

Intouch

News of ministries within
the Affinity Family

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 01
SPRING 2011

Contents

- 1 Director's Desk
- 2 Christchurch Xscape:
A Church in a
Surprising Place
- 3 The Gateway Project
- 4 Ireland's
Reformation to
Come at Last
- 5 Conference Reports
- 6 Affinity News

Affinity is a growing
network of 1200
Bible-centred churches
and Christian agencies
throughout Britain
and Ireland.

affinity
gospel churches in partnership

Director's Desk

Welcome to the new format for the Affinity newsletter. After a long break in publication it is good to be in print again. We are working hard to develop the various ministries of Affinity and have adopted a new logo which will be on all our publications from now on.

It is good to be in fellowship with one another through Affinity. As partner churches, associate ministries and individual Christians we stand together in united witness to our Lord Jesus Christ.

This expression of our unity in Christ is essential to the integrity of our witness to our nation and to the world. As a diverse group of people we rejoice in our unity in Christ. He has made us one.

In this edition of 'In Touch' we are focussing on Gospel men and Gospel initiatives being undertaken by those who belong to Affinity. Jesus prayed that we may be one 'so that the world may believe that you have sent me.'

Our unity in Christ has an evangelistic purpose. Together

we have been given the task of proclaiming the Gospel to the world. Our nation and the world desperately need to hear the Gospel. None of us can do it on our own; we need each other to fulfil our mission to the world.

So I encourage you to consider ways in which you can stand with other Affinity churches and Christians in united witness to the Gospel. The 'Find a Church' section on our website will help you to find your nearest Affinity neighbours.

Let us pray with, and for, one another as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ together to those who so urgently need to know him.

Warmly yours



Peter Milson

Christchurch Xscape: A Church in a Surprising Place

Combine snowboarding, skiing and rock climbing with shops, bars, restaurants, bowling and a cinema...

...and you have Xscape (www.xscape.co.uk) – a contemporary temple, dedicated to the worship of leisure and pleasure. It's not where you would expect to find a church. But, here in Castleford, West Yorkshire, praise God, that's what you will find.

Christchurch Xscape (www.xchurch.org.uk) started in 2008 as an outreach of Pontefract Congregational Church. After 18 months an incredible providence enabled us to lease a 4000sq.ft. unit in the centre. This encouraged the church at Pontefract to send a group with one of their pastors, Paul Howell, to establish an independent

church there. In December 2010 Christchurch Xscape was formed.

Xscape is only 2 miles away from Pontefract, so why plant a church there? And what does a church look like in such a place? The answer to these questions is at the heart of our vision.

Pontefract is very different in character and catchment from Xscape, which is visited by over 3 million people each year from all over the country. Xscape is a hub for many groups of people with whom we are building relationships; for example, we have engaged with a thriving snowboarding and ski community through Snowboarders and Skiers for Christ (www.sfc-uk.org). This has resulted in a group of snowboarding Christians meeting there with their friends twice a month.

In contrast, many in the caring professions and people who care for loved ones find the facilities at Xscape safe and relaxing. We believe Xscape needs a church to meet with people where they are and to communicate that the

gospel is about real life, so we are working to establish ministries for both Learning Disabilities and Dementia care.

We are also thankful to God for the positive reception from the Xscape management team, who have asked Paul to be Chaplain to the 750 people employed in the centre.

“a contemporary temple, dedicated to the worship of leisure and pleasure”

In spite of the surprising location, the church is still the church, so our Sunday services contain singing, praying, reading the Bible and someone speaking. By God's grace, may we do all of this faithfully and relevantly. At Christmas around 80 visitors attended carol services and we used the main stage of the shopping mall on December evenings, serving hot chocolate to passersby as carols were sung.

We value your prayers and look forward to the future in the knowledge that God will never leave us or forsake us.

Paul Howell



Paul and Rachael Howell



The Gateway Project

Be careful what you pray for – especially if you're happily settled in a pastoral situation.

