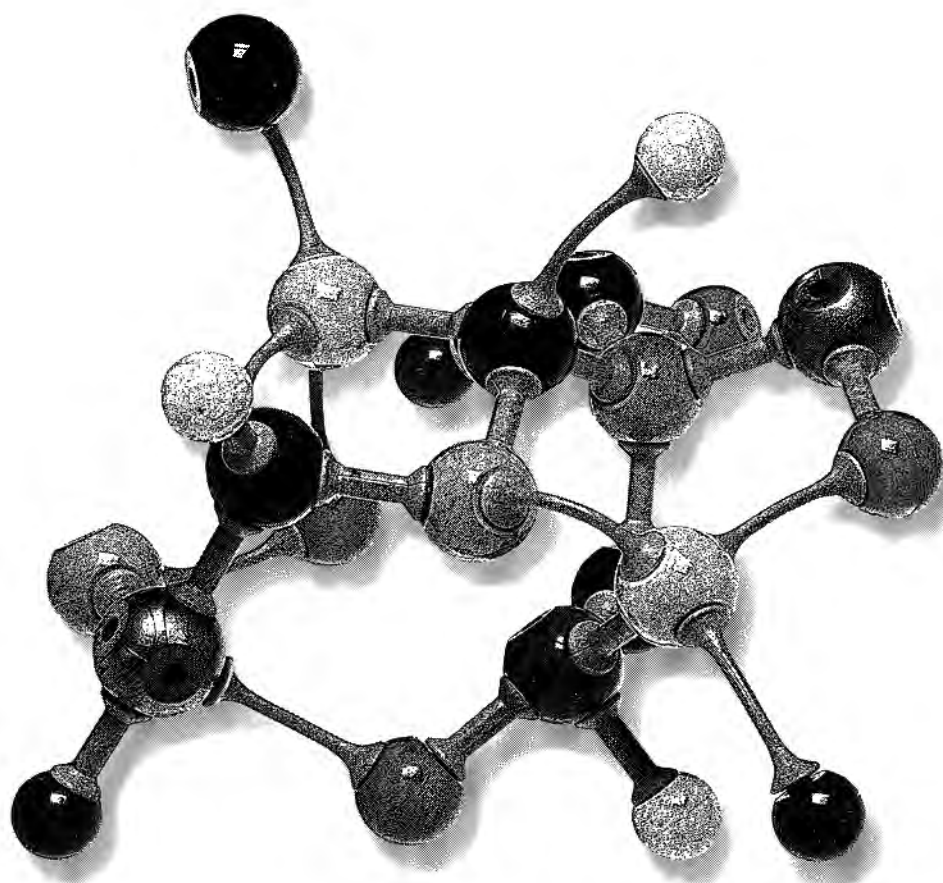


TALK

The Mainstream Magazine

Summer 2005



**Waiting for
the great leap
forward**

Ian Randall
Adam Eakins
Juliet Kilpin
Stephen Rand
Rob White
Stephen Ibbotson
and more...

Connecting leaders

Mainstream is committed to:

Get passionate about knowing God.

Get real in relationships.

Get stuck into God's mission.

A pause before we leap?

There's no doubt that everyone you talk to has an opinion about what the church should be doing and how it ought to be doing it - and some of them are Christians.

Every month the Christian bestseller lists feature a title about growing the most relevant/powerful/engaged/forward-looking/fill-in-the-blank church. Every week we get invited to a conference hosted by the latest snake oil seller who's going to charm us into believing he has the secret of the great leap forward.



So it's good to pause.

The sun is shining, the last article has gone down the line, Coldplay fills the air with their mellow angst and I'm wondering why Stephen Ibbotson's chair feels so much bigger than it looked from a distance.

In some ways this issue of Talk is a pause for breath and thought. We reflect with Ian Randall on where we've been - as a family and a movement - the aforementioned Stephen along with Rob White ponder what we're for, and newcomer Juliet Kilpin (welcome) movingly tells us what it's like on the ground.

On top of that Stephen Rand puts our plans in a global context and - welcome to yet another newcomer - Adam Eakins suggests we might plan to make way for those younger and more energetic than us who'll ensure that our leap is not a flash in the pan.

So, as the proverb says, 'look before you leap'. But let's do more than that. Let's pause, look back, look around and look up - maybe then we'll stand a good chance of leaping in the right direction.

And finally, I'd love to know what you think. Email me (simon@jonesfamily.org.uk) with suggestions, comments, helpful ideas. The best kind of talk is a conversation. It'd be great if this Talk was the start of a conversation that helped all of us do what we're doing better and more effectively for God's Kingdom.

Simon Jones is the editor of Talk. He is also team leader at Bromley Baptist Church and author of *Why Bother with Church?* (IVP 2001)

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History's lessons for the great leap forward

Simon Jones talks to Ian Randall about what the ups and downs of the twentieth Century have to teach us about what the future might hold



As the Baptist Union embarks on replacing its General Secretary, it's a good time to take stock. David Coffey's time at the helm has seen significant change both within the Union and in the wider Christian scene. The last decade has seen a million people leave the church in the UK, new forms of gathering springing up, the decline of new church groupings and a renewed confidence among Baptists.

Ian Randall has lived through these momentous times as a pastor, teacher and writer. Now deputy principal at Spurgeon's College, he has turned his gaze on the history of the Baptists in the Twentieth Century. Ian is an affable, enthusiastic very readable historian. He also teaches spirituality at Spurgeon's which earths his interest in history in the life and experience of God's people especially our Baptist family.

His book *The English Baptists of the 20th Century* the final volume in the Baptist Historical Society's four volume history of the English Baptists comes after a number of other historical studies, looking at Evangelical spirituality and history through the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. His work has given him a keen insight into how evangelicals generally and Baptists in particular have ended up where they are in Britain today.

I caught up with him in his book-lined office at the college to talk about this history and to ask him to reflect on where he thinks the denomination is and

more importantly from our point of view what contribution he thinks Mainstream should be making to the development of Baptist life in the new century.

'We're at a point where there are a number of new opportunities and possibilities for the Baptist family,' he says. 'We've been through periods of being on the back foot. From the 1970s onwards, Baptists weren't where it was at. New groupings had sprung up who were setting the pace. Mainstream helped to suggest that new things could happen within the Baptist community. But even Mainstream often looked elsewhere for its ideas and inspiration. It was reluctant to look back at our own Baptist history of renewal.'

But another generation of young leaders is needed

'We seem to be beyond that now,' he continues. 'A number of the new groups so strong in the 1980s have plateaued or gone into decline. Only NFI is still expanding but it's pretty conservative, especially on issues of women's ministry.'

In these changed circumstances, Ian believes that it is possible that we could well see a more broadly based 'baptistic' movement, centred on the Baptist Union, offering a home to all kinds of newly homeless people 'if we can be outgoing and generous enough.' He argues that the rise of the Black Churches in and around our

large cities, indicates that 'the believers' church model has prevailed in terms of growing churches. Our tradition has wide purchase. Not that we have all the answers not by any means - but we've gone beyond the period where people are having to leave the Baptist family to find new things.'

SJ: We're about to change the General Secretary. What kind of person do you think we're looking for?

IR: There's been a lot of change under David Coffey. There's a new spirit in the Union, a willingness to change. He has

been truly inspirational. The next General Secretary might not need to be so innovative; all the change of recent years needs time to bed down.

But another generation of young leaders is needed. It happened through Mainstream in earlier years David himself is an example of it. Have we got that next bunch of people in their 20s, 30s and 40s committing themselves to the future of the Union?

SJ: Do you perceive that Mainstream is as engaged now with this process as it was back in the early 80s?

'We're at a point where there are a number of new opportunities and possibilities for the Baptist family'

IR: No. In some places I hear people speaking about how the 'Kingdom' is more important than the Union. True, but we've heard the 'Kingdom'

Some emerging church stuff, I really warm to

emphasis before the Restorationists of the 1970s ran into the sand with it. Of course it could be a positive emphasis if people are saying 'we belong to the Union but want it to be broader.' If Mainstream could be that kind of movement, able to walk with other groups and churches that share our views and approaches, then it could be very creative at this particular time.

But as I see the picture, it isn't going to happen if the Mainstream leadership do not see themselves as part of our family tradition with a role in helping that tradition find its place in the present and the future. We need to make sure we learn from our past mistakes.

SJ: Your book tells the story of many of the groups and movements that have come and gone and we'll touch on some of those shortly. But first, what about the latest renewal movements clustering under the umbrella of 'emerging church' what do these have to offer?

IR: . I like the way that it affirms the older traditions of the Church rather than just leaping straight back into the New Testament which is possibly where Restorationism went wrong. The emerging church movement or at least parts of it - affirms the great statements of the Church. But it isn't stuck in the past. It's able to hold the ancient and future together; it is both traditional and thoroughly contemporary and this is a great strength. Maybe the weakness is the that it could be another fad.

SJ: Would you include the Northumbria Community in this?

IR: Yes in the sense that I think the Northumbria Community is a good

example of where the whole area of spirituality is at for many evangelicals, not just Baptists: evangelicalism is much more eclectic these days.

