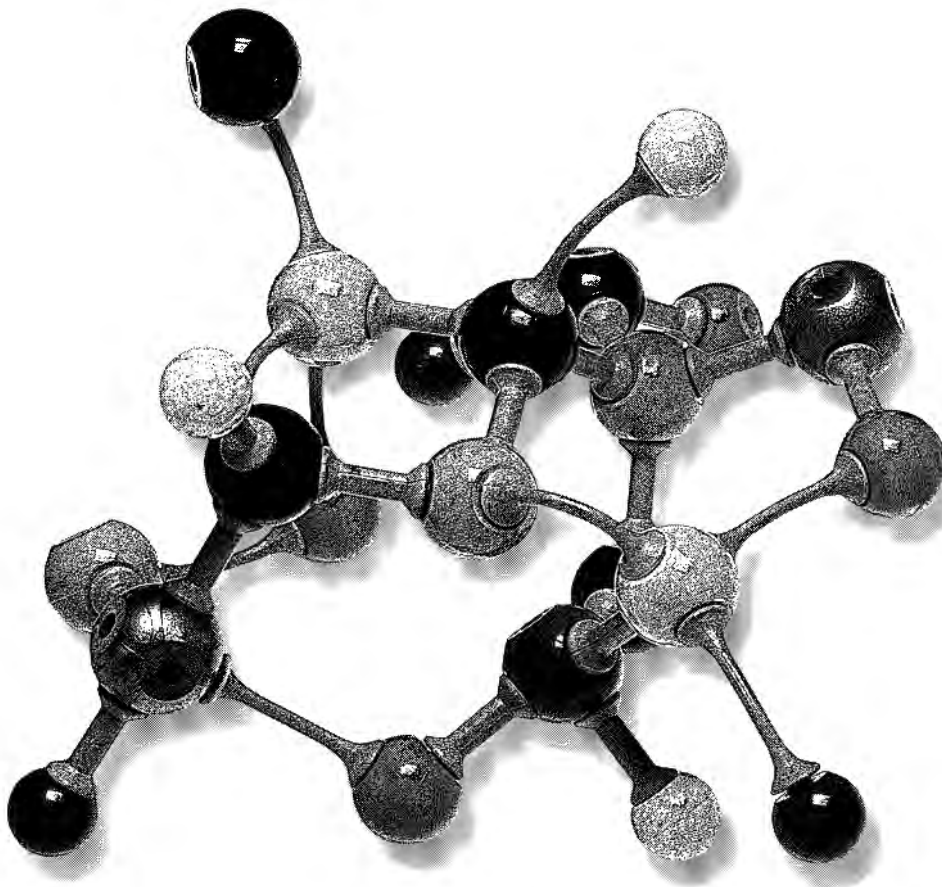


TALK

The Mainstream Magazine

Summer 2006



**Emerging
from the
Shadows
new
ministries,
new leaders**

Marion White
Juliet Kilpin
Nick Shepherd
Andy Glover
Stephen Ibbotson
Rob White

and more....

Connecting leaders

**Mainstream
is committed to:**
Get passionate about knowing God.
Get real in relationships.
Get stuck into God's mission.

Emerging from the shadows

Are you a 'glass half full or a glass half empty' sort of person? When you look at a situation are you drawn first to the positives in it or the negatives?



I admit to being torn. I think it comes down to my general mood - but sometimes I'm prone to look at what's happening in the church and think 'things have never been so bad'. Other times I see signs of new thinking, fresh growth and lots to get excited about.

Well, there's lots here to fuel conversations about where we are and where we're going as a movement, as churches.

On the one hand, a lot of the research on the state of faith in the UK does not make for happy reading. Sociologist David Voas is one who looks dispassionately at the numbers and sees a glass that half empty with the remaining contents rapidly draining away. We need to see what he sees. But we need to not let it discourage us - because as Nick Shepherd shows us, there are reasons to be stimulated to new and more productive ways of doing ministry, especially among young people.

On the other hand, there's lots of creative thinking and bold experimentation going on that should tell us that the Spirit is at work in our churches and across our land. He wants to fill our sails and take us to new places where the good news about Jesus will yield fruit in people lives.

Lots of the stories on the Fresh Expressions DVD that Juliet Kilpin draws our attention to are inspiring. The example of the Roselands Community Church - a church with choice (now, there's a radical idea!) - is one to set every church leader thinking and plotting.

Key to all this is leadership and especially the development of fresh young leaders able to rise to the challenges of our changing world. There's lots of wisdom (especially in ones so young!) and creativity in the articles by Adam Eakins and Andy Glover.

The church might yet emerge from the current shadows stronger, more vibrant, more daring and more effective. As the hang-glider pilot said - if you don't jump off the cliff, you can't catch the wind.

So jump in and see where the Spirit takes you.

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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Fighting Discipleship Decay

By Nick Shepherd

A recent article by two academic sociologists contained the arresting headline that “the church has a half-life of one generation.” David Voas and Alistair Crockett suggest that every generation (thirty years or so) a maximum of 50% of the young people within the church will remain as 'believing and belonging' adults. The rest will leave, most likely for good, and will cease to believe as well as lose connection to the church.

This is actually 'old news' to us in the Christian community. Many reports in the last ten years have told us that the church is haemorrhaging young people. A few years ago, the shock statement was that the church was losing 1,000 young people a week. This served as a major provocation to re-launch youth work with 11-13 year olds. 'Reaching and keeping' became the by-words for youth ministry in the late 1990's. As such, a great deal of attention has been put into developing resources and programmes that can make youth groups more inviting, attractive and seemingly relevant for young people.

Yet, here we are in 2006 being told that there is still a problem. We are doing better at reaching, but we are still not keeping! We have 'discipleship decay' at the heart of our youth ministry.

In light of these findings, I think we need to ask some fundamental questions. Questions that go beyond how we 'package' our youth programmes to probe what we are actually trying to do. Our starting point should be to try to gain a better understanding of what it is like for young people trying to be a Christian in a 'secular' world and try to appreciate the ways in which they respond to the challenges and possibilities.

From this we should devise approaches to youth ministry that compliment young people's intuitive responses, providing the theological



tools and practical support to help them be and grow as Christians.

Youth Ministry: Stuck between a rock and a hard place

Young Christians are stuck between a rock (faith tradition) and a hard place (secularism). They are the ones upon whom expectation, encouragement and effort is put by parents, youth leaders and others to build their lives on the 'rock of faith'.

Yet their day-to-day experience of living life as a Christian in our secular culture is as 'a hard place'. The youth group, worship events such as Soul Survivor or Spring Harvest are an oasis in this experience. Day-to-day life as a young Christian person is reported as being tough. All too often, once out of the youth group (temporarily or permanently) faith melts away because it has not become something core to the individual and it has not become a way of life that can be envisaged as part of a young person's 'adult' future.

These are issues that we actively work against through youth ministry. As such, youth ministry is vital for the church because it is the mechanism

through which we are attempting to hold together fractures in faith transmission caused by secularisation and help young people not only survive but thrive as Christians. In a secular culture this requires enabling them to have confidence, creativity and courage as well as biblical knowledge and experience of God.

The young people I have interviewed over the last couple of years do show incredible creativity and commitment in 'trying to be Christians'. There is hope then, I believe, in seeing how God might be working through some young people now as a clue to how to halt the broader failure in faith transmission. Key to this is the fact that the time of youth is a pivotal period in the formation of a person's beliefs, values and identity and Christian young people are not immune to the shaping influences of secular culture. I think we can helpfully summarise the influences of secular culture on Christian young people's emerging identity and faith into three spheres - competition for beliefs, challenges to sense self and complications in lifestyle

Competition for beliefs and values

Simply through growing up in modern



Britain Christian young people absorb values, beliefs and opinions that shape and influence their understanding of Christianity. This variety of cultural influences cannot all be attributed to secularism. But what the onset of secularism has brought is a space within western society where there is competition over the beliefs and values that shape the way we view ourselves and our world. A young person growing up as a Christian might face such 'competition' in the following ways.

First, there are formal sources of education and information. For instance, the atheistic accounts of evolution taught in school or in the philosophy behind popular TV programmes or films.

Second, there are 'ideals' which influence the way we view the world and make judgements. For instance the classic 'privatisation' of belief as personal and non-fact based, or the romantic notion all religions are merely different ways of getting at the same truth. These types of influences may never be formally taught, but they are certainly well communicated and taken on board.

In addition, in modern Britain young people encounter difference as increasingly normal, mixing with people from a variety of backgrounds (religious and irreligious) with a variety of values, viewpoints and lifestyles. Popular culture (magazines, TV, Film, music, web) is a meeting ground for all these issues through the dissemination and argument over ideas, the glorification or denunciation of certain lifestyles and

the mixing and merging of stories from many traditions and sources.

A common response to the problem of competition for beliefs and values has been to try to 'protect and preserve' our young people from negative influences. Personally, I do not think this approach is possible any more. I also think we also need to appreciate that our Christian young people are quite capable of resisting such influences given the right encouragement and enabling. We need to move from trying to protect and preserve young people from these influences to helping young people learn how to discern these values (which are both positive and negative) and describe their faith in this context.

Teaching discernment means helping young people determine for themselves which influences in popular culture contradict a Christian worldview, or go against key values and beliefs. In this I am not just talking about the moral issues we often focus on, important though these are. As the American youth ministry educator David White puts it, discernment is about enabling young people "to be faithful in the hundreds of minute decisions that face them". In my experience young people are very discerning. They appreciate the subtleties of how to talk about their faith differently in different contexts - overt and simple at Spring Harvest, covert and subtle in school! We have to ask how we can enable young people to use popular culture as a resource to expand their faith in and understanding of God.

Proactive Youth Ministry

If our aim is 'making disciples' then the teaching we provide in our youth groups cannot be undertaken without reference to the questions and alternatives that our young people are aware of from their day-to-day lives. We should rightly focus on enabling young people to learn key aspects of what it means to be a follower of Christ - what we believe and why we believe it. However, we also need to directly tackle key issues that challenge their understanding of faith in the wider world. For instance, how do we respond to other faiths? How do we interpret the role of magic in Harry Potter? How do we present our faith position to others with openness and honesty, but not come across as arrogant or outdated? These are all questions that young people who want to be Christians are asking. Our starting point for our programmes then is to work together to find some answers!

