



baptist union
of scotland

FORGING THE FUTURE

OUR PLACE IN THE NATION?

Stories

Forging the Future -Stories

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Baptist Union of Scotland

Foreword into the Future

What do we mean by “Forging the Future”? The phrase for me conjures up the image of a dimly lit Blacksmith’s workshop. The walls lined with tools and benches, files and hammers. The forge roaring in the corner, heating the workshop on even the coldest of days, to the sound of the blown air and flames heating various metal bars until they are glowing the colour of the setting sun. Silhouetted against the bright light of the forge is the Smith; watching and waiting for just the right moment to draw the metal from the flames, and with quick and precise blows, to sculpt the stock bar before returning it to the forge. The skill of the Smith, the heavy physical work, the fine filing and finishing comes together to form the finished article. The beauty of which hides the long hours, violent blows, and searing heat that were poured into this creation.

Alternatively, the phrase also creates images of those courageous souls who pioneered lives in new lands. Those who forged a new path where one had not been trod before, overcoming all the physical and mental barriers that were presented to them. Or in fact anyone, who with grit and determination, has pursued a path, enduring all kinds of difficulty, in order to achieve the goal. Whether that goal be personal or professional, sporting or academic. Whatever the image that you bring to mind, it almost certainly has an element of hard work, tenacity and final accomplishment to it. These are not the particular qualities and characteristics that I want here to focus on. This is not because they are unimportant, or because they are not integral to achievements that have in some way been forged. It is because they come together to produce something else that is unique, bespoke, created for the purpose which it achieves.

It is this unique nature of a pioneering journey, or the hand-crafted object, that will provide the focus for what follows. We will not be focussing on a process to be followed or goals to be achieved, important as those are. Instead, our task is to gaze upon the beauty of the bespoke solution, recognising the hard work and craftsmanship that goes into making it. The stories in this book are not so much patterns to be followed or goals to be aimed for, but rather art works to inspire, ideas to encourage, and journeys to experience.

One size fits all?

Temptations

There are several dangers in offering material about the church and the way forward for the future. The perceived successes of others may, for some, bring thoughts and feelings of condemnation and pressure to achieve as others have. Or conversely, we may be prompted to look at our own lack of human or material resources and conclude that, unless our congregation were bigger or better resourced, we are doomed to failure. For others, perhaps something in this book will encourage change towards a model outlined, because of its success in a particular place appears to herald a definitive way forward. Alternatively, a particular story may appear to present the best way forward and obscure the important elements of other stories and experiences. Should any of these experiences resonate within you, it is not the intention of this publication to promote a 'one size fits all' approach to the future of the church. There may be things to learn from the journeys of others, but we cannot walk the same paths as they have. Each congregation must approach its own context, and respond in the light of the love and discernment of the Holy Spirit, not from pressure to succeed by standards other than those of Jesus Christ.

Changing times

Since the middle of the twentieth century the place of the church in society, in the United Kingdom and across the Westernised world, has drastically changed. It is no great secret that in many places the number of those attending churches has fallen. Young people often appear less interested in the faith of their parents or grandparents. We are faced with the rising profile of a 'New Atheism' and the slow removal of specific religious input into our increasingly secular society. We have generations of people who no longer have the religious, let alone specifically Christian, vocabulary to understand the stories we tell about the God we worship. Even the underlying philosophical assumptions we hold have changed. The 'Enlightenment' of the eighteenth century, with its absolutes and stress on the power of reason, was challenged by 'Modernism' and its desire to improve and develop. Yet Modernism's outlook of progress now no longer seems to be able

to hold our daily lives together. The western world has moved into a 'Post-Modern' phase, where technology, never resting, advances at a pace.

To view changing times as a justification for a decline in church attendance would not, however, do justice to a bigger picture. There are Christians across the Western World who have seen breakthroughs into the social spheres of young people, the marginalised and the growing number of people who have never had personal contact with the Gospel. To blame 'changing times' would also run the risk of flattening out a vista that is far from level. Although the Western world may have moved from 'Enlightenment' to 'Modernism' and now into 'Post-Modernism', changing times cannot be read as if they were geological strata or tiers of rock, each belonging to a separate age. There are still marks of each system of thought that persist into our current situations. We need only look around our towns and cities to see how architecture speaks of the time it was built. It is clear, to the trained eye, the way in which buildings mirror the fashionable thoughts of their time. We pass through pristine glass atria, light, spacious, almost transcendent buildings into carved stone and pillars, opulent interiors, and statues heralding achievements of years gone by, as well as through the concrete structures and timber framed buildings. Passing into and out of these spaces is commonplace in our day to day life, as is dealing with and negotiating these marks, of different ages and stages, in our thought and the thoughts of others.