Through the 1960s, 70s and 80s, what



was seen as new in Baptist life was mostly charismatic. We've now moved on. A whole generation has been shaped by charismatic spirituality. I was one of those who gained great benefit from that. Now, charismatic experience is more commonly understood as just one aspect of our spirituality rather than what encapsulates our whole spiritual experience. I would argue that the charismatic is one dimension of spirituality throughout history. Another is the Celtic. As Richard Foster says, we're talking about streams of spirituality.

What's really significant is that these spiritualities can emerge and be significant within Baptist life and we certainly don't need to leave the Baptist community to draw on these traditions. So the Northumbria community is an excellent example of this positive development.

SJ: There have been a number of renewal movements throughout the twentieth Century that had varying impact on Baptist life which were the significant ones and what do you think we should be learning from them?

IR: Well, the century begins with the Welsh Revival of 1904-5 which affected churches right across the British Isles. It's often written off as a two-year wonder. But lots of churches and people across the world, including Baptists were deeply affected by it.

Spurgeon's College was affected by it as six Welsh students at the College were caught up in it, the Principal of the College went down to Wales and was impressed, classes were suspended and extended mission started at the Elephant & Castle where the College was based. Some 800 people joined the Metropolitan Tabernacle with which the College was linked as a result.

Pentecostalism partly came out of the Welsh Revival. A lot of Pentecostalism's early British leaders were converted in the revival. In a sense Pentecostalism is a step-child of Baptist life because in many places Baptist structures couldn't contain it. Take someone like Donald Gee, for example, an early Pentecostal statesman. He was a Baptist who became a significant Pentecostal thinker.

In the 1920s, the east Anglian revival broke out as a result of the preaching of Douglas Brown, minister of Balham

Baptist Church. He preached all over East Anglia, in all kinds of churches, seeing many converted and many more rededicating themselves to the life of faith. In fact his ministry eventually became one of church renewal rather than simply evangelism. It affected Baptists but it was inter-denominational.

SJ: How did the Union respond to all this?

IR: It was sometimes difficult for the Union leadership to affirm these new ways of thinking. They saw the need

You can draw a line from these events in the early 1970s to the later emergence of Mainstream

for deeper life in the early decades of the twentieth century but couldn't get the whole Union to commit to the sort of changes that might be needed to accommodate that life and reverse the decline of the churches.

The inter-war years in particular were a time of rapid Pentecostal growth that in some places came at the expense of Baptist churches.

SJ: The renewal movement in the middle of century that's often compared to mainstream is the Baptist Revival Fellowship. How significant was its role in the development of the Union?

IR: The Baptist Revival Fellowship (BRF) was run by some very able people in the 1940s and 50s. It was closely linked to Billy Graham and Youth For Christ and the whole renaissance of evangelicalism through that period. And it could have played a key role in bringing this renewed life into Baptist structures and churches.

But the Union leadership and the BRF never really connected. For instance,

the Union committed itself to supporting the Student Christian Movement in universities, whereas much of the new growth in student work was happening through Christian Unions and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. I should say, though, that the Union had a very good Baptist Students' Federation. The younger leaders that emerged from the Christian Unions helped to contribute to a growth of evangelical Anglican and Free churches but to some extent this phenomenon by-passed Baptists. The BRF could have been a bridge between the Union and the new evangelical surge, but it never quite happened.

The controversy over Michael Taylor's views of Christology in the early 1970s (Michael Taylor was Principal of Northern College) really signalled the end of the BRF within the Baptist Union. Quite a few of the ministers associated with the movement left the Union. A lot of the BRF leaders looked to Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel who had told the 1966 Evangelical Alliance assembly that evangelicals should reconsider their position within denominations. That and the Michael Taylor episode convinced most of the BRF leaders that evangelicals couldn't flourish in the Union. And though the Union clarified its position from 1972, stressing that Baptists were evangelical by history, and affirming orthodox Christology at the Union Assembly, many within the BRF weren't convinced.

SJ: Did the early leaders of Mainstream grasp these lessons?

IR: Yes, I think so. You can draw a line from these events in the early 1970s to the later emergence of Mainstream and see a determination on the part of the

early Mainstream leaders not to be marginalised as they perceived the BRF was.

SJ: Who were the significant leaders then?

IR: It was the coming together of three people that made Mainstream what it was in those embryonic days in the late 1970s: Douglas McBain, representing the charismatic strand, Paul Beasley-Murray, a champion of church growth thinking as seen by his book *Turning the Tide* and Raymond Brown, the 'mainstream' Keswick-influenced evangelical principal of Spurgeon's. These three were committed to being, as Mainstream's strap-line says, Baptists for life and growth. This combination gave Mainstream great strength.

Others joined David Coffey, Barrie White the Principal of Regent's Park College (though he doesn't really fit any of the categories above, he was passionately concerned for the spiritual health of the denomination), Patrick Goodland from Gorsley, Peter Grange, now a Regional Minister, and Jack Ramsbottom, who was at London Bible College.

SJ: Were there significant things it did to avoid becoming a separatist group?

IR: It participated fully in the debates about where the Baptist family was going. For example, the collection of papers it published at the end of the 1980s on Baptist identity was very significant. It demonstrated that here was a group of people committed to helping the Baptist community understand who it was and how it could enjoy the kind of renewal and growth that many longed for.

Many of the key post holders in the Union at the end of the decade not



least, of course, David Coffey were Mainstream people.

In the early 1990s with the emphasis on being a Word and Spirit network, the reach of Mainstream may have narrowed. It no longer seemed as though it needed to be such a broad alliance of evangelicals. Perhaps in the wake of the Toronto phenomenon there was some heart-searching over this

SJ: And where is it now?

IR: If Mainstream is well rooted in the Union but able to help foster a wider baptistic movement, reaching out to all kinds of groups and churches looking for fellowship and new partnerships - not least the Black churches - then it's in a strong position to make a significant

showing signs of significant growth are Black-majority. More importantly, Black spirituality is beginning to influence the Union. Look at the London Association and the amazing mixed leadership team that is developing.

You could say that this multi-cultural Baptist life is a key prophetic development at the turn of the millennium, vital for the future health

the way in which spiritual life will be renewed in our denomination and beyond in this century.

There is a challenge for Mainstream to face, however. Is it just a white and mainly middle class movement?

contribution to the new phase of life about to begin with David moving on to his new work within the BWA.

There is a challenge for Mainstream to face, however. Is it just a white and mainly middle class movement? Where are its actual links with Black church leaders? Many of the churches within the Union that are

of the church. It could be dare I suggest?! - that BUGB is somewhat ahead of Mainstream on this and that Mainstream needs to catch up. Mainstream has, as I see it, been of great significance for the Union. It is within an important tradition of twentieth-century movements bringing fresh spiritual life to Baptists. I look with anticipation to



Leaping across the generations

Adam Eakins highlights the importance of picking and mentoring new leaders if ministries are going to develop

Adam Eakins is Director of Joshua Generation. He mentors, trains and resources the 20's and 30's generation in leadership development and has co-authored 'The JoshGen guide to Manifesto for Life' (JoshGen), 2001). He also has spoken at many at many conferences and retreats including EA assembly and Spring Harvest's At Work Together. Alongside this he is leading a small team who are planting an emerging church in a cafe/bar in Northampton called Quench. This is part of a local Baptist church where Adam is on the leadership team. He is currently studying for a degree in Popular Culture and Sociology. Family life is full of fun, being married to Karen and looking after Joel, who is two years old and Lauren who was born in May 2005.

The British 4 x 100m sprint relay team have got it wrong many times, on occasions quite embarrassingly. It seems that passing the baton between four highly trained athletes presented too difficult a task when covering 100 metres in around 10 seconds. However, at the Olympic Games last summer in Athens, it all came together. On an amazing night, we were able to beat the US team by a fraction of a second, much to everyone's surprise and delight. It was great to see Colin Jackson mocking Michael Johnson in the BBC studio as he had declared that there was no way that the British sprinters could beat the Americans!

Passing on the baton in a relay race at those speeds requires skill, precision and timing. Get it right and it looks effortless. Get it wrong and there you are standing on the track unable to continue with the rest of the team looking on in despair. A successful change over requires two people working together, timing is very important.

Passing on the baton is a good illustration of leadership succession and, in whatever field, is a very difficult one to get right. How do we make sure that, just like the sprinters, we are working together and that the timing is right? As

it has been said, "Success is not determined by what you go on to but by what you leave behind". If that is the case then how many people who are now in key leadership positions are planning their own exit and are we already thinking about who will take over from us.

Over the last thirty years many new denominations and Christian organisations have sprung up. Some of these were started by leaders who were fed up waiting for the succession to happen so they decided to start out on their own. However, even though they experienced this frustration, some could be accused of repeating the same mistake. Where are the emerging leaders within our churches? Do our leaderships contain anyone under the age of thirty years? Is every person in a leadership position working alongside an emerging leader; investing time and giving opportunities? You only have to look at Tony Blair and Gordon Brown or Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin to know that is it not easy to get the right person or hand over at the right time.

Help in this area comes from a great biblical example. The relationship between Moses and Joshua was worked out over many years and in Numbers 27:15-23 we see Moses asking God who would

succeed him. How many of us have done that?

God's reply is found in verse 18-20 where he gives Moses his instructions about Joshua.

¹⁸ So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹ Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. ²⁰ Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. (NIV)

We also see something very similar in Deuteronomy 1:38. *But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it. (NIV)*

There are three things described in the story of Moses and Joshua that are important to consider in regards to leadership succession.

