

Brian's CLOG ...Baptist Assembly 2009.

Bournemouth International Centre.

Conformists write Blogs; this non-conformist has written a Clog (a **Coleman log**). It makes a change from Twittering, Face book, YouTube and texting...not to mention email.

The word clog can have negative connotations however it also means to stick together, which is the feeling I had of the Baptist family (all 2000 I think) at Bournemouth.

Apart for the one day Assembly in Brum in 2005 this was my first Baptist Assembly. So these are my impressions and experiences.

Having looked at the programme two weeks before departure and seeing events starting at 3 pm Friday and lasting through to 1.15 pm Monday (there were a possible 21 sessions of learning sharing and worship) I got out my Project Planner's hat out and drew up a programme so the 5 of us from this church (Margaret Reeve Jane Robson Tony and Nancy Cervantes) who were going could plan their activity to make sure we covered all the options available for multi choice based seminars.

Fortunately sense prevailed (plus several activities got in my way of this planning process) and we reverted to "Plan A"... follow God's guidance. I think I eventually went to 14 sessions over the 4 days and was greatly blessed.

My Clog is divided into separate sections to make it easier to absorb. (I have highlighted some of the more memorable comments.)

1) First impressions.

Very professionally organised, well balanced, well supported, well blessed.

The entrance hall was like a family reunion, and the 'chance meetings' included our church friend Leroy, Carol Murray, David Doonan who I had known since I was about 6, Matthew Cooper our old friend from Dunchurch and many more plus Kate Coleman who spoke to me and suggested if my brother was around we could get a Coleman family thing going and takeover.. Kate's roots must be from way back in our family history....it was good to see her again.

2) Sticking together

To a degree I had to pinch myself and ask are we really in the midst of a financial storm the worst for many years, with doom and gloom abounding?

The people at the Assembly were driven forward by the support of one another and the charge to go and share the Gospel. I did not hear the words doom gloom or failure once. Instead it was a call for growth particularly in the numbers of folk to go overseas in the missionary role. By sticking together and with our God a vast difference is possible.

3) Business.

One of the reasons for getting together at an Assembly is the need to appoint personnel, approve accounts and pass resolutions, etc

The past president John Weaver was thanked and the new one installed Kingsley Appiagyeyi (originally from Ghana). Kingsley the senior minister at Trinity Baptist Church West Norwood started the church in his home with 8 people and now has a

congregation of 2000 (not in his home of course) the only Baptist Church in the UK which is larger is Calvary Charismatic Baptist Churchwhich is one of Kingsley's church plants. Kingsley gave the message in the Friday night session. (see below) We welcomed two vice presidents this year (to give the second VP two years to prepare for the task!!)

This year's vice president is Rev Roger Martin and will be president 2010/2011; he was ill and unable to attend the assembly but Dr Pat Took president elect for 2011/2012 was in attendance and spoke at other sessions. She is the Regional Minister (Pastoral Care) Team Leader for the London Baptist Association.

The accounts for 2008/2009 for Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB; known affectionately as Bugby) were presented and although the figures on the pre-printed leaflet were not the detailed ones read out the discrepancy was explained and the accounts accepted. On another day the accounts for BMS World mission were presented. Information of both is available on the websites I believe.

Two formal resolutions were discussed.

In summary the first was presented (very well) by a young lady to bring about the banning of the use of 'mosquito alarms' to deter young people around buildings where they might cause mischief. The alarms actually affect anyone with good hearing particularly if you are under 25? The argument to ban was presented as discriminating against young people and should therefore be banned. There was no real alternative offered to "protect the rights" of those hassled by unruly people whether old or young. The proposal was eventually carried with a subtext that positive alternatives should be put in place e.g. Street Pastors? (BC)
Second resolution was to request that Asylum seekers be allowed to work while their cases are being investigated and that their children should not be held in custody. The vote went in favour.

4) The Past

There was a focus on the past this year as it was the 400th Anniversary of the founding of the first Baptist Church in Europe. We were reminded of the faith and determination of our forefathers who took great risks to live for what they thought was right. The title of the Assembly was 'who do we think we are?' was reminiscent of the TV programme that takes people back to their family roots to see what they can learn about themselves.

5) The Future....messages from Scripture

Some of the worship and Bible study sessions:-

5.1) An expectant community?

Message from Rev Kingsley Appiagyeyi
2 Chron 7 13-16.

We should be prepared to do something in God's name even if we fail; we will be judged for doing nothing. **We should not allow the current challenges to short change us of the future (Obama quote)**

The requirements:-

- **A call to prepare**
- **A call to humility**

- **A call to prayer (Jer 33:3)**
- **A call to seek God**
- **A call to repentance**

God will hear usthere will be rewards for obedience

5.2) A compassionate Community?

