

Intouch

News of ministries within
the Affinity Family

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 16
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Director's Desk

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

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

affinity
gospel churches in partnership



Peter writes his second letter to encourage Christians to be certain about what they believe, careful about what they listen

to and about what they teach – and to be ready for Jesus' return as they live holy lives in confident hope.

In 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1, he bluntly says "...there will be false teachers among you." He is realistic; there are always going to be false teachers around. It was true then. It is true today. There are people who distort the message of the Bible for their own benefit. Some change the gospel story, attempting to make it more popular and less demanding for our modern "enlightened" culture. Some are just in it for their own gain, whether for money or reputation.

How will you guard against false teaching? How will you identify those who teach things contrary to God's word or those

whose teaching is orthodox but with the wrong motivation?

The only way is to be immersed in God's word as you study and meditate on the Scriptures; as week by week you listen to God's word faithfully preached; and as you spend time with the people of God, learning the gospel together and developing godly character and wisdom; and as you praise God together in heartfelt worship and spur one another on.

With that in mind it is so encouraging that in this edition of *In Touch* we spotlight church groups within Affinity from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. It is in the church that, together, we "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people" (Jude 3). But it is also immensely encouraging that these church networks are not only defending the gospel but moving forward with outreach, church planting, revitalising churches and equipping the saints for service.

Wishing you God's richest blessing

Graham Nicholls

The Evangelical Movement of Wales



Eisteddfod stand



The EMW is a movement of Christians working together to support gospel work in Wales, doing things together that we would not be able to do on our own.

Our desire is to see the Lord Jesus Christ honoured in the church and in the world, and to that end we have a broad range of ministries. Perhaps the best known are the children's summer camps, the Aberystwyth conferences and the magazines, all available in both Welsh and English. But in addition to these we are involved in a variety of other bilingual ministries, including book publishing, evangelism, Christian bookshops, the training

and support of church leaders, ministerial training and ministers' fraternals.

We recognise that Christianity is not just a truth to be believed; the power of the gospel needs to be *experienced* in our lives and our churches. Thus, we are totally dependent on the Lord for his blessing, and are very thankful for the prayers of God's people.

The summer has been a busy period for us, and we are thankful to God for the blessings many people have testified to receiving.

We are praying that the Lord will lead us to the best ways to serve the gospel in Wales; please pray with us. There are some areas of ministry we currently believe we need to develop, including:

Producing accessible resources in print

We are producing new evangelistic booklets and the bilingual "Ask" magazine which is available for churches to use in their own evangelism. In addition, we are publishing booklets of sermons by Gwynn Williams, our former chairman who was called home to be with the Lord in September.

Making more use of the Internet

"Llwybrau" ("Pathways") is a Welsh language website for young people.

Supporting evangelism

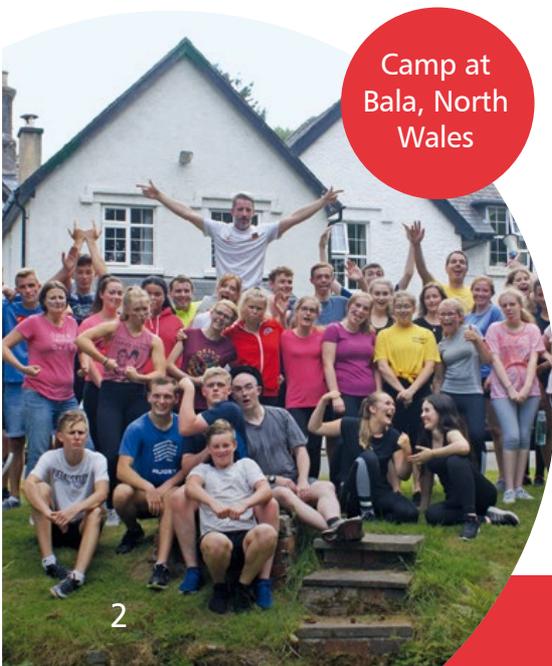
"Mission Wales" seeks to help local churches to reach out to their communities through long-term and short-term missions. A six-month mission in Bangor, North Wales is planned to start in the next few months, and work with local Christians to visit fairs, carnivals and shows is being developed. Evangelistic teams share the gospel in national events such as the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod.