Firstly, Moses envisioned Joshua. He shared with Joshua the vision that God had given regarding the Promised Land. Without this would Joshua have been able to lead the people into their destiny after Moses died? An important part of leadership succession is passing on your thoughts, ideas and vision for the area within which you are

working. Giving the emerging leader an image of the future. However, it's just as important to allow them to develop their own thoughts and vision for the way forward, which may not be the same as yours.

whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

Remember, envisioning, equipping, and empowering is worth nothing without the chance to try it out

Secondly, Moses *equipped* Joshua. He gave Joshua the skills and resources necessary to fulfil the role that he was to undertake. Training for the role is vital and that must include providing the right resources and experience. I have been working with an emerging leader for two years now and a key aspect of that has been giving him people to meet with and experiences that will help to develop him.

Thirdly, Moses *empowered* Joshua. Moses was instructed by God to give him some of his authority before the people. Empowering someone means handing some responsibility over to them and involves trust and risk taking. We can allow them to make certain decisions and to take on certain responsibilities. Of course we must hold them accountable, but back them up as much as possible.

Remember, envisioning, equipping, and empowering is worth nothing without the chance to try it out, to gain experience, maybe even make some mistakes and to learn things on the job. Sharing opportunities with an emerging leader probably takes more time but the long-term benefits are the increased chance of good leadership succession.

Sadly like many of us who have been given opportunities and grown into leadership we forget the important lessons we have experienced. This is what happened with Joshua after he died having not passed on leadership adequately. Judges 2:10: *After that*

Leadership succession is a vital part of leadership but it isn't just about making sure that you have people ready to take things on from you. We do need to broaden our view so that we are creating a large pool of potential leaders who can lead in other places. For example, Jesus didn't just choose and train a direct successor (to be fair, that would have been a bit hard since he was God!). He disciplined a whole group of people who would do things with the same values in various places. The opportunity to pass the baton on to many people to go and express leadership in many different places is a privilege and a Kingdom principle.

So if you are in leadership, you may spend time planning your next challenge. However, many good works that are having an impact for the Kingdom may be lost or lay stagnant because of a lack of thought about succession. So is it time to think a little about whom you are handing on to and when? Recently I heard a story about a leadership team meeting of a church network where the question was asked what would happen if the leader died. Someone spoke up and asked the more important question, what will happen if they don't!

'Speak Lord'.....

Being a Prophetic church

At the *Mainstream* Conference 2006 we will be looking at issues surrounding the prophetic.

Main Speakers

• Barry Kissell

Barry is a New Zealander and is married to Mary. They have a grown up family of seven. For 30 years Barry was on the staff of St Andrews Chorleywood where he was the founder and Director of the Faith Sharing Ministry. This took him with teams to 100's of churches in 25 nations where they evangelised and taught on the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. For 8 years Barry co-hosted the New Wine Family conference. He has written a number of books. The latest ones published are 'Riding the Storm', which describes the recovery from a serious accident, and 'The Prophet's Notebook'. This is a part of a series on the five-fold ministries, which he edited. Since 2000 Barry has been the Associate Rector of St Mary's church Marylebone. During the last two years this church has grown from 180 to 1200. The church has attracted many young people. The average age of the congregation is 26. Barry's hobbies are watching Rugby and windsurfing; although opportunities for the latter are not so available in London!

• Glen Marshall

Glen Marshall is former chair of Mainstream. After 20 years pastoring churches in the North of England he became tutor at Northern Baptist College last summer where he teaches courses in mission, preaching and contemporary evangelicalism. Now that their two children have left home Glen and his wife Kathy are eagerly anticipating a belated misspent youth.

Some of the Main Sessions and Seminar Titles:

- The Church being prophetic
- The Church handling the prophetic
- Learning & developing a personal prophetic ministry
- The Emerging Prophet
- The prophet as the healer
- The prophet as the 'seer'
- The prophet as the proclaimer
- Teambuilding
- Developing a healthy personal spirituality

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Please make cheques payable to:
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Balance due on **1st December 2005**.

Full amount is due for any cancellation after 1st January 2006.

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E-mail: i.frith@mainstream-uk.com
0121 323 2839

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Standard:

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En suite:

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The *Mainstream* Conference

9th - 11th January 2006

The Hayes Conference Centre

Swanwick, Derbyshire

Registration: Monday 9th from 2:00pm

Ends after Lunch Wed 11th

Isn't every year a Leap Year?

Rob White

Leap year. As I sit to write this I must confess to not knowing when the next leap year is. It may be this year- I don't know. An even bigger confession is that I don't care! That's probably because, in terms of the Kingdom, for me every year is a leap year; every month is a leap month, and so on.

I seem incapable of thinking in any other way than leaps! I'm not sure whether that makes me dangerous or an irresponsible idealist or an irrepressible visionary. Make your own choice, but let me qualify it for those of you who are about to read no further: whilst always thinking in leaps I have always had to start the journey with small steps, just like everyone else.

It seems to me that we Baptists are, generally speaking, a pretty safe crew. We don't take many risks; we're not dangerously creative, and we seem content too often to go with the status quo. That, in my book, is perilous from the perspective of Kingdom advancement. How can we be content with where we're at, nationally, locally and personally?

That's where Mainstream comes in. Perhaps we ought to rename ourselves as 'White Water' (absolutely no implied connection to my name)? We need risk-takers, innovators, leap-thinkers or, as William Booth used to say, 'Godly go-ahead daredevils'. If Mainstream is going to play its part in the Kingdom conspiracy then it has to think and plan in leaps, not in the leisurely steps of a Sunday afternoon bucolic stroll.

I've been asked by the new editor (welcome, Simon!) to put down my thoughts re the future of Mainstream, vis a vis the theme of this edition of TALK, so here goes:

Mission-focused. Mainstream must inspire, encourage, challenge, help, resource and partner leaders and churches to

make mission, in all its forms, the priority. The apostolic ministry to which Mainstream has been called must have this at its heart. Through relationship, theological reflection, story-sharing and training we must have this as the number one objective. That means seeing churches as missional churches and church members as missionaries.

Commitment. Mainstream cannot fulfil its objectives without commitment from leaders and, where possible, churches. No longer are we just a conference and a magazine - we're a network and, hopefully, a Movement. We're not asking people to give up other commitments and relationships - on the contrary, we can salt other relationships by finding strength and support with likeminded people in the Mainstream network. It seems to

What about the 20s and teens? We must identify them, train them, mentor them

me that we are taking seriously the action encouraged in the BU's 'Relating and Resourcing' initiative. It's only as we commit ourselves to ongoing relationships that we can provide the long-term support that so many look for. After all, what's the point in going for broke and finding the help's not there when I need it?

Raising young leaders. A number of us are getting older. That's about as obvious as saying that we only live so long as we breathe! But it's a serious statement, and I'm in the place to know it! Who's coming up behind? Yes, we've got some in their 30s and 40s. That's good, but not good enough. What about the 20s and teens? We must identify them, train them, mentor them and then, the thing at which we're worst, release them. I'm grateful to Peter Nodding for initiating the 'Imprint' weekend in October in Swanwick. Let's hope for some younger

people who actually think that a future in church leadership might be a challenging and exciting adventure.

Then we'll need to challenge the whole training/preparation system for these people. Theological Colleges must be only one option among others. And, whilst I'm at it, those colleges must provide much more inspiration and envisioning so that, when someone leaves at the end of their training, they do so with the fire of the Spirit burning in them and the adventure of leadership beckoning them on. Other options must include more on-the-job training where the academic part is directly linked to the practical part: where the classroom challenges and comments on the church work experience and places great

emphasis on character formation.

I think I've run out of space. Other leaps for Mainstream I would mention are **churches partnering for mission** (Mike Pears is setting out on a model for this in Bristol and Rhys Stenner has partnered, from Hove, for mission in Wales) and a serious pursuit of **how to articulate the Gospel** in the 21st Century. These might not seem like leaps at first reading but, if we're going to take them seriously, they are most certainly leaps from where we are now.

Marcus Buckingham has written, 'Leaders not only see a need for change, they feel a restless urgency to bring it about'. That, I believe, is where Mainstream is and, if it's not, it must be. How about you? Risk taking is not as frightening when looked at in relationship with others. Are you up for it, for God's sake? Make it a leap year!



Rob is our Mainstream apostle, encouraging churches and leadership teams in the work of mission. Marion works closely with him. We are grateful to them both. Please pray for them.

You can contact him on rob.marion@ntlworld.com

The long and winding road - the G8 and Make Poverty History - Stephen Rand

What will be the lasting memory of July 2005? A London bus peeled open by a devastating bomb? The moment the envelope was opened and London was named as the host for the Olympics in 2012? Sir Paul McCartney and Bono's electrifying Sergeant Pepper? Or 225,000 people slowly making their way round Edinburgh to indicate their determination to make poverty history?



In just one week enough highs and lows for a whole year - and the realisation that if the G8 package for Africa was delivered in full and on time, then there was just the possibility that history might share Bono's instant conclusion that while this was not the end of extreme poverty, it might be the beginning of the end of extreme poverty.