Bible Study led by an American lady from International Ministries, Lauren Bethall
Matt 9 1-2 35-37.

Emphasis on prostitution and human trafficking, a heart felt message from a lady who has dedicated so much of her time in the exposure of unjust treatment of people.

5.3) Focus on National Mission

This session was hosted by the Baptist Union.

Jonathon Edwards was 'encouraging missionary disciples'

What a huge harvest! How few workerson your knees and pray for the "harvest hands"

Accept people for what they are and do....leave Jesus to change them.

5.4) A missionary society?

Message from Rev Neville Callam Gen Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

Mission flows from the heart of God, do we still have the passion of the early Christians and the reformers of 400 years ago? John 20:19

Mission

Origin in the Father

Model in the Son

Impetus in the Spirit

5.5) All Age Worship Sunday Morning

Lead by Andy and Joy Clark of Viz a Viz Ministries. They were good, I liked it a lot; an excellent adult message adapted well for children. Variations on the theme "**who do we think we are ...here for?**"

Message from 2 Cor 5:7 I am a new creation, we are the latest in the line of witnesses from Adam through the OT , NT forward to the present day and we have to carry the message forward.

5.6) A Christ like community?

Recognition of newly accredited ministers. This was inspiring to see about 70 different folk being presented as newly qualified or newly appointed to the BUGB , all ages, in families, all shapes and sizes and all committed to spreading the Gospel it was a privilege to see these folk going out to new service. It was a contrast to those who are 'in the system' for BMS , only one family currently going through training for long term service as missionaries.

We need to pray for this work and Roger Amos will be helping our thoughts and actions in this as our BMS World Mission Representative.

Message from Jonathan Edwards, see the DVD "GO!" (I have a copy).

Phil chap 1 v15 **Have open hands empty, and open to God, not full of pride.**

Key word is **TRANSFORMATION**, don't be 'it's the way I am' or 'I've always done it this way' be open to God and change.

5.7) A Radical Community?

Message from Pat Took

Matt 10

What is God's word for this generation?

We are a community of pilgrims.

Radical or fundamentalism?

Jesus sent out the 12 then the 72 and now us.

What is our motivation, our call?

The call cannot exist in our singing of songs on a Sunday, we are called and encouraged to go out and offer our help to the dispossessed and the poor.

Jesus sent the disciples out with the instruction 'heal the sick raise the dead!' Are we doing what Jesus wants us to? Or doing the things we like doing. Do we have a radical programme?

How can you be radical and a home owner? the disciples were sent out with nothing.

How were the disciples received? Some were welcomed some were not. We go out and sometimes we are unpopular, obnoxious, superior etc.

We should challenge other 'allegiances' in our lives.

Family (these are Pat's words) we make far too much of our children's education we worship our children ...it is not right.

Baptist community ...Christ comes first before the church.

Obedience to Queen and country, we should obey just laws.

Finally allegiance to Jesus Christ ...how far will you go in following Jesus??

5.8) A confident Community?

Message from David Kerrigan. Romans 4

God made a promise to Abraham about his family size and he believed....with confidence, despite being 100 and his wife well beyond child bearing age.

David used the example of the huge balloon that hovers over Bournemouth where magnificent views can be seen. Sometimes it is buffeted by the wind, but it is safely anchored to the ground, giving great confidence to those in the balloon basket. We are anchored to Christ.

(He mentioned the book by Richard Dawkins The God Delusion and recommended the book by Alistir McGrath The Dawkins Delusion)

6) Special Interest Groups.

6.1) " If your church disappeared would the community notice?" was the title of the first group I went to. I had already formed an opinion about ours before I went but was interested to hear about others. Pat Bryan of Purley Baptist Church described their community project (see below an intro to their website).

The Purley Cross Centre

Purley Cross Centre

The Purley Cross Centre is a community information service for Purley and is managed by Purley Baptist Church. The Centre aims to provide a wide range of information for all ages as well as affordable meeting space for organisations

in the voluntary and charitable sector. The project is called 58:12 based on Isaiah 58 verse 12. Purley also has Town Chaplains who minister to shop staff (Training material is available) and School Pastors. Purley have a night shelter and take people into their church hall where they give them a meal, play games (scrabble etc) and somewhere to sleep.