We need to be more proactive in defining and designing what we need to teach. Not simply react to the crisis and questions young people bring, but actively design and develop a youth ministry curriculum to support young people in their task of being Christians.

A curriculum sounds a bit formal and complicated, but it needn't be. In secular youth work it is good practice to drive informal education through a curriculum. Developing curriculum shouldn't be 'top down'. It gives us an opportunity to consult and build topics around what young people want. It does though give youth leaders a structure into which we can offer what we consider as the important beliefs and practices of our faith. It requires us to think beyond next week, even next term and to take a longer view to our youth ministry. What do we want to cover in the three years we have for the young people who remain in the church past the age of fourteen?

There are some resources available now that provide a curriculum approach. Youth for Christ's *Mettle* has been designed specifically in this

way and *Youth Emmaus* has a growing collection of material that can be used in this way.

Challenges to sense of self

The competition for beliefs and values can create a certain amount of confusion and questioning. It can also lead to difficulty in knowing how to act as a Christian and grappling with this places considerable stress on young people's emerging sense of self. Scan the shelves of the youth resources section of your local Christian Bookshop (or search on-line) and you will find a large selection of books addressing issues of identity. A number of these cover key issues important to teenagers - the questions of sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. I know from personal and pastoral experience that relationships, moral behaviour and participating in certain sub-culture can derail a Christian life.

However, I think our pre-occupation with these particular topics overlooks a more general and perhaps critical challenge to a young Christian's sense of self. In the words of one young person I spoke to, "being a Christian is weird!" She's right. To her friends at school, their families, to teachers and work colleagues being a Christian in today's secular culture is a bit odd especially if you go to church. We should not underestimate the risk that this presents to young people establishing who they are and how they fit in the wider world.

In my discussions with young people I have been surprised at how even those who I consider to be resilient and firm Christians still carry an uncomfortable, nagging worry about being different or not fitting. Some young people I have interviewed are the only Christian in their school. This sense of standing out becomes highly pertinent when for example an issue about faith comes up in a class discussion. Teachers and pupils looking for 'the Christian' answer or viewpoint single them out. Likewise, many young people told me that friends gravitate towards them to off-load concerns because they know them to be Christians.

This peer pressure is different to that

which we normally focus on in our youth work. We have a tendency to see the pressures that young Christians face from their peers as being all about sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. Yet the pressure of being a 'representative of Christ' and 'ambassador' (2 Corinthians 5:19-21) or 'priest' (1 Peter 2:9) is just as great. What resources and support do we provide for these roles? So, perhaps our starting point should be to ask young people how they are already trying to be Christians and explore how to help them develop and expand on this.

Prophetic Youth Ministry

In addition to proactive education, 'making disciples' is a prophetic act. In youth ministry, we are called to help young people find answers, in Christ, to the questions 'Who am I?' and 'Who are we?' We need to call young people to find their identity in Christ.

But this is not merely a process of believing certain things. We find our identity in response to the people we engage with as much as the ideas we absorb. Youth ministry faces a perennial problem in this regard. How do we both create a space for young people to develop their own sense of belonging to the church, to establish their own identity and ways of being, whilst at the same time maintain some form of intergeneration work?

For some, the cultural gap between generations is too vast to be bridged by faith transmission. Youth ministry is not is not a process of intergenerational transfer, but one of cross-cultural mission. There is some credence in this. However, effective faith transmission requires both continuity and creativity. Continuity, in preserving links with tradition and 'orthodox' beliefs is essential if the next generation is to develop *Christian* faith and practice. Creativity though is also needed so that faith is not merely transmitted but translated to the cultural framework and experience in which the next generation live and learn.

However, we also need to maintain a prophetic call within youth ministry to retain a commitment to

intergenerational work, however hard it may seem. The creation of space for young people's exploration and expression of faith are important. Strong youth groups, or peer led cells, provide a context within which young people engage in mutual-socialisation. Such groups reinforce understanding and confidence in being a Christian. But without some form of connection to the wider church community, what is missing are ways of transmitting not just what is helpful for young people now, but what will be required of them in the future, as they pursue faith into adulthood. With only limited exposure to 'real church' and with only youth leaders as role models young people have a restricted view of the potential and possibilities for their own faith identity development.

But we also need to question the notion that faith transmission is a unidirectional flow from 'older' to 'younger'. Youth researcher Shirley Brice-Heath suggests that a classic view of transmission of knowledge, learning and practices from elders to the young is simply not feasible anymore. Our young people are creatively responding to the challenge of being a Christian in a secular culture. Their struggle for identity is in many ways indicative of the whole church's struggle to be and act in a secular world. Young people therefore have a great deal of practical wisdom and insight to share. Youth ministry should therefore promote greater voice from young people into the church's understanding and appreciation of what it means to be church in today's culture. To do this we need to have youth leaders and workers who are prepared to engage in wider leadership roles within churches and create space and opportunity for young people to explain how they are approaching the task of being a Christian to benefit the whole church.

Nick Shepherd is a researcher, writer and trainer in youth ministry and mission and recently took up a role as one of the series editors for Youthwork the Resources.

Emerging or submerging?

by Stephen Ibbotson



Stephen Ibbotson is on the pastoral staff at Altrincham Baptist Church and is a former editor of *Talk*

At the historic 1965 Selma to Montgomery march, Martin Luther King Jr.'s refrain, in his final speech to the thousands gathered before the onlooking hatred of Ku Klux Klansmen, was 'We are on the move...we are on the move...we are on the move. God is with us and He will lead his children to the land of freedom. Glory hallelujah, Glory hallelujah, Glory hallelujah!' Stirring stuff!

This image of God's people on the move struck me with ironic judgement as I sat in our Mainstream North Theology Day a few weeks ago listening to three excellent but troubling presentations under the theme of 'The Glass Ceiling'. We were considering why, having been one of the first denominations to recognise the leadership ministry of women as church ministers, are we now left far behind other Johnny-come-lately denominations, with only about 7% of our accredited list of ministers being women? Is there something wrong, profoundly wrong with our culture, theology and biblical interpretation that permits such a state of affairs to prevail virtually unquestioned amongst us? The silence of the majority of Baptist pastors on this issue I find ominous and troubling. The lack of interest and concern on the matter I find bewildering and offensive. The smaller turnout for this Theology Day than we have for others I find worrying and if I'm honest sickening, not merely disappointing. It leads me to the conclusion that there is something wrong with our culture, theology and biblical interpretation... profoundly wrong - and it's at the level of the grassroots.

I sat in another meeting of all-male Baptist ministers a couple of weeks later, and when in passing I mentioned

my concern, there was no sympathetic shock at the state of affairs, but only it seemed a fixed conviction that the Bible settled the issue for us and that women couldn't be considered for such an elevated office - that's me being ironic by the way! Something inside me twisted but I weakly muttered that this was not the time to open up such a large subject because of time factors, but we needed to challenge such points of view.

I'm coming to the conclusion that unlike Paul, who at his best understood his gospel demanded a reconfiguration of gender relations, generally speaking we see the issue as a second or even third order matter. The real business is mission, evangelism and our busy church programmes. And so we go on blindly walking in the other direction from where our culture is headed into a cul-de-sac of irrelevance in the perceptions of that society. They wouldn't consider that we had anything to offer because our attitude and practice appears reactionary that we have long-since forfeited any credibility of having something worth listening to. What's most worrying is that we use our Bibles to provide reassurance that we are justified in our lack of interest in the subject.

Back to Montgomery. Then there was a similar response by some church authorities as priests and other religious orders were told to get out of Montgomery and not stand with the trouble-makers led by Luther King. Then a Baptist led the way. History and our Bible tell us he was on the right side. Today it appears we re-enter the guards van of society rather than being in the vanguard. We forfeit our role as witnesses to the truth and hope of God's Kingdom order that is coming to meet us.

So worrying questions nag away at me. Are Baptists really 'on the move' at the grassroots, even accounting for the valiant efforts of many of our leaders? When will our pastors and ministers rise up to teach a fuller and more adequate gospel, and our churches reflect such truth? And is our attitude on this issue of women and ministry symptomatic of a much wider set of issues that blunt the cutting-edge credibility of our gospel? For all our talk of emerging church, is the mainstream of our denomination still submerged beneath an inherently conservative and inadequate interpretation of Scripture? Does Mainstream have a role of leadership given its stated desire to have 'a prophetic voice within the Baptist community'? Or is this just words?

Navigating the fault lines

By Simon Jones and Nick Shepherd

At the tail end of 2003 our church completed a review of its youth work. We had a proud heritage of running good programmes and delivering young people safely into adulthood not only as disciples but in many cases as ministers, youth workers and Christian leaders.

But things were not as good as they once were. In particular we were noticing two worrying trends. The first was that when our young people were leaving home to go to university, they were not getting involved with any kind of Christian group - not a CU, a Fusion cell or a church. They still came along to Park Road during the vacations but there was evidence of some discipleship decay.

The second was that when the same young people and others left university and came home - as increasing numbers are doing because of debt and uncertainty over career choice - they did not come back to church. They maintained contact with their peer group and hung around on the edge of things but apart from a few notable exceptions, they appeared to show no interest in the disciple-forming activities of the church.

Somewhere between A levels and mortgages, they lose interest in the church and possibly in Jesus as well.

So the plan - hatched by the church with Nick Shepherd acting as a consultant - was to appoint a minister for youth and young adults, someone who will create a programme, recruit, envision, enthuse and train a team of good volunteers (as well as taking on the many excellent volunteers we currently have working with our young people) and build a work that disciples people from their teens into their twenties.

What are the reasons why twenty-somethings fail to stick in the church? What puts young adults off being disciples of Jesus? If we can answer these questions (and others), then



maybe we can create a way of working with our teenagers that gives them the resources to navigate the choppy waters from education to work, living at home to being independent, having a child's faith to being an adult disciple.

