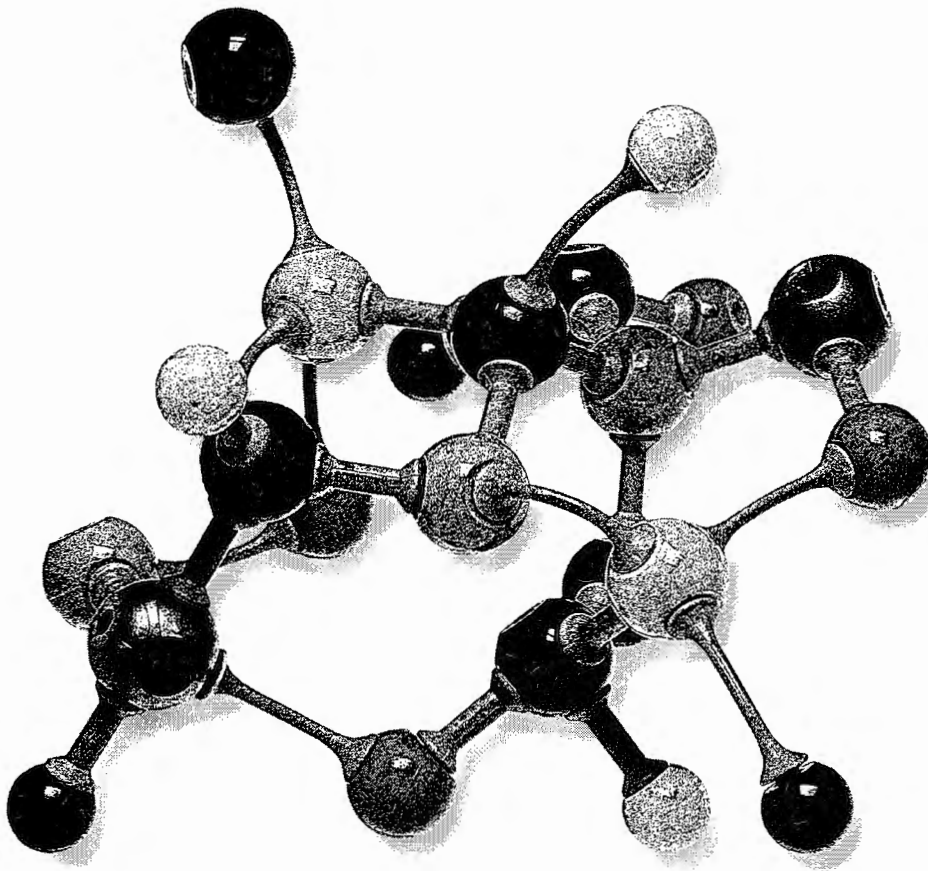


# TALK

*The Mainstream Magazine*

Summer 2007



## **Women, men and God: the gender issue**

Kate Lees  
Sean Winter  
Viv O'Brien  
Jonathan Mutton  
Juliet Kilpin

and more....

*Connecting leaders*

# **Mainstream is committed to:**

Get passionate about knowing God.

Get real in relationships.

Get stuck into God's mission.

# The Gender Issue

**W**e Baptists have been ordaining women to ministry for over 80 years. There are a host of women deacons in our churches. So, that's all right then, we've got the men, women and God thing sussed and there's no need for any discussion.

Well, not exactly.

The trouble is that only about 10% of our ministers are women - and that figure includes all those who are in sector ministries and working at Baptist House. As Juliet Kilpin points out in this issue, even Jackie-come-latelys like the Church of England have a higher proportion of female ministers.

And go to any of our churches and while there are almost certainly more women than men in the pews (or on the seats), the platform will be occupied by a man and the leaders' mugshot gallery (if they have one) will be dominated by males.

This suggests that women, men and God is still a subject worth talking about.

So, that's what we do in this issue of Talk.

Here you'll find articles by Sean Winter and Chuck Poole that handle what Scripture says about the matter; you'll find women reflecting on their experience of doing ministry and you'll find men and women doing theology about the subject.

So, what's left? Well, there's a guide to a wealth of resources that will hopefully further stimulate your thinking on what the Bible says and how people around the world are applying that message to their situations.

So there's nothing left to do, then? Yes, there is. While only 10% of ministers are women we've got a ton of work to do.

As leaderships we need to be asking whether our thinking and attitudes are in line with Scripture. Then we need to look at our practice and ask if there's anything we do that prevents all those people gifted by God for ministry and leadership from actually using their gifts - or are we saying to some, 'actually, we don't need you'? And if we are, perhaps we could read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and ask 'why?'

After all, if women are going to take their place in the ranks of ministers having their hands shaken at the Assembly, they need to be allowed to emerge in their congregations, recognised as people gifted and called by God to serve in this way.

So, I hope you find this issue entertaining and informative, inspiring and provocative in equal measure. And if you have comments about it or suggestions for what we might tackle in forthcoming issues of Talk, please drop me an email.

**Simon Jones** is the editor of Talk. team leader at Bromley and author of *Galatians* (Crossway 2007) and *Building a Better Body: the good church guide* (Authentic 2007)



## Contents

### main features

women in Baptist ministry <i>Viv O'Brien</i>	4
God's inclusive story <i>Sean Winter</i>	6
we ordain women because we baptize girls <i>Chuck Poole</i>	8
sorted <i>Jonathan Mutton</i>	10
reflecting on the journey so far <i>Kate Lees</i>	19

### features

'that joke isn't funny anymore' <i>Adam Eakins</i>	12
tough questions for all our churches <i>Juliet Kilpin</i>	14
inspiring people to Stop The Traffik <i>Marion White</i>	16
will women priests 'save the church from sinking' <i>Simon Jones</i>	18
inspiration and insight for leaders <i>Malcolm Egnier</i>	20
does your wife play the piano better than mine? <i>Stephen Rand</i>	21

### regular columns

whitewash <i>Rob White</i>	5
network news <i>Peter Nodding</i>	22
newsdesk <i>Craig Millward</i>	24
surfing for resources <i>Simon Jones</i>	26

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# Women in Ministry

by Viv O'Brien

I'm often asked how many women ministers there are. The current answer for those in pastorate, tutoring in colleges, working as Chaplains, Regional Ministers and for Baptist House is about ten percent. This answer usually causes raised eyebrows.

'Is that all? Surely after all this time we must have more than that?'

Well, no we haven't. However, if I was to be asked the current percentage of women students in ministerial training the answer would be twenty-five percent.

Things are changing. Over the last few years more women are feeling able to test a call to ministry, thanks to the flexible approaches to training at our colleges. We should be reaping the benefits of this influx over the next couple of years.

This leads on nicely to another frequent question. How do women fare in the Settlement system? The answer is that women come into a system run by a team of people who are committed to women in ministry. There are churches who for theological reasons will not call a woman, there is no getting away from that, but the Regional Ministers will always challenge a church to look at the issues again. In actual fact most women do not 'stay on the books' longer than their male colleagues. There is a perception that the Settlement Team is male only, but in fact two women are always present, and female Regional Ministers will often step in when a colleague has to be absent.

Ask about the pressures women in ministry face and you will get a number of different responses. We are not all the same and don't have identical experiences. We can't be lumped together as a commodity. Like any other minister we cope in with pressure in a number of ways.

Recently a BUGB publication was printed and made available to



churches. The hope is that churches that have never called a woman before, and are currently seeking a minister will with the encouragement of Regional Ministers and Moderators consider the issue now. The booklet is called 'Women, Baptists and Ordination' and affirms celebrates and encourages the ordained ministry of women in the Baptist Family. It addresses some of the questions asked by churches that have theological issues with the ministry of women, and also gives advice to those women who are in non-affirming churches but nevertheless want to test a call. The Baptist Union will never close the door to a woman who believes God may be calling her to ministry but is part of a church that feels unable to help her discern this.

Sadly, there are women who can tell horror stories of prejudice and hostility. These need to be owned and repented of. Women should not be silenced or made to feel that their experience is no longer valid. We still need to listen and learn from each other. But I am hopeful that a new age may be dawning, and the Blackly Declaration is a part of this. We need to find ways of building on this

Declaration, of giving it life and legs in our Union. We have over eighty years experience of the ordained ministry of women behind us. In many respects we have shown the way forward and must move on in that same spirit of affirmation.

My prayer is that when these current female students leave college there will be churches not just ready to 'give a woman a go' but many more churches that are open and receptive to recognising the call of God in the ministry of women.

*Rev Viv O'Brien is Ministries Adviser at the Baptist Union of Great Britain and a member of the Spring Harvest Event Leadership Team.*

# Mr. and Mrs.

by Rob White



For many years the church has presented a distorted picture of God to the world. Distorted because most of the expressions of the Body of Christ have been fashioned and delivered by masculinity. Fashioned through masculine lenses, masculine emotions (or the lack of them) and masculine processes of thought.

In short, we've presented a lopsided God.

It's a wonder that so many women have come to faith! I suppose it's because women have the ability to look deeper than the surface and are, largely, very forgiving. I'm not sure if men would have the foresight or patience to persevere if things were the other way around. Not only that, but also many women have been hurt and scarred by some crass masculine leadership unthinking, unfeeling and boorish. The male ego can be a brutish thing - unbending and irrational when aroused.

It's time to redress the balance, but it's been time for ages so when is it going to change? How is it going to change? More disturbingly, will it change? It's so good to see more women exercising ministry, serving on leadership teams and taking their place on bigger platforms, such as Spring Harvest and even Mainstream Conferences, but there's still a long way to go. We have very few women ministers and, if women sense a call to be such and follow that through with training, how many churches

are there that would consider them?

If we're going to present a 'rounded' picture of God we must include women, married and single, on our leadership teams, in the pursuit of vision and strategy, and as ministers. The intuition, nurturing nature and ability to empathise that women so often possess must be brought to the places of leadership and decision-making in order to put the vitally necessary colour into the monochrome picture shaped by men.

But that's only addressing part of the issue. The other part, and very important in my book, is the encouraging of married couples to minister together. It seems that Marion and I are a rare breed (no comments, please!) I can't think of many other husband and wife pairings who work alongside one another in a more public way. That's not to say that spouses do not support their partners who are in leadership or that doing so is somehow of no real significance. Not at all! But I wonder in how many marriages the question has been asked as to whether there may be a call to the spouse (usually a woman) to work with her husband in ways other than the role of supporting?