The acts of terror in London almost completely submerged the coverage of the G8 - a salutary reminder that even the eight most powerful men in the world can be hostage to the agenda of the perpetrators of political violence. Ironically it was the public disagreement between Bob Geldof and other campaigners that helped the reaction to the G8 communiqué get any coverage at all.

The word Sir Bob was muttering was 'perspective.' And perspective is certainly vital. Do we praise Tony Blair for his determination to put Africa on



the agenda, to invest time and effort in getting a result, even holding his nerve and pushing the agenda to the wire despite the London factor of Olympics and terrorism? Do we emphasise the progress that was made - or highlight just how far short the G8 fell of the target set for them by the Make Poverty History campaigners and the global Live 8 audience?

For three days I was part of the Make Poverty History team agonising and arguing over this very question, conscious of the political desirability to encourage leaders who make progress to want to continue and make further progress; aware of the campaigning imperative to encourage all those who had sent emails and text messages, worn white bands, bought the t-shirts and posted the postcards, so they were motivated to do more rather than give up.

Ultimately there was also the consideration of truth. If Make Poverty History had set out what it believed needed to be done to achieve the goal, then in the end the judgement had to be based on what the G8 had delivered against that target. The policy objectives were not hopelessly optimistic ideals designed to tempt the politicians forward; they were serious summaries based on careful analysis of what were the minimum requirements to end extreme poverty. To put it crudely: if a child dies every three seconds because of poverty, is it success or failure to change that to a child dying every four seconds because of poverty?

So what did the G8 achieve in the areas of debt, aid and trade (recognising that on the twin track of climate change, which affects the poor so drastically, they could hardly agree that action was required, let alone take action)?

Debt

On debt the deal agreed by the finance ministers four weeks earlier was confirmed. Widely reported as 100 per cent debt cancellation, much of my last month has been spent trying to get the

media to realise that this is a gross over-simplification - so much so that we even had a row with Gordon Brown about it.

Jubilee Debt Campaign was quick to recognise that the principle of 100 per cent debt cancellation was a significant step forward. But it is a principle that has been applied to *some* of the debts of *some* countries: if you get 100 per cent for one question it does not mean you pass the whole examination. The announcement referred to a deal worth \$40 billion, even \$55 billion; but that is over a 40 year period. If debt cancellation is to have an impact, then it has to release money that is used to combat poverty. This deal will release less than a dollar per person in the countries that will benefit in the coming year, assuming the deal is properly ratified and implemented in the coming weeks.

Aid

Enormous effort was put into getting agreements for additional money, so that the G8 could announce significant extra sums, \$25 billion for Africa, \$48 billion in total. But this is promised by 2010, when it is needed immediately. There are questions about how much of this money is new money, or recycled from existing aid budgets. And, of course, the promises have to become realities.

There were notable specific pledges to focus on malaria and to ensure AIDS treatment to everyone who requires it by 2010, offering real hope to the 40 million people currently living - and dying - with HIV. But little was said about improving the quality of aid, making sure that this extra money is really effective and focused on people who are poor.



Make Poverty History has consistently expressed concern about the damaging economic policy conditions that are routinely attached to aid and debt relief - and the G8 seem more likely to extend these rather than end them. There were words about allowing poor countries to decide their own route for development; campaigners will be looking for action.

Trade

Here there was real disappointment. No date set for ending the export subsidies that destroy livelihoods of poor communities around the world. No awareness of the need to regulate multinational companies: the challenge of trade justice remains.

*

So there is plenty still to do for politicians and campaigners. The UK now holds the Presidency of the European Union, a vital opportunity for progress on the links between Europe and the developing world. The UN Special Summit meets in September, assessing the progress on the goals to halve poverty by 2015. And in December the World Trade Organisation is due to agree new arrangements to assist the development of the world's poorest countries.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY has become an unprecedented movement of passion, energy and solidarity. Never before have so many people in the world come together, fully united in demanding action to end poverty, with a roar for justice. And while we must never forget the movement is much wider than churches, it is important to recognise the vital role that churches have played in raising the profile of the campaign both within and outside their congregations.

Driving up to Edinburgh it was so encouraging to see just how many churches, from the most massive to the modest, were wrapped in a white band or sporting a Make Poverty History banner. The massive rally in Edinburgh, such an inspiring event, was undoubtedly swelled by people motivated and organised through local churches.

For me, perhaps the most encouraging and moving memory of July 2005 will be of a Bethlehem to Jerusalem experience. The little town of Auchterader (Bethlehem) is just down the road from the luxury hotel in Gleneagles (Jerusalem). The G8 were thrust upon them; some residents were afraid of protesters and disturbance.

But the churches got together, determined to take this unique opportunity. They operated a Global Village Café, fairtrade coffee and cakes to welcome visitors - and they discovered that police and protesters were people, glad to know that Christians could get past the stereotype. And the churches also

organised a 24/7 prayer vigil that ensured every moment of the G8 summit was covered with prayer: prayer for the leaders, prayer for the world - and on Thursday and Friday, prayer for London.

It was a wonderful combination of the spiritual and the practical and you'll have to decide which category the coffee and the prayer comes into! On the day before the summit I joined eight people who had walked from Birmingham to Gleneagles to make their point about debt cancellation and to advertise Make Poverty History. They arrived at the police checkpoint after 18 days and 380 miles. They handed over the petition signatures they had collected on giant footprints. They stood at the gate and prayed. Then they walked to the churches café and enjoyed refreshment.

No one imagined that the G8 would end poverty overnight. Working for the justice of the kingdom is indeed a long and winding road but it's one that we can all, as individual and churches, continue to walk ourselves and do we all we can to encourage politician and public to join us and keep moving forward.

Stephen Rand is co chair of Jubilee Debt Campaign and part of the leadership team at Kairos Baptist Church Wimbledon. Information about continuing involvement with Make Poverty History can be found at www.makepovertyhistory.org and on Premier Radio at 10.30 on Saturdays - www.premier.org.uk/mph





Ministering to life and death on the street

By Juliet Kilpin

Juliet Kilpin is one of the ministers of Cable Street Community Church in East London. The church developed out of the work of Urban Expression, a mission agency which recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams to pioneer creative and relevant expressions of church for under-churched areas of Britain's inner-cities. For more information visit www.urbanexpression.org.uk. From September Juliet will also be working for the Baptist Union as a half-time Mission Advisor for church planting and evangelism.

I don't think I had ever heard 'Amen' being shouted quite so meaningfully. I was surrounded by a large group of young people on the side of a busy main road in East London, at the site of a road traffic accident that took the life of their friend during the early hours of the day.

The 20yr old man came off a motorbike that he had pinched. He was testing the bike to its full capacity in front of his friends. Unfortunately, as he did a wheely at 100mph he came off

Unfortunately, as he did a wheely at 100mph he came off

and hit a bollard, and his life was snuffed out. Given the fact that he could have come off this bike almost anywhere in East London, it was a slight consolation that he did so in the middle of the community he had grown up in, practically outside his grandmother's house, and was held by local people who knew him until he died.

The young people had gathered at the scene to grieve, to console one another, and to pay their respects in the only ways they knew how - to play garage music loudly out of a van, to lay flowers, light candles, drink beer and place the empty cans and bottles on the railings and bollards in the road. This is what their friend would have appreciated.

From the moment I heard about the accident I guessed that they would gather, and when a friend came round and confirmed that this was so I knew that I had to

go down too. You see we knew the lad a little, but we knew his friends more. As a church we recognised the high level of bike theft in our community, and understood the thrill of stealing and speeding on a bike for lads that have been denied opportunity simply by virtue of their postcode. We ran several motorbike projects to teach the lads how to respect a bike and repair one, and we took them to off-road biking centres where they were taught how to ride safely. The two boys who were following him when he died had

been on these courses. Unfortunately the guy who died hadn't. Would the end result have been different if he had?

So I went to the scene and became a street pastor, a role that seems so integral to urban estate ministry. This is where we seem to do most of our pastoral care - our listening, our counselling, our biblical exposition, and even our praying. Shopping trips up to the local

So I went to the scene and became a street pastor

market have to be allocated extra time as we are bound to bump into people who want to talk, to share their stories with someone who is interested, to express their thoughts to someone who considers their opinion worthwhile. And on that evening it happened again, pastoring on the street - chatting with the guys, listening to their stories and accounts, their

regrets, their confusion, and hearing evidence that the police weren't privy to.

It felt right to ask these guys if they would like to do something 'spiritual' at this time of grief. It sensed as if they were craving some direction, some valve to release the pressure of their emotions. Starting with the closest relatives, I asked if they would like to pray, and the response from everyone was positive. Some of the eldest and biggest lads gathered everyone together in a huddle, the driver of the van was asked, or rather told, to turn off the music, and there was little me surrounded by all these guys. We have known them since they were little, but now they were towering above me. These kids that we have known and been in community with - some have come on trips or holidays with the church, we have babysat some, and others have slept over while their lone parent was rushed to hospital, (that wasn't written in our child protection policy!), some of them we have fed when there was no-one at home to cook, others have

walked to school with us or played with our kids, we have even had the pleasure of delousing one or two of them because their parent was too ill to notice the nits, and still others we know more through our encounters with their addicted relatives who come round to 'borrow' money.