Many of the issues we need to address are those being tackled by emerging church thinkers. In some ways we are gearing up for creating the church that will replace the existing one that is surely the task of each generation: to mould structures that embody the gospel in a way that is attractive to our contemporaries. For this reason the person we appointed would need to be part of our core leadership team helping to shape (and be shaped by) the overall vision we have the church.

Well, we found the person - Jonathan Somerville comes on board in the role in the autumn. This is the scale of the task he faces.

A common gripe we hear against 'secular culture' is that it offers young people too many distractions that compete for their attention and affection. For instance, being part of a football team that plays on a Sunday, having a part-time job that prevents

you going on a youth group weekend away or feeling the pressure of upcoming exams and staying in to revise rather than go to that regular worship event.

As such, we tend to focus our energies on making youth groups and programmes more attractive. However, youth leaders are not the only ones trying to carve out space for faith - young people are active in doing this as well. Most young people in our youth groups do an incredible job to balance and juggle the calls on their time. One of the key tools they use for doing this is to 'keep their options open' (yes some of them are just slack as well)! This can be infuriating for a youth leader but it is actually a key skill that wider (consumer) society demands us to learn.

In church we are resistant to the idea of youth group activities as another consumer choice for young people. As a result we often see 'keeping options open' as a lack of commitment. However, we believe that the problem young people have today is not that they make shallow commitments, but that we don't recognise when they have made a commitment. Where is the life in your group beyond the



Sunday teaching session or the Friday social? Do they MSN each other, meet up to go out, text, walk to school together?

If faith is of significance to the young people we work with, there will be a pattern to it - a practice or shape that they form as part of their own commitment to being a Christian. We therefore need to focus our energies on how we can better understand and nurture the commitment to Christ and his church that they have already made. To do this, our patterns of ministry with youth and young adults need to be flexible and fluid, because the ways in which young people manage their lives and time are similarly flexible and fluid.

Regular and consistent meeting times and spaces are very important in this provision, but this does not mean that young people will necessarily use these how we expect them to. A regular meeting event has been described by the young people in my research as an essential element of 'holding them' in faith.

Our calling as a church is to care for and walk with our young people. It is a commitment to follow them as they try to follow Christ. Young people growing in a secular age need people to pastor them. These people are those who will believe in them, listen to them and challenge them. Such adults and older young people are not always the youth leaders or youth workers who run groups and programmes. We need to keep recruiting adults who live and work in the real world to the forefront of this task. Such adult interaction is a vital

addition to youth groups and peer support (cell) models.

And since the insight of Voas and Crocket affirms that the single biggest influence on a young person's faith is still that of their parents, a pastoral focus also needs to be extended into working alongside parents and families, not simply as youth workers but as members of church pastoral teams. Youth ministry then needs to be connected to the wider teaching and pastoral care of the churches in which these adults learn to, and are supported in, passing on faith. Hence the reason for our new minister being part of the overall leadership of the church.

A pastoral youth ministry should also focus on helping young people learn practically what it means to be a Christian. To help young people contend with the effects of secularisation we need to teach young people to be "ready to give an answer for their hope and faith" (1 Peter 3:15). However, we also need to be more aware of how young people learn to do 'being a Christian'. This has to do with the ways in which we pass on the practices of our faith - worship, prayer, hospitality etc. Young people will not simply pick the point and purpose of these activities from being in church. Nor will they interpret our practices in the same ways we do.

We need to help young people and young adults develop practical and habitual ways of learning and expressing what it means to be a Christian - as individual, as a community and as servants and witnesses to a wider world.

Being in a hard place, knowing that the transmission of faith from one generation does not happen 'naturally' anymore (if it ever did) is in our view a very healthy place to be. Our story, the story of God revealed in his word, is littered with examples of God's word and people flourishing in unlikely circumstances. Such life is always dependent on God's gracious intervention and blessing. We may be stuck between a rock and a hard place, but God is more than able to bring forth water of life from the rock (Exodus 17) and cause springs to flood up in the desert (Isaiah 32).

Let's pray this is the case for our youth ministry - not just in Bromley where our new (and perhaps bold experiment) starts in the autumn - but all over the UK. After all, if the Christian faith really does have a half-life of a single generation, we haven't got long to get this right.

Learning the lessons of succession - for real

by Adam Eakins



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 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, and Lauren who was born in May 2005.

At the end of March this year I handed in my 'Director of Joshua Generation badge' temporarily to take on the leadership of our church on a full-time basis while our pastor was on a three month sabbatical. In my role with JoshGen I get to talk about leadership succession a great deal but now I was experiencing it first hand. Could all that I talked about be put into practice?

Well my three months are nearly up and the church is still standing. I would like to use a few moments during my time in charge to reflect on the development of leadership and the whole area of succession. I am sorry if it comes across as a bit self-indulgent. Please forgive me but I have found it quite cathartic. I hope to drop in on five moments in the life and ministry of Jesus to give it a biblical foundation and even if you get nothing from my ramblings at least you may find from the greatest of leaders.

Training Others

There was a temptation to take on everything having been placed in leadership, thinking I needed to do all the preaching etc. For me, this maybe a desire to prove myself (to whom? I am not sure, maybe God). This is one of the dangers anyone faces taking on a new role that in the desire to establish ourselves we miss opportunities to pass on leadership.

Church leadership is not a one person job and

whenever you step up to fulfil a new role it is important to look out for those who God may be leading into new roles to fill the space you have left behind. I needed to remember that I had been given numerous opportunities which had contributed to my development. Now I wanted to do the same. This meant putting in place a team that would work with me during this time period.

You can see this clearly in the life of Jesus, who on beginning his wandering teacher role made sure that he gathered a team around him. These men would spend time together and be given opportunities to develop their leadership skills ready for the time when Jesus would move on.

Mark 6:6-13

My team were a mixed group of people in the same way that the disciples were but they have been invaluable to the church and me with many displaying hidden talents/gifts which have added to the flavour of the church. Thanks guys - standing shoulder to shoulder with you has been brilliant.

The Right Balance

Whenever I change jobs it is often very exciting for me and I am very guilty of allowing the whole job to take over my life. The people in this case who normally suffer with the adjustment are not me but my family. Another day off interrupted by an important phone call or a vital

meeting. Those of you who have children must know the strange experience of being at church with your family. Who else takes their family to work with them once a week and then is too busy to speak to them. My son, Joel, loves to join me on the platform or shout out (he once asked me out loud if I was having a bath as I entered the water for a baptism).

Keeping that balance between work and family is one of the hardest aspects of these three months as I have struggled to know where the boundaries are between work and family. Thankfully I have a very loving wife who is very patient with me and I have found the stuff Mike Breen wrote about our work coming out of our rest and not the other way other way round very helpful. You can find more in his excellent book 'Passionate Church'.

Jesus knew the importance of rest although like many of us he found it hard to come by. **Mark 1:35-39.**

It is vital to chill out with God and we often read of Jesus going off to spend time with his Father. How much more do we need to do that than Jesus, if I'm honest a whole lot more. You see most of us don't need solitary confinement, which is punishment; we need solitary refinement the space to allow God to refresh us. Still haven't got this one sorted - I'm a 'work in progress' on this one.

People First

The one aspect of my new role which I was not looking forward to was having to visit those who are elderly or housebound. It's just not me I thought. I do enjoy being with people, but taking time out of my day when I could be doing something productive, to visit someone was not high on my agenda. It has therefore been a pleasant surprise to discover that placing people first (the priority of the Kingdom, no less) has been the biggest joy of these three months.

One person I visited who had been widowed just over a year ago asked me at the end of our time together why I had come to see her that day. "Honestly", I replied, "when I was thinking about my day ahead your name came to my mind". "That is amazing", she replied. She went on to tell me that when I had been speaking on loving mercy a week ago she had said to herself that is all very well but I need to see it in action not just words. She had prayed to God that someone from the church would visit her and here I was.

To be used by God in this small way to bless someone reminded me that Jesus was a people first person. One of my favourite moments in Jesus' life was when he was stopped by a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. He turned and calls her 'daughter', the only time it is recorded that Jesus spoke these words. Jesus even on the way to doing something else never missed out on those who just needed a moment of his time. Jesus completed his mission but never lost the value of placing people first.

Matt 9:18-26

Vulnerable

The other day I had one of those 'need to change my pants' moments during a normal Sunday service. Now I do have a bit of a reputation for doing some odd things in services to grab people's attention but this moment was in no way planned. Halfway

through my talk a woman approached the stage and started shouting and swearing. For a split second, I was frozen to the spot, as I recognised her as the woman who had hit one of our congregation two weeks before. However, I knew I needed to act. I approached her and told her that this was not the time and asked her to leave the platform and be quiet. At the same time two elders arrived on the stage and escorted her off the platform still swearing and now lashing out. The scene continued outside as I reassured the congregation and I led them in prayers for this very disturbed lady.

The experience had left me feeling very vulnerable and exposed; I still twitch slightly if anyone gets out their seats now. It is at moments like this that you realise how much we need God's strength and protection because we never know what we might face. I also think feeling vulnerable although uncomfortable is a good place to be for leaders. Jesus himself was vulnerable in front of Peter, James and John in the garden of Gethsemane and he faced the temptation to walk away.

Matt 26:36-46

However, many leaders (me included) have wrongly assumed that showing weakness is not a good thing in a leader. Admitting 'I don't know' or 'I got it wrong' truly is liberating if we dare to do it.

Succession

The most challenging aspect of this temporary succession has been the balance of honouring what has happened in the past while seeking to move forward in a new way that reflects your leadership style. It can be very insulting to come in changing everything as well as very unsettling and unnecessary. Yet, when someone said to me that they hardly noticed the difference since the change it made me want to do things in such a way so that everyone felt the difference. I have been able to do stuff that has

reflected more of who I am but I hope that in doing that I have honoured God and those who went before me.

Jesus knew that succession needed to take place as he went to be with his Father. The last thing he said to his disciples just before his goodbye was go and do the business all over the place and do it by God's Spirit. Jesus had indicated that these men would do far more than him and in regards to succession we need to be willing to let those we pass leadership onto go further than we may have without getting precious about our ministry!!!

Matt 28:16-20

So now I begin to plan the handing back to our pastor after my caretaker role. It has been a challenging and rewarding experience but I guess maybe even more testing may be letting go of the reins, no longer being the boss and allowing God to use me in a different way over the coming years.

