

Baptist Assembly 2018

At the Kingsgate Centre in Peterborough

Opening Celebrations

Welcome by David Whitlock, minister of Bretton Baptist Church.

'It's my joy to welcome you here - Peterborough is an exciting, growing, diverse city,'

Worship had a multicultural flavour, and was led by Greenford Baptist Church in London.

A multi-ethnic, multicultural church, led by Andy Robertson. After opening with *10,000 Reasons*, there followed several songs in different languages - Yoruba (Nigeria), Arabic, Swahili, Zambian, and Hindi, mostly sung in dual language, with an explanation to their meanings.

Interview with Kang-San Tan – General Director of BMS World Mission

In post for 6 months – When asked what God laid on his heart, he said, 'Mission continues to be a call for the church today.' 'And mission is not just out there, it's here. God has brought the global church together here in the UK. We are living at an exciting time, and God has called the whole Baptist church. Will we see ourselves as a missional community?'

Reflections with outgoing President

Dianne Tidball had served and inspired with her presidential theme 'As in Heaven.' Dianne said her 'real joy' had been witnessing God at work in local congregations. She cited a number of churches which had seen particular growth. 'These churches have something in common: keeping God at heart; honouring him in worship, rooted in scripture; courageous leadership,' 'We need to keep God at the centre.'

Induction of new President

Dave Gregory the senior minister of Croxley Green Baptist Church in Rickmansworth worked as a scientist in the Met Office before sensing a call to Baptist ministry, is the. He gave a short introduction to 'Divine Windows' *glimpses of God in life*. He finished by leading delegates in a prayer based on our values as Baptists Together, before launching the prayer via a stomp rocket prayer into the audience.

In Memoriam

Names of ministers and mission personnel who have died since the last Assembly displayed on screen.

Thanks to Richard Blyth and Ann Bothamley, both received a plaque

Richard Blyth, a governor for BMS at Eltham College for 20 years

Ann Bothamley, who has served BMS for 50 years in Vellore, India, invite to speak

'I'm much happier sitting with patients or leading a Bible class.'

Firstly, that her heart was full of thankfulness for God – 'for his faithfulness and enabling.' And she thanked all those who have prayed for her. 'I couldn't have been in Vellore without your prayers.'

Secondly, she wanted to make a challenge. Inviting delegates to reflect on where they are at the moment. '*Are you in the place God wants you to be? Or has He an exciting journey to challenge you on? Be challenged – God has a very special place for each of you – but are you in that place?*' She said that when we give ourselves wholeheartedly to God, he will guide us and we can do immeasurably more.

Recognition of Ministers and Mission Personnel

The commissioning of ministers, preachers and mission personnel took place, described by Lynn as a 'holy ground moment.' She encouraged delegates to be challenged in this moment. 'While the focus is on them, this is also a time to think about our calling. It's an opportunity to rededicate our lives to Christ and recommit to them.' All the BMS mission workers to be prayed for have now arrived in their countries.

Life's First Cry - address from Kang-San Tan

Kang-San Tan gave a short address which introduced the new BMS video, filmed in Afghanistan, called *Life's First Cry*.

He began by saying that it had been wonderful morning. There had been a reminder from Ann that mission is still with the church, he said, adding it was wonderful to see that God continues to call ministers here for the church in the UK.

Taking Romans 8 as his text, he said that verse 17 reminds us that as children of God we are co-heirs with Christ.

In the text Paul introduces the idea of a 'groaning creation'. It's out of the current world that God is bringing about a new heaven and earth.

In verse 22, not only is creation groaning, but we the church are to groan with groanings of creation. This remains the role of the church in today's world, and this is what it means to be co-heirs with Christ. It's why BMS works with the least evangelised, most marginalised and most fragile places, Kang-San said.

He said BMS brings the gospel – without it life can't be transformed – but we are still called to demonstrate it in places where traditional missionary workers can't be sent out, like North Korea and Afghanistan.

Afghanistan represents a fragile state. The moving video shows how through its workers, BMS is helping to educate people in the remote mountains about safe child birth practices - and the transformative impact this is having on people's lives.

Seminar 1 - Becoming Beacons of Hope – Playing your Part in God's Missional Adventure Lead by Roy Searle (Northumbria Community) and Simon Goddard (EBA)

Their Message: 'Encourage pioneers and pioneering'

Baptists need to be more encouraging of pioneers and pioneering if we are to reach people and make disciples in these challenging times.

Roy said 'God is raising up pioneers – these are our beacons of hope'

Our task is not to build the church; it's to go and make disciples. Jesus will build his church, Roy said. 'Pioneering is not restricted to age - it's about trying something different.'

Simon led the second part of the session, and encouraged delegates that in order to take risks and step out, they must be prepared to give something up, 'something familiar, which may now be unhelpful.'