A liminal space

The Church today finds itself in a place of changing times that do, in fact, mix and merge with one another. We do not belong to any of these ages, but appear in all of them. We live in the 'in-between', in tension between different ways of viewing life, in a liminal space of overlaps. To focus on engaging the issues encountered, as we move from 'Modernism' with its self-assurance into a less fixed, more mobile 'Post-Modern' way of thought, could easily obscure the needs of those who still operate mainly within a modern framework. Similarly, to simply continue in patterns of life and worship that have developed over the past century and that we have become comfortable with, would be to put ourselves at odds with the changing cultural expecta-

tions and ways of thinking. So what can we do to embrace this liminal space?

Unity or Diversity? And do we have to choose?

No One Shot solution

Perhaps the first step in engaging the present culturally diverse situation we find ourselves in, is to name and put aside two unhelpful thoughts. Firstly, there is no silver bullet, no one shot solution. For us to imagine that there might be would require us to ignore the wide cultural diversity around us. However this also does not mean that, in the specific context we find ourselves in, there is always a plurality of cultural influences. You will know your own context and there may only be one prominent culture. Secondly, it is important not to confuse unity with conformity. By not being involved in exactly the same activities as others does not separate us, or them, from our respective places in the people of God. As Baptists, we have an advantage in our way of doing church that allows for variety. Our Union of churches emphasises the autonomy of each individual congregation, in respect to governing its own affairs, which predisposes us to see unity in diversity and not conformity. The idea of a silver bullet, the one shot solution, has never been a viable option for us as a people of God.

I suspect that few of us would consciously want to suggest that there is only one way by which to do things. As you read through the following chapters you will see different stories of how communities are being engaged. However I imagine that many of us would consider the diversity seen within Christianity, nationally and globally, is a later development that we would ideally reverse. Perhaps visions of the early church in Luke's account of the Acts of the Apostles is where we should start? Yet the more we look into research surrounding the origins of the early church, we find that the evidence doesn't point to conformity. We do not see a single method, or model, of church.

A Biblical kaleidoscope

By the 2nd century AD it is clear that 'Church' was the preferred self

designation of Christians. But the singular nature of the word 'Church' can obscure the plural form of what is being talked about. It may suggest a picture of conformity which might appear ideal; but this was not the practical reality. Some would want to identify clear stages, or 'strata', in the emergence of the church: Jesus and a Jewish background, Paul and a Gentile background, the Apostolic Father and a Greek background. Others, however, would point out that it is not possible to compartmentalise the development of early christianity. Can we easily unravel the knot? No. We are faced, in the light of Biblical and early Christian scholarship, with a kaleidoscope of colours. Early Church was a whole range of relationships, a variety of patterns in a way of approaching both mission and ministry. Perhaps then we might allow this evident diversity to free us to imagine that church, even from its earliest forms, need not necessarily be conformed to one pattern of practices.

Does this mean it would be appropriate to leave an open invitation to believe what you like, practice your own rituals and to conveniently call it 'church? Certainly not! What then informs this diversity? What prevents us from taking things into our own hands and that keeps our diversity grounded in Biblical truth? The simple answer to this, in terms of our Baptist Union Declaration of Principle, is Jesus Christ. But more than that, our relationship with Jesus Christ is foundational to the very existence of Church. After all, it is Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah that prompts the response, "on this rock I will build my church." It is confession that is central, not conformity. As Rowan Williams said in his forward to Mission Shaped Church,

If 'church' is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other, there is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style, so long as we have ways of identifying the same living Christ at the heart of every expression of Christian life in common.

Perhaps this might begin to expand our framework of church to view diversity as part of God's creativity and to embrace it, in order to see others built up into the fullness of Christ.

Paul Minear wrote *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, which outlines and examines numerous images used of the Church. He highlights four main images, the People of God, the Body of Christ, the New Creation and the Fellowship in Faith. These images are augmented by minor images, including salt, a letter, the boat, bread, vine branches, wine, trees, God's building, the poor, a bride, and fishers. All are employed to show different facets of church that would not otherwise be seen, or might even be obscured by other images.

Minear devotes, in this book, an entire chapter to looking at the relationship between these images. For him, the many images provide the threads of a rich and ornate tapestry, which only when viewed together begin to show the full picture. He is also struck by the wealth of diverse origins the images come from, 'home life, in wedding customs, in farm and lake, in city streets and temple, in kitchen and courtroom, in ancient legend and contemporary events.' It is also noteworthy that it is not 'found in any [Biblical] writer the inclination to reduce the profusion to order.' And so Minear asks the question, 'why is it that each figure gains in force when viewed in the context of all?'; and the answer he finds is that each image points to something beyond itself. No image contains enough to definitively pin down a definition of church, because the images point towards the realm that God is at work in. These images, Minear suggests, only make sense if they are 'everywhere anchored in the reality of God'. In fact, he concludes from his understanding that, 'the New Testament offers no definition of church per se as a separate or autonomous entity.'