Learning the lessons of leadership early

by Andy Glover



Andy Glover is Team Leader at Hoole Baptist Church. He is a member of the Mainstream Leadership Team and a Trustee of Link Up, Chester Schools Christian Work and The Light Project. He is also an Alpha Regional Advisor for Chester.

Andy is married to Sue.

A story is told of an event at the Paraplegic Games. It was late in the day, and the 400 metre race was about to start. Two young men lined up on the starting line, all the other competitors had dropped out. A hard-bitten *Time* magazine reporter gave his commentary on the radio, describing the scene as 'painful to watch'. The gun went off. The two men, both with cerebral palsy lurched off the line. One of the coaches ran beside the track, coaxing his athlete on. 'Come on Joey, you can win.' At the first corner Joey was 25 metres in front, a subtle chant came from the crowd: 'Joey, Joey, Joey'. Coming into the last turn, Joey's lead had stretched to 40 metres. The other competitor was weary and losing heart. Thirty metres from the finishing line, Joey suddenly stopped. He turned to his coach and smiled, acknowledged the crowd, and then turned back to the other young man and said, 'Come on, buddy.' Joey held out his hand until the man was alongside him and then they ran across the line together. The crowd went berserk. The reporter was heard to utter, 'Make me more like Joey.' The coach was heard to stammer through his tear-stained face, 'Attaboy Joey, you're a real winner!'

Being a leader of a church is tough, particularly at this time of great change within society and church. Many leaders are unsure of their role and feel inadequately trained to fulfil it. Reports such as *Affirmation and Accountability*, and *Leaders Under Pressure* highlight some of the current pressures experienced by church leaders:

- 3 in 10 have felt for a prolonged period like leaving Christian service.
- 3 in 10 feel their family suffers because of their work.
- 7 in 10 feel heavily overworked.
- 200 church leaders miss Sunday activities each week as a result of stress related illnesses.
- 1,500 church leaders quit over a 10 year period.

Over the past 10 years three things have fuelled my concern about training leaders, firstly my own personal journey. At 17 I was leading the Youth Group in my local church, by 19 I was at Bible College and at 26 I was the pastor of a local church. I love leading a church; I've made lots of mistakes and learned loads. Secondly, I started reading widely on the subject of leadership and discovered authors saying similar things. In particular was the "need

for a new kind of leadership." Models of leadership and church that have worked well in the past are being challenged and new models are emerging in order to engage with a rapidly changing world. Thirdly I have been involved in the releasing and equipping of young leaders. In Chester I have been working with many young leaders in their 20's who are looking for opportunities to lead within a strong relational context where they can be accountable and find support.

As I reflect on the need to train leaders I believe we need to concentrate on 5 key aspects - the leader as a disciple; the character of a leader; the call of God on a leader; the cultivating of competence in the leader and the leader as part of a team.

The leader as a disciple

In my experience it is very easy for those of who are paid to lead a church to slip into "doing a job". We lose sight of the truth that our leadership flows from our "fellowship." We are to be followers of Jesus Christ first and foremost which means primarily we are disciples. Our personal relationship with Jesus needs to be kept alive, the love we have for God and His people can quickly be squashed and lost by the pressures of leading. In helping to develop an emerging leader we must emphasize that the leadership exercised flows from our position 'in Christ.' Our identity is crucial; if we don't settle the question of who we are 'in Christ', then we will always struggle in what we do for Christ.





The character of a leader

We set young leaders up for a fall if we encourage them to envision what they can do before we consider the kind of person they should be! In today's society the issue of trust in leadership is paramount, the loss of trust in institutional leadership - for example in the world of politics - is seen clearly in the 20's and 30's who have disengaged because they don't trust what is being said by those in leadership. Trust has to be earned; we can't just expect people to give it to us. For me this is the biggest challenge in developing leaders because it isn't a quick fix, instant thing. Qualities such as authenticity, integrity and vulnerability all build the sense of trust that we need if we are going to lead.

As leaders we need to show people how to follow Jesus, not just tell people. The area of modelling, (not the cat walk type!) challenges me in my role as a leader. Yet I cannot hide from the fact that people are watching my life and my leadership. Bill Hybels defines character as "who you are when no one else is looking" We must connect the public and private life, problems usually occur when we separate them. Our character is expressed under pressure: it is when a crisis comes along that we really see what our character is like so we must prepare ourselves for that moment of pressure. One final thought - don't ignore the small things in your life, they will have potential to grow into big things; if we observe and reflect on these then we can act and change before it becomes much harder to do so.

The call of God on a leader

The issue of time or more specifically not having enough time is one that all leaders face. I belong to a number of networks of church leaders and I can pretty much guarantee that everyone I speak to will complain that they are too busy. The pace of modern life, the

multiple demands from people, the pressures created by modern communications and the complexities of Christian leadership leave many of us breathless. I am aware in my own life that I can hide behind the issue of being busy so that I don't answer the question of being productive. It is important for me to keep asking the question, 'What is it that God is calling me to do?' As I reflect on this I can respond to God's particular purpose for my life?

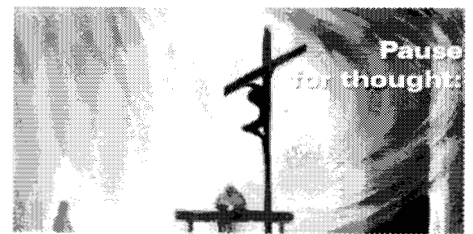
Leaders need to know the call of God in order to be able to prioritise their time. Over the recent few years I have had to reassess my own priorities as the leader of my church, changes in my personal circumstances, the addition of new staff, the growth with the church, the invitations to do stuff outside of the local church has all meant that I need to reassess the call of God on my life. If I know God has a unique and particular purpose for me then it enables me to stop doing some things, give more time to other areas and have the ability to add new responsibilities and still have time off!!

The cultivating of competence of the leader

If we want to release younger men and women into leadership then we must take the time to invest in them. Over the years a wide variety of people have developed and grown me as a leader; for this I am deeply grateful. It has also given me a heightened awareness of the responsibility on me to invest in the next generation. At the moment I am involved in investing my time in eight individuals who are in their 20's and 30's. Within Mainstream I am developing the "Imprint Conference" an annual event for 20 somethings to come together over a weekend for input, networking and encouragement for their leadership (the next one is in October 6,7,8 - for more details please email me). In each one of the people I meet with I am

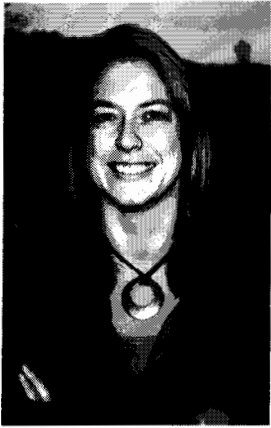
looking for four key things: humility, faith, gratitude and servant-heartedness. When I see them in a person then I know that in time a leader can emerge. Giving young leaders exposure and experience is a risky thing but an environment for this to happen must be part of our churches and within Mainstream!

The leader in a team



Leadership in the New Testament is always plural yet many leaders I meet in churches are very lonely and isolated. I believe we must develop new models for leaders to grow where we have a clearer context for expressing our leadership one of community, team, interrelatedness and interdependence. I am so grateful that within my church and in the city I live I have some very good friendships with others who are in leadership with me. Developing leadership in teams provides a safe place to grow as a leader, where the temptation to abuse power or go it alone can be held in check, edges are rubbed off and pride is reduced through the sharing of results.

Much of this article is adapted from a book by James Lawrence "Growing Leaders." I would highly recommend the reading of this book to develop some of the concepts in the article.

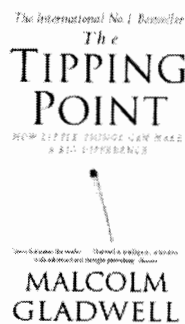


Juliet Kilpin is one of the ministers of Cable Street Community Church in East London. The church developed out of the work of Urban Expression, a mission agency which recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams to pioneer creative and relevant expressions of church for under-churched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

Is it enough being famous for 5 minutes?

by Juliet Kilpin

It's really strange how things become trendy isn't it? I've been reading the highly acclaimed book 'The Tipping Point' by Malcolm Gladwell, which unpacks the theory of how little things can make a big difference. It was recommended to me and Jim by our friend Brian Bauman, a Mennonite working in Toronto, Canada. Apparently he gets all his church planters to read this - I think it's even higher up the book list than Stuart Murray-Williams' books!!



It begins by telling the story of how Hush Puppies, after years of being a small insignificant company, suddenly became trendy in New York (we must have missed that one here!)

More interestingly for me, it tells the story of how police in New York, faced with spiralling murder rates, decided to instigate a zero tolerance attitude to fare dodging on the subway. Hours of police time were invested in this seemingly minor crime in comparison to the many homicides surrounding them. But strangely enough it became a tipping point in seeing numbers of homicides decrease rapidly. Potential

murderers knew perhaps that if the police were seriously concerned about something so petty, how badly were they going to look on homicide? The message is clear. Little things can make a big difference.

When we first moved to Shadwell no-one had heard of it! 'Where's that?' people would ask us! Two significant things have tipped people's knowledge recently. Firstly, Holy Trinity Brompton have replanted an Anglican church here. A team of 80 have made St Paul's their church, and have been investing time, energy and finances on what was a struggling congregation. Suddenly Shadwell is on their lips and has become a recognised mission field. We are pleased to have more Christians in the locality. Their presence in a place which has such a minority of Christians is refreshing and encouraging.

Secondly, Fresh Expressions and RUN made their DVD, 'Expressions: The DVD', which included a 5 minute snapshot of Cable Street Community Church. We have always been a bit nervous of publicising stuff that's happening on the ground here - partly for fear of making local people feel they are in a goldfish bowl, and partly because we know that videos can often do a great job at making things look bigger and better than they really are!

I have been in several places where they have chosen to show our clip. Not only is it always embarrassing to watch yourself on a huge

screen - analysing every movement you made, every angle which shoots up your nose etc. - but afterwards you are flooded with people saying how fantastic it all is and what a great job you are doing.

