

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

The search for my successor as Director of Affinity has begun. We are praying that the Lord will guide us to the right man to take this vital work forward. Over the past five years Matthew and I have been working to consolidate and develop the various ministries of Affinity and are encouraged by the progress made.

It has been especially encouraging to see the fellowship enjoyed at Council level being deepened and becoming the springboard for joint endeavours by the Corporate Partners and Associates. Our Council Chairmen, Richard Underwood, David Meredith and Paul Spear, have been a great help to us.

Affinity is based on our biblical and gospel convictions. We exist to promote warm, loving relationships, co-operation and united witness between Christians and churches.

Love for our fellow Christians is a sign we have been born again (1 John 3:14). This love is a sign of those who are truly the children of God. Anyone who does not love his brother is not a child of God.

Love is a sign to the world that we really are Christians (John 13:34-35).

The loving unity of his people is a sign to the world that Jesus is the eternal Son of God (John 17:23).

Our normal way of thinking works outwards from ourselves: me – my family – my local church – my denomination – the universal church. In the last analysis however, it is the universal church, the innumerable multitude in the presence of God and of the Lamb, that is the ultimate, eternal reality.

My successor needs the prayers and financial support of all the Christians and churches who belong to Affinity. We work with a very small budget and would love to be able to do more. Please pray with us, and partner with us, so that my successor will have the spiritual and financial resources he needs to fulfil the ministries of Affinity which is a small, but significant, part of the church which the Father bought with the blood of his own Son.

Warmly yours
Peter Milsom (Director)

A new church for Ilford

Ilford is in the London Borough of Redbridge, in north-east Greater London. It has good transport links, with trains that get you to Liverpool Street in 18 minutes.

Parts of Ilford are also on the Central Line of the Underground. With the arrival of Crossrail in five years, you will be able to get on a train in Ilford and step off west of London. It has a shopping centre and good schools. Property prices are cheaper than other parts of London, but that's not saying much!

While Ilford has lots going for it economically, it is spiritually very poor. In the mid-20th century it was a white suburb with large church buildings that were near to full. Since then the ethnic make-up of the area has changed dramatically and churches

have struggled to adjust. Today, more than half the population comes from the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), and there are very few white British families still living there. The majority of these south Asians are Muslim, with many Hindus and Sikhs too. They know little about the gospel, but can be reached much more easily here in the UK. As Western Europe grows more secular and Islam grows numerically through higher birth rates, it is vital for the church to be reaching areas like this.

A number of church plants are taking place across London, but this stretch of the city is still lacking healthy, evangelical churches. The East London Gospel Partnership, London City Mission and wide variety of churches in east London are very supportive of a new church here.

The church plant

Started by the International Presbyterian Church (a member of Affinity), the plant will be led by Simon Arscott, currently Assistant Minister at

Trinity Church York, which was itself a church plant. He is from south London, and trained at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. He, his wife and four children plan to move down to Ilford at Christmas to start gathering people. He hopes to start a Sunday morning service at Easter 2016 and an evening service later in the year.

Simon is convinced that the only kind of church growth that matters is growth created by the word of God. Therefore, the driving force in the life of the church will be evangelistic and expository preaching. The need of the hour is faithful preaching in 21st century language; it is only the good news of reconciliation with God that can unite an ethnically and culturally diverse group of Christians to love one another – and love their neighbours who don't yet know Christ.

For more information, or if you are interested in getting involved, go to www.ilfordipc.co.uk or contact Simon at simonarscott@gmail.com



Simon,
his wife
Becky and
family

A Mission Director for the Free Church

The Free Church of Scotland is the largest evangelical, Presbyterian denomination in Europe, but when placed in the context of only just over 13,000 members and a Scottish population of 5.3 million we are faced with a reality check.

Reality has at its very heart the power of God to change lives and the call to the Church to be an instrument in seeking and saving the lost.

In recent years the Free Church has seen a degree of growth and revitalisation. Congregations in Edinburgh have risen from 3 to 6 with another on the way. Congregations are being established in the north east in Montrose and even further on the north east coast.

“It is our intention to bring the heart and eyes of a preacher/pastor to this new task.”

