

Intouch

News of ministries within
the Affinity Family

NEWSLETTER
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Director's Desk

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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

As Christians we enjoy a wonderful unity with each other because we are all 'in Christ'. We experience the blessing of this unity in our local church and also as we meet other Christians from every part of the world. Our unity in Christ transcends every cultural and linguistic difference. We share the same experience of God's amazing grace, a deep love for the Saviour, and a passionate desire for the glory of God.

Our unity as God's people has great practical significance. It is strategically important that we stand together in united witness for the gospel. This is especially true at a time like this, when we face so many challenges. We are involved in a great spiritual conflict and have been called to rescue people from the dominion of darkness.

Some of our older hymns are set in the context of Christian warfare. We are Christian soldiers who are 'marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before.' The verses in that hymn are both encouraging and challenging: 'Like a mighty army moves the church of God; brothers we are treading

where the saints have trod. We are not divided, all one body we; one in hope and doctrine, one in charity. Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane, but the church of Jesus constant will remain. Gates of hell can never 'gainst that church prevail; we have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail'.

There is a link between our unity as God's people and the triumph of the gospel. We must guard against everything which might divide us from each other. Only true Christians can be guilty of the sin of schism. We are united in the great doctrines of the faith and need to maintain our love for one another, especially when there are differences between us. I remember a conference speaker giving a very helpful definition of the distinctive characteristics of historic Evangelicalism. He said 'Evangelicalism is orthodoxy with a warm heart'. In our passionate desire to guard our orthodoxy it is so important to make sure we also maintain a warm heart to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Warmly yours

Peter

ReformationWales

Reformation – noun: the re-evangelisation of a post-Christian society

Ours is a culture in transition. Things that have long stood unmoved are in flux. For the Church this is disturbing. It feels like a 'Psalm 11 moment' – the foundations are being destroyed (v. 4).

How shall we respond? The advice of v. 1 is tempting: *'flee like a bird to your mountain'*. But Psalm 11 calls us to take refuge in the Lord (v. 1) and his sovereignty (v. 4). He tests the hearts of his people (v. 5) and judges the world (vv. 5-6); and whatever happens, the righteous shall surely see his face (v. 7).

“God goes to the heart here of one man. And he deals with that man.”

That is the vision that lies behind ReformationWales. Despite all that has shifted, if you dig deeper nothing has changed at all. God still reigns. Jesus Christ is still his eternal Son. The atonement is still sufficient. The tomb is still empty. The Spirit is still striving, convicting, regenerating, sanctifying, empowering, keeping. The ascended Christ still builds his Church. And the gates of hell can do nothing about it.



What is ReformationWales doing?

- We visit churches to offer encouragement and support.
- The 'Reason for God' outreach looks at why people don't think about Christianity any more.
- The 'Itinerant Preachers Network' brings together many who preach in churches, chapels and street corners across Wales.
- We promote the 'Revive' Prayer Meeting (run by the EMW since 1968). It brings together Christian leaders to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- We are ready to support church plants or initiate them ourselves.

But we are after something bigger. In 1980, in a sermon on Jacob wrestling with God, Vernon Higham said:

It is [only] the activity of God that can move us... I used to think it would be my energy and righteous anger that would move people towards holy things, and after many years I learnt that 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God'...



*God doesn't talk the way we do. We say 'We'll plant a work there, we'll do this over there.' It isn't like that at all. [God] goes to the heart here of **one man**. And he deals with that man. It isn't a programme at all. Not that there's no room for that sort of thing... And I'm glad he's so terribly unworthy, because it makes us feel 'Well, if he's willing to look at Jacob... he may have mercy on us.'*

I think this where we need to be. This is not really about plans and meetings. We need to meet with God himself. To wrestle with him. To be touched by him. To be humbled by him. Nothing less will do.

Ian Parry

ReformationWales is a ministry of the Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales (www.aecw.org.uk). For more information contact Ian Parry or Peter Milsom via www.reformationwales.com

Introducing Grace Baptist Partnership

Grace Baptist Partnership, led by Barry King, is an initiative to identify, train and resource men for church-planting ministry.