In 2007 I saw a presentation on 'The Gateway Project': the vision of Grace Baptist Churches in southeast England to plant churches in the 'Thames Gateway' – the parts of Kent, Essex and East London along the river Thames. Since my wife's family lived nearby, I signed up to receive their prayer letters...

Jump forward to January 2010. The Gateway Committee were looking

for a worker to church-plant into Gravesend and Northfleet (Kent). Because of my earlier interest, my name came up; Julia and I were rather surprised, to say the least! We had concerns, so we prayed, *'Lord we are willing, but there are a lot of good reasons why we should stay here in Southport. Please lead us clearly in your will.'*

Since then the Lord has graciously opened all the doors. He has used a variety of means, including his Word, to confirm the rightness of a move. Nigel Hoad (Chairman of the Gateway Committee) spoke to our church and, following a month of prayer and consultation, they agreed

to release us to this ministry, with their blessing.

We hope to begin this summer, God willing. Our long term vision and prayer is that the Lord would establish a network of Reformed Baptist house-churches in the surrounding communities, and that he would raise up others to join the Gateway Project team. Can you join us in prayer?

Adam Laughton

Adam has been co-pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Southport since 2000. Julia and Adam have four children: Tom (14), Ellie (11), Ben (8) and Nathan (6). For Project information and updates, email: nigel.hoad@sky.com

Laughton Family



Ireland's Reformation To Come At Last

Ireland, the Emerald Isle, the one time home of the Celtic Tiger is in the news these days for all the wrong reasons.

Ireland, virtually overnight, has fallen from being one of the wealthiest countries in Europe to being a 'basket case' economy. But what about the spiritual affairs of the nation, which to us is far more important than any economic index?

"We need urgently to recruit missionary workers to join with us"

The Reformation had only a minimal impact here. For centuries the Catholic Church has held the country in deep spiritual darkness; very much a Catholic country for a Catholic people. But scandal after scandal has rocked the Church and has brought about a sea change in the attitudes of ordinary people. In the early 1980s 97% of the people attended mass each Sunday. This is now less

than 45%. Vocations to the Catholic priesthood are on the floor, resulting in some parishes having to double-up and others having to close altogether. So deep is the vocations crisis that the retirement age for priests has been raised from 65 to 75, where health allows.

The churches that are partners of Aontas (formerly the Association of Irish Evangelical Churches) see this as Ireland's opportunity to have its very own Reformation. The needs are many; there are 72 towns of a population above 5,000 with no evangelical witness of any sort; there are 16 towns of over 15,000 with no evangelical church. Church planting is now the greatest need in Ireland.

Is the Lord leading you to consider missionary church planting endeavour? We need urgently to recruit missionary workers to join with us: experienced men who could head-up a church plant, experienced pastor/teachers to lead evangelistic teams (and, because of the slowness of the work in Ireland, see this as a long-term commitment), men and



women to form these teams and an administrator. All will need to have a passion for evangelism and agree with our Statement of Faith. They will also need to be prepared to turn their hands to many varied tasks because of the pioneer nature of the work.

Please pray for us. If you would like further information please get in touch with me, Paudge Mulvihill.

Tel: 00353 94 90 23702
Email: office@aontas.ie

Conference Reports

The Making Of A Movement: The 2010 Fiec Leaders' Conference

What's the difference between a monument and a movement? A monument is static and looks to the past; a movement is dynamic and is about changing the future. With almost 300 delegates representing over 125 churches, FIEC's recent annual Leaders' Conference saw significant steps towards the Fellowship becoming a genuine movement of churches with a mission to fulfil.

New Director John Stevens set out a clear and compelling

vision of churches working together in mission. According to Paul in Romans the gospel generates fellowship between independent churches. When we are truly gripped by the gospel, we will seek ways of working together to re-evangelise the nation.

Trevor Archer (Training Director) and Richard Underwood (Pastoral Director) filled-out the big picture with a vision of training and pastoral care across our churches – and all with the purpose of creating and sustaining missional ministry. All three presentations are on the FIEC website.