It seems strange, doesn't it, that in marriage we should be the closest of friends, share mutually as partners, rear a family together and yet, in the service of the One whom we both put first, largely we do different things? Before anyone leaps up protesting

that husbands and wives may be very fulfilled in obeying the call of God on their lives to different things, I want to say that I'm fully aware of that! My main point is: in how many marriages is the question raised? Perhaps more to the point is: how many male leaders have considered encouraging their wives into ministry alongside them?

From a chauvinistic and arrogant attitude during the first few years of our marriage I had to learn how to open the doors of ministry opportunity for Marion and encourage her to go through them. I'm so glad I did, although I have had to admit that there have been times when that male ego I mentioned earlier rose up in rebellion at the challenge of what could have seemed like competition! Hopefully, when we speak together or pray for people there is at least something of value that those listening receive, but I know the women will possibly relate more to Marion's approach than mine and, sometimes, men will relate more to mine. Surely that more 'rounded' picture has got to be positive?

And, if we can do it, there must be many others that could - so, go on, ask the question!

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](mailto:rob.marion@ntlworld.com)

# God's Inclusive Story

by Sean Winter

**The Rev Dr Sean Winter** is tutor in New Testament at the Northern Baptist College and moderator of the Baptist Union Council. He blogs at <http://seanthebaptist.typepad.com/>

Pauline theology is rooted in a story. The story's opening scenes consist of a re-telling of an inherited narrative of creation and covenant making: God's purposes for the world and for Israel respectively. The central and controlling episodes describe God's dramatic and revelatory intervention in human history in Jesus the Messiah. Christ's obedient faithfulness in crucifixion and resurrection are the very means by which human beings are to understand the nature of God's purposes for the world and the covenant people. The final 'chapters' of the story offer guidance for God's people, called now to live in the reality of God's action in Jesus Christ. In Paul's letters we see him, in ways adapted and suited for each context, telling this overarching story using language and imagery that has, rightly, become decisive for all future Christian attempts to do likewise.<sup>1</sup>

The underlying shape and direction of this story is clear in Galatians. The complex argument of the letter, as well as its passionate tone, find their roots in the basic conviction that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has 'set us free from the present evil age' (1:4). The letter is shot through with the rhetoric, idiom and stark dualism of apocalyptic discourse. In the words of Lou Martyn, Galatians is about 'the death of one world and the advent of another'<sup>2</sup>. Paul knows for himself that through the cross 'the world has been crucified to me and I to the world' (6:14). Life in the new world requires a reassessment of the old story and so now 'neither circumcision or uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is everything' (6:15) for those now called 'the



Israel of God' (6:16). And, crucially, life in the new world has a certain shape, a certain direction that must be consistent with its central act. The world is being remade 'in Christ' but this recreation begins in the community of those who have become God's true children, through faith (3:26).

Martin Luther King Jr. was fond of saying that 'the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice'.<sup>3</sup>

If we were to sum up the argument of Galatians 3 one might adapt King's words: the arc of salvation history is long, but it bends towards inclusion. God's story leans towards the welcome, inclusion and incorporation of those who would otherwise be excluded. Of course the main focus of the chapter (with its focus on retelling the story of God's promise to Abraham) is on the inclusion of the Gentiles. The new thing that God has done in Jesus Christ is actually the fulfilment (as well as the disruption) of all that God has been doing since the time of Abraham. The only basis for inclusion is now faith. This faith is first and foremost the faithful obedience of the Messiah (this

is what Paul means in 3:20 when he speaks of the 'faith of Jesus Christ' which is given to 'all who have faith'). It is this faith that 'has come' so that we are 'no longer under the power of a disciplinarian' (3:25). For Paul, Gentiles are now included in the story of God's purposes because of Jesus Christ and their believing response, and *on no other basis*.

It is crucial to note, however, that God's inclusive story is not limited to issues of ethnic identity. In his famous, but often misunderstood, closing argument in Galatians 3, Paul suggests strongly that the story also reorientates and thus re-creates social distinction and gender difference. The key is baptism. 3P:27-28 are very likely a baptismal formula, recited over or by the candidate at the moment of baptism as a way of reminding them that they were about to leave the old world behind and enter into the reality of God's new world (see also 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:9-11). In baptism they enter into that great story of God's gracious, inclusive love, which makes them (and us) righteous through Christ's faithfulness and our response of faith, through baptism. *And if*



*the story of God's salvation bends towards inclusivity, then the life of a baptized Christian and of the community in Christ, must lean in the same direction.*

These verses, which in so many ways sum up the main tenets of Paul's theology as a whole, offer us a new vision of human identity, Christian community and transformed society. We must remember that in Galatia the issues of slave-free person or male-female relationships was not at issue. Yet, in including them, Paul is reminding the Galatians and us that God's inclusive story moves beyond the focal issue of Jews and Gentiles in the Church. The story is about how we handle difference and diversity in every aspect of human life and community.

These verses describe the new creation that God is making (see also 2 Corinthians 5:17), of which the church is the visible expression. And it is in the whole area of gender difference that this aspect comes to the fore. As Paul mentions the third 'pair' in 3:28 he shifts language from 'neither ... nor' to 'neither ... and'. The phrase 'male and female' is a deliberate allusion to the creation story itself, picking up the language of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1:27. Of course Paul does not mean that gender difference is obliterated (any more than he thinks that ethnic or social distinctions are erased) through baptism. Christians are not androgynous (new) creatures. But our common baptism in Christ, as male and female, does constitute the

obliteration of dominance of one gender over another. In God's inclusive story, gender is not a decisive issue.

Now Paul does not go on to draw the implications of all this out in detail. In fact there is evidence from elsewhere in his letters that (in the cases of male-female and slave-free relations) he struggled himself to follow the logic of his own argument. But in the end, the thing that should shape our handling of the whole question of the relationship between male and female in the church is not Paul's 'answer' but God's story. It is this story that enabled the church to see that, on the subject of slavery, Paul's answer and God's 'story' stood in some tension, and the story of God's inclusion won out. Women and men are children of God by faith, baptized into Christ, jointly heirs of the promise given to Abraham. Embodying this vision, living out this story in the church is not easy. But if we take Galatians 3 seriously, there is about as much justification for excluding women from ministry within the church as there is for excluding Gentiles or refusing to 'sit under the ministry' of descendants of slavery. As we are reminded elsewhere in this issue: we ordain women because we baptize girls. This is the direction in which the inclusive story of God unavoidably leads us. It commits us to working, praying and campaigning and to changing our language, our assumptions, our expectations - so that women come to their full equality with men in Christ.

And we should bear in mind that, if and when women achieve full equality within the church and in the world that is the ultimate object of God's gracious love, there will be more work to do, as we continue to work out its implications for church and world. What would it mean for the inexorable logic of God's inclusive story to work itself out in us, among us and through us? Where will God lead us next?

<sup>1</sup>For the idea that Paul's theology has its roots in the story of God's action in Christ see Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (2nd edn., *Biblical Resource Series*; Grand Rapids, Cambridge / Deaborn: Eerdmans / Dove, 2002) and Bruce W. Longenecker (ed.), *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville / London: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (*Studies in the New Testament and its World*; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 117. Martyn's commentary on the letter is the definitive interpretation of its apocalyptic dimensions: J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997).

<sup>3</sup>See King's last Sunday sermon 'Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution' in Martin Luther King Jr, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 272. Sometimes King referred to the 'arch of history' and bending towards 'freedom'. The line has recently been taken up by Senator Barack Obama in his Presidential campaign.



# We Ordain Women Because We Baptize Girls

a sermon on Galatians 3:27-29

by Chuck Poole

“Something there is that does not love a wall, that wants it down,” wrote Robert Frost, leaving us to wonder exactly what that something is that so opposes a wall. For one possible answer, we might see Paul; specifically, what Paul said to the Galatians in chapter three, verses 27-29. In Galatians 3:27-29, Paul tells us something that does not love a wall. In Paul’s mouth, the something that wants walls down is water. Not just any water, though. Paul is talking about the swift, strong, deep, division-drowning water of baptism. Indeed, rarely has anyone thrown such cold water on such old walls as Paul did when he wrote, *“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”*

One imagines that Paul’s words about baptism made quite a splash in Galatia. The idea that the walls of race, class and gender are washed away in the water of baptism ran counter to the conventional wisdom of Paul’s world, conventional wisdom that is captured in a popular “men-only” prayer which went like this: “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who hast not made me a Gentile. Blessed art thou, O Lord Our God, who hast not made me a slave. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who hast not made me a woman.” What Paul told the Galatians was that, in the water of baptism, those divisions are swept away.<sup>1</sup> *“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”* Paul told the church at Galatia that they could not embrace the water of baptism while also holding onto the walls of division. Their neat, settled, familiar categories of race, class and gender had been washed away in the water of baptism.

If that’s what Galatians 3:27-29 meant



for them then, what does it mean for us, now? I believe it means here what it meant there: In the water of baptism, our culture’s walls of division are washed away. Race, class, and gender remain as human realities, but for those who have been baptized they can no longer be relevant to who’s in or who’s out, who leads by serving or who serves by leading. Men are still male and women are still female, but in the baptized family of faith, in the church of Jesus Christ, it just doesn’t matter. That’s what Galatians 3:27-29 means.

So why have some baptized Christians so steadfastly maintained their denial of certain roles in the church to people based on nothing more than the fact they happened to have been born female? I think they would say, “Because of what the Bible says.” After all, in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, the Bible says, “Women should keep silent in the church. They are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate. If there is anything they want to know they should ask their husbands at home. It is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” And then there is 1 Timothy 2:11 and 12, which says, “Let

a woman learn in silence, in full submission. I permit no woman to teach a man.” So, there you go. That’s what the Bible says. End of story. Right? Well, not exactly! The same Bible that gives us 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, also gives us Acts 2:17-18, which says, “Thus says the Lord, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” Here, God specifically includes daughters and sisters as preachers and proclaimers. Then, of course, there is 1 Corinthians 11:5, “Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head.” Obviously, Paul is expecting women to help lead worship, otherwise why would he establish a dress-code for women worship leaders?

Let’s be honest. Here, as in other cases, the Bible speaks with more than one voice. (*That’s why we must always interpret any single passage of scripture in conversation with, not in isolation from, the rest of the Bible.*) When it comes to the roles of women in the church, the Bible is in a tie. (With itself!)