Now it is always great to have people understand your situation a little more and to recognise the effort you are putting in, but the thing is they are only watching that 5 minute snapshot, and in those 5 minutes everything was great! And it really catches some wonderful people with whom God is doing some great stuff. But what it doesn't capture is the heartbreak you experience when someone who has been following Jesus goes back on drugs and disappears off the scene, or what it feels like when most of your congregation are suffering from mental health disorders and probably won't be more 'together' next week or next month, or when you've put your heart and soul into a message you've prepared and only two people turn up, or when someone in the church has started self-harming again, or when you wonder whether you are really making a difference for the Kingdom of God.

It would be nice if when people say to me, 'Wow, that looks so great what you're doing,' that I could turn around and say 'Yes, you're right. It's fantastic!' And in one sense I could say that over the last 9 years Urban Expression has recruited almost 40 people to move into inner-city areas to create relevant forms of church, of which Cable Street is just one.

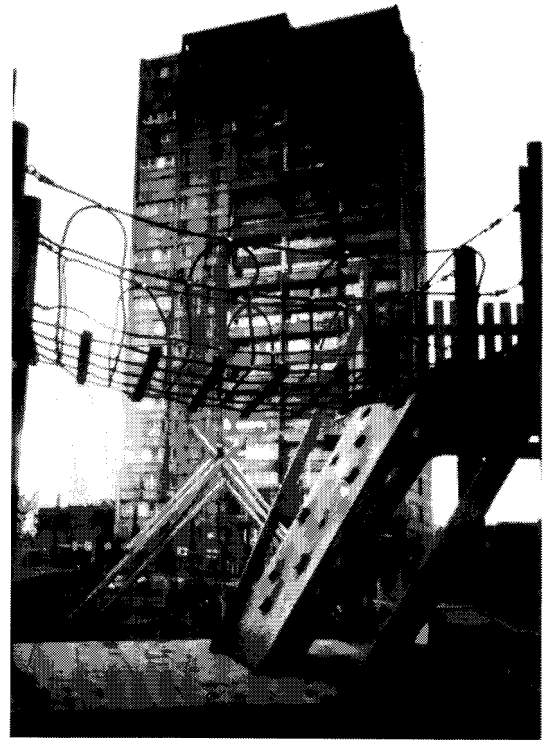
We have just appointed the leader of our 8th team in London, have a team started in Manchester and have just held interviews for Glasgow. We have 80 Associates and interest in Urban Expression is growing.

But I know that on the ground for each of the teams it is more often than not simply hard work. It is self-sacrificial, with all of us making daily choices to remain living in the inner-city; to cope sometimes with the risk of violence; to cope with the question of 'what have I achieved today?', and perhaps most importantly in this day and age, to remain for the time being as a minority and to not go to the bigger, more comfortable churches that we might prefer. As Charlie Ingram, from the Ferrier Estate said at a recent Urban Expression Open Day, 'We don't need superstars, we don't need anyone out of the ordinary, we just need average, everyday Christians to choose to come and live out their average, everyday faith in this small, urban expression of church. To choose not to be anonymous in the big mega-

churches, but to do something small that will make a huge difference.

[As an aside... as I write this there is another article in The Guardian stating that this is the year that our world experiences its own tipping point and more people now live in cities than out. So Charlie's point rings loud in my head. If we are choosing not to live our ordinary lives in our cities, then we are certainly in a losing battle to reach them.]

So, whenever I watch the Expression DVD, and I'm being honest with you now, it puts such a big smile on my face as I consider all the small things that have happened which have made a big difference - like picking up rubbish, playing football, washing people's windows, having a cup of tea with someone, stopping to chat, visiting someone in prison, sending a text, having a meal. It makes me think of all the people's lives that have been touched by Christ through the people who have moved in with Urban Expression. But it also, without exception so far, causes me to shed a



tear as I consider those whose journeys with Jesus have been hard, those who have given up so much to come and do this ministry, those who have poured themselves out as an offering for others and for God's glory.

To all of you who understand this, who are struggling on in the urban place God has called you to, keep on keeping on! Remember that small things can make big things happen. There is a point to tip, and together we can tip it!

Gladwell M, *The Tipping Point*, Abacus, 2000
WWW.RUN.ORG.UK





Stephen Rand is co-chair of Jubilee Debt Campaign and part of the leadership at Kairos Baptist Church in Wimbledon.

Justice - action and sensitivity

by Stephen Rand

It was an interesting day. The nail-biting experience of watching England labour to beat Trinidad and Tobago came after five hours thinking about the legacy of slavery - spot the irony? Then I attended The Observer Ethical Awards Ceremony, where the organic wine flowed while award-winners in ethical living were rightly celebrated. The readers of The Observer had voted Make Poverty History campaigner of the year 2005 ahead of Bob Geldof and Jamie Oliver. So if you emailed Tony Blair, wore a white band, voted for trade justice - you were honoured, and I raised my glass on your behalf.

A year after the Edinburgh event and Live 8, it is even clearer that something was achieved last year, but that something was not enough. The global trade talks are in danger of complete collapse; the promises of aid are yet to be delivered. At least the debt deal has been implemented, and came fully into effect on 1st July. Already Tanzania is using debt relief money to assist 3.7 million people facing drought; Zambia has made access to healthcare free to all.

But as the G8 meet once again in Russia, you might be forgiven for thinking that no-one cares any more. But the global white band movement is stronger than ever and this autumn there will be a global month of mobilisation between 16th September and 17th October World Poverty Day. There will be a multiplicity of opportunities for your church to take further action in support of the global anti-poverty movement - not least Micah Challenge Sunday on 15th October.

Of course we were never going to make poverty history in one year. When Jubilee 2000 started, it was consciously modelled on

the anti-slavery movement recognising just how long it took the campaigners to achieve their aim: twenty years before the final victory was achieved in 1807.

Which brings me back to my first paragraph. My five hour meeting was an update of the Set All Free initiative of Churches Together to celebrate the bicentenary of this event next year. There will be exhibitions, gospel music tours, educational and worship materials galore. The Stop the Traffik campaign will be a great opportunity to take action, recognising the extent to which forms of slavery still exist in our modern world.

As I sat in the meeting four things impressed themselves upon me. First, that next year is an important opportunity for the church to take this issue seriously and sensitively. It will be great to tell a new generation the story of how a small group of Christians took a lead in working to end a dreadful injustice; and hopefully face up to the reality that Wilberforce was not afraid to apply his faith in the political arena in his determination to do justice, to do the right thing. His story is inspiring, and illustrates a vital truth for our contemporary situation.

But there is much more to the story than the triumph of one white and wealthy Christian. Let's make sure our history includes those who campaigned alongside Wilberforce, black and white, men and women. There were slaves and former slaves who were part of the struggle; there were Christians who were part of the problem and not the solution. The Bible was a weapon in the battle - but one used by both sides.

Which is where the sensitivity becomes vital. Hermeneutics has had significant life and death consequences - and still does.

During the meeting we were encouraged to consider Philippians 2: 5-11 - and I suddenly realised just how charged the idea of Christ becoming a slave would be to those who feel the legacy of slavery in a way that will always be impossible for me. All of us who teach and preach will need to remember that legacy includes an acute sense of pain, suffering and loss. One woman trembled with passion as she described the vacuum at the heart of her own identity and called for an international day of remembrance.

One black church leader indicated that this topic was just as likely to be ignored in black-led churches as in white churches but for very different reasons. There was a fear of what might be released if the lid was lifted on this particular box. An estimated 24 million were enslaved, uprooted and died in the African Holocaust. And while one section of our community wrestles with what that means to them communally and individually, so across the world the appalling toll of oppression and injustice continues. Set All Free encourages us all to Remember, Reflect and Respond. And so we should.

Key websites:

www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk; www.setallfree.net (includes resources and an events diary for 2007); www.makepovertyhistory.org; www.micahchallenge.org;

stephen@jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk

Stephen Rand is the Co Chair of Jubilee Debt Campaign and helps to lead Kairos, a Baptist church meeting in the Odeon Cinema in Wimbledon.

Big Brother?

by Rob White

Don't worry; I haven't succumbed to watching it or, if you're a trendy advocate of keeping closely in touch with the nation's entertainment habits, I'm sorry but I'm not in vogue!

It's what immediately came to mind (a sad mind, some might say!) when I thought about this column in an issue dedicated to the subject of raising up young leaders. It's a subject I have some considerable passion about. Did I hear someone say, "That's because you're getting older, mate!?" I think that helps to stoke up my interest, but I've always felt strongly about it. I don't suppose I could have led YFC for many years without a strong interest in it.

There are three things about this subject that I want to comment on. The first is **release**. I've seen (and so, probably, have you) churches, organisations and whole movements flounder because old boys (we haven't had enough women in ministry yet to be able to comment, but they're usually more sensible) stay around in position too long. Insecurity rears its head and causes people to hang on rather than release others. No boasting here, but Marion and I made our decision that I should step down from being Senior Minister mainly for that reason. Oh yes, God did say something to us about it as well! We can become corks in the bottle that trap the energy and fizz inside. And release is best by design rather than default in other words, a purposeful recognising, equipping and releasing as a priority.

The second thing is about that energy. It's the **vigour and passion** of youth. I love to say that ecclesiological happiness is Brethren in your rear-view mirror! That's the church background in which I grew up and, although have since realised what was missing there, will remain eternally grateful for release into leadership experience at a relatively early age. By sixteen I was participating in the Sunday morning meeting, leading services at other churches when older men took me with them as they were preaching, and was an assistant leader in a

Crusader class. People were aware enough to give me the chance of channelling my vigour and passion in a direction of Kingdom priorities.

There's a great quote in a book I'm wanting to read, 'Practising Passion - Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church', by Kenda Creasy Dean: *"Teenagers are heat seeking missiles. They're drawn to fire. They yearn for experiences that will channel their passions. And by and large they are not detecting many signs of life from the church..."* That confirms my belief that we should be channelling the energy and passion of young Christians into leadership responsibility. My role as Trustee/Director of The Message Trust continually challenges me in this area. It's so inspiring to see so many passionate young people on the front-line of mission. Why can't we attract these sorts of young people to local church leadership? Does it appear too safe and boring? Probably. Do we insist on too many hoops (perhaps more than would have been negotiated in Prescott's game of croquet?!) through which they have to jump? Almost definitely. Or is it that we think releasing that youthful energy is too risky? I'm certain. If we don't take the risk we'll find ourselves facing another risk, viz. losing those young people who could rise to the challenge and give their vigour and energy to the local church.

