

Intouch

News of ministries within
the Affinity Family

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 04
AUTUMN 2012

Contents

1 Director's Desk

2 Working Together as
Churches

3 The FIEC at 90

5 Christians at Work

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

In Psalm 133 David wrote, "How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live together in harmony!" David came from a very large family. As he was growing up there were tensions between his brothers. In later life his children caused him much heartache. So it is no wonder that he understood how precious it is to know peace and harmony in the family. He saw it as the essential precursor of God's blessing. True family unity amongst God's people on earth anticipates the wonderful God-centred harmony of heaven!

In our society the main emphasis is on the nuclear, rather than the extended, family. The New Testament teaching about the unity of God's people, however, is set in the context of an extended family. Paul writes of being together "with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2).

Affinity is a family of churches and Christians. As in all families

there is diversity. We are not all the same in the way we do things. Our essential spiritual unity, however, lies in our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are one in him. It is important for us to work out the implications of this in our relationships with our fellow Christians and between our churches. We are committed to seeking fellowship with all who are one with us in Christ and who belong to Christ-honouring, Bible-based churches.

Fragmentation in God's family is serious because it hinders both our growth in spiritual maturity and our ability to effectively present a united Gospel witness to the people around us, who desperately need to know the Lord. So let's pray that the Lord will deepen our fellowship together in the family of Affinity.

Warmly yours



Peter Milsom



How did the early Churches work together?

Despite the obstacles they faced, because of distance and difficulty of communication, the New Testament churches cooperated together in significant ways. They provide a challenging and inspiring model for inter-church fellowship today.

1 A ministry of care and encouragement

The apostles and others visited churches to encourage believers (See Acts 8:14; 9:32; 15:41; 16:1-5). Local churches today need encouragement. A ministry of care and encouragement between churches is a practical demonstration of Christian fellowship.

2 Providing leadership, ministry and pastoral oversight

The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to help the growing Gentile church in Antioch (Acts 11:22). Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), and Titus to Crete (Titus 1:5). Small and developing church situations today would also benefit from the ministry of experienced church leaders.

3 Working together in Gospel proclamation and church planting

The task of taking the Gospel to the nations was a great priority for the early churches. The church in Antioch set apart Paul and Barnabas to this work (Acts 13:1-3). Later Silas, who was from Jerusalem, joined Paul on his second journey (Acts 15:40-

41). As the work extended, gifted men from the newly established churches at Lystra, Berea, Thessalonica, Derbe and the province of Asia joined Paul's team (Acts 16:1-5; 20:4). As we face the challenge of re-evangelising the UK and Ireland we need gifted men from many churches.

4 Serving each other with gifts of love, both material and personal

The early churches sent financial gifts to other churches and Christians who were in need (Acts 11:29-30; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8 and 9). The church at Philippi sent gifts to Paul. When he was in prison they even sent one of their members, Epaphroditus, to help him (Phil. 2:25; 4:14-17). Today some churches, especially smaller ones, are struggling and would be greatly encouraged and helped by a financial gift or the temporary help of Christians from a nearby church.

5 Standing together in defining and defending the truth in the face of error

The early churches had to deal with false teachers, especially those who denied the gospel

of God's free grace. Leaders from the churches at Antioch and Jerusalem met to consider this important doctrinal issue and then communicated their decision to all the churches to help them stand against false teaching (Acts 15:1-16:4). Today major doctrines are being questioned, and even denied, by professing evangelicals including the authority of the Bible, substitutionary atonement, justification by faith and eternal punishment. It is vitally important that we address these issues together and help churches to stand firmly for biblical truth.

The early churches were not all the same. There were cultural differences and varieties of practice. It is clear, however, that churches cooperated together spontaneously and exercised real care for one another. New Testament churches were not isolated from each other but practised an inter-dependence in which each congregation felt a responsibility for other congregations. It is so important that we regain this quality of fellowship amongst us today.

Peter Milsom

The FIEC at 90: Lo

In October 2012 some 360 delegates met together in Swanwick for our annual FIEC Leaders' Conference (writes John Stevens, FIEC National Director).