Let us walk through Ephesians 2, which Minear uses as an example of two images coming together. Ephesians 2:11-22 is full of images, but the major images of the 'Body of Christ' and the 'People of God' can clearly be identified coming together. These show how those who were alienated from 'the commonwealth of Israel' are, through Christ's death and resurrection, reconciled into one body. Paul's discussion of the 'Body of Christ' lays out what Minear sees as the universality of the body. The body is inclusive, for all men are included in the righteous act of one man (Romans 5:18). When you consider then the 'People of God', an image that we would readily associate with the Israelites, that image must also be expanded. God's people must derive meaning both from the life of Israel and also this present time of ful-

filment. Minear also notes that it is also the person of Christ that modifies the image of the 'People of God'. For now, through the Messiah, the 'People of God' becomes a more personal image. It is through Jesus Christ that the individual enters into the corporate commonwealth. Through Christ's act we are all justified. Minear goes on to express how this image of the body works alongside the image of God's people, in order to bring new understanding to it. Minear is also keen to remind us that Paul, in expanding the understanding of the 'People of God' image, was certainly not prepared to do away with it.

With these scriptural images in mind and also considering the historical accounts available to us, I want to highlight one additional area. When we begin to talk about 'church' we often unconsciously move between spiritual and sociological concerns. Yet to do this is incredibly difficult. As this discussion develops into the realms of emerging churches, fresh expressions and missional movements, models have been sought to try and bridge this divide between spiritual and sociological. Fresh Expressions acknowledge the 'Four Marks', One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, adding additional methodologies for a missionary church. Over the past decade this has developed to include relational models of church, understanding relationships between God, the World, the Wider Christian Body and the local Christian Body as being important to bridging theological and sociological concerns.

What this leads me to conclude is that as we look at Scripture and church history in the light of modern research, we find a level of diversity that is often concealed in the word 'Church'. For us to really make sense of this mixture of different angles and opinions, views and approaches, images and experiences, it is necessary, as Paul Minear suggested, to look to that which all of these point towards. In all these areas, church is church because it points towards not only the person and work of Christ, but also to experiencing his present presence. Our unity is expressed through a diversity that is grounded in pointing beyond itself towards the love of our Father, brought to us through Jesus Christ his Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not need to choose between unity and diversity. What we need to focus on and proclaim together is life and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Forging the Future...

What follows are four stories. These are the stories of people leading churches in different parts of the country. Each church has its own character, needs, people and concerns. Each is dealing with the question of how to be church. There are those for whom the primary issue is to equip and disciple those in their congregation, in order for them to make an impact on the world around them. One of the stories focuses on getting out into the community first, in order to dispel some of the myths that often surround the church: only after people have begun to engage can that progress into making disciples. Another story looks more at being part of their small community and working hard to reflect the community within their congregation.

What has struck me as interesting, as I have been involved in compiling these stories, is that different as each of the stories are and valid for their own context, two things are obvious.

Firstly, each church has at some stage really grappled with how to show the love of God and express the truth of the gospel to the local community. As we saw with the images of the church, it is necessary to have many images to try and truly capture the vast nature and character of what it means to be 'Church'. One image is simply not enough to express all that needs to be said. If you are beginning this process of reaching out again into your local communities, then it cannot hurt to start by asking about the nature of your context.

Secondly, each story is not only about a church but of a person as well. I often heard that there were key defining moments in the early parts of their lives, whether that be missions trips, a particular love of sport, the encouragement of their own leaders and pastors as they grew up, and more besides. It was these key moments that began to shape possible ways forward into the local communities, forging actions and attitudes. So whilst it is important to understand the communities around us, it is also fundamentally important to look at what has shaped us. What or who really influenced you, as you began to mature in your faith? It may well be that something you did, or a particular encouragement you were given, will be just what you need to think about doing in your congregation or community.

It has been a true privilege to listen to these stories. That some have come from similar backgrounds, yet now are doing significantly different things in their respective communities, encourages me. There are more out there, doing very different things, that reach into their own contexts and address the specific needs that they find there. It also gives me hope that, as others begin to address the issues facing them, they too will find varied and appropriate ways to bring the love of God and the good news of Jesus Christ to those around them.

As you read these stories, think of them as encouragements. These are not stories about best practice, or programmes that need to be repeated. These are stories to encourage reflection on your own situation, the communities you find yourselves in, the things that you have experienced and that have shaped you. To pray that God would give you the boldness to reach out to people around you, in ways that meet them where they are.

Paul Hammond

Pitlochry Baptist Church - Family

David Barrie was appointed as pastor of Pitlochry Baptist Church in October 2007. He joined Pitlochry from Stirling Baptist Church where he was initially called as Youth Pastor in 2000 before being ordained as a minister in 2003. Prior to this time David worked with Glasgow City Mission and studied at Glasgow Bible College. For 12 years he has been involved in football chaplaincy, serving as the chaplain of Stirling Albion Football Club, and since season 2012/13 the chaplain of St Johnstone Football Club.