Spiritual leadership

We recognise that the spiritual health of the church is linked to that of its leadership, and so we are keen to support leaders in these rapidly changing days. Please pray for the Church Training Days to be held in January, where the main speaker is to be Mark Thomas, and the Theological Training Course, for men called to the ministry, whose Principal is Stephen Clark.

More information on all our ministries can be found on our website www.emw.org.uk

Steffan Job



Camp at Bala, North Wales

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland



REFORMED
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF IRELAND

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland has its roots in the sixteenth century Scottish Reformation, tracing its family tree back to Reformers such as John Knox. In the seventeenth century, in order to defend their Reformed faith, large numbers signed the National Covenant of Scotland (1638) and the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) embracing England, Scotland and Ireland. The Covenanters who accepted these documents are also spiritual ancestors of the RP Church.

A church cannot live in the past, however, and the RPCI seeks to live out biblical truth in a context that has changed rapidly in the last few decades. In the Irish Republic there has been a great turning away from Roman Catholicism, but although many have abandoned any form of organised religion, there is an open field for evangelism. In the past Northern Ireland has been viewed as a bastion of gospel truth, but that situation certainly does not hold true today. Although the speed of change may be slower than in the rest of the UK, there

has been a significant decline in church attendance and Christian commitment, along with increasing opposition to the Christian view of, for example, homosexuality and gay marriage. Opportunities for evangelism, however, are plentiful, with internationals showing more openness to the gospel than the local population.

The RPCI has 38 congregations, with church plants under way in Enniskillen, East Belfast and Cookstown. The vision for church planting has strengthened in recent years and there has also been encouragement from the revival of an older congregation to the point where it is now able to call a pastor of its own. Various methods of fostering contacts with local communities are used, with several congregations finding a good response to free English classes for internationals. The challenge is to develop such contacts into opportunities for presenting the gospel. The resistance of the nominal Protestant community in Northern Ireland presents particular challenges, with indifference sometimes



becoming more overt hostility. We have been encouraged by the number of men entering pastoral ministry in recent years, with three students beginning their course this year at the Reformed Theological College in Belfast.

The RPCI seeks to be outward looking and outward going. A mission work has been underway in Nantes, France, for over thirty years. Contacts are maintained with other branches of the RP family in Scotland, North America and Australia. Along with membership of Affinity, the RPCI was a founder member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

By God's grace we are "holding out the word of life" to communities which are spiritually very needy. We deeply appreciate the interest and prayers of the Affinity family. www.rpci.org

David McKay
Shaftesbury Square RPC, Belfast



The Association of Grace Baptist Churches South East



Welcoming pastoral appointments at the AGM



London is a big place – the population is more than the next fifteen UK cities combined. It comprises a complex network of communities. Some are very local while others span the metropolis through tube, train and bus connections; great wealth and abject poverty exist as neighbours; amazing culture is found alongside criminality of every sort; people from multiple nations, tribes and tongues live just around the corner. Every religion is here: Secular materialism drives the city; there are many churches, from the utterly apostate to our gospel friends in Affinity and other networks.

One hundred and fifty years ago, when the population was already over three million, a small group of churches decided to associate together for mutual gospel support and formed The Metropolitan

Association of Strict Baptist Churches. AGBCSE are heirs to their passion for the gospel of grace and Baptist ecclesiology. The name Grace Baptist may be more winsome than “strict and particular”, but our core beliefs remain the same: The link between conversion, baptism, membership and communion is vital for growing healthy churches.

We are one small part of the Grace Baptist family. Around half of our member churches serve greater London and the rest serve across South-East England in cities, towns and villages. Most churches have a local focus to their ministry – to reach millions we start with dozens of personal contacts, hundreds of homes on each patch and the few thousand people we may contact through outreach programmes. We hear of conversions and baptisms; we long for many more.

The Lord is at work in lots of ways.

- **Several churches have been planted, relaunched or revitalised**, often in fellowship with other gospel partners: The new garden city of Ebbsfleet is under construction and a new

church has started there; Walthamstow and Greenwich are seeing new works in existing chapels; Chingford, Halling, Kew and Finchley are being revitalised under new leadership.