It was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made as a family of independent churches seeking to reach our nation with the good news of the Lord Jesus, and to look to the future.

We are a growing family – currently 509 affiliated churches – 25 having joined us in the last year, including Eden Baptist and Grace Church, Cambridge, The Crowded House, Sheffield and Mount Pleasant Baptist, Swansea. We are delighted that these churches want to be part of our gospel vision and to help support and shape the future of independent ministry in the UK.

God has richly blessed us financially in the last year; our churches have increased their donations to us by 57% at a time of economic difficulty. This is a very tangible sign of support for the expanded work of FIEC. However we have certainly not become a bloated central organisation. The total



central budget of the FIEC is still less than that of our single largest church.

One of the most encouraging aspects is the large number of gifted and passionate younger leaders serving in FIEC. Training gifted gospel workers of godly character for the future is a key priority. This year we have raised £400,000 for our Training Fund, to invest in the next generation of pastors. We are giving financial support to 18 men in training for pastoral ministry at college or on courses, including Oak Hill, Cornhill, Porterbrook and RTS. We have also been able to help 8 churches to employ a trainee assistant minister, and are supporting a church planting initiative in Denbigh in North Wales. We aim to raise half a million pounds every year for this purpose. We are launching a new event next year, called

the Hub Conference (18-20 January), which will provide a clear route into free church ministry, with advice and support, for those who are considering whether they might be called to serve in this way. We hope that over 130 men and women will attend and details can be found on the FIEC website www.fiec.org.uk.

We are also developing our strategy to advance the gospel by church planting in places that urgently need a gospel witness, and for strengthening independency as a whole by planting FIEC churches in strategic centres which do not currently have one. It is very encouraging that 45 FIEC churches already have plans to plant in the next few years, and over the summer we were able to undertake a comprehensive research project analysing the gospel provision in

Looking to the Future

the 150 largest centres in England that do not have an FIEC church. This work will enable us to identify gospel priority areas. The conference heard of plans to establish an independent church in central Oxford in 2013 to reach the large and strategically significant student and international student community.

We are making progress in our provision of care and support for pastors, and the FIEC Pastors' Association has now become the FIEC Pastors' Network. This will continue to accredit and register men for ministry, but will have a much stronger emphasis on providing proactive pastoral support to men in ministry, many of whom suffer as a result of their isolation. We hope that it will be possible to ensure that every member of the Network has a personal "link-pastor" who will support and encourage them in their ministry.

We continue to support our churches by providing practical advice on all areas of church life, including their governing documents and compliance with the plethora of legal, financial and charity regulations affecting churches. Regular updates can now be found on our website.

There remains a huge amount to do in coming years. Many FIEC churches are small and declining or aging. We hope to be able to revive and support many of these smaller churches so that a gospel witness will be maintained in every community. Maintaining rural ministry is increasingly difficult and we will need to find new ways of providing leadership and support for churches in small communities that are no longer able to support a pastor of their own.

This is our 90th Anniversary, and we are in the middle of holding a series of regional celebrations around the country to mark this milestone and to look ahead to how we can serve Christ most effectively in the next ten years before, God willing, our 100th Anniversary. The FIEC has grown far larger than we imagine that E J Poole-Connor, our founder, would ever have expected, yet at the same time the church in the UK has declined and deviated from the gospel far more dramatically than anyone could have predicted. We face a massive task to re-evangelise our nation, of which a very small percentage of the population are genuine born-again believers who are active in

their local church (probably no more than 2-3%). We see FIEC as a mission organisation seeking to advance the gospel in the UK through the biblical means of faithful local churches proclaiming Christ to their communities. We long that all those who share our core gospel convictions, expressed in our statement of faith, and our independent ecclesiology, will want to join with us to help in this great task that we face.

This year we had to turn some prospective delegates away from our Leaders Conference because there was insufficient room for them to attend. We are therefore moving to a new venue on the North Norfolk coast next year, which will be able to accommodate 550+ delegates. The dates for next year are 4-7 November. Whilst the conference is an FIEC event we are always delighted to welcome leaders from churches that are interested in finding out more about FIEC and would like to consider whether affiliation might be appropriate.

fiec 
the FELLOWSHIP of INDEPENDENT
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Christians at Work

70 years on and still pressing on!