*"But what about the gospels? Didn't Jesus pick only men for the twelve apostles?"* Yes, but weren't the first voices to proclaim the most important message ever told all women and only women, on the morning of the resurrection? And what about Luke 8:3, which lists the many women who went about with Jesus and the apostles? (And, on a much deeper level, those who would exclude women from ministry on the basis of the Bible probably don't want to call too much attention to the four gospels. After all, the gospels say that we must give to everyone who begs from us (Matthew 5:42), we must not resist evildoers (Matthew 5:39), we must not own more than one coat as long as anyone has no coat (Luke 3:11), we must make loans without seeking repayment (Luke 6:35), and we must sell our possessions and give the proceeds to the poor if we want to follow Jesus. (Luke 14:33). I know many people who deny women a place in ministry on the grounds that they "believe the Bible," but who dismiss, with a wink and a nod, the most radical sayings of Jesus, which leaves one to wonder how a person can use two or three verses of Scripture to exclude someone from serving God, while simultaneously ignoring many verses of Scripture (just because they don't fit the conventional wisdom of North American culture.)

Let's just be honest about all this. The Bible does not speak with one seamless, homogenized, unanimous voice on the question of the roles of women in the church. If all we have to go on are the words on the page, then the Bible is pretty much in a tie. (With itself!)

So, what breaks the tie? For me, the tie is broken by the boundary-shattering, wall-removing, fence-climbing, gate-opening Spirit of Christ. But if the Spirit of Jesus is too subjective, if we must limit ourselves to that which is written in black-and-white on the pages of Scripture, I would say that the tiebreaker is Galatians 3:27-29, which tells us that we cannot embrace our baptism while also maintaining



distinctions in the church between male and female.

Based on all of that, I offer this modest proposal: If anyone should ever ask why your church ordains women, just tell them that, based on a careful reading of the Bible, your church discovered that if you were going to refuse ordination to women, you'd first have to refuse baptism to girls because Galatians 3 says that once a person has been baptized, their gender is no more an issue in the church than the color of their eyes or their hair or their skin. Tell them that based on a careful reading of Galatians 3:27-29, your church ordains men *and* women because your church baptizes boys *and* girls.

<sup>1</sup> *This part of this sermon was spawned for me by John Timmer's "Owning up to Baptism."*

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# Sorted

by Jonathan Mutton

"Dad, can you help me with my homework?" (Ah, you already know I'm male, not a DINKY and probably Gen X.) "I don't understand what I'm expected to do: we have to write about all the different coloured people; my teacher says that red people react and have feelings for what they see." I turn round from the computer and start fiddling with a data stick.

"I know what you're going to do now, you're going to give me a lecture, you always fiddle with something when you're explaining something." "There you are, you react to what you see," I reply. "Yes but everybody does."

"No it probably means you are a red type of person, we don't all react emotionally to what we see, that's the point; we're all different."

The first task we were given to do was name everything and we are still at it. God asked us to name all the animals. The sorting continues, only with most of our attention on us; we have got to know ourselves quite well after all this time. Psychometric testing is used to sort potential employees from those who wouldn't fit what you wanted them to do. Professor McGonagal has a sorting hat while other teachers use learning styles to help form lesson plans. And speaking of hats, we are red, yellow, black, green, blue, or white; my son, aged ten is being taught Edward de Bono's thinking skills theory. It is one of many ways of assessing our team type. From colours to letters, Y.U.P.P.I.E., D.I.N.K.Y., S.I.N.B.A.D., C.H.A.V., then 16 combinations of I or E, S or N, F or T and J or P that make up the Myers Briggs Type Indicators.

We can also be arranged by what are sometimes called the seven redemptive gifts of prophet, servant, teacher, exhorter, giver, ruler and mercy giver; all very helpful for self understanding. How about The Five Love Languages, different ways we like to be loved? We can add to the mix ethnicity, caste or class standing, upbringing, education, generational

experience, sexual orientation, marital status, age, intelligence, political persuasion; an anthropologist's dream.

We spend a lot of time sorting out who's best, who needs help, who could do better, from GCSEs to professional exams and the local football league to the Olympics, or this year's Rugby World Cup; elaborate ways of classifying humans into winners and losers.

And then there is gender Women and Men, Mars or Venus, equal and different....ahhh, why can't we just be people?

Why did God ask us to do this? Is it because the animals needed to know what they were to answer to, Millie, Arnie, Oscar, and Scrappy Doogle? Or because He couldn't think up any names for himself? What happens when we name something?

First we have to think about it; every new parent spends hours thinking about what to call their child, well mostly (lists can be found in books or Hello magazine). I have been told that Jonathan was the name of a childhood friend my mum had who sadly



drowned when he was ten; Peyton my middle name, was the surname of a distant relative who was a barmaid in Shrewsbury. Mum chose it in case I wanted to use another name instead of - Mutton (haggard old sheep) which describes the fact that the other half of my family were sheep farmers in Cornwall.

Names given to pets, houses, streets, churches, ships, businesses, cars, communities all say something about that thing, but also the person or people who have named it. We have been required to take time valuing and considering, giving thought to what that person or thing is all about.

The huge range of human diversity is to be celebrated. Announcing the new South African president Nelson Mandela in 1994, Desmond Tutu said



"We of many cultures, languages and races have become one nation. We are the Rainbow People of God." God has placed something unique and amazing in each individual. We are to appreciate and listen to our varied expressions of our personalities and gender and our stories.

If we want to change the world, we need to start valuing it and celebrating it in all its incredible diversity.

Having sorted, ordered and pigeonholed everybody (INFP, Team player, Teacher) we are however in grave danger of making assumptions, for we are not robots that are programmed to particular equations. And this is where everyone gets riled, cos I'm me, not a series of letters or numbers, someone who is, has a soul, does my own thing, and thinks my own thoughts; possibly in a predictable way but they are mine.

Sorting has been used for destructive purposes. Ethnic cleansing and discrimination continue through the policies of the likes of Hendrik Verwoerd and Jonathan Mutton. We discriminate against those who are not like us, and especially those who are only just not like us; this is due to the effort involved and the perceived threat to our own identity. We make short hand assessments, quickly pigeon holing people and totally failing to meet the God-created person. The result is that people are undervalued, misinterpreted, ignored and despised; this leads to prisons over subscribed with disproportionate sections of the community and ghettos but also the simple social clique.

Sorting only helps us so far. We need to move from talking

about us as a God-created species with the initial task of naming to our purpose, which is to have a relationship with God. It is as His dearly loved children that He wants to know us and for each of us to know each other, siblings; you and me, His dearly loved children.

*Jonathan Mutton is a member of the Incarnate Network steering group, a member at North Winchester Community Church, until recently working for Kids Church in Andover. The photo of Jonathan working in his shed was taken by Philip Mutton.*

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# 'That Joke Isn't Funny Any More'

by Adam Eakins



Adam is Student Pastor at Broadmead Baptist Church where he mainly leads a fresh expression of church called Quench. He plans to start training in September to be a Baptist Minister which his two children are not sure is a good idea!!! He is married to Karen who is a Social Worker with the NSPCC and also has a dog who does very little in the way of housework. He is a happy man when given a glass of red wine, a good book and listening to anything by The Smiths or Billy Bragg. He also loves cricket but who doesn't?

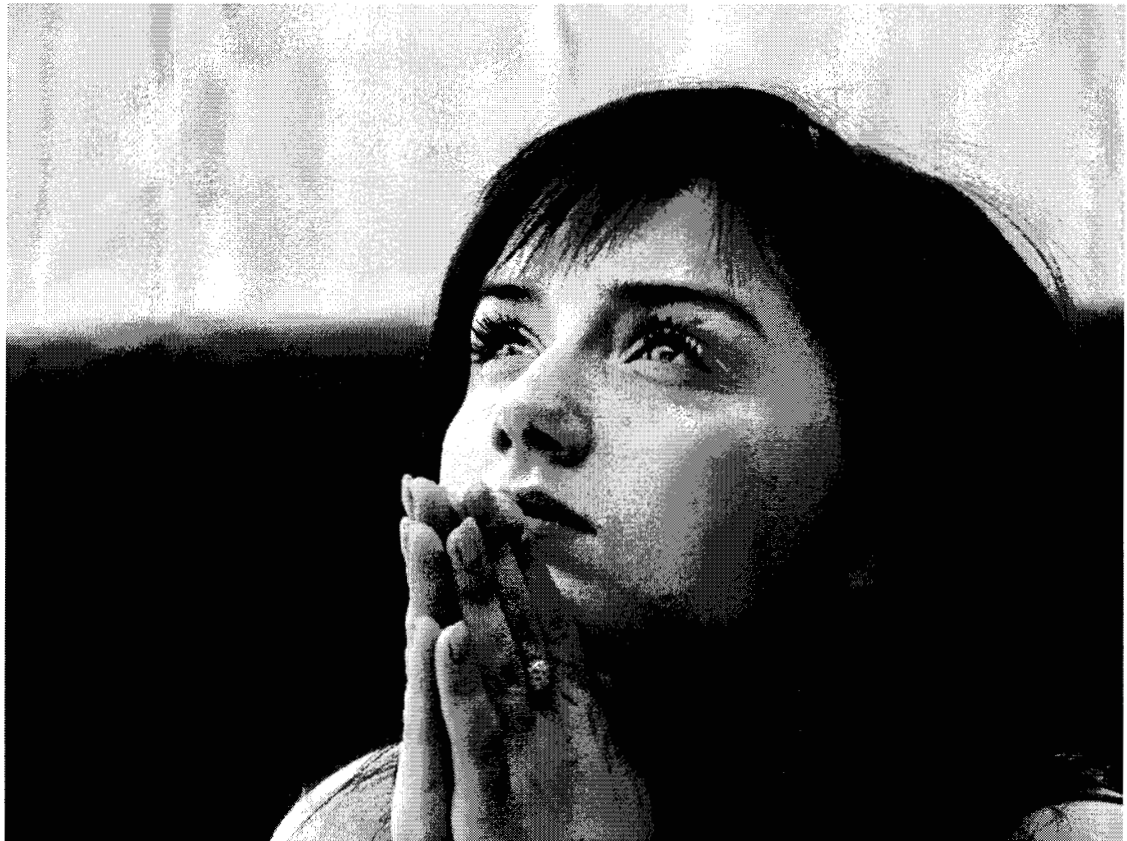
The joke goes, 'where do you stand on women in the church? Don't stand on them - sit on them - on their laps'. It's not especially funny and probably offensive, most likely to have been told by a man. A man writing about issues relating to women in ministry is probably not a helpful thing and I hope this issue of Talk Magazine is not dominated by men but allows the voices of women to be heard on this issue of gender and leadership.

own experience when relating to the issue of gender, ministry and leadership. My aim is just for them to raise questions and thoughts.