What's the BU doing to reverse this? We need some strategic leadership to lay down some plans, open up the possibilities and provide some finance. One of the things that I would like to see Mainstream initiate is teams of young aspiring leaders, released for a year, who could be exposed to about four churches in that time, learning through being given some leadership responsibility in those churches.

The third thing, which is obvious, when writing about this subject, is **mentoring**. That's where the big brother or sister comes in and not the overbearing, patronizing, voyeuristic kind, but a genuinely caring, overseeing, watchful kind. The subject of mentoring fills many books



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

and conversations these days, and not least in church circles. Careful and meaningful mentoring is a major part of training and equipping a person for ministry/leadership. Done properly it offers encouragement, inspiration, checks and balances to the person mentored. I believe that young aspiring leaders need planned mentoring treated as of equal importance with theological training. I'd like to see far greater emphasis put on mentoring, through the BU, in the journey taken by a young leader, from the moment of acceptance for training (hopefully even before) right through the academic studies and early years of ministry, and beyond.

If we can begin purposefully to recognise, equip and release young people of vigour and passion now, the mentoring process can begin at an early stage. And the relationship between mentor and mentored is so important that it can only work where there is a strong element of choice in who the mentor should be. In other words, it will only bear fruit where a relationship already exists or where it grows positively in a short time. It loses its point when, if part of a formal system, no meaningful relationship is formed between the two people.

I'd like to say loads more, but there isn't the space. Anyway, I'm off to watch TV!

Roselands, the 'Church with Choice'

by 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.

Trawling the web in search of interesting and innovative church ideas and practices, I came upon www.churchwithchoice.org.uk. Pastor Graham Prestridge outlines what happens when you give people choice. What do you think?

In our modern world, supermarkets and cinemas give us infinite choices. 'Flexitime' seems to work in employment, and many of us have dozens of satellite channels available on our televisions.

Why then do we think that everyone doing the same thing, at the same time in Church, is still the way forward? This formal approach to Sunday worship worked well in the first half of the last century, but this way of gathering on a Sunday is foreign and unattractive to the unbeliever, and becoming increasingly unsatisfactory and restrictive to many frustrated believers.

I remember a quote from a few years back, which said this: "The Church faces two major problems firstly that its message *will* change and secondly, that its *methods* won't"

We certainly don't want to change the message - it's even more important that everyone hears the 'Good News' in this day and age. We *do* need to examine and where necessary update the methods!

Until 2 years ago we were known as Roselands Christian Fellowship, originally a Church 'plant' from Winner Street Baptist Church, Paignton, and now 13 years old. Like them, we are affiliated to the Baptist Union. In March 2004 we changed our name to Roselands Community Church, better to reflect the vision we have to reach our local community, and for it to see 'Roselands' as its local Church.

We have doubled in size during the last 2 years and are now a growing group of 65 or so people, meeting in a Primary school. We love and trust one another, and have a desire to reach out to those around us on Roselands Estate, Torbay and South Devon. We have four mid-week 'Meetings for Discipleship', attended by about 85% of the Church. Following a Leaders' Retreat in February 2004, and the sharing of a vision given to Peter Mallett, a Pastor of a Vineyard Church in Cornwall, the concept was shared with the Fellowship. *Everyone* agreed that we should work towards the realisation of this different approach to 'Church'.

Apart from the change of name, which is important, we have changed the practice and ethos of Sunday morning services. The essence of this change has been to encourage 'choice' in how Sunday is

experienced. Everyone no longer *has* to do what the music group or Minister has planned! There is freedom to move between 'zones', in which various aspects of spirituality can be experienced, by Christian and non-Christian alike.

The format we have implemented seems to answer various problems we have experienced over the years, such as "Should services be structured for believers or seekers?" "How *can* I bring my unconverted neighbour to a 2 hour service?" "How do we allow room for 'spiritual gifts' in our services?" "What if people come with needs which are not effectively addressed by a 45 minute sermon?" One nice side effect of all these changes is that it is impossible to be late for Church!

Our time together starts at 10.30am with coffee / tea / refreshments (including toast & marmalade) in the Café Zone, which has red & white gingham table clothes and a coffee machine, which creates a wonderful smell! These refreshments are available for the whole 2 hours, and folks seem to be confident enough to bring coffee and tea into the Music, Prayer & Teaching Zones! People are able to consult a map of the 'zones', and choose one of 10 areas of ministry.

- **Prayer:** where people spend time in intercessory and 'requested' prayer.
- **Music:** where people are free to enjoy praise and worship with the music group, occasionally CD's, and whatever the Holy Spirit prompts!
- **Worship:** where there is themed meditation and a quiet contemplative atmosphere.
- **Teaching:** A sermon is available for those who wish to hear it (full speakers notes are available for others to take away, to enable them to be kept informed of what is currently being covered in a series). We also record cassettes.



- **Discussion:** a 25 minute opportunity for small group discussion about Biblical and topical issues, or the sermon which precedes it!
- **Challenge:** an area is set apart for creative young people's work, with video / DVD / etc. from 11 to 12.
- **Chill zone:** our area for creative work with younger children.
- **Creche:** for babies and 'crawlers' (of which we have 3 at present).
- **Care:** where mature Christians are available to help people confidentially, who come with particular needs, and trained counsellors can be called on to listen and pray.
- **Fellowship:** this (The Café) is the hub of the Church, where coffee and refreshments are available all morning, and people initially gather to meet and talk. There is always a volunteer in this zone all morning, to talk with anyone, Christian or seeker, who will benefit from this contact. Our vision is that non-Christians will feel comfortable to stay in this 'non-threatening' zone for as long or as short a time as they wish.

People are free to move around these zones, spending time in one, two or all as they feel comfortable. These groups run for different times (some 30 minutes, some 45 minutes and some for 1 hour. The majority of people (who choose to), re-assemble at 11.30am for a one hour corporate time together of praise, worship, prayer, testimony, and

when appropriate things can be shared which have come out of the various 'zones'. Communion is available in the Music Zone every Sunday. The morning usually ends around 12.30pm.

This new approach has been running for just over two years, and we have proved that 'Church with Choice' is a practical way forward, especially for those Churches that meet in schools, but also for Churches with 'multi-room' facilities. For too long the 'school-based Church' has been the Cinderella of Churches in most communities. This new approach majors on the strengths of the 'school-Church', i.e. a non-threatening environment, with multiple areas that are easily (and cheaply) available for the Church to use.

At Roselands we have seen more visitors (many of whom have stayed) in the time we have been "The Church with Choice", than we had seen in all the previous years! Teenagers and children especially seem to love this sort of 'Church!' 'Prodigals', who have been alienated by bad past Church experiences, find our fresh approach non-threatening. We have seen several such couples return to the Church.

After proving that this vision is practical, we can't go back to the 'old way' of doing things! We are constantly evaluating the effectiveness of the Zones, and 'fine tuning' them. "Constant change is here to stay" could be our motto!





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



Daniel Bedingfield Global Angel



Stop the Traffik

Those who were at the Mainstream conference earlier this year will remember Marion White's impromptu plea to engage with the forthcoming Stop the Traffik campaign.

On 25th March 2007 the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade will be remembered in many countries around the world. Stop the Traffik will use this anniversary as a catalyst for a initiative whose goal is to cry for freedom for every human caught in trafficking around the world, with a particular focus on children and young people.

For more details go to <http://www.stopthetraffik.org> and bookmark the site so you can go back to it early next year when the events page will be updated.



GORSLEY FESTIVAL

The Gorsley Festival: August Bank Holiday weekend with a difference

Over the last ten years a spectacular Flower Festival has grown into a Christian Festival offering teaching, outreach, worship and ministry all set in beautiful surroundings. The fact that it is something slightly different means that the Gorsley Festival attracts a wide range of different people and is often a bit more relaxed than a full-blown Christian conference. Once again the Flower Festival is the centre-point but will also be welcoming Mike Hill, Louie Giglio and David Carr as guest speakers.

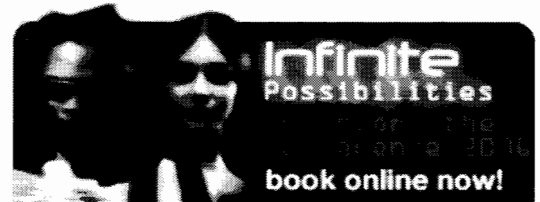
Go to <http://www.gorsleyfestival.co.uk/> for more details.

Infinite Possibilities - Reimagining mission to the digital generation

It's impossible! That's how many of us feel when we consider the awesome challenge of reaching out to young people. Where do we begin? Young people, and the world in which they live, seem to change so quickly. How can our church even begin to relate to their world? There are just so many obstacles.

So many obstacles or infinite possibilities? This year's Youthwork conference aims to explore and reimagine mission to the digital generation - turning the obstacles into possibilities and the challenges into opportunities.

For more details go to: <http://www.youthwork.co.uk/conference/>



Mind, Machines and Majesty - The Boundaries of Humanity

How do advances in neuroscience, genetics and embryology fit into our picture of being made in the image of God? Christians in Science have drawn together five eminent thinkers to explore the theme: what makes us human.

The Conference is on Saturday 4 November 2006 at The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. Go to <http://www.cis.org.uk/> for booking details.



Leading Edge 2006

Leading Edge is described as a 'Baptist family holiday week', organised by the BUGB in partnership with Viz-a-Viz. It provides an opportunity for Baptists to gather together under canvas, in their caravan (or in local hotels and B&Bs) and to come together for worship and teaching. The week also provides recreational opportunities with football tournaments, golf coaching, swimming, quad biking, squash, tennis, etc. A full children's and youth programme is hosted on-site. Speakers include Myra Blyth, Stuart + Jill Briscoe + Dennis Pethers.