The Glasgow I was born into and brought up in was the part which battled with bigotry. All my siblings were members of the Orange Order and, although my parents were not particularly religious at that time, when I was born they enrolled me in the Lodge, and I believe that by the age of 4 or 5 I was attending meetings. The natural progression for most of us once we were old enough was to join a flute band and learn to play an instrument. This I did by about the age of 10. However, I recall that after the climax of the marching season one year, I returned home from 'The Big Walk', put my sash away in the drawer, and went outside to play football with Paul and Mark; two good friends, and practicing Roman Catholics. Even at this young age, it became increasingly obvious to me that I wasn't convinced by the beliefs of the Order. Before long I decided that it wasn't for me, so I stopped going along and put down my flute for good. Mercifully, my parents supported my decision, and I soon found myself an outsider with a lot of time on my hands. Something that had been such a normal part of life suddenly stopped.

At around this time my sister came to faith through the ministry of Edwin Gunn at Queen's Park Baptist Church. My sister would drag me along to some of the groups that they were running for young people. One was a midweek group for pre-teens who had no or little contact with the church. I have really good memories of those times and in particular of two men, Douglas Kennedy and Calum Tooth. These men of God inspired me. Now, all these years later, and I love this, I am now Douglas Kennedy's pastor and he is one of my deacons. Through the ministry of those involved in the youth ministry at Queen's Park, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit I came to faith at the age of 15. In

particular I was struck by the inclusivity of this group. They opened their lives to me, put up with me, and seemed to be able to cope with all my rough edges.

Sometime after I came to faith I had a chance encounter with a lady called Wynne Stearns, who was heading up YWAM's Kings Kids ministry. She challenged me to get involved with this performing arts ministry and, although no young person today would be seen dead in the shell suits or use the material we used back then, it did have a inspiring effect and stopped people in their tracks to listen to our singing and stories of God. Although I never enrolled in a YWAM Discipleship Training School, I did participate in many teams over the years, and I got used to going out onto the streets and talking about my faith. This was discipleship training for me, and it certainly helped me grow. I remember one occasion we were performing in Glasgow Central Station. At the time I was training as an apprentice engineer and like a lot of young people I kept quiet about my faith. However, this day in Central Station, just after the cheesiest piece of choreography performed to a song called 'I just gotta tell ya', I was about to take to the microphone and give my testimony when I spotted four apprentice workmates standing at the front of the crowd smiling at me. Boy did that put hairs on my chest. From then on, my faith was out the bag. I prayed with my leaders, shared my testimony to all the crowd, and went to speak to my workmates about Jesus.

Importantly, with both the youth ministry at Queen's Park and the YWAM teams, my discipleship was done in community. Communities that accepted me and the rough edges I had; but formed me, taught me, loved me and very seriously stretched my faith. When I left the Lodge I left a community. That should have left an enormous chasm in my life, but what I found with the church family, at Queen's Park in particular, was a community with opened doors to me and inspiring people who journeyed with me day in day out. This was a new world to me, and although I couldn't articulate it at the time, I was growing by seeing Jesus in the lives of these Christians.

Having completed my training and become an Engineer, I married Miranda. She had been brought up in the manse and, although her parents' ministry and example have always inspired her, she always

said she would never marry a minister. However, after six months of marriage I responded to the call to ministry and began my studies at Glasgow Bible College. It was never my intention to become a minister. I simply knew studying theology was the right thing to do. As my course progressed, we were offered the opportunity to make our studies a little more practical by signing up for a three month placement 'in the mission field'. Many in my year group decided not to go down this route in case it jeopardised their grades. I came to the conclusion that, if I was going into Christian ministry, then I ought to find out early on if I was cut out for it, or not.

That placement was with Glasgow City Mission; great people and a great ministry. Much to my delight, after those three months they gave me very good grades and offered me a job to-boot. So I continued to study for Honours part-time and started working at the City Mission. Sometime later, my leaders at the City Mission asked me if I had seen the Youth Pastor position that had come up at Stirling Baptist Church. To be honest I had, but previous experiences with Stirling Baptist Church had put me off taking interest. The youth fellowship at Queen's Park had stayed in their building soon after it had been refurbished and we caused a 'little' bit of damage which didn't go down too well. So I told my leaders I didn't want to apply. Besides, I enjoyed working at the City Mission, was involved in ministry at Queen's Park and had been given the opportunity to teach young people at Bearsden Baptist Church as well.

My leaders persisted and, out of obedience, I applied for the role at Stirling. For some strange reason, at no point did I suspect that the City Mission were trying to get rid of me!? I seem to remember looking a little rough and as uninterested as I possibly could when I went for my first interview at Stirling. I even told the interview team that I was happy working with the homeless at the City Mission and they only needed to keep me in the process if I helped them work through their thoughts about other candidates. All the while I kept praying and asking if this was God's will he needed to change my heart. Then one weekend I was given the opportunity to take a youth group and speak to the church. And what do you know, my heart changed. As I drove home I remember thinking, 'If I don't get this job I'll be gutted.' Shortly after this I was offered the job and became Stirling's Youth Pastor.