Alongside a mouth-watering assortment of ministry seminars, the highlight of our two evenings together was the preaching of God's word from Philippians by Ray Evans (Grace Community Church, Kempston).

So, is FIEC a movement? It takes more than a conference. God has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to re-shape our ministry and it is evident that there is a great deal of goodwill towards the Fellowship. But with great expectations come great responsibilities. Next year, the Directors will need to show how they are beginning to deliver tangible benefits to our family of churches for the gospel's sake.

Richard Underwood



'I Walk The Line' – The New Pastors' Conference 2010

I was sad leaving this superb conference, knowing it was my last one; I no longer qualify as a 'new pastor'! The NPC was an opportunity to relax and learn alongside experienced pastors; their

inspiring ministry urged us to walk an authentic, orthodox path, serving our Lord in critical days. We shared our joys and struggles and built meaningful friendships. The combination of clear, passionate Bible ministry and practical seminars deepened my sense of calling, expanded my view of the Saviour and practically

equipped me for years of ministry ahead. New pastors would greatly benefit from this conference.

Peter Shirtcliffe
(Pastor, Prettygate Baptist Church, Colchester)

The Evangelical Movement of Wales NPC is for those in their first five years of ministry. Go to www.emw.org.uk/npc to download past audio and details for 2011.

We warmly welcome **Christ Church, Southampton** and **Iden Green Congregational Church, Cranbrook, Kent** as Affinity Independent Partner Churches.

Affinity News

New Assistant To The Director

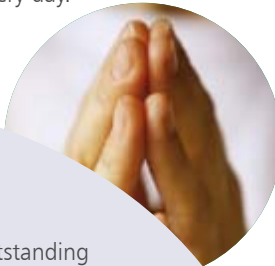
Matthew Evans, formerly of Rock Baptist Church, Cambridge, has become the Assistant to the Affinity Director from 1 March 2011. Matthew is from Wales and worked for the Evangelical Movement of Wales as their Bookshops General Manager before moving to be the Church Manager at Cornerstone Church, Nottingham. For the past 10 years he has been Pastor at Rock Baptist Church, Cambridge. He has a real heart for the vision of Affinity and will be a great help to us in fulfilling that vision.

New Website

We are working on a new website which we hope will be more accessible and useful than our previous one. We hope the new website will go live in mid to late April.

Praying For Each Other

From April a monthly online Prayer Calendar will encourage prayer for each other, the UK and the world. We hope our fellowship as churches and individuals will strengthen and deepen as we use the Calendar every day.



Personal Members

We are living in very challenging days for churches and Christians. Affinity is a fellowship of churches and Christian agencies in the UK and Ireland which is clearly and unambiguously committed to biblical truth. It is very important that we present a strong and united witness.

Therefore we are encouraging individual Christians to become Personal Members of Affinity, in order to strengthen our witness and to help us identify with like-minded believers. Personal Members will receive their own 'In Touch' newsletter and a personal monthly email with our Prayer Calendar.

If you would like to become a Personal Member of Affinity, please download an application form and a copy of our Doctrinal Basis from our website. Alternatively please write to us with your name, address, telephone and email (if you have one) confirming that you are in agreement with our Doctrinal Basis.

Foundations Goes Online!

We are sorry that there has been a long break in the publication of our theological journal, Foundations. A new editor, Martin Downes, has now been appointed. Martin is the Pastor of Christ Church, Deeside.

It has been decided that Foundations will in future be published online and will be made available free of charge. Those who have paid for Foundations and have

outstanding subscriptions will be offered a refund.

By publishing Foundations online the excellent articles it carries will be made more widely available. To launch Foundations online a Special Edition is planned for publication in April which will contain the papers from our recent Theological Studies Conference.

Affinity, The Old Bank House,
17 Malpas Rd, Newport, NP20 5PA
t 01633 855165 w affinity.org.uk
e office@affinity.org.uk

Registered charity number: 258924