- **Most churches have at least one full-time minister.** The average age of church eldership has dropped significantly as new men have been trained and appointed; there are currently more men training with ministry in mind than there are vacancies in the churches!
- **Lots of chapels have transformed their premises** through minor or major refurbishments or complete rebuilds and there are several more in the pipeline. The Lord has provided in unexpected ways.

Of course, there are lots of challenges; many churches seem fragile and losing a few key people could lead to terminal decline; some churches struggle to appoint church officers and support full-time workers because of housing costs; we need to see more Londoners converted. We do not want to paint an unrealistically positive picture – but the Lord is at work!
www.gracebaptists.org

Paul Spear
AGBCSE General Secretary



Generation: The Free Church of Scotland on Mission



Generation is a new platform which the Free Church of Scotland is using to initiate and support evangelism in Scotland and internationally.

The denomination adopted an ambitious mission strategy at its General Assembly in 2017 and then launched Generation as the vehicle to deliver it. The name was chosen because it reflects the values of the denomination – as Presbyterians we believe that the blessings of the covenant are passed down through generations. The name speaks also of the power of God to bring us new life. We want to be contemporary and so the gospel has to be applied to the present generation.

Our plan is to plant thirty new churches in Scotland by 2030. This adventure of faith has got off to a good start with new churches planted in Year 1 in Haddington, Esk Valley and Dundee. One of our churches, St Columba's in Edinburgh has been revitalised to such an extent that it has planted three other churches in three years.

The church-planting programme is supported by a well-thought-out scheme of recruitment, assessment, training and mentoring. Generation is also geared to support churches beyond the Free Church; it currently provides peer-to-peer support for two other planters, one of whom is with the FIEC, while the other is independent.

Revitalisation is another part of our mission strategy. In parallel with the church-planting programme we have a similar track where revitalisers meet together for mutual encouragement, sharing of ideas and teaching. We have found that the thinking and philosophy of church planting is a good fit in situations where older churches

are in need of refreshing. The challenge is common to all gospel churches today: How do we communicate the good news of salvation in an increasingly secular society? Dying churches don't even seriously ask the question.

Globally, we are committed to a policy of supporting indigenous churches and already we have handed a school in Lima, Peru to local leadership; we are partners in a theological college in the Eastern Cape of South Africa which we are in the process of transferring to African leadership. Partnership is fundamental and we enjoy this in-mission enterprise in Asia, Africa, India and Europe.

Our theological training centre, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, has been re-launched and provides education way beyond our own tradition.

A recent addition to ETS has been the Mission Centre which focuses on training from Masters level to Sunday School.

Scotland is a divided, turbulent nation but it is an honour to serve and challenge our country at such a time as this. Pray for us.

generation-mission.org

David Meredith
Mission Director,
Free Church of Scotland

Haddington
Community
Church



News and Reports

Church leaders meet Tim Farron

In September Affinity organised an opportunity for Tim Farron MP to address local church leaders in the London area on how the church can continue to be salt and light in public life. Mr Farron spoke about his own recent experience of being a Christian in the public sphere and the lessons about needing to not compromise on faith. It was a very encouraging afternoon and those present went home to their churches inspired not to back away from presenting Christ in the public square and all of life.



Tim Farron addresses church leaders

New Affinity members

We are delighted to welcome recent new members. More information about each can be found on their websites.

- **Edward Connor**

Using our legal expertise to help your ministry to flourish
www.edwardconnor.com



- **Frontiers UK**

With love and respect, inviting all Muslim peoples to follow Jesus
www.frontiers.org.uk



- **Church Society**

Strengthening local churches in biblical faith and helping shape the Church of England now and for the future
www.churchsociety.org



- **Mission Care**

Providing residential and nursing care to vulnerable adults in South London
www.missioncare.org.uk



Affinity Theological Study Conference 2019

The Worshipping Church

The principles, practice and history of what Christians are to do when they gather to praise God.

Contributors: Ray Evans (FIEC), David Kirk (Free Church of Scotland), Bob Letham (Union School of Theology), Graham Beynon (Oak Hill College), Mark Johnston (EPCEW), Stephen Clark (EMW).

13-15 March 2019, King's Park Conference Centre, Northampton.

Booking is now open so for more details and to make sure of your place, go to: <https://guestli.st/508242> And why not encourage others to come with you?

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