He focused on the example of Abraham. He said that being a person of faith means stepping into the unknown, as Abraham did. It means imagining what can be – God stirred Abraham's imagination of what might be, and as the church today, we need to let the imagination 'stir about how people can thrive and flourish.'

Question to us.....What do we hope for, for our church?

BUGB AGM

Link to Notes: https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/512992/BUGB_AGM.aspx

https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/521205/Annual_Report_and.aspx

Seminar 2 – Transition and Transformation

Lead by Paul Lavender (MPBC Northampton)

Ken Benjamin, *newly-elected vice President (Chichester BC)* and

Both explained the transition that had taken place at their respective churches. Paul spoke about the transformation of the church building. It was built in the late 19th century, and subsequently renovated in recent years to become premises fit for purpose for the 21st century. It was renamed the Open Door Centre – an open door for people to come in, but also for the church to go out, said Paul.

They wanted the church to be a safe place for the community (they are based in the second most deprived ward in Northampton), and through activities such as a Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre, a community shop and a drop in for homeless and vulnerable people, the church is regularly reaching double its official membership each week.

There has therefore been a transition from being a preaching centre to ‘a church committed to the people God has brought to our doorstep,’ Paul said.

‘It’s been about being Kingdom building, not empire building.’

He added they have always tried to ‘Do what we can, be who we are,’ – and encouraged delegates to do the same.

Ken spoke about the alternative gatherings, or missional communities, at Chichester. One Sunday a month members are encouraged to do something in the community, in a variety of contexts and locations, instead of attending the more traditional service.

‘We want to reach people who wouldn’t normally come,’ said Ken. The goal isn’t to encourage people to eventually come to that Sunday service, but to help people explore faith in a completely different environment, an environment that suits them.

The missional communities have been running for around seven years. The church has a membership of around 360 people – but reaches about the same number again through its missional communities.

They shared a number of leadership lessons and pitfalls: interview and learn from others who are doing different things; remember the big picture that underpins what you do; and don’t pre-guess the outcomes. Paul spoke of how useful he had found the writings of Sam Wells, vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, particularly A Nazareth Manifesto.

Both Paul and Ken stressed that their churches’ ministries might not be for everyone: they wanted to encourage people to try something different, to experiment boldly, and not be afraid of it not working.

‘We are commissioning you to bring your creative best in a variety of ways,’ said Ken.

‘We commission you to go and be the change you want to be,’ added Paul.

BMS World Mission Update

Treasurer Robert Ashurst shared that BMS had made a small surplus over the last year. The was due in part to larger than expected legacies – income from churches had seen a slight decline. Longer term, this wasn't sustainable, Robert said. He therefore asked delegates to return to their churches with these two words: gratitude and challenge. 'We thank you for your praying, your giving, even you're going, so that together we can fulfil our highest goal,' Robert said.

One million lives transformed by 2020 - introduced by Kat Wagner and Jael Darmasin

In four areas – education, development, health and leadership, it is ahead of target (in the case of the latter two it has almost reached its target following large gains in 2017). In the areas of justice and relief, BMS was on target after two years, having currently reached 25 per cent and 41 per cent of its target respectively.

The only area in which it was behind where it wanted to be was church ministry. BMS wants to reach 500,000 people over five years, and has so far reached 113,551, or 23 per cent of its target

Reaching a million people is easy, relatively speaking, in today's world. Transforming the lives of a million human beings is something very different. Particularly when you are aiming for people in places and situations that are hard – really hard. With your help, BMS aims to bring Christ's transforming love to the world's most marginalised people and least evangelised communities, with a special focus on fragile states and desperate, often dangerous, contexts.

ONE MILLION LIVES TRANSFORMED BY 2020

VISION
THE HIGHEST GOAL OF ALL WE DO IS TO BRING PEOPLE TO FAITH IN OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST AND AN EXPERIENCE OF THE ABUNDANT LIFE THAT ONLY HE CAN PROVIDE.



STRATEGY
2016-2020

VALUES

 LOVE

 FAITH

 INTEGRITY

 EXCELLENCE

PRIORITIES

MOST MARGINALISED PEOPLE



INVESTING AT LEAST ONE THIRD OF OUR RESOURCES IN THE COUNTRIES IN THE BOTTOM QUARTER OF THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX.

LEAST EVANGELISED COMMUNITIES



INVESTING AT LEAST ONE HALF OF OUR RESOURCES IN THE THIRD OF THE WORLD THAT IS LEAST EVANGELISED.

MOST FRAGILE STATES



WORKING IN TEN OF THE 20 MOST FRAGILE STATES.

CHURCH

Growing culturally relevant expressions of Christian community, formed and led by indigenous believers.

EDUCATION

Enhancing life opportunities by providing access to education for those on the margins, including all ages and especially women.