So we gathered, and as the traffic on the busy London road whizzed past, (albeit a little more respectfully than usual on account of the fresh flowers tied to the railings), I prayed. What I said I do not remember. The tears flowed and at the end, when I said 'Amen', there was a reply like I have never heard before.

I came home and pondered the event. What had just happened? Was that church? These guys don't often 'come to church', but they are undoubtedly part of our church community. Why don't we take church out to people more often? And I considered again the theme of incarnation, and wondered whether if we commuted in from a nicer part of London to minister to this community that so few Christians want to live in, whether we would have been in the same position to take hold of such a Gospel opportunity.

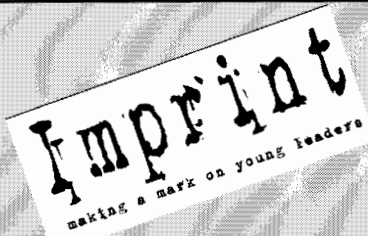
And I wondered how long God would like us to live here in Tower Hamlets, and what the benefits would be of staying in one urban community for a lifetime, so as to continue walking with people and ministering to people when the opportunity arises. To stay in what might always be a small church,

and resist the urge to move to a larger church where my sermon preparation would (might?!) be appreciated by a greater number of people, and possibly where I might feel that I would be able to

equip more Christians for God's service. Where my children might grow up in what most Christians in Britain consider to be a 'normal' middle-class, secularised, education-obsessed, money-addicted environment.

Time has passed, and the flowers by the road have died. I wonder if the experiences of that evening have faded too, or whether a seed was sown in the lives of the guys who were there, which will bring life out of death and hope out of despair. May it be so. Amen





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• **Paul Maconachie**

Paul is the senior leader of St Thomas' Church Philadelphia, Sheffield, an Anglican and Baptist church with a regular attendance of about 1500, a large proportion of whom are under 30. He is also a Senior in The Order of Mission, a multi-denominational religious order formed for the purpose of raising up and discipling missionary leaders.

Paul is married to Elly, and has two daughters, Grace and Hannah. In his spare time he enjoys movies, reading and music as well as an occasional walk in the Peak District.

• **Peter Nodding**

Peter chairs the Mainstream Leadership Team, and is senior minister of Purley Baptist Church. He previously led churches in Guildford and Nottingham where several new congregations were planted.

Peter has a wider ministry in teaching and encouragement of leaders and is particularly committed to a Word and Spirit ministry and the unity of God's people.

He is married to Wendy and has two grown up children.

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Watching for the great leap forward

Stephen Ibbotson reflects on
Mainstream's policy for mission

Yes, but what's it all for?

The question was incisive. The person asking wasn't being awkward. He just wanted to know Mainstream's purpose. I tripped off our values - 'passionate about God', 'real in relationships', 'stuck into God's mission'. But I could see that without specifics I'd cut no ice.

How were we going to achieve these?

I waffled.

The second value was clearest, the first less so and the last the most fuzzy. Getting 'stuck into God's mission' in meaningful ways together will always be difficult amongst legally independent churches. How can a national network tangibly deliver ways of getting stuck into God's mission, rather than just being plain stuck in God's mission?

Start with prayer and fasting? Switch to Sutton Coldfield, April 20-21 this year. A day and a half, seeking God about how we can help one another get stuck into God's mission. I shouldn't have been surprised at the creativity released, but I was. After all, if there's an issue, don't we call a meeting and talk...and talk? Even better, form a 'working group'!

Then it struck me, and I think, us as a whole. If it's God's mission, the first thing to do, is to do nothing. It's to discern not do. It is to slay the monster of anxious activism that so besets our culture as enthusiastic evangelicals. The same culture that I now recognise exhausts me whenever I go to one of our assemblies or gatherings. There we sit, telling one another what we're doing, or should be doing or what we're failing to do. Isn't

the end of the church in this land in sight? And we do this with so many words I start to drown.

Our first task is to come to the place of recognising, 'It's not our task!' It's us entering into what God's about. I was struck by Jesus' approach in Mark 13. How were they were to position themselves in God's on-going story? They were to 'watch...hear...be on your guard...see...see...be on guard...be alert...keep watch...Watch!' It was a process of attentiveness, of catching the scent of God's presence in events.

Then through the mist of our groping, a theme emerged. Our mission policy as Mainstream is more about cultivating a way of being missionaries together, of forming healthy missionary habits. It was to embody **solidarity** with one another in the hard, exhilarating, challenging and disillusioning task of mission.

Could we see teams formed supporting one another in short term missionary projects, which brothers and sisters in other parts of the UK are undertaking? Could we be alert to missionary partnerships between local churches, and foster the habit of forming such partnerships? In other words, could we symbolically show concern for one another's missions and not just be anxious about our own.

It was to encourage one another to **be or become a missionary community**. Could we develop a range of mission indicators to be used within a mutually edifying and safe relationship of respect and support, which foster good practice? Could we have tutor material to help churches transition from being a church

stuck in mission to being a church stuck into God's mission?

It was to take the **personal development as missionaries** seriously. After all our greatest missionary resource are our missionaries. So could we offer an 'every member a missionary course', rolling it out across the country? Could we use, understand and replicate patterns that help individuals in their personal formation as missionaries? Could we partner with an agency to train young people from an early age in living as missionaries in today's culture? Could we actively promote a culture and habit of relating as ministers where issues of personal formation as well as church development are addressed?

It was to develop our churches as **political expressions of the Kingdom** bearing witness to God's alternative order. There really is an alternative to the individualistic preoccupations of our narcissistic society. It's within communities that express Kingdom values and habits. This has symbolic resonance within our society with its many people of peace. So could we see world poverty and environmental issues move centre stage? Could we celebrate and learn from the variety of ways churches serve their communities? Could we get more individuals and churches involved regularly in short term teams going overseas, expressing loud and clear we're part of the most successful trans-cultural movement of all time.

All this alongside what we already do well and could grow more - Alpha courses and church planting. There's a mission to be alert to. It's God's! It's moving! And we're trying to get stuck into it!



'Stephen, how about writing the Baptist Speak column? It's the gadfly column commenting on the weird ways of evangelical and charismatic Baptists.'

'Thanks for asking, Stephen. I accept.'

'Blessings in retirement!'

Could we see teams formed supporting one another?



Craig Millward brings us information from the Christian world. Pastor at Ormsby in Norfolk, Craig is a member of the Mainstream leadership team.



Lifeshapes

The Mainstream Leadership is becoming excited by what is going on at St Thomas' in Sheffield. A visit to their website (<http://www.sttoms.net>) will introduce you to Lifeshapes - which has been the underlying value structure of St Thomas' for the last 10 years and is now being shared more widely through a new series of books and resources:

"Lifeshapes is the shape of life at St Thomas. It describes how we do what we do. It is the language of life and leadership and represents the basic elements of discipleship and growth within the church. We have been teaching (and learning) Lifeshapes for over 10 years. It underlies the way we do ministry and mission and informs how we pursue our vision to 'call a city back to God'."

The first National LifeShapes Conference will provide you with a simple but powerful way to help you learn and to remember the principles of the Jesus-driven life.

The eight shapes paint a clear picture through which you can gain a greater understanding of what God intends to do in your personal life, your church, and the world. Each of the eight life shapes will be taught in depth over the two days and all delegates will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding and ask practical questions during the small group sessions.

St Thomas' will testify that Life Shapes, working under the empowering of the Holy Spirit, produces radical disciples who in turn make other disciples, and build communities of believers that are passionate about their faith!

The conference runs from October 7 - 8 in Sheffield. For more info visit <http://www.stream247.com> and follow the links



Hope for the Planet

The way we treat our world still inspires much talk but little in the way of action. A Rocha is a Christian nature conservation organisation, beginning with a field study centre near the Alvor Estuary in Portugal and now encompassing a family of projects working in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North and South America and Asia.

A Rocha projects are frequently cross-cultural in character, and share a community emphasis, with a focus on science and research, practical conservation and environmental education.

On 24th November they are hosting a Day Conference that will bring together top theologians, scientists, and hands-on conservationists from five continents, to look at how the Christian message is one of liberating hope for the whole creation. The day aims to be biblical and practical, aimed particularly at church leaders, but essential to all thinking Christians. Confirmed speakers already include Peter & Miranda Harris, Sir Ghillean Prance, Elaine Storkey and Prof Alister McGrath.

See www.arocha.org for details or contact uk@arocha.org



The Leadership Summit

The last Willow Creek Leadership Summit I attended was very helpful - and there are two more this autumn: 30th Sept - 1st Oct in Stafford and 7th - 8th October in Bracknell.

The mission of Leadership Summit is to help Christ-following leaders like you recalibrate, recommit, and renew your passion to "lead with all diligence." Focusing upon self management, team building, real-life application and change management, the Summit will help you diligently embrace new challenges with excellence, whether your gifts as a leader are well used, under used or still unexplored. Attend with your team to find inspiration, motivation and practical tools for implementing your learning.

Speakers include Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, John Maxwell and Ken Blanchard.

Go to www.willowcreek.org.uk to book online.



LICC Toolbox

If I lived in (or at least close to) London this is something I'd do with my annual study week. Toolbox 1 is described as a 'High Intensity Training Programme for Workers in Christian Organisations & Churches' and aims to 'develop skills in biblical interpretation & contemporary cultural engagement'.