Another interesting change was the merging of two of the missions boards. We took the view that international mission differed from national, not in principle but only in scope. The methodology of church planting in India is not radically different to Glasgow. In both situations we speak sensitively



David Meredith

into the culture, religious background and even language of the indigenous people group.

It was in response to this new situation that the Free Church appointed me as Mission Director in October. The task is to encourage, direct and stimulate our evangelism in Scotland and beyond.

In Presbyterianism each congregation is connected to each other and the local grouping of 15 to 20 churches is called a presbytery. In Scotland there are 6 presbyteries. I have been tasked with meeting with each presbytery and working with them in strategic planning. With the unified board and a

single director we will all work together. Development and training of our existing and future leaders will be critical in extending the gospel.

Over the last two years we have held successful ‘boot camps’ which have trained 25 emerging leaders, all aged under 25. I will also be running courses at both presbytery and congregational level on subjects like ‘developing a strategic mind set’ as well as helping congregations carry out mission audits as they ask the honest question, Have we become inward looking?

It has been my privilege to serve one of our larger and growing congregations over the last 31 years. I am not an administrator by gifting and experience but a preacher and pastor. It is our intention to bring the heart and eyes of a preacher/pastor to this new task. My new ministry was launched by looking at the work of Nehemiah who was the quintessential planner under God. We were reminded that if God’s work is done in God’s way, ‘The God of heaven will give us success’ (Neh 1:20). Please partner with us in prayer.

David Meredith

Seminary on a chip

In East Africa it is estimated that there will be an additional 1 billion Christians within the next 40 years.

In China some estimate that there are currently 100 million Christians, which would actually exceed the membership of the Communist Party. Operation World notes that the two fastest growing churches in the world are in Iran and Afghanistan.

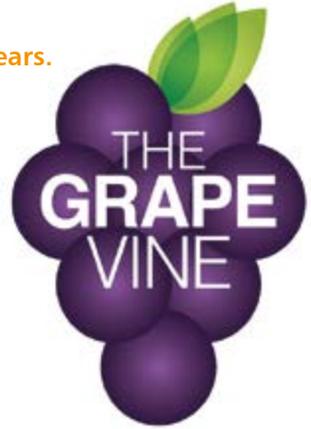
With this good news comes a new type of challenge – theological training. In Africa we could never build and staff enough seminaries to meet the full need; in China the government has begun a new round of persecution; and in Iran and Afghanistan you would be jailed or killed for such activity.

Because of this great need 100Fold has partnered with Third Millennium Ministries and Birmingham Theological Seminary in the USA to build a free, online, one-year Certificate in Christian Ministry course in English and Spanish and a mobile app. See www.thirdmill.org and www.btsfreeccm.org 1200 students from 93 countries have enrolled. We are working with our partners to make the same high quality video, audio lectures and PDF textbooks available online in Chinese, Arabic and Russian.

However, many of the people who most need training either

do not have access to the Internet, it is too expensive or such material is blocked. So we created the 'Grapevine' that allows people to take the class *without* Internet access. This device produces a private Wi-Fi cloud that students can connect to with a mobile phone. Once connected, they can take an online class, but local to the device itself. 90% of the 600 million Chinese people who access the Internet do it through their smartphone. We have commissioned a series of Grapevines to be used by 1000 theology students in a country where they cannot access theological materials on the Internet.

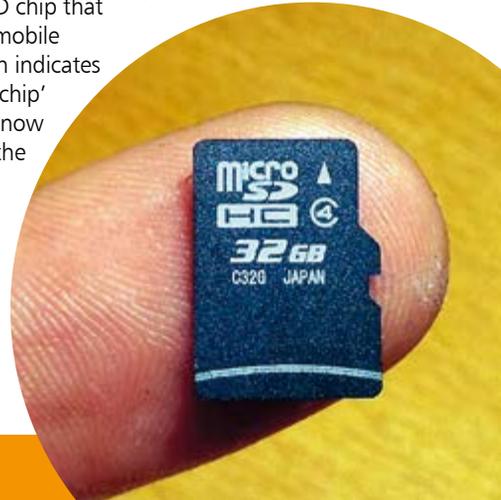
But our vision has not stopped with the Grapevine. Now we would like to develop the entire year-long training course on a single micro SD chip that can be placed in a mobile phone. Our research indicates this 'seminary on a chip' is within reach and now we are praying for the Lord to provide the resources, both in skilled personnel and finances to develop this theological training tool for the Global Church.