Upwards of 100 men have attended GBP training schemes in London, Gloucester, Ipswich, Leicester and Manchester – and partnered with others in Perth (Scotland) and Frankfurt (Germany). Men received basic training in interpreting and teaching Scripture, evangelism and church planting. Some now serve as evangelists, church planters and pastors. Further training is planned for Vienna and elsewhere on the continent.

GBP does not directly plant churches, but men trained by GBP (and the churches they have assisted) have planted almost twenty new churches and revitalised another five. GBP has also counselled numerous other churches that are prayerfully considering planting.

Churches have been planted (or revitalised) in urban as well as rural settings; in church buildings as well as in rented halls; with a core group as well as from scratch; with almost immediate success as well as with slow, almost imperceptible, growth. It is encouraging to note that a significant percentage of the members of these churches are new believers rather than transfers from other churches.



Barry King and family

Through a church-planter assistance grant scheme the Partnership is able to provide some finance for men engaged in this ministry. Eight such grants have been awarded already and additional applications are in the pipeline through the generous support of local churches and likeminded Christians in England and elsewhere.

This summer the Partnership will seek to identify 300 men across the country with an interest in training for church leadership. A special webinar, A Noble Task, on Thursday 31 July at 9:00pm, will enable interested men to hear a talk by Barry King about the calling and preparation of a minister. Participants will be invited to complete an online survey to identify potential leaders as well as prospective locations for new training groups.

Interested men are invited to email gracebaptistpartnership@gmail.com to receive log-in details to participate in the webinar in July. It is hoped that this event and the subsequent training initiatives will be a means through which many new men enter gospel ministry.

You and your church can be involved by receiving a monthly email update which will enable you to pray for the various projects in which the Partnership is involved. You can request a speaker for your church during the Grace Baptist Partnership Week of Prayer and Giving, 3-10 August 2014. You can attend a conference for church planters and those who support them, 28-30 August at Grace Baptist Church, Angel, London. For more information about any of these please email gracebaptistpartnership@gmail.com

The GBP London training group



WEST

Bringing the Academy into Missional Church

WEST is an international, interdenominational, evangelical and reformed, Bible-believing college.

We exist to provide a sound biblical and theological education and training to those God is calling to bring the light of Christ into the darkness of a post-Christian world. Not content with that, we also want students to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength by fully integrating their academic, practical and spiritual growth. Our longing is to develop trained, prayerful, godly pastors and church planters with a heart for mission, who handle the Word of God accurately, and bring the unchanging gospel to an ever-changing world.

The college moved to its present location at Bryntirion, Bridgend, in 1985. Degree programmes were gradually introduced, from BA to PhD. We rejoice at the number of godly students whose faith has been strengthened by their time here, and who are now serving in churches, seminaries and other situations in the UK and the world.

The college was renamed Wales Evangelical School of Theology (WEST) in 2007. Since then, there has been no change in our doctrinal position. New students are still assured of receiving teaching from those completely

committed to a reformed and evangelical understanding of an inerrant Bible. But we are not afraid of the word 'contemporary'! Like King David of old, we believe we are primarily called to serve our generation.

The addition of Cor Bennema, Phil Hill and Mike Reeves to our full-time faculty this year has made a huge impact – this has been reflected in increased applications. People want to interact with and learn from the best in their field, and also join some of the exciting evangelistic and church-planting projects in which WEST plays a part, like *Valley Commandos* and *Looking for God*.

Our international vision has grown through our partnership with SaRang Community Church in Seoul, Korea. Through their generosity, we have been able to significantly enhance our facilities. Another supporter has enabled us to purchase the freehold

WEST

Wales Evangelical School of Theology

of the grounds and buildings from the Evangelical Movement of Wales, giving extra space for future growth.