I grew up in a church which took a very strong viewpoint on women in leadership. They biblically defended their position especially using the writings of Paul. However, this didn't rest easy with me. There appeared to be some inconsistencies, the Church

to experience it.

On arriving in Northampton as a student in 1990 I did the usual tour of churches in the town arriving at a Baptist Church because they were offering a student tea. The service that evening was the beginning of a new series on women and leadership. Here for me was completely different teaching and a church leader willing to wrestling with the issue head on. I decided to hang around and



However, as I sit down to put pen to paper (actually, fingers to the keyboard) I am really struggling to know what to write and feel that if I seek to write on this issue I would not be writing from a position of experience but maybe ignorance. Therefore I am just going to recount my

sent people abroad to lead churches and all of them were women. It seemed that women where unable to lead the men in the church in England but we, as a church, were quite willing to send women abroad to lead whole churches as long as the men in the UK church didn't have

have been here ever since. Here a new idea to me was laid out. Since the Fall of man the world had seen inequalities in relation to gender. However, when Jesus came we entered a new time when according to Paul (again) there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female,



for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).

So the proposal is that Jesus came to reverse the effects of the Fall and one of those areas was gender inequalities. Therefore as we see equality occurring in different areas of life we are seeing the outcome of Kingdom of God at work. Again, maybe you agree or disagree?

I have served in a number of leadership teams and most of these have had women within them. All the teams have had very talented individuals, whether male or female, who have added a great deal to the team, given direction for the vision and each team was the richer for it. I have been led well by both women and men and have come to the conclusion that issues relating to gifting, character and calling are far more important than gender. However it's important not to see people as gender neutral as that is part of who God created us to be and

it is important that men are men and women are women, whatever that means!

There is one thing that most of the women who I have worked with have in common. Their pathway into leadership positions was much harder than their male counter-parts. They had received far less encouragement, have faced more obstacles and prejudice. However, they had made it but what about those who didn't because of attitudes still found in some of our churches today.

I had the privilege of meeting many emerging leaders during my five years with Joshua Generation. The one question that I could guarantee to be asked by women was, 'where they could go to find women in leadership who would be willing to mentor and guide them?' They were struggling to find role models who would be willing to invest in and encourage them. This was mainly to do with the lack of women leaders who were visible to

younger leaders. It was very difficult here to advise people about the best way to find a female mentor and maybe there is a role for Mainstream in enabling this to happen so that in the future women who sense the calling of God on them as leaders would find other women who are already in leadership who would journey with them.

These are some of my reflections on the issue of gender. We still probably have a long way to go but I guess it starts with us valuing each other as God does and allowing people to lead according to gifting, calling and character, seeking first the Kingdom of God.





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](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk). She is also a half-time Mission Advisor for church planting and evangelism.

# Tough questions for all our churches

by Juliet Kilpin

**H**ere's a little quiz for you. It's a multiple choice.

1. Why are there proportionately more female ministers in the inner city than male ministers?
  - a. Women have more guts than men
  - b. Women are less worried about money than men
  - c. Inner city churches are more liberal
  - d. Inner city churches are more desperate

## **a. Women have more guts than men**

If you have chosen 'a' then you are probably a woman!

It is a common perception (misconception?) that urban ministry is tough and only the most courageous can hack it. So why is it that more male ministers choose the so-called 'easier' locations in the suburbs rather than the inner city? And why is it that so few male ministerial students preparing for settlement prioritise urban communities on their profile? And why do so many of them say that they would consider it only if their wives would let them?

As someone who has recently moved out of the inner city after nineteen years I certainly wouldn't criticise someone for putting their family first, but I do sometimes wonder if some of our male ministers use their wives as a shield protecting them from the onslaught of difficult pastorates.

There are of course men who have prioritised the urban

and they stand out in a crowd for having done so, and I honour all that they have given and what they stand for.

I do sometimes think that the Salvation Army have one over us in that all married officers are trained together and, because it is an army people, have to be prepared to go wherever they are sent. Officers used to find out on the day they graduated where they were going, and would have three days to pack and depart! Our Baptist ecclesiology might not allow

this? Are women less worried about money? I know I am less organised with money than my husband, but does that mean all women are less worried about it? Who knows? But the repercussions of this is obviously that there are more grant-aided churches in urban communities, and women seem to be more prepared to go there.

Is it that men are conditioned to provide security for their family and bring in a steady wage? Or is it that some women in these situations



that, but I do sometimes wonder if ministers should covenant to a certain number of years in the inner city during their ministry. If every minister gave three years alone, that would make such a huge impact not only on our inner cities but on the character and experience of our pastors.

## **b. Women are less worried about money than men**

Research has shown that there are more female ministers in our grant-aided churches than male. Why is

are backed up by husbands with greater income who can support their risky ministry?

## **c. Inner city churches are more liberal**

It has often been said that inner city churches are more liberal. Having been in the inner city for so long I am now convinced that it isn't out of choice but it is because our urban communities face issues earlier than elsewhere. The question of whether you should marry people who live together or who are divorced, or dedicate a child



born out of wedlock is not a new question to most urban churches nowadays which are today grappling with whether you should let a drug addict lead a house-group or an alcoholic lead communion, or whether you should shop an illegal immigrant to the police, (only one of our marriages in Shadwell over ten years was not a re-marriage).

So are there more women because the inner cities are more liberal theologically, or is it because they are more forward thinking theologically? Or is it simply because there is so much else to think about that they really can't be bothered to waste precious time on the whole debate and just want to get on with being a relevant Christian presence in our forever-changing urban communities with those who are prepared to get involved?

#### **d. Inner city churches are more desperate**

A few years ago a friend of mine was on the settlement list. One suburban church he went to look at had an interview process on a par with that of a Managing Director for a corporate company. At the same time a church in London which was looking for a minister appointed the first person prepared to come and preach with a view...a woman.

Is there some truth in the fact that because so few ministers are prepared to look at inner city churches that when someone does they are sometimes snapped up in an instant? And is there some truth in the fact that whilst some suburban churches are happy to recommend female church members to the Ministerial Recognition Committee, when it comes to looking for their own minister would not consider a female themselves?



Perhaps it's not that some urban churches are more desperate but that some suburban churches are just a little too choosy for comfort and church has become just a little too much like a business.

#### **Conclusion**

In truth I don't know the answer to the question of why there are proportionately more female ministers in the inner city, but there certainly are. There are lots of questions here which I would urge the ministry department to invest some serious research into. The shocking truth is that in a denomination which has been ordaining female ministers for eighty years we are still way behind many of our counterparts. Even almost half of Anglican ordinands are now female, and they have only been ordaining deacons since the mid 80s and priests since the mid 90s.

Whilst our statistics supposedly look like they are improving we still need to ask tough questions about our Baptist culture and why only a shocking 10%

of our ministers are female, why it is still such a huge step for women to go to college, (I was asked if I was a man in a skirt at my interview...happy days!), why there are so few female regional ministers and why so many female ministers end up in roles outside the local church. There are many things which make me proud to be a Baptist, but I have to admit that this is not one of them...in fact I find it all a little embarrassing, don't you?



#### **Have you got balls?**

Jugglers needed to balance the highly challenging and incredibly rewarding demands of urban ministry. See [www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk) for details.

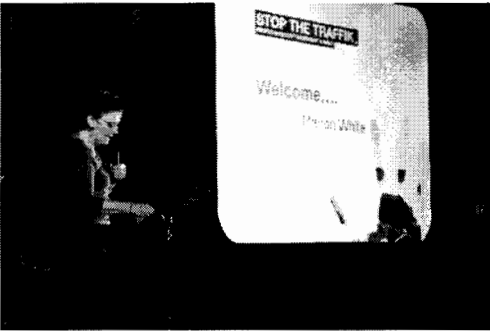
# Inspiring people to Stop The Traffik

by Marion White

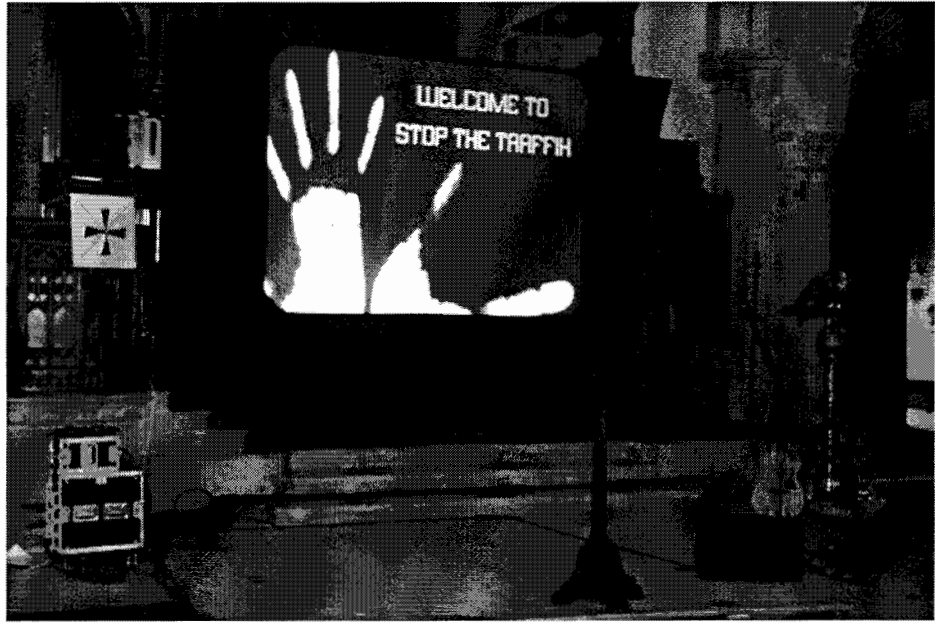
It seems strange now to be looking back on fourteen months of planning and preparation for the Stop The Traffik Tour, including the time spent in Mumbai. It has been an amazing journey and we have seen God's hand on all of us, and on the whole project in so many ways.