Beginning in 1942 as the “War Time Christian Union”, *Christians at Work* has gone through several evolutions, yet its aims and objectives remain very much the same:

To support, encourage and equip Christian men and women for Fellowship, Evangelism and Witness at Work. It is no accident that this gives us the acronym FEW, for we are indeed few. Statistics tell us that less than 1% of the working population are Christian (in the proper sense of the word).

Christian men and women in the workplace have a mission field of some 23 million people and faced with all of the diversity legislation and individual organisational policies, this means that the harvest is made all the more difficult. It is important therefore that we come alongside those who take the challenge of reaching into their working community seriously – firstly to encourage, secondly to challenge and also to equip them for the work that lies before them.

We believe that:

- Christians are called to live out their faith in every

“Encouraging witness in every place, yet purposefully Biblical”

Our mission statement

aspect of their lives, and that includes work.

- the workplace is a perfectly legitimate and needy mission field that provides us with a wonderful opportunity to share and live out the gospel.
- Christian witness and evangelism in the workplace should be valued in much the same way that world mission is.
- Christian men and women need practical encouragement in their workplace life and witness, not just from organisations such as ours, but especially from the local church.

We fulfil our vision by:

- uniting individual Christians at work, to provide that sense of fellowship and partnership in the gospel. We also support and encourage lone Christians in their workplaces.

- helping to establish and support wherever possible, Christian fellowship groups as a base for evangelism and witness.
- producing and publishing Bible study material, fact sheets and a weekly E-Bulletin which includes news from around the working Christian community.
- seeking to help churches face the challenges and realise the opportunities that the workplace presents.

The Director spends 16 to 20 weeks every year visiting workplace groups throughout the UK to support and encourage their proactive witness and evangelism. He also visits many churches, to challenge them to support those in their fellowships who seek to be effective in their workplace.

Christians
at Work



For more information, or to receive the free weekly E-Bulletin, please contact the Director:

Brian Allenby, Christians at Work,
Suite 11, Hubway House, Bassington Lane,
Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 8AD
or on **01670 700 908** or
at **brianallenby@caw.uk.net**



Affinity News

New Members

We are pleased to welcome a new Affinity Independent Partner Church and two Associates:

Milnrow Evangelical Church, Rochdale

www.milnrow.org

Cor Deo www.cordeo.org.uk

Cornerstone North East Adoption and Fostering Service

www.cornerstonenortheast.co.uk

Personal Members

We are encouraged by the growing number of Affinity Personal Members. Personal Members receive a monthly update and a copy of the Prayer Calendar. If you would like to become a Personal Member please send an email to office@affinity.org.uk and we will be happy to send you further information.

Salt and Light Library

For many years the Social Issues Team has published *The Bulletin* three times each year. Many excellent articles, reports and updates on a wide range of social issues of concern to Christians and churches have been published. We have now made much of this material available again by creating a library of the articles and reports that have appeared in *The Bulletin* since 2006.

The library can be found at www.affinity.org.uk and includes life issues, education, child protection, equality & discrimination, public order and marriage & sexuality. Future items from *The Bulletin* will also be uploaded to the Salt and Light Library.

Theological Study Conference

“Interpreting the Bible Ethically – the Bible and Ethics”

16-18 January 2013
at High Leigh, Herts.



Speakers: Stephen Clark, Joshua Hordern, Gordon Wenham, Andrew Hartropp, Paul Helm and Leonardo De Chirico.

A booking form can be downloaded at

www.affinity.org.uk or

email us your name, address and a contact telephone number and tell us whether you wish to have a standard or en-suite room.

Bursaries available for theological students and pastors in the first 5 years of their ministry.



Affinity, The Old Bank House,
17 Malpas Rd, Newport, NP20 5PA
t 01633 893925 w affinity.org.uk
e office@affinity.org.uk

Registered charity number: 258924