JUSTICE

Enabling individual people and communities to access justice and to advocate for those without a voice.

DEVELOPMENT

Enabling individual people and communities to experience wellbeing economically, socially and environmentally. Intentionally planning for sustainability and resilience.

HEALTH

Helping people experience health and wellbeing through increasing access to training and provision of health and psychological care.

LEADERSHIP

Empowering strong and effective indigenous leaders by nurturing people with leadership skills and biblical understanding.

RELIEF

Working at effective collaborative responses to disasters and building resilience in those areas most at risk.

FAITH-STRETCHING TARGETS – THE TRANSFORMATION WE AND OUR PARTNERS HOPE TO SEE IN FIVE YEARS

Share the message of the gospel with

500,000

and plant 500 Christian communities.

For example... In India, our workers are planting small house fellowships among previously unreached people. Jesus is being praised and the work of the Spirit is being seen by thousands of new believers.

Enable

50,000

to access education and training.

For example... In Mozambique, our preached programme offers an flying start to children from poorer backgrounds, while in Nepal and Albania we support training programmes for national teachers.

Develop justice ministries in four countries impacting

120,000

For example... Our team of legal mission workers in Uganda is spreading justice through rights education and representing the poor, while our people in Thailand are helping women out of sex trafficking.

Enable

100,000

to develop sustainable livelihoods.

For example... In Afghanistan, we are empowering communities to invest in much-needed clean water, safe toilets and greenhouses for additional crops, and to develop sustainable livelihoods.

Enable

100,000

to access healthcare.

For example... Spinal rehab patients in Nepal and children with special needs in Thailand are being given new hope by our workers, whose love and skill are bringing healing and care in Jesus' name.

Develop national thinking among

20,000

in the UK and 10,000 people overseas through ten partners.

For example... In Brazil, Latin and Amsterdam, we are helping to train a new generation of Christian leaders for Europe, the Middle East, South America and North Africa at leading theological seminaries.

Co-ordinate disaster relief responses impacting

100,000

For example... In situations that make the news (the West Africa's Ebola epidemic and those that don't like Syria's cyclone disaster), we are meeting the needs of those worst affected by disasters and working for long-term recovery long after the cameras have moved on.

7 MINISTRIES | 4 VALUES | 3 PRIORITIES | 1 VISION | 1 MISSION

In short, we're intentionally going where others can't. We believe God is leading us into places at the bottom of the Human Development Index, and to people who have had the least opportunity to receive and experience the good news of Jesus Christ, in places often closed to Christian influence. Over the next five years, this will see us growing our work in such countries. Countries where churches, on their own, with fewer resources, simply cannot go.

We are doing the hard job, because we are called to, because we can. Because being born in Afghanistan, or Chad, or Guinea should not determine that you live a life of suffering, without help or the hope of Jesus.

We have targets – numbers of people we want to see touched and changed by our work. And these are bold, faith-stretching and measurable. But this is not a numbers game. If it were, we'd do the easy thing. Focus on the easy places. Do the easy work. With integrity, excellence and love guiding us, we're aiming at lasting transformation, not box-ticking or headline-grabbing. In this, we have faith that God will honour our work in ways we had not even imagined.

'BMS: a catalyst for mission'

How can BMS World Mission be a catalyst for mission in the world – and not just a partner?

That was one of the questions posed by General Director Kang-San Tan

Kang-San returned to the theme he had introduced during the opening session. Taking Romans 8:17 as his text, he reminded delegates that creation is 'groaning', and that the church, by noticing, groans with it. When the church goes into the world, it does so inspired by the spirit – the 'groaning spirit' which invites us into this mission.

So what does this mean for us now? Kang-San, who grew up in a Buddhist household, reminded delegates of the challenges of Christian mission today – after 200 years of missionary work, just two-three per cent of the Islam, Buddhist and Hindu world are Christian. This is where the groaning spirit is, he explained - and God is raising African, Asian and South American mission workers.

Increasingly, Kang-San said he can see BMS becoming a 'polycentric mission' -- mission from everywhere, to everyone. How can BMS be a catalyst for such mission activity, and not just a partner?

Kang-San moved on to ask: how do we encounter the groaning spirit? We need sacrifice, open hearts and open churches to meet the mission needs of today, he said. Sometimes we can look for comfortable lives, but the holy spirit is leading us deeper, and when we follow, that's when we experience it.

Kang San said that BMS participates in the groaning spirit today by working among the least evangelised, the most marginalised and the most fragile states. He spoke of his privilege and gratitude at leading an organisation that had been obedient in 'sharing God's love to the ends of the earth.'

He concluded by thanking supporters. 'We can't do this without your giving, your prayers and your surrendering of your best people, old and young.'

Closing Worship & Prayer

Delegate: Helen Wilkes, Member at Leamington Spa Baptist Church