Stirling Baptist Church was a great experience for me. Of course I made mistakes, yet also saw a successful ministry grow. After 3 years the church family recognised the call on my life and ordained me. Soon after this there seemed to be a lot of rapid development and change at Stirling, and I found this time very difficult and unsettling. In hindsight, I can see the learning curve I was on; particularly observing Alistair Black and the emphasis on the preaching of the word, and the leading of the church there.

Another significant event that happened while at Stirling was getting a call from Manchester United Football Club. I thought that perhaps the talent scouts had finally caught up with me! Sadly, this was no call to the first team, but it was a call that would really change the direction of my own ministry. The call came from John Boyers, Manchester United's Chaplain. He asked me if I had ever considered becoming a Football Chaplain and, as a result of that conversation, I ended up taking up a position with Stirling Albion Football Club.

I enjoy being in the company of others, hate it when I am stuck away without contact, so the opportunity to get to know the players and staff at The Albion was great. In general, football clubs are a closed shop and a hostile environment for the church. In the early days, it was mostly the players who came up from England, who had had contact with a Football Chaplain. Most players didn't know what to say to you; and I'm sure there were some who were scared to get cornered by the Chaplain, in case he 'thumped them over the head with a Bible.' But my time with YWAM and the City Mission, demonstrating my faith to people on the streets, taught me that witnessing can be a slow process, a drip feed, where some people are interested straight away, others take time, some not at all. I was often just there feeling like a bit of a lemon, but I was intent on showing an interest in the people and hopefully finding acceptance.

Since leaving Stirling I have kept football chaplaincy up and, for the last two and half seasons, I have been chaplain to St Johnstone Football Club. Each week I get my kit on and get involved in training. The fact I kick a ball about with them brings acceptance. The fact I can kick it reasonably well also helps. It would be a much slower process if I was

just standing there, or sat in an office and waited for people to book an interview with me. In this environment you have to be part of things, immersed in the day to day to make something of an impact. The opportunity may be for a season; in God's timing, or in literal footballing terms.

What has changed for Pitlochry Baptist Church

When I was in the process of moving from Stirling to Pitlochry, I was asked what 'my vision' for Pitlochry was. My response didn't go down too well. I replied that I didn't have a vision for Pitlochry. How could I? I'd been in the town on 4 occasions and didn't know anyone or anything. I had no doubt God had called me. I had no doubt he directs our paths. But for me, as an incomer, to present 'my vision' for Pitlochry would be to ignore those who had called me, who had journeyed with God in Pitlochry before I arrived and now journeyed with God with me. In time, once I 'became' the pastor, my dream for Pitlochry Baptist Church as a growing vibrant family was that we would have an impact in our wider community. That means we would go into the community and get involved in unexpected ways and places. That's not simple. There are communities within communities and we can't always be all things to all people all the time. We have to make choices, but essentially we need to be with people and, at the same time, be accessible and approachable.

As part of this dream, I have always hoped that we would, as a church family, be more representative of Pitlochry. When I first arrived the prevailing view was that Pitlochry was a place for the elderly, and this was not a place where many young families came to live. The 2001 census highlighted that there were almost twice the national average of retired people in Pitlochry. Recently the demographic of the town has been changing. The local school is bursting at the seams and, although Pitlochry will no doubt always be seen as a retirement town, an increase in affordable housing and a vibrant tourist industry means that young people do not have to move away to settle or find jobs. On one Sunday in my first month at Pitlochry, I made a bee line to introduce myself to Rob because he was maybe in his early thirties and I really hoped he was going to stay around. Now, our church family has

many, many 'Robs' and a good balance of other ages too.

Although the way of 'doing' church on a Sunday was a bit foreign to my past experiences in Stirling and Queen's Park, I could still engage with the culture in Pitlochry when our family first arrived. Some of us within the church realised early on, however, that if we were going to connect with a larger section of our community, we had to address our gathered worship experience. We decided to move away from a very passive service, which was led by the pastor, to worship being led by gifted groups who were encouraged to release the voice of the church family, and at the same time sensitively combine both contemporary and tradition music. There was always the temptation to radically change things quickly and decisively. Yet I hope that, through the commitment to honour previous contributions and the healthy natural pace of change, we got through most challenges without unnecessarily hurting those who had given so much to our church family. An encouraging feature of our recent life together is that we have a good number of people, who are part of Pitlochry Baptist Church, attending our worship services week in week out; but as yet have not put their trust in Jesus. It's a good thing that church has opened up for them. That our gathered worship is accessible to them, and that Christians are their friends, and parents, and spouses. We trust that in time they will find Jesus, who is holding onto them in the first place.

Within this area of worship, we are also committed to encouraging anyone of any age who is gifted to participate. For instance, my son when he was 6 years of age was encouraged, by myself, but mostly by 2 or 3 grannies in our church family, to use his passion for the drums in worship. These were ladies who would smile and cheer him on from the sidelines even though my son would lose timing and the strength in his wee arms to keep up. In fact, most of our musicians are under 18. We desperately need them. They need us. That's Pitlochry. Of course there is always a wee bit of resistance to new things. However, seeing the generations united even in the prickly area of corporate worship is something we promote within our church family, and interestingly is sought by the wider family too.

