffed & blindfolded me and I was pushed very harshly and went through some glass, cutting my hand badly - I fainted and woke up the following morning in hospital. Two years later I received a summons, went to court where I was informed by the Judge that I was to receive 75 lashes and spend 3

I began to feel that Christianity could help me. She never pushed me to become a Christian but told me to put my faith in Jesus when in trouble and see what happens.

In 2015, I met a Priest at an illegal house church and he encouraged me to attend, which I did regularly. However, in April 2016 I was arrested by revolutionary guards, taken away and interrogated about when I became a Christian. I told them that I was not a Christian. Every day they interrogated me and asked me about the priest and my Christian friends.

In my cell I was crying so much that I felt the room going round and

didn't question this, I just signed. I put my faith in Jesus as told to me by my friend and I honestly believe that Jesus helped me.

I went straight to my house, got the spare key to the car and drove to Turkey. After four days I was in Ankara. Since then Jesus has helped me many times, I'm here today to be baptised to say thank you Jesus for being there for me."

This is the recent Baptism Testimony of an Iranian woman from one of the churches in our area.



Books were and are central to the vision for The Basement at Bunyan – the latest chapter in the Bunyan Meeting story. With its reinstated windows and doors, its strong iron pillars, exposed brickwork, spacious gallery, craft rooms and areas for reflection and hospitality, The Basement at Bunyan provides a meeting place for the many diverse communities within Bedford and the community of Christians at Bunyan Meeting.



Bunyan Meeting

The Bible and The Pilgrim's Progress are the very foundations of the community that worship in the place where John Bunyan preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Bedford.

And it is books, as a spiritual heritage and a revelation to God's creative liberation in our world, that inform the activities and outreach in our Basement project.

When you open a book, and begin to read, you start on a journey. You may travel through soft landscapes and seductive encounters or menace-filled valleys of shadowy death. But whether the story is heart-enflaming or heart-stopping, you, the reader, are in a safe place. You can close the book at anytime and come back later. A book allows you to be in

control, enabling an engagement at your own pace, in your own time, and in your own strength.

In the same way, The Basement at Bunyan offers a safe environment for all: both those who feel confident engaging with creativity, and those who may feel marginalised because of their mental or physical challenges. As a semi-basement it has the security of a warm, enclosed space - slightly separated from the rest of the Bunyan Meeting complex, and also the controlled outlook and access to the world outside. It is a safe environment for those who can feel anxious in open and unpredictable surroundings.

We are currently enjoying creative opportunities for two groups in Bedford.

Youth Inspired - who work with adults with autism and other social challenges - have had an association with the John Bunyan Museum for several years, and are now exhibiting their artworks in The Basement. This summer we are hoping to offer them studio space to create art installations that will be exhibited in The Basement at Bedford. Our resident artist, Anne-Marie Stijelja and other staff members plan to tutor the groups and build on the confidence and skills that have been encouraged through their involvement with The Basement.

Artism – a small group of young adults living with autism, who have attended four sessions with Anne-Marie in which they have explored print-making. Each session has built on the previous week's experience,



and their confidence level has increased as the group members have relaxed into the familiarity and safety of The Basement at Bunyan.

Both these projects were made possible by the granting of funds for this particular area of special needs.

Following the affirmation of The Basement as a place that can both provide creative opportunities and a safe place to work – and seen by our church members as an important part of our Christian ministry of welcome – we would like to continue to offer similar opportunities in the future. We are particular keen to provide workshops in all aspects of art, book and print making to those of the Bedford community who are lonely, elderly, or disadvantaged by either physical or mental challenges. With the appropriate funding we could offer these workshop for free or at a heavily subsidised price, enabling us to provide expert tuition and materials for the attendees.



The Basement at Bunyan

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den: and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a dream.

We hope that others will share our dreams and visions of encouraging everyone to explore and express their life journeys through the creative arts.

David Walker

Arts Project Development Worker

The Basement at Bunyan
Bunyan Meeting
Mill Street
Bedford MK40 3EU
Bunyan Office 01234 213722
email davidwkr5@aol.com

MOULTON – Where Carey Lives!

When we came to Moulton, 3 years ago, we came not only to a new church congregation but also to a new locality which couldn't have been more different. We came from a modern new-town with less than 75 years of collective history; a place where people and ideas came and went, to a place with centuries of significant rooted history and generations of tradition; change here is a gradual process.



However, when they called me, the church congregation had realised that they needed to embrace the rapid change that was happening, literally on their doorstep. Several new housing developments are bringing more people and an ever greater need for community engagement. While working to connect with the growing village I have been

surprised to discover that one of the most successful ways of engaging has been through acknowledging the history of the place and actively promoting it. It has not been new directions or innovations – like discussion groups which meet in the pub, or changing service times to afternoons – but rather a re-engagement with the church's history which has had the best response.

We are lucky that the church is historically significant as the place where William Carey lived and became a Baptist minister. It was in Moulton that he began to form his ideas about mission which developed into the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). The church property includes the cottage where he lived, and one room is dedicated as a museum, enthusiastically curated by Margaret Williams. The museum is well visited by mission workers from India to the USA, but not so much by local Moulton residents.

Soon after we moved here Jodie decided that, for fun, she was going to make me a William Carey costume, (I already have the hair!). So, a velvet curtain from a charity shop became an 18th century jacket, and old trousers became cropped breeches. Then, we realised that this would be a good outreach opportunity.

So, at the next village festival the church did stalls and refreshments as usual but we also opened the museum and had William Carey out and about drumming up interest! Dressed as William Carey I found that people were happy to approach me and start conversations. People asked, "Who are you?" This gave me a double opportunity to introduce them to the Carey story and our church community. It was the busiest day the museum has probably ever had. All day a steady flow of people came to Carey Baptist Church curious about what was going on, and interested in connecting with the village's history. They were welcomed onto the church premises with free refreshments and we had a successful day engaging with the village community.