Our desire is to make sound, high quality training accessible to anyone – free – for pastors, elders, deacons and anyone involved in local church ministry. Please pray for us.

Ed Underwood
100Fold Team Leader

Ed spoke at the Affinity World Mission Day Conference in Deeside in September. This article has been adapted from an article in the Summer issue of 4 Corners, the magazine of UFM.



Gospel Yorkshire:

planting together in England's largest county

80 people gathered at Dewsbury Evangelical Church in West Yorkshire in October for the launch of Gospel Yorkshire.

In association with the Yorkshire Gospel Partnership, we are a new church planting initiative, a network of gospel-believing people across the county who long to work together to see more gospel churches in needy communities. At the conference were church leaders, ministry trainees, bible college students, retired people and others in the workplace. The feedback from delegates at this excellent day has been very positive.

Neil Powell (City Church Birmingham and 2020birmingham) and Andy Paterson (FIEC Mission Director) opened up God's Word to us. Neil gave a masterful overview of Jonah, probing the motives of our hearts as we engage in (or

avoid!) sharing the gospel with the lost. Andy urged us to humble, gospel-serving partnership from Acts 17, and pressed home the implications of Yorkshire's needs, as he explored social data on the county. Their input brought much-needed realism, about ourselves as gospel servants, our county, and the infinite power and possibilities of God's grace.

We also had extensive updates from churches and ministries in the county (Acts 29, International Presbyterian Church, the new Church Planting Academy in Sheffield, and Anglican Mission in England). We also broke into regional groups for news, conversation and prayer and explored serious planting plans in Leeds, Scarborough, East Hull and the Spenn Valley, as well as to look at the needs of Central Doncaster.

One of the best features of the day was the opportunity to talk together, either as already-established gospel partners, or as new friends. Several came from outside Yorkshire, and are seriously looking at ministry opportunities here.

The result of the day was that we went home encouraged to get to work, relying upon the Lord, and ambitious to partner in seeing churches established.

Gospel Yorkshire exists to help churches plant churches. We want to see Yorkshire alive with gospel life in local churches, and are convinced that churches must own the work of planting. Equally, experienced church leaders and planters must work together with their churches to get them doing the real, hard work of planting. Gospel Yorkshire is a network of leaders and churches working together for these aims.

After such a successful conference it's vital to remind ourselves that we've done almost nothing yet. The challenges are enormous. And we are keen to hear from anyone who wants to pray for Yorkshire's needs, get involved in planting, or offer us financial or any other support. Check our website, www.gospelyorkshire.org.uk

Lewis Allen is Director of Gospel Yorkshire, and planter and Pastor of Hope Church, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.



Affinity News



Our monthly prayer calendar is now on PrayerMate

Each month we publish on our website a list of prayer requests (one for each day) from our Affinity family. We have now also made this available on the PrayerMate mobile app. This excellent tool enables you to download to your phone or tablet prayer feeds from many different churches and organisations, as well as organising your own personal prayer requests. Find out how you can use PrayerMate at www.geero.net/prayermate



PRAYERMATE™

New members

We are delighted to welcome the following additions to the Affinity community:

- New Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, West Kilburn, London (Independent Partner Church)
- Upton Baptist Church, Chester (Independent Partner Church)
- Time for Change Ministries (Associate)

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.

Theological Study Conference 2017

The next Study Conference will be at King's Park, Northampton, from 1-3 March 2017. The theme is 'The Christian Church – Its Mission in a Post-Christian Culture' as we consider how to respond biblically and practically to the challenges posed by the increasing secularisation of the West. Details of papers and speakers to follow.

Vacancy: Affinity Director (part-time)

The role requires creativity and flexibility but the core responsibility is to provide leadership & co-ordination across the Affinity network.

The person we are looking for:

- *Understands & values the core purposes of Affinity to deepen gospel unity.*
- *Understands & values the boundaries & breadth of our theological position.*
- *Has experience of leadership in a church and/or Christian organisation.*
- *Has a calling and vision for the development of Affinity.*

Contact Paul Spear (Chair of Council) by 16 November for more information.

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Applications to be received by 30 November

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