There were definitely times when I was tempted to give up, and where my faith has been very weak. As I look back on this period of time I am so grateful to God for all the support and encouragement to keep going from the rest of the Team and many others. It was particularly special to be given the offering towards Stop The Traffik at this year's Conference in January.

On a practical front we covered all the costs of doing the Tour with at least ten of us involved, plus having a Tour Manager, two sound engineers, and various musicians also with us on the road, and paying for the venues. Some of the venues were given to us, like Manchester Town Hall, or charged very little which was a real confirmation of God's affirmation.



More importantly we raised £10,000 towards projects run by Oasis India that we visited in Mumbai. We saw well over 200 children sponsored during the Tour, through Compassion UK, which removes them from the risk of being trafficked into domestic slavery in Haiti. We were also able to give an extra £2,000 to Compassion to go to a community project in Haiti. We have given to some of the local projects in the UK who are working with



trafficked victims and we have money left in the bank which we could possibly use for making a resource for secondary schools in the UK, but as yet that is a work in progress. I would appreciate any input from educationalists who may read this magazine.

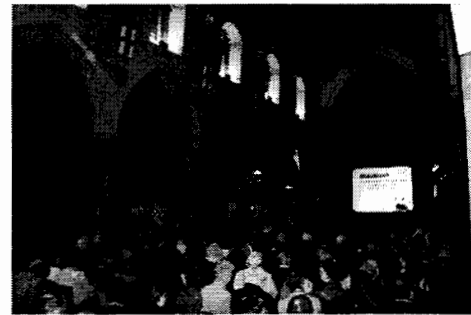
We have done many radio interviews, made many contacts and learnt a lot. I guess most of us were not fully aware of the number of UK girls who are being groomed, introduced to drugs and trafficked for prostitution around cities in the UK.

I think the greatest link we have made is with the UK Human Trafficking Centre which is a police initiative, but combines many other agencies, like Immigration, Customs, Serious Organised Crime Agency etc, set up in October 06, based in Sheffield, but covers the whole of the UK. They sent a representative to be interviewed by us at all of the 11 venues. We have appreciated seeing their passion and dedication and having their experience and knowledge as part of the Tour. This link with the police happened in a very 'coincidental' way and we are continuing in discussion with them to see if there are ways we could work together in the future. We are also praying that our Christian example will continue to challenge and

encourage them all.

We based the Tour on the fact that every person could make a difference and our prayer is that we will know whether it is right for us to continue, in any way, with what has been started and that many others will begin initiatives that will, in time, help to draw to an end this whole travesty of human trafficking.

Songs of Praise on May 13<sup>th</sup> featured my brother, Paul Field, being



interviewed and singing one of the songs from Cargo, the musical about slavery past and present that he has written, and also an interview with Dorrie, my granddaughter, about her involvement with Stop the Traffik.

Dorrie is now just 15 and she was seriously impacted during her time in Mumbai, particularly when she came face to face with Bhavani, a girl of the same age as herself who we met in a

Rescue Foundation that we visited. She had recently been rescued from a brothel where she had been since being abducted on her way home from school at the age of 11. Since then Dorrie has talked to two Year 9 classes at her school, done one school assembly, with a little help from Granny, and is about to speak at a Churches Together event in the village of Duffield, near Derby, where she lives. The school has been so supportive and Dorrie spent time selling the Stop the Traffik keys and raised over £200 from the pupils there. Rob and I reckon that we will



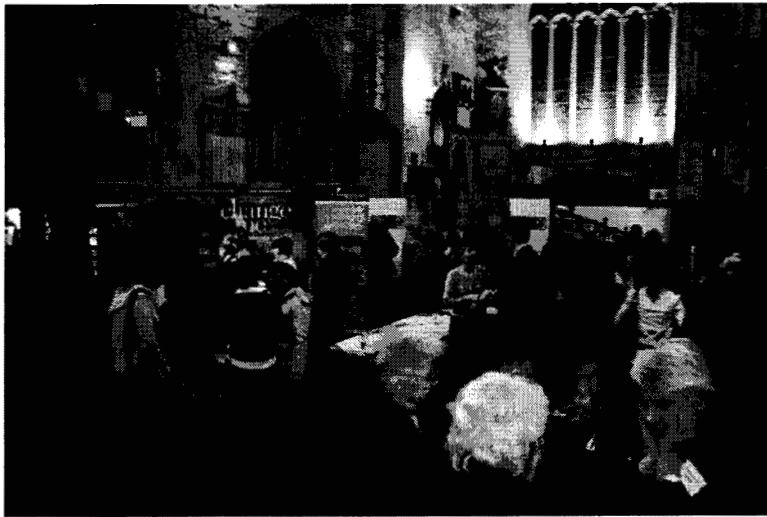
memorable time of seeing the culmination of so many hopes and dreams, blood, sweat and tears, of so much help and encouragement from so many, but particularly the incredible commitment and support

from so many members of my own family, not only my children and grandchildren, but also brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and some great friends.

What is exceedingly clear is that God has honoured the initial vision of setting something in motion, like that pebble thrown into a pond and causing ripples, and seeing others taking it up which is indeed happening and is a great joy and encouragement.

Just like the twelve men praying and planning in the back of a printing shop 200 years ago, we can make a difference!

Don't forget, if you haven't yet signed the Global Declaration Card that goes to the UN in November please go to the Stop the Traffik website and sign it online. [www.stopthetraffik.com](http://www.stopthetraffik.com)



be able to retire soon and leave all the speaking to Dorrie! She said that she actually ran out of time during her last class talk (an hour in duration) so she definitely takes after her grandfather!

Paul, my brother, is now going around the UK performing Cargo so do go to his website [paul@paulfield.com/cargo](http://paul@paulfield.com/cargo) if you want to see if he is coming to your neck of the woods, or if you would like him to come. He tells me that he is hoping to perform Cargo at Gatwick Airport, a place where girls have been trafficked, which I think is due to the combined efforts of the Churches Together in Horley!

The final evening of the Tour was a



# Will Women Priests 'Save the Church from Sinking'?

by Simon Jones

**D**avid Voas is one of the most savvy and intelligent of church-watching sociologists in the UK. Author of a string of stimulating papers over the past few years, his is a voice worth listening to.

An article in *Sociology*, co-authored with Alasdair Crockett, used data from the British Household Panel Survey, to show that faith is declining as fast as church attendance - a finding that contradicts the view held by Grace Davie among others that there is a great pool of people who believe but do not belong to a church for one reason or another.

The BHPS data is not gathered to track religious affiliation but questions on religion are occasionally included and provide tracking data spanning over a decade.

Voas has coined some great phrases to explain his findings. He spoke of churches having a 'half-life' of one generation. 'If both parents attend church at least monthly, there is a 46% chance that the child will do so,' they say. 'The generation now in middle age has produced children who are half as likely to attend church' as they are.

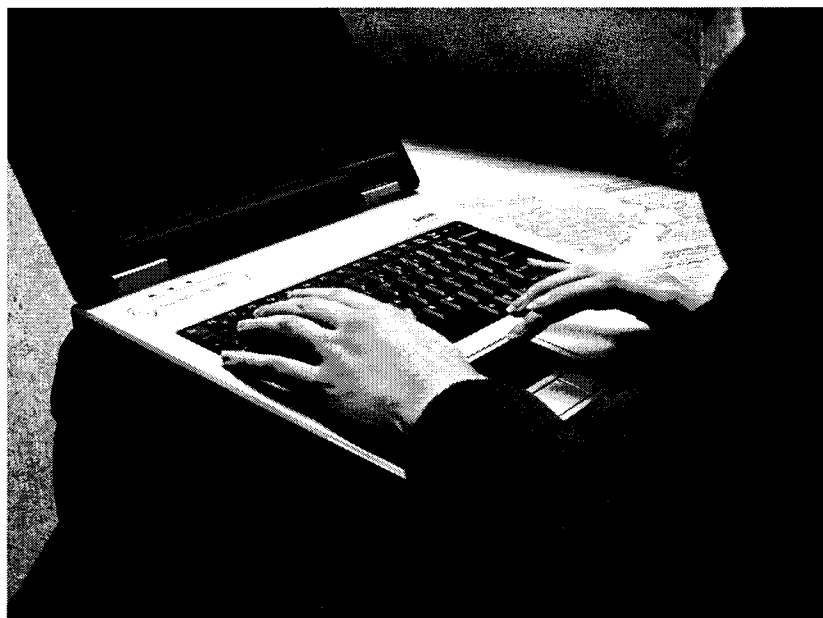
In another article, he speaks of a culture infected by 'spiritual entropy' making it harder for parents to pass their faith on to their children.

Voas is currently looking at the impact of women priests on the Church of England in an Economic and Social Research Council funded project. And here's what they say about his findings in a recent progress report. It makes for fascinating reading.

Whether or not ordained women have had a significant impact over the past decade, they will save the Church from sinking in the future. Voas says:

"Nearly half of all priests ordained in recent years have been women. Close to a quarter of male parish priests are 60 or older, and their average age is 54. Without women, the pulpits would become as de-populated as the pews in the years to come."

His comments are based on analysis of new statistics on women ministers from two sources: the Church of England itself, and the English Church Census 2005, conducted by the independent charity Christian Research, and substantially funded by the ESRC.



In a recent interview in the Catholic Herald, the Archbishop, Dr Rowan Williams, whilst emphasising that he still believed the Church of England had been right to create women priests, was quoted as saying: "I don't think it has transformed or renewed the Church of England in spectacular ways. Equally, I don't think it has corrupted or ruined the Church of England in spectacular ways."

But according to Voas, this apparent failure on the part of women clergy is not surprising. He said: "The Church is far from being an equal opportunity employer. The glass ceiling is shatterproof: women are not yet allowed to become bishops, and they

are far more likely to be 'second class' clergy.

"Most of the men who became priests in 2005 went into paid, 'stipendiary' ministry, while most of the women are in voluntary posts - 'non-stipendiary' or 'ordained local ministers'." And Voas points out that the Anglican Church is not alone in giving women the least desirable jobs. He says: "Well over half of women ministers in all denominations serve in rural areas, with very few found in the flagship city centre churches. The larger the church, the more likely it is that a man will be put in charge."

The English Church Census found no women at all leading churches in the largest category - those with 300 or more attending on a typical Sunday. "Holy Trinity Brompton - home of the Alpha course - is an example: it has eight clergy, all of them male." Churches are traditional institutions, and tradition gives women a raw deal, Voas suggests.