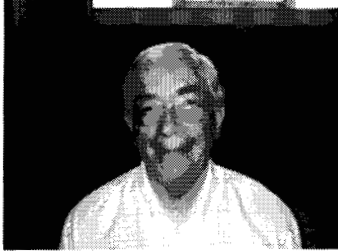
Leading Edge is held at The Warwick School in Warwickshire and runs from 14th - 20th August 2006.

For more details go to:
http://www.baptist.org.uk/le_site/leadingedge.htm



Mainstream - South London

In June Ken McGreavy spoke to leaders at a South London meeting at Purley Baptist Church. Ken is always good value and brought just the right word on this occasion.



He spoke from Amos chapter 7 where the prophet is under pressure from Amaziah to return to Judah and capitulate on his true calling. Ken opened out the sort of pressures which we face which militate against obedience to God's call. Knowing what we are called to do and faithfulness in fulfilling our calling were explored in depth.

Ken said that the teaching was to stimulate us to personal reflection, which it certainly did, and he left us with three questions.

- What is the leading pressure which I face?
- Am I spending most of my time on my main gift/s?
- What are the keys to maintain personal freedom in the outworking of the call?
- He had some powerful quotes.
- We have pressures to make easy choices rather than right ones. We need to make righteous choices not comfort ones.
- When we are crying out to Lord to speak to us He often speaks about something other than the issue which we are bringing to him. When we are looking for answers and solutions, God is more concerned with attitudes and transformation.
- Accumulation is easier than delegation. (We collect more jobs as leaders rather than delegating). Delegation is God's gracious act of inclusion.
- My responsibility is obedience; the consequence of my obedience is the Lord's responsibility.

Ken will be one of the Speakers at the Mainstream conference in January 2007.



Fasting

For the last couple of years the Mainstream Leadership Team has planned two 'fasting times' into their annual programme. They are joined on the first day by invited leaders who are committed to Mainstream's values and an aspect of our mission is brought before God. On the following morning the Leadership Team meet to assess what has been heard.

The Lord spoke to us in May about strengthening the Mainstream's relational infrastructure and indicated some practical ways forward to strengthen leaders and churches in their mission. A 24 hour gathering has been called in September of this year for those who are serving Mainstream's mission. This time together will help to clarify how to release more leaders to serve in this developing mission. We hope to give you an update at the January conference.

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. Peter.nodding@purleybaptist.org

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Personal Profile:

Andy Glover

Everyone remembers 1966, the year England won the World Cup. Forty years on and I thought that we might win it again!! I am always the optimist. ☺ January '66 was the month Andrew Ian Glover came into the world, born in Stoke on Trent, that famous City of 6 towns which has given us Robbie Williams; and the reason for my other passion in life, besides God and my wife, Stoke City F.C. ☺ Attending the Victoria Ground in the 70's and watching players like Gordon Banks, Alan Hudson, Dennis Smith was my favourite pastime as a child with my dad, brother, uncles and cousins.



It was at the age of 17 that I became a Christian, part of a Youth Group in our local Anglican church. We experienced a move of God's Spirit in which 25 of the group became Christians, then linked to Mission England, in 1984, many in the church made commitments and it was great to be involved in leading nurture groups across the congregation. After an initial enquiry to train at an Anglican College, I was told I was too young and to come back when I was 25. ☺ I went off to Bible College in 1985, to Birmingham Bible Institution for three years. During this time God placed in my heart a burden for two things both of which I still carry; the importance of intercessory prayer to cry out to God for revival and the importance of working together across the denominations to see the Kingdom of God come on earth as it is in heaven.

In 1988 I married Sue. We had met at the Youth Group and Sue had come to Chester University to train as a primary school teacher. In a three month period we moved house, got married and both started new jobs, not something I would recommend to newly-weds now. ☺ I suppose in some ways I am quite unique in that I am still in the same church, Hoole Baptist Church, after 18 years! After four years as the Youth Pastor, two years of uncertainty, in 1994 I took on the role of Pastor. The next 18 months were very difficult with a number of pastoral issues in the church, Sue and I were also struggling, Sue was off work for nearly 6 months with post-viral fatigue and about a third of the church left. ☹

God is good. ☺ Over the past 10 years He has blessed us, I am now Team Leader and we have a staff team of 7. Our community project, Hoole Lighthouse Centre, has regular contact with 300 adults and children from our neighbourhood. The morning congregation meets in a local community centre as we have out-grown our building. I have a strong sense of call to Chester; I lead a relational network of churches of all denominations and streams from in and around Chester called Link Up. I believe passionately in the local church and the releasing of leaders especially young ones!



When the Time is right

Stephen Rand explains the thinking behind his Advent book

Writing daily bible reading notes is quite a challenge: how to say something meaningful, helpful and thoughtful that isn't just bright, trite and slight? So, having taken that plunge, my editor next suggests writing a book of daily readings for the advent season.

Who finds extra time for Bible reading at Christmas? And what to offer them fresh and stimulating enough to repay their extra commitment? Then I remembered my past career as a history teacher. And just how difficult it is, especially in the weekly sermon that is the basic input for most people's biblical education, to

From the introduction:

My wife Susan and I help to lead a small church in Wimbledon. We meet in the Odeon Cinema - cue my standard joke about belonging to the church with the most comfortable seats and the largest individual communion cup holders in the country. The church is called Kairos, and I readily confess that using a Greek word for the name jars slightly with the strap-line that follows it: 'church for today'. One of our members discovered this in conversation with a Greek friend. "Why is your church called Kairos?" he asked. Tim was on the ball, he had been listening in church: "It's a Greek word meaning 'now is the time'," he explained. "In ancient Greek perhaps," said his friend, "in modern Greek it means weather."

Just to add to the confusion, kairos is also used to mean time in modern Greek, but it clearly does not have the same significance as of old. In ancient Greek it meant the proper moment, the crucial moment, the chance, the opportunity emphasises that have been built on by theologians, so that the word has taken on almost a specific religious meaning. The coming of Christ is seen as the prime example of a kairos moment, a time in history when the pattern of events creates a crisis which is both an opportunity and demands a response. It was a kairos moment for the world two thousand years ago; and so it is for us each time Jesus comes to us by his Spirit. One of the aims of this book is to encourage every reader to once again experience the coming of Jesus - a real Christmas, a kairos Christmas.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was born when the time was right. It was not that God

communicate the big picture, the cosmic meta-narrative encapsulated in the Christmas story: the big picture that is for life, not just for Christmas.

What's more, nothing makes me want to give my all for God more than knowing that I have a part to play in God's mission plan and purpose for his creation, to add my own unique brush-stroke to that same big picture. So maybe this book was an opportunity to share that passion, and offer a daily reflection of individual pieces in the context of their place in the giant jigsaw puzzle. A process helped, of course, by the careful collection of

suddenly seized an opportune moment on a passing whim. It was the result of a plan known before time itself and more than two thousand years in execution, a plan in which individual human beings fulfilled their role in the delivery of God's plan. Advent is a reminder of God's plans and purposes: they are sure, they come about - and we all have a part to play. Jesus came at the right time, the time of God's choosing, but a time that was right because of people over centuries following God's promptings.

That does not mean that they became robots, incapable of making their own choices. God worked in and through their choices, made of their own free will, as they responded to their kairos moments of opportunity. Some were aware of the significance of their actions, many were not. In our advent readings we will have the opportunity, in the context of tracing God's plans and activity in human history, to reflect on a number of the people linked to the story of Christmas. There are discoveries to be made: what it means to be in God's purposes, how we can be used by God, and how God works in the big sweep of human history and the minutiae of individual human lives as well. This Christmas you can meet the kind of people God uses: the failures, the reluctant, the ordinary, the humble, the faithful and the persevering.

We all probably know the illustration of human history as a tapestry. We see it from the back, a mass of knots, stray threads, no apparent pattern or design. But when it is turned round, we see it from the designer's perspective, full of life and colour, and forming a design full of clarity and meaning. A more elaborate version of the story tells of

individuals put in their place in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke.

*So having written the book, how to maximise its existence - and the thought behind it - in the life of the church? It may not exactly be 40 days of advent purpose, but perhaps it could offer a similar experience of Sunday preaching programme, home group study and individual reading that might, for some at least, put Christmas into a new perspective. Ah the eternal hope of the communicator! But then the church is called Kairos: and the book is called *When the time is right*. It might just work...*

a master weaver who directs an apprentice who is working from the back, unable to see the design. And should the apprentice make a mistake, the master weaver, being a great artist, simply works the mistake into the design." We can't always see the big picture, but God knows what he is doing.

This book is not a theological study of God at work in history; neither does it attempt to answer philosophical questions about predestination and free will. It is written from the perspective that the Bible is God's word and therefore tells the truth. As a history graduate who takes truth seriously, I am well aware of the challenges made to the historical accuracy of the Christmas story in particular. But this is not an academic history book; it is a book for those willing to spend a small time each day to once again be reminded of the truth of scripture and reflect on its particular relevance to them in this advent season.

Christmas was not, in itself, the plan. It was an enormously significant moment in what is still an unfolding picture. For the purposes of God will be fulfilled by the ultimate and complete overthrow of evil and the release of the entire universe from the effects of sin, the completion of the victory won by Jesus when he died on the cross. And the greatest dimension of this plan from our perspective is that those who choose to put their faith and trust in the one who was born, who died, and was raised from the dead, can play their part in the ongoing battle and share in the triumph of the victor - not as soldiers, not as servants, but as children, members of the royal family of heaven.

All the books mentioned on these pages are available post-free from Wesley Owen, 8a The Mall, Bromley, BR1 1TR; 020-8464 1191; bromley@wesleyowen.com



Reading your way out of the shadows

There's a plethora of stuff around about how to do and be church in our rapidly changing world. Some of these are books about youth ministry; others are published under the heading of emerging church.

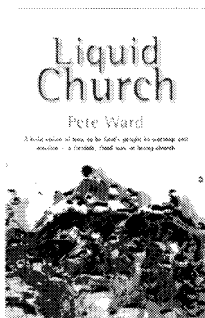
Here's a selection of good things worth checking out, adding to your shelves, even using as the basis of a leaders' away day or retreat.