More about the Purley Cross Centre

For more information on the Purley Cross Centre have a look at the website:

www.purleybaptist.org/pcc

I am surprised the church did not operate a funeral directors then it could have been called the "Purley Gates"

In the session we met with other churches to understand what each were doing in the communities. It was obvious that many churches are looking to expanding into the community as a way of supporting the vulnerable and to take the Gospel.

6.2) Baptist on the waterfront

The second session I went to was on the end of the pier in the restaurant where cream teas were served. Adrian Plass was the guest speaker for the Sailors Society. The SS is a very worthy charity that does as it suggests supports merchant sailors world wide in the extremely difficult job that they do to bring essential (and not so essential !!) supplies to this country, without them our stores would start to run out with ten days!! Rev Mark Warner was promoting the Society. Mark very recently came to Regent Place to lead a Men's Breakfast session; he was also welcomed in a later session by the Baptist Union to his new role as pastor to the Sailors Society. That was the serious side...I had never met Adrian Plass before but for me he was funny, irreverent in some peoples eyes no doubt but has tremendous insight into the way we think.

The theme of 'Who do we think we **are?**' put personally **has** a different emphasis when expressed 'who do you think **YOU** are?'

His version of Moses and the burning bush in teenage speak was great ...his 'hey Mo Bro talk to the bush cause the face ain't listening' might not mean a lot to the mature in the audience but it said a lot to the young exploring the faith and trying to understand the Bible. If we think about it we say some weird things in church that we understand but a lot who are enquiring about faith would not understand.

I think it was Adrian who mentioned people being the pillars of the church, thought to be a worthy title by some but as a description, pillars in a church can be large thick things that hold up the church and can block vision... many a true word.

His new book is **Looking Good, Being Bad: The Subtle Art of Churchmanship.**

6.3 Bible Reading –boring or life transforming

This was led by Lynne Green Minister of Wokingham Baptist Church. She was full of energy, inspirational and non judgmental.

She pointed out that only 29% of Baptists read the Bible once a month. She said many of the frustrations that people experience is the over the guilt many carry for not being

a 'model Christian' (whatever that is). Some of the phrases she used when describing Bible reading included:-

- Engage with the Bible
- Read quickly learn slowly
- Tyranny "I must read the Bible everyday!"
- Be free of guilt turn duty to desire.

She gave a list of 10 options to follow to light or re light the Bible bug. To follow

1. Daily notes. For married couples suggests 'Becoming Soul Mates' helps new couples cultivate a strong spiritual union with 52 devotions from two authorities on marriage enrichment
2. Reading a daily portion every day
3. Pod castdownload from the internet and listen
4. Faith comes by hearing (Bible Soc dramatised version available)
5. Meditating on a verse or short passage say Matt 28:20
6. Lectio Dinina . Look at BibSoc website under "Resources" to find out what is available.
7. Journaling. Nice note book, prophetic word, and the SOAP system Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer
8. Bible in a year. There is a book to help with this. Try genre reading plan e.g. history, psalms etc. Cover to Cover
9. Songs based in scripture. Ishmael Party Time available
10. The Book of God: The Bible as a novel.

Also write a verse on a stone and live with it for a week!! And then swop for another week.

A book Faith Endures for Ever.

The Bible.... don't just read it ..live it.

6.4 Walking on Eggshells

Presented by the Baptist Interfaith Network and the speaker was David Gifford Chief Exec of the Council of Christians and Jews...the question have we learnt anything in 65 years? Judging by the reactions of some of those in the group if we have learnt anything it has not calmed the situation these is obviously still bitterness around.

David said we should focus on a new boldness with respect for others because God is at work in them as well.

I will add to this later.

Sundry

- Stamps. I think I am right in reporting that 8m used stamps had been collected and this raised £14,000 for BMS.

- BMS had a £600,000 legacy last year which meant that some of the projected cutbacks were put on hold for review this year.
- *Future Shape* is a DVD I have from BUGB re caring for Gods creation. If anyone would like to see it please ask.
The Assembly tried to be carbon neutral. In respect of travel to Bournemouth all the delegates were encouraged to complete a questionnaire on a computer and the cost of off-setting the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the travelling was calculated and the amount donated by the delegates would be used to plant trees to compensate.
- I bought a series of BUGB publications called Baptist Principles they are an excellent resource, talk to me about them.
- Crossing Places is a title for community initiatives in which Baptist Churches are involved.
- Leading Edge is on again this year in Warwick.
- Back to church Sunday in October ...bring someone you know to something you love.

Thank you to the church paying for our registration fees. In light of the recent political revelations thank goodness we were not claiming any other expenses. I was pleased to be able to stay with my brother and sister-in-law in Bournemouth plus other family members and share as a family as well as part of a church family.