Instrumental to these changes has been giving people the responsibility and authority to go and get on with things. When we first came

to Pitlochry, the church had a regular meeting called the Church Life group. The purpose of this group was to have an opportunity to discuss all aspects of the life of the church and, in practice, guide the direction of ministries, whether a person was called to serve in that area or not. This didn't make much sense to many of us. Why weren't we releasing and supporting those who were called and gifted in these ministries? So we began to dismantle this quasi-church meeting, and at the same time release people into leadership and allow ministries to grow. They, in turn, would report to the church leadership and then into the main church family meeting. We were probably accused at times of being too controlling. I believe we were much bolder than that. We were in fact willing to let ministries go in all directions with people who had dreams.

With my Youth Pastor background, I was keen to promote children and youth work in the fellowship. We were coming to Pitlochry with a young family, and my wife and I for obvious reasons are very passionate about our children. At their dedications, we made promises to God that we would help our children to learn about Him and encourage them to know Him. That we would pray for them, share our faith in Jesus with them, and encourage them to be a part of God's family. We knew that, if we were going to keep that commitment, our children would need to be part of an inspiring church environment, led by called and gifted people who would lead from a place of love and partner with us as parents to this end. Looking back, I tend to forget how strenuous it was to release people from areas of ministry which they had served in for many years. Identities and power were often being fought over. But doesn't God go before us? Doesn't he equip us at the right time? The building up of our new ministry to children came about only after a dear retired teacher responded to our call to partner in this work. Without her standing with us, without God raising others up, we couldn't have transitioned as quickly and thoroughly as we did.

The church had a wonderful couple who, in particular, kept the needs of our missionaries before the church family. However, their commitment to this ministry didn't stop them being open to this area developing, with fresh ideas and people. I had always enjoyed good exposure to missions through YWAM. My sister spent a number of

years serving with them and, most recently, I'd witnessed how teams from Stirling had gone out from the church on short-term mission, and how that experience had 'gotten under their skin', making a positive impact on the church when they returned. So while it is ok to write cheques periodically to missionaries, it was another thing altogether to engage in mission mutually. It's also fair to say that some of our missionaries had historical connection with our church family, and there were others who were coming back from the field, so we took the steps to prayerfully and slowly overhaul the entire area of missions in our church family. Again, a called out and gifted group led this, and now we have a framework which helps us support our new mission partners, many of them recently sent out from our church. We now find ourselves sending out groups to a partner project in Africa, and also offer practical support to the many young and older people who engage in short-term mission throughout the year.

Our Current Focus

Increasingly, we find ourselves turning to the work of prayer. We don't do this because it happens by default, but because instinctively we know there's nothing else we can do. This past year we've committed to 24 and 36 hour prayer events, which have been such a positive experience for our church family, that there's now the call to stretch ourselves to do 48 hours and beyond. Since one of our leaders took over the oversight of prayer across the church, we've started a number corporate prayer gatherings throughout the week, which in all honesty do not draw large numbers, but offers to the church family various opportunities to draw near to God with others in prayer. And of course, the unseen faithful prayers of many over long periods of time is the boiler room of all our ministry together.

A term we use, 'tongue in cheek', when someone gets involved in a task or ministry, is that they've been 'voluntold'. Whether that person has a passion for that task or is gifted, is by the by. Although we acknowledge there will always be things that need to be done, our growing conviction is to identify and release people in their passion and gifts within our church family. The skeptic might say in reply to this vision, "That's an interesting idea." Which may be interpreted as, "That'll never happen." If every God-ordained vision appears impossi-

ble and frustratingly out of reach, maybe this is one of those occasions when we have to keep pressing into God, for the resources to keep pressing on? Our leadership team is motivated to realise this 'out-of-reach' dream. Personally, my motivation comes also from my family responsibilities. I appreciate that in the long life of Pitlochry Baptist Church, I'm only a small and transient part. However, for my children I'm their Dad, and I will always be their Dad. In 25 years time, who will remember David Barrie in Pitlochry Baptist Church? Not many, but my children and God willing grandchildren will really know me. How I would mourn if my children were to lose me because I was too busy with the rest of the church. Therefore, I'm over the moon that there are better preachers, worship leaders, pastoral visitors, evangelists, administrators, carers, and pastors than me. We're committed to releasing them, so that I do not feel compelled to try and be superman, and when I'm long gone from Pitlochry, the show will still go on.