Two books by Pete Ward are pretty essential:

Growing up Evangelical: Youth Work and the Making of a Subculture (SPCK 1996) is his account of developments in the world of evangelicals - especially as it affects work with young people - since the war. By turns hysterical and thought-provoking *Youthwork and the Mission of God* (SPCK 1997) is a more theoretical look at youth work practice.

It's also worth checking out *Liquid Church* (Hendrickson/Paternoster 2002). Wonderful, quirky and provocative and by no means the whole answer to where the church needs to go in order to re-engage with our culture. But he asks the right questions and will get you thinking creatively.



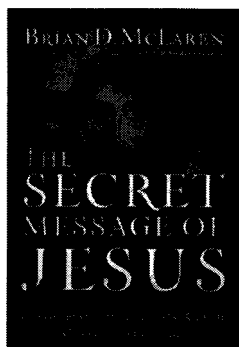
Nick Shepherd referred to work by David Voas and Alistair Crockett. The article in question is called 'Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor belonging' (Sociology 39(1) 2005).

Voas also has a very good chapter called 'Is Britain a Christian Country' in Paul Avis (ed) *Public Faith: The State of Religious Belief and Practice in Britain* (SPCK 2003).

The work of Bob Mayo (and Sara Savage and Sylvia Mayo-Collins) on the late teens and early twenties age group in Britain was published earlier this year under the title *Making Sense of Generation Y: the world view of 15-25 year-olds* (Church House 2006). It's essential reading.

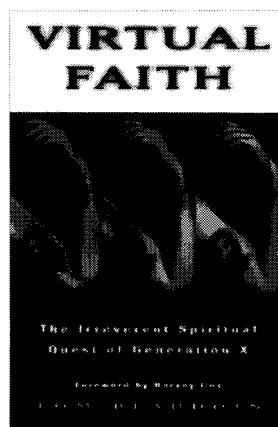
So too is Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger's exploration of experiments and new styles of church called Emerging Churches: creating Christian community in postmodern cultures (SPCK 2006).

If you aren't familiar with the work of Brian McLaren, a good place to begin is with *The Church on the Other Side: Doing ministry in the postmodern matrix* (Zondervan 2000). His trilogy beginning with *A New Kind of Christian* (Jossey-Bass 2001) is worth checking out. His latest book *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that could change everything* (W Publishing Group 2006) is not as controversial or ground-breaking as he thinks it is - after all, Tom Wright has said much the same in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (SPCK 1996) and *The Challenge of Jesus* (SPCK 2000) - but it is engagingly written and reminds us that the gospel



is truly a revolutionary message.

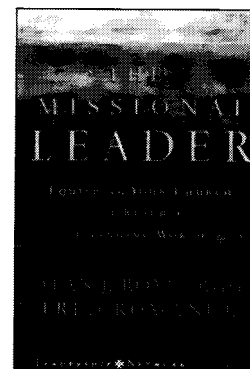
Nick Spencer of LICC has written up the research he carried out for the diocese of Coventry on the spirituality of people who don't go to church in a book called *Beyond the fringe: Researching a Spiritual Age* (Cliff College/LICC 2005).



Tom Beaudoin's *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (Jossey-Bass 2000) explores spirituality and popular culture as does Shane Hipps *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media shapes faith, the Gospel and church* (Zondervan 2005) though from a different perspective with different conclusions.

Leadership for these turbulent times is key to ensuring churches remain mission-focused. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk have produced *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World* (Jossey-Bass 2006). As with everything Roxburgh's associated with, it's a challenging, demanding, stimulating read - definitely one worth working through with a leadership team (though a study guide would have helped this process considerably!) Roxburgh's slim but trenchant volume *The Missionary Congregation, leadership and liminality* (Trinity Press International, 1997) remains the best 70 page job description for missional ministers in print.

Also check out Grove Booklets especially its new series on youth ministry at www.grovebooks.co.uk. All their new titles are available as ebooks



Gearing up to Stop the Traffik

by Marion White



Marion is Spring harvest leader and married to Rob. She'll be reporting on Stop the Traffik over the next year or so in forthcoming issues of Talk.

It is now six months since I made my response to God to get involved with 'Stop The Traffik'. Things seem to have moved very slowly in some respects, particularly because of the busyness of life and constant travelling. However, the picture is gradually becoming clearer and amazingly things are falling into place.

A group of ten women are travelling to Mumbai from 25th October to 1st November. We will be going to visit projects run by Oasis India and also other projects in Mumbai. The aim is for us to see the situation for ourselves, firsthand, particularly with a view to women, children and young people being trafficked. This will give us a far greater understanding when we do a national tour for women from 27th January to 10th February 2007 in the UK which will be specifically to raise the profile of this huge problem.

We will put details of venues for the UK Tour on the Mainstream website when they are finalised, hopefully, by the end of July, and we are aiming to have some publicity out by Sept/Oct for the UK Tour. We would also appreciate your prayer support at this time and will endeavour to give pointers for prayer.

Paul Field (my brother) is continuing to write the musical, 'Cargo'. He has got support from Hull City Council, (birthplace of William Wilberforce) and will be doing the premier of 'Cargo' in Hull Town Hall on

31st March 2007. Fancy a nice weekend away in Hull! We are trying to publicise the tours together. He will travel with us on our tour performing some of the songs from 'Cargo' and then from March 31st 2007 hope to perform 'Cargo' in many other cities in the UK particularly concentrating on major ports where slaves were brought into the country in Wilberforce's day. He is still waiting to hear whether he will get any funding for this so please continue to pray that the money will be forthcoming. If you want to find out more do access his website which is www.paulfield.com.

To date I have received £2000 towards the women's project but if any church or individual wants to give please send direct to Mainstream and it will be forwarded. I am hoping to have a little more time over July/August to look at raising sponsorship for the project. We have decided to use an Indian cameraman when we are in Mumbai because of the many sensitivities but do hope that we will have video footage we can use when we go on the UK Tour and maybe the potential for use by the media in some way. All of that, of course, needs finance.

Sometimes I wonder whether we can really achieve anything but I am constantly spurred on by the phrase "ordinary people can make a difference" and the fact that Jesus started with a very motley group of 12 disciples who were indeed the catalyst that saw Christianity grow and the church begin 2000

years ago. I think it was so timely to have said about 'Stop The Traffik' at the Mainstream conference as it means I have to carry on if I want to come to the conference in 2007!

The particular aim of the UK Tour will be to raise the profile of human trafficking, hopefully to raise funds for organisations working in that area, or for specific projects that we have identified. We need to keep the pressure on governments and people in the western world who have grown self-satisfied and comfortable when there is the glaring poverty of the two thirds world, to continue what 'Make Poverty History' started and particularly that the law abolishing slavery is upheld. I am gaining some good links with people in the UK who are working with people who have been trafficked and hopefully we'll be able to interview some of them when we are on tour.

The tour will be inviting ALL women, Christian or not, to fight for freedom from slavery for all human beings. We trust that not only will we raise awareness of the situation, but also an awareness that there is a God who cares.



Photo: Jackie Sheppard

Success and Succession

By Nigel G Wright

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.

As if life were not full enough I have landed myself with a couple of 'moderatorships', except that I'm not really moderating, more like acting as a pastoral consultant at long range. Anyway, the task involves looking through the profiles of possible candidates to see if they might be compatible with the churches in which I have an interest. It's an interesting experience, of course, and one of the things that strikes me (not for the first time) is just how many good, able, and accomplished people we have in our movement. Thanks be to God.

On the other hand I am also struck (again, not for the first time) by just how unsatisfactory our 'system' is. Here is a pastor who has laboured diligently and hard over a number of years. The church has grown and things are on the up. Relationships of trust and affection have been forged. The pastor has accrued social and spiritual capital over the years. Then one day, without anybody suspecting it, up he or she gets and announces a call to a church somewhere else. Within months they have gone. A huge hole suddenly opens up. People gradually realise that the pastor did do something after all. The church becomes rudderless and anxious. Individuals and families slip away. What had been thriving is now languishing and progress falters.

I know of course that it isn't always like that. Sometimes it's high time the pastor went and stopped being a cork in the bottle. Sometimes churches don't languish in the 'inter-

regnum' (strange word) but discover a new spurt of growth. Sometimes people step up to the crease and discover they have gifts which were being suppressed. True enough. But should it really be like this?

I once heard it said that 'success without a successor is failure'.

Yet our system makes the search for a successor virtually impossible. For one thing, if you are thinking of moving you are not supposed to share it with your fellow leaders: they might become insecure. For another, if you do know (as at retirement) that the end is drawing nigh, looking for a successor is thought to be trying to fix the future beyond your own (pastoral) lifetime. And we all know tales of pastors who looked for a smooth transition to A. N. Other and found just the opposite.

The fact is that we do not have much accumulated wisdom in doing the 'settlement' thing any other way. The system may not be a good one but perhaps, we think, it might still be the best one. At least we have worked out how this one could be made to work. What do we know about any other?

Perhaps some bright spark would like to pick up the gauntlet. How about some careful research about alternative models for finding a minister? There would be plenty to go on. Underlying this project are the theological issues concerning the nature of Christian ministry in itself. Then there are comparative studies across the denominations to

see how others do it in different networks. Perhaps a tad of international travel might be thrown in to investigate the ways in which different Baptist groups have explored the issue. Perhaps too there are questions about the degree of openness we foster in our churches concerning the length and the quality of the ministry offered; or about the nature of team leadership within a congregation. Even if we find alternative models, are they applicable to all churches, or might some churches, less well resourced and smaller, find their requirements beyond them? And should we always look outside the local church for ministry or should we raise up leadership from within, over a period of time, investing in the future out of the resources of the present?

Another related question worth re-visiting is that of interim ministries: making experienced pastors available to help churches re-orientate after a time of difficulty or conflict so that not every appointment is intended to be a long-term one.

It's certainly easier to raise questions than to supply answers, in this sphere as in many others. Yet the questions are worth asking and the research is worth doing. It's a matter of knowing what other possible ways of doing things are open to us. Let somebody do the work for the benefit of us all.

Dr Nigel G. Wright is Principal of Spurgeon's College. His next book *God on the Inside: The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture* is due for publication in November 2006.

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.