As we seek to draw people in we will continue to try out new, innovative ideas but, we will also remember to look back and draw on the roots of the place and its history, not aiming to introduce people to William Carey, but to his and our Lord.

Stuart & Jodie
Dennis



Stuart in costume

FOOTSTEPS

DEVELOP YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS

A course designed for everyone who wants to develop their understanding and skills as they serve God in local churches and communities.



Subjects covered on Footsteps 1 include Understanding the Bible; Understanding our Faith; Deepening Spirituality; Mission, Evangelism and Culture; Baptist History & Principles; plus options from Pastoral Care/ Exploring Worship/ Leadership Skills/ Preaching Skills.

Dates for 2017-18: Footsteps 1 & 2 will be held on 10 Saturdays, September to June, 10a.m to 4.15 p.m - 16th September, 7th October, 18th November, 2nd December, 6th January, 3rd February, 3rd March, 21st April, 19th May, 9th June

Venue: Church of Christ the King, Frithwood Crescent, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6HG

To find out more

Email: anne.lane@regents.ox.ac.uk
To download information pack go to www.centralba.org.uk/ministry/953-2/

Footsteps, for me, has shown that I shouldn't be frightened to learn even if I feel that I am not academic enough. Footsteps provides a safe and open-minded space for me to delve into my Christian faith, where I feel encouraged and my faith is sharpened.

Hayley Hughes
Footsteps 1, 2016-17



Footsteps is a place where you open your mind and your heart to God and to others. Wherever you are on the journey of faith and whatever theological camp you come from, at Footsteps we can bring all our complexities, doubts and questions and learn together.

Tim Hughes,
Footsteps 1, 2016-17

Footsteps has been amazing. On setting out I was very concerned about how I, and the family, would cope with a whole Saturday out each month. After the 2nd one it wasn't a concern at all. I now view the end of 2 years with some trepidation! The course has been fascinating. The variety of subjects has been really interesting as well as challenging and has helped my spiritual journey enormously. The worship option has been particularly helpful in the role I have at church and has given me the confidence to try new things. The other members on the course have become good friends and we support each other as we journey together. I am thankful that I have had such a great opportunity to learn more about my faith and it has whetted my appetite to learn more!

Helen Evans, Footsteps 1 and 2, 2015-17



Luton Airport CHAPLAINCY

(part funded by Home Mission)

London Luton Airport (LLA) is definitely an exciting place to be at the moment.

In 2016 the airport saw an 18.5% increase in passenger numbers compared to the previous year. That makes it the fastest growing of the designated London airports.

To meet this continued demand, LLA is making the largest single investment in the airport's history to upgrade facilities and improve the passenger experience. Construction is well underway and the redevelopment will increase capacity by 50% to 18 million by 2020.

The challenges that face an operational airport undergoing so much change against a backdrop of rising passenger numbers is also reflected in the Chaplaincy Team. We are busier dealing with an increased number of passengers in need and looking after the larger workforce in all areas of the airport. Our aim is to maintain calm, independent and confidential support, wherever that support is required.

We spend time in the Terminal Buildings assisting passengers to find their way around, answering general queries and sometimes having more in depth conversations with people, who might be travelling in difficult circumstances.

An example might help give an insight into how we might be called upon. Last week we helped a young man return back to Belfast where his 7-year-old daughter had died that morning. She had been ill for some time, but wasn't



Revd. Canon Liz Hughes

expected to die imminently. He came over to England for a short break, but came to the airport immediately he heard about his daughter to see if he could get home as soon as possible (before his next pay cheque was due). He was understandably very distressed.

It is a mark of how the Chaplaincy Team works with other staff around the airport that he was found by a member of the Special Assistance Team in quite a state who immediately called us for assistance. He has since been back to thank us all, and expressed how impressed he was, that the staff here obviously care for the passengers in a way that he had never experienced before.

I believe that this account tells an important story in how we operate as Chaplains: we spend much of our time out and about in airport, as a visible presence, just getting to know and be known by people so that when the need arises, we are normally quickly available.

The Chaplaincy was started by Revd. Bob Gunn, the local Vicar in 1987, who initially visited on a volunteer basis once a week, ministering mainly to staff. The need for this independent, listening presence was so appreciated, that by 1990 Bob was taken on as full-time Chaplain, giving up his parish responsibilities.

In 1999, Baptist minister Revd. Michael Banfield took over as Chaplain and then began to develop a team of volunteers to expand the strength and scope of visiting both within the Terminal and to the various workplaces around the airport.

I became the third Senior Chaplain in November 2013, inheriting a team of 6. Recognising very quickly that the airport was due to undergo development, and being realistic about the age of the existing Chaplains, I have put recruitment as the highest priority and we now have 12 regular volunteers (including a Rabbi) and 2 in training, plus an Imam that we can call on as necessary.

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Chaplaincy at LLA. Plans are underway to mark this milestone with some visible events towards the end of June, beginning of July.

Revd. Canon Liz Hughes

Insurance cover for Church Members



We have recently received a numbers of calls from churches asking about insurance cover for church members. If your church is insured with Baptist Insurance then your church members will be covered under the Public Liability section of the policy. That means they are covered if a claim is made against them which arises from an incident that happened whilst they were acting on behalf of the church.

It's important to bear in mind that the cover only applies if the member was acting on behalf of the church and authorised to do so. For any incidents where a church member was acting in a private capacity they would not be covered.

You can check whether your church has liability cover by looking at your latest policy schedule or by contacting us on 0345 070 2223.



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