"Old-fashioned Anglo-Catholics don't want women to be priests, and so the plum jobs mostly go to men. At the other end of

the theological spectrum, evangelicals tend to be patriarchal, so the growing ethnic minority and Pentecostal churches typically have male leaders. Women are left with the dregs. Their congregations are often small, rural, old or liberal: the kind of churches that need nursing care."

Ouch!

You can follow this up at the following website [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2006/november/women\\_priests.aspx?ComponentId=17521&SourcePageId=13404](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2006/november/women_priests.aspx?ComponentId=17521&SourcePageId=13404)

# Reflecting on the Journey So Far

by Kate Lees

As I graduate from Spurgeon's College at the age of 33, I think back to the Summer of 1992; the Summer of my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and my critical 'A' level results. I remember at the time having little belief and even less hope of passing those exams. I knew the expectation was to progress through the levels of education, to get a good job, to settle down and to give my parents, among others, peace of mind. I knew this was the path that all young people were expected to follow. I knew in many ways this was the ideal way of life, but somehow I also knew that this was not going to be me.

As I found myself walking away from the euphoria of others that day, knowing that, once again, my results weren't good enough, I don't remember being surprised. I simply remember turning to my friend, as we stood outside the college, and saying, "Do you know what I am going to do now? I'm going to work for God". I don't really know what I meant when I said those words, whether I saw this as a viable option, or a career choice, or really the only way left to go, but I distinctly remember saying them and I also remember that when I said them, it felt good and it felt right.

Looking back it could be said that after my 'A' level results I followed them wholeheartedly. A year on an Oasis Frontline team, two years with the Oasis Trust Evangelism and Schools team, and nine years as a youth worker at Herne Hill Baptist Church would seem to prove this to be true. However, the truth is that I never saw it that way. In all honesty, up until my acceptance to train as a Baptist minister I saw what I did as an undetected accident. I felt I was not good enough to do anything else, that somehow I had smuggled myself into this

line of work and if I kept my head down, maybe no one would notice that I wasn't supposed to be there.

This is not to say that I didn't enjoy the jobs I found myself in. In the most part I loved them, especially working in the Church, I saw this as my life and it was so exciting for me. In all honesty I could think of no other job that I desired to do even if I had got the best 'A' level results in the world. However, despite this, deep down I was always waiting for the moment when someone would find out that actually I wasn't supposed to be there. That I was a fraud, that I wasn't qualified and it was about time I left. Looking back I think I was always waiting for someone to inform me that I couldn't do the job I loved doing.

It wasn't until I went to Spurgeon's College in 2004 that I was challenged about how I felt. It was at Spurgeon's that people started to inquire as to why I wasn't training for Baptist Ministry. I had decided to study because I needed more depth and challenge and was surprised that instead of being exposed as a fraud, I was challenged to take another step with God. This was puzzling for me. Why wasn't I training to be a minister? Why if I loved the Church, loved God, loved 'working for Him' was I not training for a role that enabled me to live out this dream? The most honest answer I could find was that I was scared; I didn't think I could do it, I had never thought I could do it, and I knew I wasn't good enough. I was frightened.

Questions whirled around in my head, how did I know if I was called? Was my life good enough to enter into ministry?

Should I not have had a 'sign' from God? Was I simply entertaining these thoughts because I was unable to do anything else? Why would God possibly choose me to do His work? I remember the doubt and questioning well, at times I live with it today, but I also remember the moment my letter of recognition came through the door. I had been interviewed two days before and was waiting to see if the Baptist Union would recognise me to train for ministry.

I was on my own at home when the letter arrived telling me I had been accepted, and I will never forget the moment I opened it. It was as if the words I had spoken on the day of my exam results 12 years before had finally come to pass. I knew God had gently guided me to this point, letting me take tiny step after tiny step until I could accept the call He had given me. It was a moment of clarity that I have never had before or since. It was a moment of confirmation on my life and my role in life that caused me to relax. I knew for the first time, with all my being, that this was what God has always intended me to do.

Of course since that moment life has been harder than ever. In continuing to take steps for God I have found myself doing things I never thought I would ever do. Sitting with people in situations which break my heart and sharing with others at times of great privacy and joy. Training as a Baptist minister has taken me to the end of myself. I often say if I knew it was going to be like this I would never have done it, but then I guess that is why I never knew. I know things will probably get harder as I leave college and step into a new situation. I know as a female minister people will see me in many different ways, a misled woman, a brave woman, a faithful woman, a woman who is stepping outside her role. For me I am simply a woman who has found her place in life and prays that God will give her the strength to live it out each day.



*Kate Lees has recently graduated from Spurgeon's College and is employed as the Assistant Minister at Herne Hill Baptist Church. She is married to Simon and enjoys holidays where she can relax in the sun with a good book and an ice tea.*

# Global Leadership Summit 2007

## Inspiration and Insight for Leaders

by Malcolm Egner

If you're reading this, you are almost certainly a leader. The likelihood is that you also realise that **good** leadership is vital for the local church. You recognise the need to inspire, motivate and equip leaders, and to be inspired, motivated and equipped yourself.

"Lead where you are" an inspirational teaching and training event for all those involved in church leadership - is coming to the UK this Autumn. This Global Leadership Summit (GLS), featuring world-class speakers on key aspects of leadership, is expecting over 3000 leaders to attend the 14 venues across the country.

This is the third year that we will have hosted the GLS here at Rising Brook Baptist Church in Stafford. It is a stunning event, and it has made a huge impact on us in our own lives and in our role in the church. The Summit is based on the premise that the local church truly is the hope of the world. It follows that to be really effective the local church needs good leaders.

GLS focuses on leadership. It is not there to help you be a good counsellor, or to develop your hermeneutics in your preaching (although this may be a useful by-product). It is devoted to developing effective leaders. It's about developing the life of the leader. It's about envisioning and strategising as a leader. It's about how you relate to others as a leader. It's about how your leadership can enable your church to transform your community and to make a real difference in people's lives - in short, to become a 'prevailing' church.

The Summit is at its most effective for a church when the leadership team attend together and work through the inspiring teaching as a group. The event is also very relevant to individuals with leadership positions in business, charities and the community, hence this year's theme: Lead where you are.

The initial Summit takes place in Chicago during the Summer with the highest calibre of speakers from



Richard Curtis

church, business, politics and so on taking part. Previous speakers have included Bill Clinton, Rick Warren and Bono. This year's array of speakers includes Richard Curtis (the inspiration behind Comic Relief and Make Poverty History, and writer of hit TV comedy *The Vicar of Dibley*, as well as box office successes *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*), Jimmy Carter (former US President and Nobel Peace Prize winner), Colin Powell (former US Secretary of State), Bill Hybels and John Ortberg (best-selling authors and pastors), plus a top Harvard Business School professor and a former CEO of Hewlett Packard it oozes with quality! The Summit is beamed out by video link all over the USA. Then in the Autumn (September and October), the eight best and most relevant speakers internationally are selected to be shown at Global Leadership Summits all over the world, on every continent.

Naturally you may be thinking: how can it work by showing DVDs of speakers? That was exactly what I was thinking in the lead up to our first Summit. But I was amazed! It really does work, and it works really well. People respond and react to the screen as if the speaker is there in real life they laugh in the right places, applaud, and engage. In fact it's not that different from a live event with the

speaker being shown on a big screen as well most people watch the screen. Live worship helps to create an atmosphere where people are engaging with God, and a facilitator at each venue helps people to reflect on what they've seen and heard, and to apply it to their own lives and situations. As with anything from Willow Creek, it is to a very high standard.

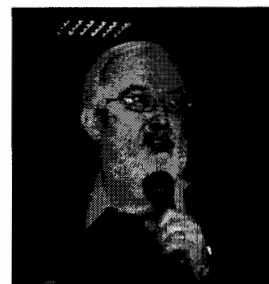
The two day event takes place on a Friday and Saturday (28-29 September or 5-6 October this year). To find out more about your nearest venue and to make bookings check out [www.willowcreek.org.uk](http://www.willowcreek.org.uk) or call the Willow Creek Association on 0845 1300 909. There are discounts for group bookings, and the Early Bird rate continues until the end of August. You can get hold of brochures and information leaflets for your leaders, and also for other churches nearby.

Malcolm Egner (Minister, Rising Brook Baptist Church, Stafford)



# "Can anyone here play the piano better than my wife?"

by Stephen Rand



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

What an interesting question to start a Tearfund weekend conference! The weekend's host thought he was just asking for some help with worship accompaniment. Another colleague, sitting next to me, audibly winced - and was still throbbing with anger when the session finished an hour later. *He* thought his question was a light-hearted way of solving a problem; *she* marked it down as yet another example of the crass insensitivity of male Christian leadership.

A few years later I remember the moment I discovered - after being an elder for some time, mark you - that

- a) not only did the trust deeds forbid women members to vote on matters of finance and property
- b) not only had the church not been informed of this significant fact
- c) not only did the elder who did know make a private count of men only votes when relevant to ensure that the trust deed rules were not violated
- d) not only for years had it been considered too complicated to change the trust deed, and therefore right to continue with this remarkable subterfuge
- e) but it was not thought that many, if any, of the women would have any problem with this arrangement.

Then there was the woman I got to know because of Clive Calver's insistence that Spring Harvest's main seminars should always include a woman in the speaking team. She was an excellent, gifted communicator - and recently we invited her to speak at Kairos. At some point that morning I discovered that the leaders of the Baptist Church where she was on the staff had asked for her visit to us not to be included on their Sunday notice-

sheet they did not want the church to know she was preaching.

Years ago I attended a mission agency conference where the issue of women in leadership was the main topic. That was where I discovered that there were those (men) who could argue, apparently seriously, that the Bible taught that women could be allowed to speak to a mixed audience on a Wednesday but not on a Sunday.

Now in some ways it is quite impertinent of me to tell these stories, because while they made me angry I did not feel the pain; empathy is not easy for English white middle-class men. Women, especially those who have been anywhere near thinking of getting involved in Baptist ministry, will almost certainly be able to multiply these stories ad infinitum and ad nauseam.

I have only dared to recount them myself because I realised a long time ago that if men just let these things pass, things do not change, and we would continue - by silence and default if not by intention - to hamstring the church by seriously hampering the ministry opportunities of over half its membership, and maintaining a significant barrier to effective evangelism among women.