The five-day course is designed to help Christians to:

- Develop a robust Biblical method for interpreting and applying the Bible to contemporary life and work.
- Learn to apply that method to a select number of contemporary issues.
- Understand the impact of the sacred-secular divide on the thinking and praxis of the church and Christian organisations and develop an understanding of whole-life Christianity.
- Develop specific skills in reading contemporary culture through Biblical lenses in order to engage more effectively with congregation members, supporters and beneficiaries of Christian ministries.

Toolbox creatively combines interactive lectures and small group discussions, participant presentations and field trips to 'refresh' participants and to meet critical learning goals. For example, a trip to the Tate Modern will require participants to identify specific examples of worldviews; a walk round Christian London will act as a springboard for reflection on how Christians have historically engaged in society; a visit to the cinema will require participants to learn skills in reading media and to engage critically and apologetically with any issues raised.

The next course runs from 19-24th September. See www.licc.org.uk and look for the 'all events' link.

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surfer's guide

Simon Jones



Simon Jones is team leader at Bromley Baptist Church and author of *Why Bother with Church?* (IVP, 2001). Previously he was BMS World Mission Co-ordinator for London and the South-East.

The great leap forward is not going to be found on the internet. Indeed the world wide wait could be a massive distraction from actually getting on and doing what we're called to. But there are people out there doing interesting, innovative and inspiring things and cyberspace is one place to find them talked about and debated.

I've highlighted some of these sites before, but others are new and some are just wonderful.

Start with www.opensourcetheology.net, It pretty soon became clear that the emerging church movement (if it can be called that) needed theological resources. That's what this site is all about. It's packed full of stimulating papers, forums, debates and discussions about all manner of practical theological and mission topics. Start with the rules of engagement (clicking the link on the right hand side of the home page) where webmaster Andrew Perriman outlines how the site works and how you can join in. And then follow the threads that take your interest.

Another site of similar ilk but not as broad is www.eternalpurpose.org.uk. This is the personal blogsite of John Clements that has grown into something more substantial and more useful. There are good articles on the cultural context in which we do mission, the chance to engage in debate and useful links to follow up.

Most emerging church sites are just that - sites plugging a particular group. But one or two contain really helpful reflections on mission in contemporary culture. So check out www.moot.uk.net. Not only are there details of its gatherings,

but also some helpful papers - in particular www.moot.uk.net/docs/fluid.pdf is a piece by Ian Mobsby called 'liquid modernity and the need for transcendent encounter' which is one of the most stimulating things I've read all month.

www.sttoms.net outlines the St Thomas Crookes model of clustering people around a vision. This and the lifeshapes course (see Newsdesk p18) is one of the reasons why the church is attracting and keeping people. As well as two books out in the UK, Lifeshapes also has its own web site (www.lifeshapes.com) where you'll find a description of the course, testimonials and the chance to buy it on DVD to run in your small groups.

www.purposedriven.com is the website that keeps you up to date with developments in the purpose driven church movement. As well as detailing available materials, the site also has papers and testimonials. It's very product focused but then the product has had a significant impact on many churches.

Another model that many people are talking about is G12. This is not without controversy- both here and in Latin America where it originated - but it has a website that explains the model and contains testimonials from those who've used it. You can find them at www.g12harvest.org.

Many churches are trying café style services (ours included). The Salvation Army in central London was one of the pioneers. Their philosophy can be found at www.regenthall.co.uk/cafechurch. You can see the topics we've tackled so far at Bromley and join in the conversation at www.bromleybaptist.com (click the links on the home page).

www.zacsplace.org is part of a ministry in Swansea that's having a significant impact on people on the margins of church and society. As well as outlining the philosophy of the gathering, the site contains some background information and helpful reflections on the ministry. Another Welsh church - Cardiff this time - is behind www.pubchurch.com. Again as well as outlining the meetings, there is some good stuff here on the whys and wherefores. The host church's site is also worth checking out (www.glenwoodchurch.org).

In Glasgow, Queen's Park Baptist has been running the crypt as a youth outreach for a number of years. You can find details and pictures at www.qpcrypt.com.

www.emergingchurch.info is a huge site that gathers up stories, reflections and blogs from all over the place. All kinds of practitioners in the field share their experiences, detail their events and exchange ideas. Visit and tell your story. There are new papers posted every month, so the site is worth bookmarking and returning to from time to time. Last month an excellent paper by Philip Johnson from Australia was posted talking about DIY spirituality and pop culture.

Reflections on Mainstream's prayer and fasting day

Mainstream holds prayer and fasting days twice yearly at Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church when the national leadership of our movement invites others to join them to worship, hear from the word, and wait on the Lord together. The last such day was April 20th when about twenty of us spent time together with God; for me, on this occasion, I was even more aware of the presence of God than I have been at previous days.

The day began with hearing stories of what God is doing in the lives and ministries of the various churches that were represented. As we went around the room, our hearts were united in responding in praise to God for the signs of His Spirit's work of transformation that were shared, and I believe that our faith was stirred by hearing what our Heavenly Father is doing amongst us. In the worship and prayer that followed, I was so profoundly absorbed with the privilege of seeking the face of the Lord that I cannot tell you where the rest of the morning went. There, in that place of 'Divine encounter', the sense of hearing from God was, once again, palpable.

Mainstream is so often described as a movement and it is emphasised again and again that it is so much more than a conference and a magazine (worthy though these are!). I believe that forward steps have been made but the real value of the past couple of years seems to have been in building relationships of trust and love, and of waiting upon the Lord to see where He is working. As a network of leaders and churches, we have been getting 'real in our relationships' with each other and getting increasingly 'passionate about God', but the hallmark of this last gathering was the emphasis on 'getting stuck into God's mission'. I am convinced that God desires to use our network, to resource and support one another, and to impassion us and release us into radical, dynamic mission, which transforms our communities, saves the lost and brings glory to His name. I say "Bring it on"!!

Chris Bird. Fleet Baptist



Peter Nodding brings us news of the Mainstream network and other connections. Peter chairs the Mainstream Leadership team and is the Senior Pastor at Purley Baptist Church, Surrey.
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Rob and Andrew being commissioned

Peter taking the lead

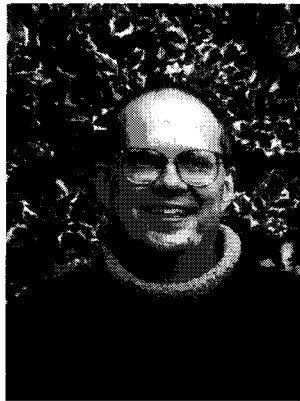
Profile: Chris Densham

I've been avoiding writing this profile for some time; mainly because of the challenge of not simply writing a CV. However Peter Nodding always gets you eventually, and he finally caught me in a moment of weakness so here goes.

As I think about my childhood I realise what an enormous impact my Dad in particular had in shaping who I am today. Perhaps one incident sums up why we got on so well as I grew up. The front doorbell went. It was the boy who lived over the road who was about 8 or 9 at the time and he said to my mum "Is Mr Densham coming out to play?" My mother was not amused but the reality was that Dad was often out there kicking a football around with us, teaching us how to play cricket, improving our golf swings, climbing trees we thought impossible and even breaking a few windows at a local school with a particularly impressive cover drive. But both Mum & Dad loved God, and He always came first in their lives. They didn't talk to my sister and I directly a tremendous amount about their faith but it showed in all they did. In particular Dad's love for the local church as the place where God was at work shone out in many ways

So here I am many many years later and I Something of this was revealed amongst last bought us a set of mugs, each with a face on, fitted each character in the family. I was given grumpy one," the boys said. Obviously a need completing his A-levels and looking to serve God serious about his commitment to Jesus so off.

Their Mum Lyn (also my wife!) and I were number of years before we really spotted one through the years, and for all the fun and



wonder what my two boys make of me? year's Christmas presents. Our co-workers and challenged us to choose the one that most the one with the frown. "Because you're the for further sanctification there! Tom is now 18, in a gap-year before University. Simon is 15 and maybe even in my frailty something has rubbed

involved in Covenanter Camps together for a another! I am grateful for her love and support enjoyment we continue to share.

Like my Dad I remain a boy in a man's body! A couple of years ago Simon re-introduced me to local cricket when the side he was playing in was a man short. I've been playing most summer Saturdays since. What a great way to get to know non-Christian blokes! Dad also took me fishing as a boy, and yes, I'm afraid I've re-discovered that in the last few years too!

Oh and by the way, I have been the Minister of Hoddesdon Baptist Church since leaving Regent's Park College in 1994. Prior to that I worked in the Pharmaceutical Industry for ten years, initially in R & D, then in management in the manufacturing area and finally running the warehouse and distribution side of the business. I've led a local Mainstream group over several years and am passionately committed to the values that lie behind it. It's been a joy and a challenge to serve on the National Leadership Team in recent years.



Central Southern Group Re-launch

For several years a Mainstream group ran successfully in the South Herts area, drawing folk from North London and Hertfordshire. With a number of regular attenders moving out of the area and other factors the group ceased to meet although informal contacts continued between those of us still around.