Prayer and releasing people into ministries are just two areas in our family life which we are committed to. Obviously, there are a number of other changes and developments going on. A few years ago, we dropped the evening service altogether and opted to put our energy and commitment into developing small group ministry within the church. This ministry continues to grow. Three years ago we decided it was the right time to employ a youth worker, to help us develop our young people's ministry. Now, we've built on that work to the point we see the need for an associate to come on board, to develop the teams and structures that support the expanding ministry to incorporate families. Our building in Pitlochry is 140 years old and is, like many things of that age, showing its age. When the original church family erected this building, they could hardly have been accused of being shortsighted now that we find our facilities restrictive and unsuitable, not to mention a burden to any growth whatsoever in the near future. So we have had to look at options to do with our land and buildings. I don't believe any of this would have happened if God hadn't raised up a godly and gifted leadership team, to work with me and our church family, in pursuing Him and His purposes for us. And so now, at this point in our journey together at Pitlochry, we find ourselves juggling many important balls, such as our vision, staffing, land and buildings, and I don't think that would have been advisable or possible at any other point in my short time here at Pitlochry. It's daunting and ex-

citing: I wouldn't want to be in any other place and I feel like running a mile at the same time. However, by accident or design, it's where we are and, if there is going to be a vibrant church family in 10 years time, reaching it's community with the gospel of Jesus and growing in Christ, then it's onwards and upwards!

Final Thoughts

We believe that over the past few years we've built on past good work and grown into a place where we can continue to be an authentic community. We'll probably never be slick. We will never get to the end of this journey, bar Jesus' return. We're a wee church family, trying to do our best to follow Jesus. These developments in the church mean that now we can face the issues of growing. We can face those difficult and prickly obstacles others before us have not been able to address, and leave a positive legacy for future pastors and leadership teams. Through this we will never please everyone; some will be disappointed. Thankfully, this is not about me and my vision. Crucially, this is being driven by the church leadership team appointed by our church family; gifted and passionate people whom I dearly love and admire. Hopefully, with that Spirit-filled leadership, we can as a church family continue to move into a place in our community that, should we suddenly not be there, we would be greatly missed.

David Barrie

Tillicoultry Baptist Church - Reflection

Peter studied Linguistics and English at the University of Leeds, before working with a Christian Mission agency on their ship the Logos II. In 2006 he became the Assistant Pastor at Queen's Park Baptist Church in Glasgow, where he met and married Jayne in 2008. In December 2009 he was asked to be Pastor of Tillicoultry Baptist Church. Both Peter and Jayne continue to enjoy plenty of outdoor activities including walking, cycling, camping, barbecuing, powerkiting, skiing and snowboarding.

In 2009 an email arrived from a church secretary as we were both between jobs, me as a Baptist Pastor, Jayne working in a Mission organisation. We were sat in an internet café in Cambodia whilst on a backpacking trip. "Tillicoultry?" "Never heard of the place." A quick map search found us looking at a small town, close to Stirling in central Scotland.

So how does anyone find out about churches these days? Find the church website and see what you find there. We read some up to date information and a few clicks later, we were listening to sermons from Clackmannanshire, Scotland. The impression we got was of an active church, keen in faith and mission and willing to explore new things. This first email and impressions developed into several visits to the church when we were back in Scotland. It started to feel that our background, outlook and approach could suit where the church was at.

I was brought up in an evangelical church, where I saw faith making a practical difference in people's lives. Faith was not merely a tradition or a Sunday hobby but living and active in daily life. After a time away from faith at university, I worked overseas with Operation Mobilisation, on their ship Logos II. During this time I was involved in mission and evangelism and also leadership in a Christian organisation. This was a really formative time and instilled in me the importance of God's mission to the whole world and the need for an active and outward looking faith. Working with people from around 40 nations with many different approaches also helped me see the value of diversity. This in turn led me towards a style of leadership that is more collaborative than directive.

On returning from OM, I studied at ICC in Glasgow and learned a huge amount from tutors and students who were secure enough in their faith to explore deep issues and re-evaluate our assumptions in theology and practice. My time studying also galvanised the importance of being rooted in God's Word and dependent on His Spirit. From ICC, I went to work with a great team at Queen's Park Baptist Church and continued to see teams led well, people active in faith, and God's Word and Spirit at work in a church including people with diverse approaches. Jayne and I met in Glasgow and, as we got to know each other, we also discovered that our outlook on faith, church and mission was similar.

As we looked at Tillicoultry Baptist Church and they looked at us, it seemed like some of these values and approaches were held in common. People in the church clearly had active faith that made a daily difference: church was not just a Sunday event or pastime. Over the years there had been significant connections with overseas mission, and many people with interest in local community involvement and mission. There were also people with diverse church backgrounds and approaches that worked together. There were many capable and experienced people in the church who were willing to take on significant responsibility during the time of pastoral vacancy. With such people, it felt like a collaborative approach to leadership could be a good fit. It also felt like the church was willing to learn, to work out together where God was leading, and to change. After this six month process we found ourselves settling in Tillicoultry and the church. The impressions we had were pretty accurate, and we started to get to know the people, the church and the town. The story deepened and broadened and continues.

What has been happening?

Where has the church been? Where is it now, 4 years on? Where is it going? These are always going to be complex questions. The answers are as individual as the people and as varied as the relationships. Or you can simplify it down to a few figures and dates, a potted history; and possibly can miss the heart of the matter.