So just to be provocative, here's a short list of some aspects of this issue that frustrate me most about the difficulties Baptist churches have in allowing women to take God-given responsibility in leadership:

1. For people that believe in the 'priesthood of all believers' we seem often to have a curiously high view of ordination - and in practice we therefore believe in the 'ministership' of men. We partly get into difficulty because the denominational default is the minister who is the preacher who is the leader.

So endless hours are spent discussing whether a woman can be the sole leader, rather than addressing the more significant issue: how are we going to develop shared leadership - of men and women - so that it is practiced by leaders, understood by members, releases gifts, transforms the church and impacts the community?

2. Mainstream has a particular opportunity to actively counteract the all-too-readily accepted assumption that truly Biblical churches believe that leadership is male, and those with women in leadership have compromised with the spirit of the age. The opposite is true. But it needs to be said. Mainstream regional groups can help to get the theology straight; men who are preaching need to preach it and men in leadership need to make every effort to practice it.
3. Inclusive language in Scripture is not about political correctness for its own sake; it is about making sure we have an accurate contemporary translation. Inclusive language in church is not about political correctness, it is about a right and proper and holy sensitivity. If political correctness means trying to avoid unnecessary offence and speaking to and about people with words that demonstrate to congregation and community your respect for them - men and women, white and black, young and old - as human beings made in the image of God, then not only am I all for political correctness, I think God is too: we are talking about basic kingdom values.

And let's not argue that because not every woman has a problem with this issue there is not a problem: not every slave wanted to be free.

## Mainstream Growth in the Baptist Union of Wales.

Mainstream Wales was launched in January. It's come into being chiefly through the growing frustration amongst some leaders who discovered that by and large they were having to travel, often beyond Wales, to find meaningful relationships and networks. What Mainstream offers namely being committed to Word and Spirit, seeking to connect leaders and churches for mission, equipping leaders to fulfil their God-given potential, and equipping leadership teams is so valuable. Mainstream's teaching and prophetic input, provides the kind of meaningful relationships and network that many have been seeking. So Mainstream Wales has come to birth.

The closer working relationship between the Baptist Union of Great Britain's South Wales Baptist Association and the Baptist Union of Wales has also added momentum to the establishment of Mainstream Wales. The opportunity to build faith, restore hope, develop mutual accountability and pray for and with others of like mind, has seen ministers and leaders from all over Wales gathering together with the hope that in time small localised clusters will also develop.

For its part the Baptist Union of Wales has taken

the step of focused mission development. Whereas a Union can be seen solely as a bureaucratic and administrative body and sometimes be perceived as a straightjacket to local churches trying to develop meaningful local mission projects and initiatives, the Baptist Union of Wales has deliberately sought to become a mission movement for and in Wales.

Over the past 12 months it has deliberately focused on the Eastern side of Wales, resulting in exciting developments such as the appointment of a minister at Welshpool Baptist Church, (which until that appointment had not had a minister exclusive to the congregation for more than 68 years). Strategically, this area of Mid Wales, has seen large numbers of Polish immigrants coming into the area and the Church in Welshpool, along with the Union, are now in discussions with Polish Baptists and other evangelical organisations in Poland to bring a Polish speaking evangelist over to work amongst these people.

In Breconshire a minister/enabler now works within the Association to promote growth and develop mission and ministry - with the hope that some churches will then be able

to sustain ministry themselves in the foreseeable future. In North Wales, in the Denby, Flint and Merion Association, a new minister is working with a cluster of churches to establish and develop a lay ministry team to minister in that area and in Gwent a small church has exercised great faith in totally refurbishing its premises equipping it for community initiatives and outreach and now has a part-time minister.

Other plans include church planting initiatives, the launch of bilingual resources for youth and children's ministry, as well as a bilingual pre-Alpha DVD resource. It's the hope and prayer of the Mainstream Wales leadership that we can continue to draw together the South Wales Baptist Association and the Baptist Union of Wales for strategic Spirit filled ministry and mission in Wales. This will best be achieved through local groups of like-minded leaders, the clustering churches that are one in Spirit and purpose who can in turn develop cross-church projects and partnerships for mission. The ongoing motivation and training of leaders remains a serious focus with the clear need to identify younger leaders in particular.



**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](mailto:Peter.nodding@purleybaptist.org)



## “Transforming Congregations”

Mainstream SW Leaders’ Day with Nigel Wright - May 2007

Despite the air of gloom and despondency whenever “church” is discussed, “New Humanist” carried an article pointing out the value of ritual and structure to effective community life. If congregations did not exist, they might have to be invented! So say the *secularists*.

Societal change within in the last 35 years has been extensive. Social mobility and weakened family networks have an impact on the attendance and availability of committed Christians. There is perhaps an interesting doctoral thesis waiting to be written on the impact of caravans as an agent of church decline! However, deacons going away at the weekend are not a complete explanation of our problems.

Congregational life as we have inherited it is in desperate need of transformation. This is probably true of the majority of churches: so today's leaders must promote and develop church health. Do we know God's purpose and calling for our congregation NOW? Do we understand our history? To know and understand our own local “story” will help us to serve the mission of God - and a healthy congregation will promote the well-being of our community.

Nigel helped us explore the contribution that the individual leader can make. We have a choice between despair and engagement. Leadership has a responsibility to guide healthy change: failure in this area simply means that our congregations will either die or be transformed according to someone else's agenda. Change is integral to the biblical account, and cannot be avoided in any congregation determined to live. Leaders with visionary pragmatism - *the ability to see the future whilst remaining pragmatic about the realisation of that vision* - are vital.

Our thanks go to Nigel for a stimulating and enjoyable day: our prayer is that God's Holy Spirit will enable us to live and give life where we have been called as change-agents.

*Richard Starling is Minister of East Dartmoor Baptist Church*

## Time for Transformation

by Richard Cornfield

Finding people who can support and help you in ministry is always a hard thing. It is especially difficult to find people who speak the same language as you. So Jenny, my wife, who is the Midlands Manager for Open Doors, and I, a vicar for a Church near Birmingham, were slightly nervous when we stepped into the room for the Mainstream prayer and fasting day.

However, it turned out to be a day which brought tremendous refreshment and encouragement to us. We felt humbled to be in a room with people who were real in their approach to faith and Christian leadership. We heard stories of church growth and spiritual coincidence. People spoke of answered prayers and gave examples of congregations opening themselves up to greater commitment to God. Also there was the voice of struggle and pain which is always there when we seek to follow Jesus.

As a Church leader it is easy to get drawn into the details of ministry. Too often support groups can dwell on the minutiae rather than the big picture. To be in a room where the only thing on the agenda was vision and mission was so helpful. To pray about the big things, the moving forward things, the God things was transformational. It means going home daring to trust God for more and expecting more. We all too often can feel on our own as we seek to minister, this Mainstream day gave me the confidence to reach out to God and trust that he is with me as I seek to serve him.

Thanks to everyone who welcomed Jenny and I. It was so helpful to be in that prayer-soaked, spirit-filled, wisdom-packed room.

Rev Richard Cornfield is Rector of Aldridge in the West Midlands

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

## Aiming 4 Excellence

With the requirement for all churches to be individually registered with the Charity Commission by 2012 (and larger churches by next year) the following conference may be more relevant than you think!



Aiming for Excellence is a two day conference for Chairs and Trustees, Chief Executives, Finance Directors, HR Directors and Senior Executives of Christian charities. An opportunity to explore models of good practice, consider how our faith underpins what we do, and get to know people in similar roles in other Christian charities, share ideas and build relationships. Aiming 4 Excellence is organised by Stewardship, Spring Harvest, Global Connections, Evangelical Alliance, Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP and ACEA.

A4E is at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick and runs from 1-3<sup>rd</sup> October. For more information visit [www.aiming4excellence.org.uk](http://www.aiming4excellence.org.uk)

## Open Doors: UNITE 2007

Open Doors is urging Christians throughout the UK to put Saturday 29 September in their diaries and experience the life-changing power of connecting with the Persecuted Church worldwide.

The Unite Events in West Bromwich, near Birmingham, will provide the UK Church with an unparalleled opportunity to be transformed, challenged and more united.

Overseas Christians who are being persecuted for their faith will speak about how the love of God motivates them to work amongst the very people who persecute them. Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors, will also be launching his new book *Secret Believers: What Happens When Muslims Believe in Christ*, based on his experiences ministering in the Muslim World.

Speakers such as Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali and author Ron Boyd-Macmillan will share their unique perspectives on issues such as positive Muslim-Christian relationships and learning from the Persecuted Church.

Visit <http://www.opendoorsuk.org.uk>



## On Eagles' Wings - Going Beyond our Limits

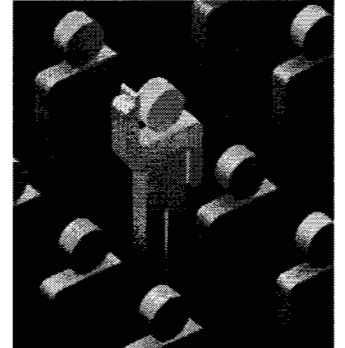
Leading Edge is a 'Baptist family holiday week', organised by the BUGB in partnership with Viz-a-Viz. It provides an opportunity for Baptists of all ages to gather together for worship, teaching and relaxation.

The week provides quality teaching and inspirational sessions as well as recreational opportunities with football tournaments, golf coaching, swimming, quad biking, squash, tennis, etc.

Leading Edge takes place at Warwick School, Warwick from 13-19 August 2007. For more information visit the website [www.baptist.org.uk/leadingedge](http://www.baptist.org.uk/leadingedge)

## Faithworks: Change Agents: Sustaining Transformation

Everyday, churches and Christian projects are positively working out their contribution to civil society in 21st Century Britain. Whilst many are debating whether or not God is on the agenda, Faithworks are confident that He is not only on the agenda but is at the heart of it, bringing social and spiritual transformation through the sacrificial, practical love demonstrated by His change agents on the ground.



Change Agents: Sustaining Transformation will be an opportunity to share fresh ideas, learn from one another's successes and failures and explore honestly how we can embed Christian spirituality and sustainability into our engagement with our communities to bring change that lasts.

Whether you and your church are experienced change agents or just beginning to make a change, this conference will encourage and equip you to approach the challenges affecting your local community with creativity, courage and a faith that works.