In mid-May about 10 of us met for what turned out to be a very encouraging morning at Cuffley Free Church to re-launch the group. Peter Nodding was our speaker, sharing a little bit about where Mainstream is, a significant chunk on Pentecost and what it's like to live in the Last Days according to Joel's prophesy and then concluding with a bit about continuing to grow in God. We also had a significant chunk of worship so, as you can see, it was a packed morning and we thoroughly deserved our £4.99 special lunch at the local Harvester Restaurant. We are very grateful to John Walford from Bishops Stortford for organising the day and to Phil Coffin for acting as host at Cuffley.

As a result of the morning we have agreed to meet again at Cuffley on September 27th and November 29th. We will also attempt to establish some local clusters that meet more regularly. Please get in touch if you're within this area and would like to get involved.

Chris Densham

Energize

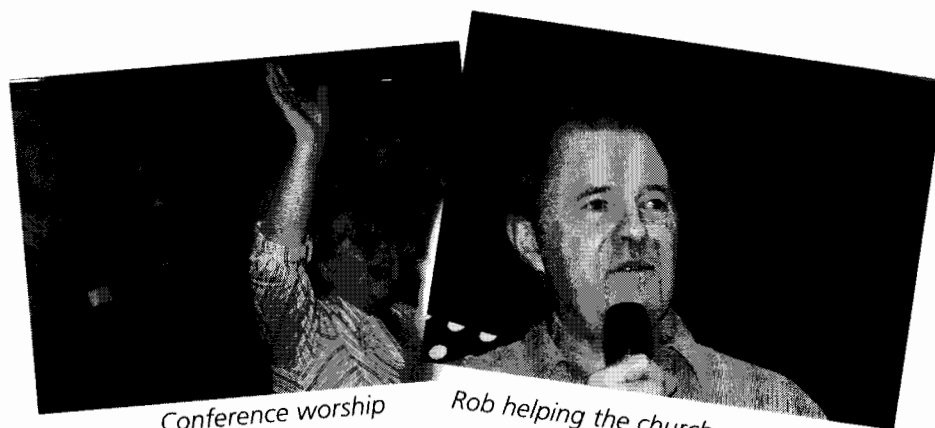
Since November 2001 a group of Young Baptist Ministers have been exploring how we can support and encourage one another within the context of Mainstream. In 2003 and again in 2004 we held a 36-hour retreat called 'Energize'. At the last one 17 of us met together from across the UK. As one of the guys wrote after: *"I was really inspired by the enthusiasm and passion for God in the group... I felt really strongly that being involved with this group could only benefit my development as leader"*.

Since May 2004 we haven't been able to organise another retreat but we believe God is saying we should be developing the role of Energize.

We would like to aim the network at:

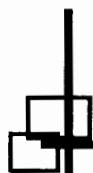
- Those in pastoral charge of their church e.g. accredited or non accredited Baptist Union Ministers who are 25 to 40
- Others who are accredited ministers e.g. Youth and Evangelist (Recognising that other networks may develop specifically for these within Mainstream)
- Those who are just about to leave Baptist Colleges

We have set aside Tuesday 27 September from 10am to 4pm as a day of prayer and fasting. We are going to meet at Wotton Baptist Church, Wotton-under-Edge Gloucestershire. During this day we want to seek God as to how we develop the network of Energize and how we can best serve the Mainstream Vision and Values in **"connecting and equipping young leaders"**.



Conference worship

Rob helping the church get apostolic



off the shelf

Reading for the great leap forward

There are lots of books that claim to hold within their pages the secret formula for moving the church to a new plain of blessing and growth. They're nearly always a disappointment.

But let's not blame the authors. Maybe the fault lies with us for thinking there's a quick fix out there that can be outlined in 150 pages with a clutch of funny anecdotes.

There are some books that we ought to be reading, however, whether we agree with them or not, which will fuel our thinking and praying about where we are, where we want to be and how we'll get from here to there.

Top of my list are two by Stuart Murray - *Post Christendom* and *Church After Christendom* (reviewed on this page by Glen Marshall). Great analysis, intelligent questions and a complete lack of one-size-fits-all answers.

Then in no particular order, I'd say the following are worth reading and returning to:

Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey *ChurchNext* (IVP 2001) - Lots of wisdom about the kind of changes needed to the way we do ministry to get anywhere

Mike Booker and Mark Ireland *Evangelism which way now?* (Church House Publishing 2003) - a really helpful analysis of the various process evangelism models on offer which suggests that making up our own might be the most effective way of reaching our neighbours

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Hendrickson/Strand 2003) - the emerging church handbook, a call to genuinely apostolic leadership in our churches if we want to effectively reach out into the confused and confusing culture we live in.

David Smith *Mission After Christendom* (DLT 2003) - wonderfully written, deeply biblical, realistic and challenging.

John Drane *The McDonaldization of the Church* (DLT 2000) - a stimulating analysis of what the church is currently and what it could be.

Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead *The Spiritual Revolution* (Blackwell 2004) - five years in the making, this is the report of the Kendal Project, a sociological study of the Lakeland town seeking to understand what people believe and why. Fascinating and unsettling, it could form the basis of new thinking about how we talk to friends and neighbours about faith and what kind of events we put on.

You probably have a similar list. Email me (simon.jones@bromleybaptist.com) with the book you've found most helpful in your thinking about church and we'll compile a list for the next issue.



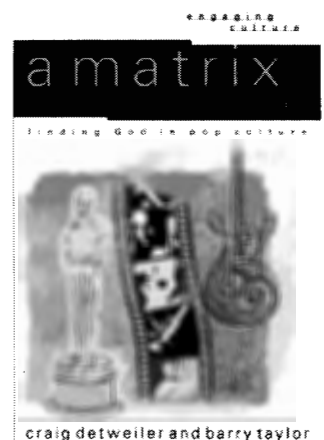
A World of Meanings by Daniel Pritchard

***A Matrix of Meanings: finding God in pop culture.*
Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. Baker Academic, 2003**

I've never read a book quite like this one before. The authors (an American professional screen writer and associate professor of mass communication and an English professional musician painter and professor of popular culture and theology at Fuller seminary) set out to do theology using the raw material of popular culture. Their thesis is that serious theologizing is going on in some unlikely and influential places and that the church can't afford not to join in.

What do the worlds of pop music, film, advertising, fashion, the cult of celebrity, sport, art and television have to tell us about the values, spirituality and the quest for meaning in contemporary society? Detweiler and Taylor skilfully guide us through territory that is part familiar, part exotic with the deft touch of expert practitioners and the kind of acute observation that would do credit to David Attenborough. Their concern is ultimately missiological. What does the church have to learn from the world of popular culture? How should the gospel be cast if it is to live and speak and communicate within such a culture?

So if you fancy grappling with Seneca and Inspector Gadget, conversing with Julia Roberts and Protagoras, weighing up the Whassup! Budweiser ads and the writings of Zygmunt Baumann this is the book for you. If the Spirit really is out there and up to stuff and not just in here where we can keep an eye on him, then the read just might do you good.





A Potent Vision for the Future

by Glen Marshall

Stuart Murray,
The Church After Christendom
Paternoster, 2005

The trouble with band wagons is that people usually feel they have to jump on them or throw stones at them. There's no doubting that the whole issue of emerging church/new ways of being church/fresh expressions of church is the latest in thing to dominate the world of Christian publishing. Thank God then for this contribution from Stuart Murray. It's not the last word on the issue but it is the most mature reflection on this key area of missiological thinking that I have come across. If others engage seriously with the issues that Stuart raises then it just might take our thinking and our practice onto the next level.

Post-Christendom is the disintegration of the alliance between the church and the powers that be in wider society. Viewing the search for a fitting shape and ethos for church in contemporary Britain through this particular lens of rather than the more usual lens of *postmodernity*, gives this book a fresh perspective. Stuart offers us a very helpful and thoroughly well informed overview of other work in this field, seasoning his survey with lashings of timely wisdom and much called for critique. Whether you like your church seeker-sensitive or liquidised, café style or boiler room, here is a generous portion of food thought.

As you can tell, I really enjoyed reading this. So much so that I entered into correspondence with the author. Here's what we had to say to each other.

From: Glen Marshall

To: Stuart Murray Williams

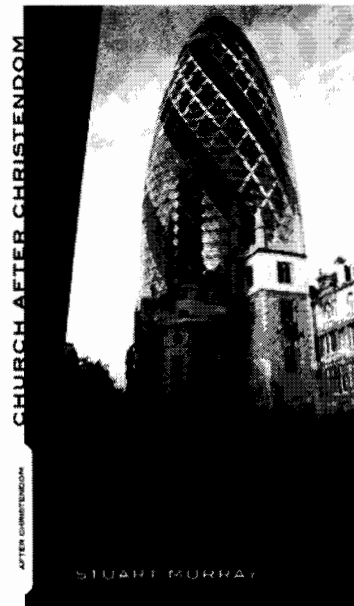
Subject: Church After Christendom

Stuart

I just had to write to you. I'm half way through reading *Church After Christendom* and I am getting increasingly angry! Did you have to say everything that I wanted say (and more) and say it before I did and better than I could? I'm so furious I just had to break off reading to congratulate you. For the sake of my blood pressure I hope the second half of the book is much worse than the first.

Keep up the good work!

Glen.