Our latest venture, to be launched at All Souls Church in London on May 22, is to bring theological education into church community contexts. Our belief that gospel growth is best fuelled by directly 'Bringing the Academy into Missional Church' means that over the next few years, we shall be rolling out a new concept of online provision for churches, learning communities and partner colleges across the UK and Europe. Please pray for us! www.west.org.uk

Jonathan Stephen, Principal



Engaging with society

One of the ways in which Affinity serves the churches is through its Social Issues Team. Its members bring together experience and expertise across a range of areas of social policy, ethical issues and legal matters.

They cast a watchful eye over current events and write informative briefings for the churches to alert them about issues to be aware of and take action over. We also communicate regularly with government departments over proposed legislation in order to represent a biblical worldview on behalf of Affinity churches.

Here is a flavour of just some of the issues with which Affinity is currently engaged:

Elderly care

We are monitoring the progress of the Care Bill through Parliament. It will have a direct impact on how the care of elderly and vulnerable people is assessed, delivered and funded.

Churches and individuals are heavily involved in this provision and we want the very best for those in need, as well as the carers themselves, who often suffer low morale and overwork. The recent exposure of abuse

in care homes highlights another real area of concern.

Sex education in schools

A recent attempt to make sex education part of the national curriculum (and thus compulsory) was defeated but there is a worrying level of government support for the sex education lobby. From April this year sex education videos have to carry a rating (much like cinema releases and DVDs). This could be a good thing but not if the ratings are too weak. We will keep monitoring this. One positive thing is that in future schools are going to be obliged to put their curriculum online. This will help accountability to parents, particularly in matters such as sex education.

Assisted dying

Several attempts have been made to legalise euthanasia in the UK in recent years and proponents continue to

push this by every means. We expect an 'Assisted Dying' bill to come to Parliament later this year with government MPs given a free vote. Affinity will make representation where possible.

Three-parent babies

Affinity has also responded to government proposals to allow mitochondrial donation – which replaces the nucleus in a healthy donor egg with the nucleus DNA from the prospective mother – resulting in a baby with DNA from two mothers.

Arresting street preachers etc.

We have written to the Home Office about the recent spate of such arrests, asking for urgent action to ensure that police officers conduct themselves in accordance with the law. We have also written on behalf of Christians who find themselves unable to operate according to conscience in the workplace.

For much more information on the work of the Social Issues Team, see *The Bulletin* that we publish three times a year. These are available, free of charge, on our website: www.affinity.org.uk

Affinity News

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members as Independent Partner Churches:

New Life Church, Middlesbrough, Pilgrim Mission, Aberdeenshire and Lodge Road URC, Birmingham, and the following Associate members: **Grace Baptist Partnership and Sharing Christ Internationally**

Conferences

The Cross and the Global Mission of the Church

Affinity is partnering with others in a day conference in **Nottingham on Saturday 7 June**. 'Local Church Global Mission' is an initiative to encourage churches to be active in identifying, training, sending and supporting workers for cross-cultural mission. Whether your church has been involved in missions for years or you want to explore what a global vision will look like for your church, this day conference will envision, equip and encourage you and your church in reaching the ends of the earth for Christ. Speakers on the day include Andy Paterson (FIEC) and Jonathan Lamb (Keswick Ministries and Langham Partnership). For more information and to sign up for this event, find the link on the Affinity website.

2015 Theological Study Conference

We are pleased to announce that the subject for our next conference is Union with Christ. The dates are **25-27 February 2015 at Kings Park Conference Centre in Northampton**. The speakers will include Bob Letham, Paul Wells and Lee Gatiss. More details will be available shortly, so contact us now to make sure you receive them.



Publications

The Bulletin

The latest issue of The Bulletin is now available on our website, including items on the freedom of the press, the redefinition of marriage, developments in care of the elderly and a review of Lord of the Flies.

Foundations

Issue No 66 of our theological journal, Foundations, will also be available by the end of May. It includes articles on Gospel Partnerships, Para-church groups and the Ethics of War.

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 so they can pray more intelligently for the work. 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.

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