The Conference runs from 1-3 November and will be held in Central London.

For more information see: <http://www.faithworks.info>

## The Marriage Conference

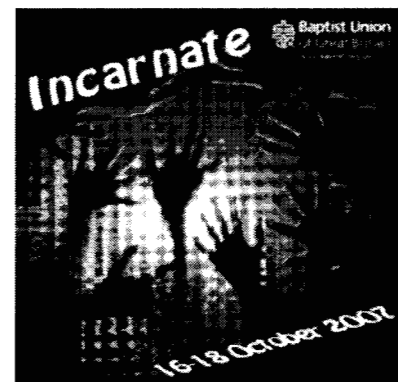
This is designed to equip people to lead The Marriage Preparation Course and/or The Marriage Course in their home, church or community. The conference is for anyone looking for a practical, easy to use, skill-based course which is an effective means for strengthening all marriages and a way to reach out to the local community.

This day conference is on 28<sup>th</sup> September and will be at Holy Trinity Brompton, London.

For further information phone 020 7052 0440 or visit [www.hfb.org.uk](http://www.hfb.org.uk)



## Incarnate House Party



The Incarnate Network is hosting another conversation about church planting this Autumn. Held at Somersal Cottages, in Derbyshire, this will be a relaxed opportunity to share stories, think about good practice and meet others who are looking for ways to engage their communities in conversation about Christ.

The conference runs from 16-18 October but the booking deadline is July 31<sup>st</sup>.

See <http://www.incarnate-network.eu/> for more details.

## So where to next...?



**Simon Jones** is the editor of Talk. team leader at Bromley and author of *Galatians* (Crossway 2007) and *Building a Better Body: the good church guide* (Authentic 2007).

### Simon Jones suggests where to look on line and in print for resources that will help your conversation about men, women, church and God

The issue of gender is one Christians have struggled with through the years. At the outset of this guide, I have to declare a bias. Pretty much everything that follows assumes that men and women are equal in every area of the church's life including ministry and leadership. Obviously the web is full of material that doesn't endorse this view - any search engine will take you to it.

A good place to start is [www.cbeinternational.org/new/index.shtml](http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/index.shtml) the Christians for Biblical Equality website. Here you'll find free articles plus the chance to join a movement.

Our own website <http://www.mainstream-uk.com/index.html> contains the Blackley Declaration on women's ministry and an excellent article by Stephen Ibbotson 'Following the trajectory - eschatological hermeneutic and gender' (find it by hitting the women in ministry button on the menu bar).

There is a surprising amount of good material on American websites. The Southern Baptists manage just four lines on women and ministry on their website [www.sbc.net/aboutus/pswom-en.asp](http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/pswom-en.asp) - and it's not very enlightening.

But [www.abwim.org/index.asp](http://www.abwim.org/index.asp) is a doorway to discovering other more mainstream American Baptist views on women's ministry with lots of good articles and fascinating statistics - worth comparing with ours. And [www.bwim.info/index.php/html/main/welcome.html](http://www.bwim.info/index.php/html/main/welcome.html) has two fascinating reports on the state

of play in the US. And The Mercer University Centre for Baptist Studies (where the excellent Chuck Poole sermon reproduced on p8 can be found) has a wealth of good stuff on women, ministry and Baptist life and is at [www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/](http://www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/)

In Australia there's been considerable debate on women's ministry and a good way in can be found at the ever-useful John Mark Ministries site <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8195.htm> (note no www.). If you look around, you'll also find a host of fascinating statistics on Australia - good for those sleepless nights! There's also a very interesting dissertation looking at the attitudes of Australian Baptists to women's ministries <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/9020.htm>

In both Australia and the USA (and more recently in some conservative UK circles), the issue of relations between the sexes has spilled over into discussion of the Trinity (I kid you not). The argument is that if the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father, then women are to men. Whatever the logic of this, it's well answered in two essays by Kevin Giles which you can find here: [http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/pdf\\_files/free\\_articles/ETS%202006%20Paper%20Sons%20Authority.pdf](http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/pdf_files/free_articles/ETS%202006%20Paper%20Sons%20Authority.pdf) and here <http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/theology/docs/2004/colloquium04kgiles.pdf> Giles' ideas are debated at this site: <http://www.ajmd.com.au/trinity/>

Charles Sherlock a bright Aussie theologian points out

why all this matters at [www.ajmd.com.au/trinity/Giles\\_launch.pdf](http://www.ajmd.com.au/trinity/Giles_launch.pdf) And Gilbert Bilezikian makes a very similar case in the Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society [here](http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/pdf_files/free_articles/ETS%202006%20Paper%20Sons%20Authority.pdf) : [http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/pdf\\_files/free\\_articles/ETS%202006%20Paper%20Sons%20Authority.pdf](http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/pdf_files/free_articles/ETS%202006%20Paper%20Sons%20Authority.pdf) Rebecca Merrill Grothius addresses the topic in an essay at [www.ivpress.com/title/exc/2834-18.pdf](http://www.ivpress.com/title/exc/2834-18.pdf)

And the ever-reliable Ben Witherington III has a good post on it on his blog <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2006/03/eternal-subordination-of-christ-and-of.html>

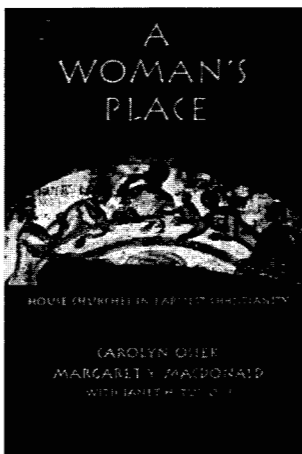
Other New Testament blogs have also weighed into the conversation. Michael Pahl's excellent *Stuff of the Earth* blog has a very interesting post on the whole issue of creation order. It's at: <http://michaelpahl.blogspot.com/> and was posted on 3 July 2007. And Scott McKnight's *Jesus Creed* blog also has some good posts on it - the comments are always worth a look! [www.jesuscreed.org/?cat=27](http://www.jesuscreed.org/?cat=27) the postings start on May 27 and go back chronologically for a little while. Many of them get a lot of comments. Another blog always worth checking is Maggi Dawn's <http://maggidawn.typepad.com/>

[www.youthspecialties.com/articles/topics/gender/pattern.php](http://www.youthspecialties.com/articles/topics/gender/pattern.php) has an excellent article by Brit Jenny Baker. And a piece by Tom Wright can be found here (along with a ton of good things) [http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_Women\\_Service\\_Church.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Women_Service_Church.htm)



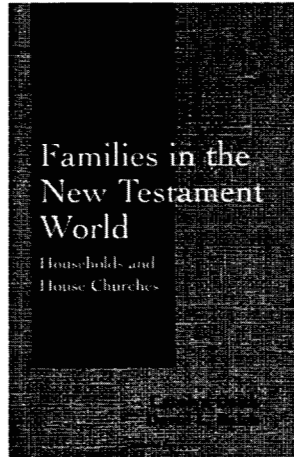
Probe ministries <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/5lies.htm> is worth checking out.

A good place to begin a trawl through what the New testament says about women's ministry is here <http://www.bibletexts.com/terms/women01.htm> And Watch, a Church of England pressure group campaigning for women bishops headed by Christina Rees, has some good resources here <http://www.watchwomen.com/watchpapers.htm>



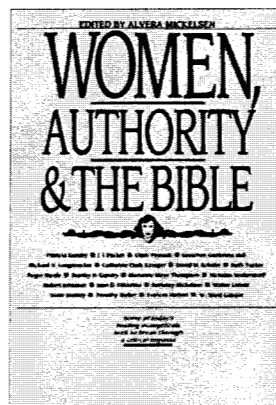
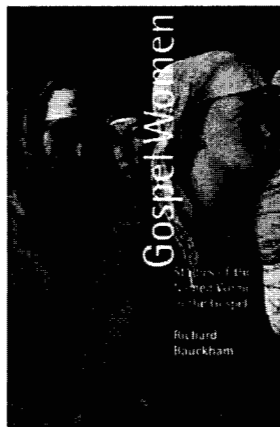
Much of the really useful material in print covers what current New Testament scholarship is saying about the role of women in the earliest Christian communities. This has been stimulated by feminist studies of NT texts and history and has yielded some fascinating results.

Worth checking out - in no particular order - are Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald *A Woman's Place: House Churches in the Earliest Christianity* (Fortress Press 2006); Carolyn Osiek and David Balch *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (John Knox Press 1997); Ben Witherington III *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge 1990); Richard Bauckham *Gospel Women: Studies of the named*



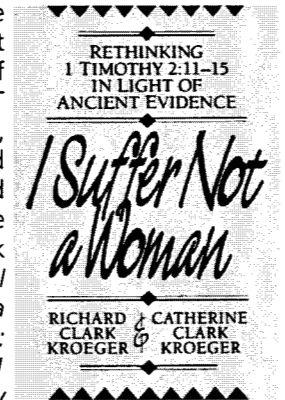
*women in the Gospels* (Continuum 2002) and Bruce Winter *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: the appearance of the new women and the Pauline communities* (Eerdmanns 2003).

All these repay careful study. Some are more demanding than others but Winter and Bauckham in particular are both well-written and full of insight and the raw material for many sermons.

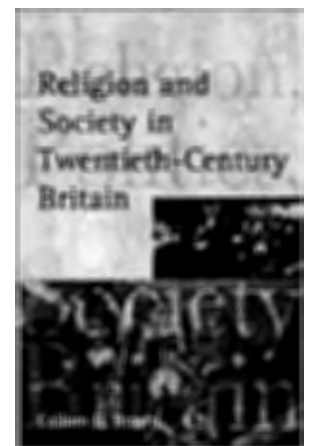


A collection of essays edited by Alvera Mickelsen called *Women, Authority and the Bible: An Evangelical breakthrough on the Biblical*

debate (IVP first published 1986 though it might have been updated) is a bit dated now but still has some excellent material in it. And if you want an exhaustive study of that thorniest of the NT passages, then Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger's *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in the light of ancient evidence* (Baker 1992).



Coming more up to date Callum Brown offers fascinating insights into the relationship between women and Christianity over the past 200 years in both *The Death of Christian Britain: understanding secularization 1800-2000* (Routledge 2001) and *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain* (Pearson Longman 2006).



## What's Mainstream all about?

**M**ainstream 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.