Daniel Pritchard

is a member of the pastoral staff at Battle in Sussex. He has an interest in theological studies and compiles reviews in each edition. Reviews and suggestions for reviews can be submitted to: daniel@thepritchards.freerve.co.uk

From: Stuart Murray Williams

To: Glen Marshall

Subject: Church After Christendom

Glen

Don't worry - the second half sucks!

Thanks for the encouragement!!

Stuart

He lied. The second half is just as good as the first. A powerful argument for church to become a network of simple, sustainable, missional communities.

If you are tired of books on emerging church read this to get refreshed. If you wonder what all the fuss is about but can't face wading through all that's been in recent years, read this and you won't need to.

All the titles featured in this issue of *Talk* are available postage free from Wesley Owen Books & Music, 8a The Mall, Bromley BR1 1TR (020 8464 1191); bromley@wesley-owen.com. Pre-payment required. Reasonable postage rates apply to other orders - please ask for details.



Simon is pastor of revive, a young-generation church within the extensive youth culture of Leeds. He is also tutor on the Oasis youth ministry course based in Leeds, and has become known as a writer and thinker about church, mission and youth culture.

'We have virtually no people in the church between 10 and 40'

Somewhere between denial and bargaining?

I remember facilitating a seminar on the emerging church at a well-known Christian college. It just so happened that as I flicked

through the flipchart looking for a clean sheet I discovered that most of the pages of the pad constituted the notes for a course on grief and bereavement. I flipped to the page on the stages of coping and asked the assembled church leaders where they thought their churches were. The audience was mixed denominationally, and it was very interesting to see where people came out.

The Methodists were in a happy stage 5: acceptance, learning to live again. For them learning to live again meant learning to live with their imminent death, hastened by a proposed fusion with the Anglican Church.

The Anglicans were in a variety of stages from outright denial (the charismatics) to the depression of stage 4. Most were in stage 2 (anger at how previous generations had ruined the church) or stage 3 (bargaining: 'perhaps *Mission-shaped Church* will change everything?')

Those from the house church of course resisted the entire premise: the church in terminal decline? Not us!

But what about the Baptists? Where did they put themselves on this rather pessimistic scale? The general consensus was that the small amount of growth experienced in the 90s might in fact have harmed the denomination in the long term, lulling us all into a false sense of security. In practice, this means we appear to be way behind the other major denominations in terms of developing a mission strategy that will guide us

through the 21st century. I also remember some comment about how the baptistic view of independence was now viewed with such idolatry that any co-ordinated attempt to think as a denomination was doomed to failure. But maybe that was me...

Of all the denominations present, we Baptists best conformed to Mike Riddell's description of our situation on page one of his (dare I say it?) seminal book *Threshold of the Future*: 'The Christian church is dying in the West. This painful fact is the cause of the great deal of avoidance by the Christian community. To use terminology drawn from pastoral care, the terminally sick patient is somewhere between denial and bargaining.'

However, maybe it's not all bad news. The problem is that we don't know exactly what the good news is? I have asked at Baptist House for the official reason for our survival through the 90s. I was shown a graph with various peaks: 'These are the years after Billy Graham came to Britain: for a few years afterwards the number of baptisms would surge and then decline again.' Yet over the last 10 years there is a new phenomenon: a gradual incline. It is not as dramatic as any of the Graham spikes, but over a decade it amounts to a similar number of new members. I ask for explanation: 'Alpha?'

Well, it makes sense, for at least two reasons. One, Alpha works. Two, it works best with middle class people and we are primarily a denomination of the suburb and the market town. Alpha fits our demographic better than any other denomination in the country. Let's praise the Lord for that and then take a deep breath. How are we going to reach the rest of the country?

Those who read this column will know that this is my major concern. I'm not suggesting that I have any of the answers, only that the questions present themselves to me in a particular way because I live in a very diverse inner-city community. From where I look our success in the suburbs is a contributing factor in our failure in the cities. Unlike the Church of England, we are not worrying about our future because our churches are doing OK. The problem is that one reason they are doing OK is because Christians are abandoning their local churches, maybe even their local communities, to be part of our success. Our survival may well be at the price of many other local churches as the dwindling numbers of Christians huddle together in their suburban lifeboat of a church. Let's face it, that's not what we're about, is it?

I think death may be the answer. I suspect we may have to die to a whole load of stuff before God can raise his new church. Here's a story. A local church leader called me and said, 'we have virtually no people in the church between 10 and 40, so we suspect we might die as a church at some point in the future. Rather than spend the next 30 years trying to survive, we have made the decision to sow ourselves into the young people of the city. Can we help?' Wow! Yes please! Mentors please! Can you guess what's happened to that church? There are now young adults attending (some of whom have left revive to attend, I might add!) and the church has been renewed. Didn't Jesus say something about having to lose your life to save it? I wonder what he might say to our denomination, 'successful' as it is, as he looks at the twin desolations of our country: the cities and the countryside. Well, what *would* Jesus do?



Photo: Jackie Sheppard

Investing for the future

By Nigel G Wright

Last year David Coffey spoke to our students about his vision for the churches. It went down well. Afterwards it felt like an altar call had been given as I talked with several students about their futures. David had fired them up about the importance of regional ministry and they were asking me how they could get to do the job.

Some might want to dismiss all this as premature, youthful student enthusiasm, or even arrogance. Conventional wisdom tells us that regional ministry is the kind of job you need to be led to all unwillingly, rather like the Speaker of the House being manhandled into the Speaker's chair, and when you are getting on in years to boot. Surely someone who *wanted* to do this job would be the last person who should be allowed to?

But I think otherwise. Partly this is because I knew the students concerned; partly because I read my Bible and find Paul saying that if one 'desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work' (1 Timothy 3: 1 - Authorised Version to make the point!); partly it is that we need people who aspire to make their mark and leave the world a different place.

There is no doubt that regional ministers are important people. There is some evidence to suggest that, as with finding pastors for our larger churches, people who are well matched to the challenge are not thick on the ground. There is everything right about a younger generation of ministers aspiring not to climb some kind of ladder but to make themselves of maximum use in

God's kingdom.

So what did I tell them, these regional-ministers-in-the-making? Well for a start, you become a regional minister only when you have proved yourself, and for most of us this means leading local churches effectively,

What happens in ten years' time grows out of what we begin to do today

building them up in spiritual life and growth so that God is glorified through them. The best way to prepare for a wider ministry therefore is to make a good job at more local forms of ministry so that people can have confidence in what you can do and be. As in other spheres of life, there is no substitute for learning the job from the bottom up.

But then what? People need both a breadth of understanding and of experience. For most of us there is no substitute here for a steady regime of solid reading in biblical, theological and practical theology as well as in wider areas of culture and of knowledge. Even a few significant books read each year can make a huge difference in enlarging understanding of the

To cease to read is often to cease to grow

faith, its practice and its ramifications. To cease to read is often to cease to grow. It may be of course that this can be done in part through formal study as part of continuing ministerial education. There is no shortage of courses through which this could be done as opportunity allows. Added to this is the benefit of travel, of understanding other places and cultures not just from the perspective of the nearest beach but through the experiences of people, Christians and otherwise, the lives they have lived and the

difficulties they have overcome. Those who have the opportunities and resources to do this are fortunate and should see it as an investment not a luxury. Having developed as a generalist, it is also good to identify some area of specialism, something which can be recognised as a

distinctive contribution or a particular expertise in mission and ministry. This demonstrates both ability and individuality. It increases the pool of resources that a person would bring to, say, a team of regional ministers.

Then there is the infinite value of curiosity, of wanting to know how things work and what makes them tick, and of maintaining this on a broad level, not just in one's own immediate sphere. To be curious means you develop the ability to compare things and by means of comparison to think outside the grooves in which most of us are in danger of burying ourselves. The clash of difference, of the boundary situation, is a mighty stimulus to learning and to freshness.

We need to invest for the future when it comes to any kind of ministry. The skills and abilities which are required for ministry in the church take time to mature. The same is true for regional ministry. What happens in ten years' time grows out of what we begin to do today. In time there will be modules available which will help people address the challenges of this kind of ministry. But we don't need to wait till then to encourage those who have a heart for it to gird up their loins and fit themselves for the task.

Dr Nigel G. Wright.

is Principal, Spurgeon's College, London. A former president of the Baptist Union, his latest book *Free Church, Free State: the Positive Baptist Vision* (Paternoster) came out in May 2005.

What's Mainstream all about?

Mainstream is an informal network, mainly comprising Baptist leaders and churches. We are absolutely convinced that the authority of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit must always be brought together. It's only then that we can be fully under the Lord's control, direction and empowering and have any hope of doing properly the things he wants us to do.

- Local groups where leaders get together to talk, pray and encourage each other.
- Regional meetings where we encounter God and receive significant input to resource our ministries.
- A national leadership team drawn from those leading the local groups.
- A quality magazine that addresses the issues and concerns that matter to us.
- An annual conference for teaching, ministry, building relationships, and releasing gifts and ministries.

What do we hope to achieve?

- A network of leaders and churches with authentic relationships, sharing their experience and resources and committed to working together for the advance of God's Kingdom.
- A visible difference in leader's spiritual lives and in God's work through the things we do together.
- Our churches throbbing with spiritual life in their worship, outreach and ministry to the poor in Jesus' name.
- The recognition, mentoring and release of emerging ministries.
- A prophetic voice within the Baptist community.