So first, a recent history. About 20 years ago there was a committed

group of a few dozen people gathering as Baptists in Tillicoultry. A few young families joined the church and committed themselves to the people and the place, gradually seeing others gather, and the congregation gradually rose to just over 100. During that time, several Pastors worked with the church; some part time, some in conjunction with another church. There were also periods of vacancy, which enabled more people to step into responsibility. All of these people's positive legacy was built upon, and it has brought the church to where it is today.

Now the church has around 110 members, and about 125 people gather on a Sunday morning. The ages range from babies and toddlers to people who have been living the life of faith for 7 decades. A great group of people who are at different stages in the life of faith but heading in the same direction, and together working out how we get there.

Rather than numbers and dates, one of our members wrote a short poem that gives a much better feel of where the church is from.

Where we're from

we're from...
the smallest county
the foot of the hills
bluebell woods, burn-orange bracken
the Devon wandering slow
deep glens
clear running burns and old woods
lichen creeping, quiet pine-needles
old stone walls crumbling
deer on the golf course
sheep in the quarry
owls in the trees
we're from...
ski slopes and rugby fields
pubs and churches
closed mills and shopping centres
we're from...
the old sandstone church on the corner
buses turning
red door pushed wide open
dark wood screens, bolt upright pews
reminding us this is serious business

high pulpit under pale stained glass
heating pipes melting our boots
long gone and not much missed

we're from...
the creaking organ and old pub piano
making way for guitar and drums, bodhran and cornet
stacking chairs and projectors
scaffolding dizzy-high and paint dripping in hair and on faces
varnish and paint our incense for weeks
worrying cracks and damp seeping through old roof

we're from..
food.
always food, like the best family gatherings
coming from that tiny kitchen,
elbows bumping
laughing "I'm sorry", "mind out",
stovies and stews and scones
curries and cakes and casseroles
bacon rolls in the early morning
good dark coffee and stewed tea in aluminium pots
always lines at the hatch,
endless dishes, good humoured as fingers wrinkle
and "sorry, just one more"

we're from...
heart conversations over rickety trestles,
and kitchen tables,
round bonfires and in back gardens,
beside hospital beds and on sofas

we're from...
how are you?
how are you really?
how can I pray for you?
did you read this?
have you heard this?
I'm sorry, please forgive me
I thought it was just me!

we're from...
singing
really loud singing
hands raised, eyes closed
in Christ alone,
His Grace, amazing

be Thou our vision

we're from...

faithful servants when numbers dwindled
sleeves rolled up, hands dirty, prayers offered
new faces welcomed
curious questions, dinner plans,

we're from...

pastors who loved us well
frail body holding the strongest heart
and a faith that held fast to hope,
telling stories that spoke truth
home safe now
stories of redemption woven into each Sunday
freedom from guilt and religion preached
"let me tell you the story again"
held together through change after change
emails winging over continents
shy questions asked
hearing the call together
travellers putting down roots
gentle leading, challenge
and facing the future
And at the heart of it all
we know He stands
Saviour King, Brother, Life-changer, Future-shaper
calling us on to more
more tears and casseroles and really loud singing
more parties and fireworks
more hospital beds and dark days
more freedom and peace
more of the joy of living this
messed up, complicated, broken,
beautiful life together

Where are we now?

Whenever Pastors gather, the common question is; "How are things in Tillicoultry?" Depending on my mood, I may try and pick out a few interesting bits from church life or may reply with a bland, "Pretty good, the regular ups and downs of church life."

When describing the state of the church, it is easiest to talk about numbers on a Sunday morning, or tell people about the different activities

that are going on. Tillicoultry Baptist Church is made of many people who are 'activist' by nature. They are proactive and are happy being active in church life. In such an environment, the level of activity can be seen as a gauge of the health and success of the church. The more activities that are going on, the healthier things are. Within our situation there is generally a good amount of activity within the life of the church and in the community.

We have many of the usual activities of church life: Sunday morning services and children's groups and a good youth group. There are a number of healthy house groups enjoyed by a good proportion of the church. There is also good involvement in community activities and with other churches locally. Within the church there are people with a great interest in mission, 5 people work full time with overseas mission organisations, and several more work for Christian groups in this country.

Recently, we have appointed Ministry Leaders to be responsible for different areas of church life. This has enabled more people to take on responsibility, and is helping the various areas of church life to progress. The process of appointing Ministry Leaders is probably worth some further comment.

For a number of years the church has had an Eldership of 5-7 people, including the Pastor and a similar number of Deacons. The role of our Elders is, 'To give spiritual guidance and leadership, providing vision and enabling gifts to be developed and used throughout the whole church body.' The Deacons' role has been to coordinate the practical, financial and building aspects of church life. These roles worked well alongside each other, but it was also recognised that there were others who took on significant responsibility in church life who were not formally included in the leadership structure. People were coordinating work with the children, youth, worship and many other areas, but the connections and delegation of responsibilities were more personal than part of the leadership set up. Therefore we started to consider changing the church's leadership structure. The discussions started with the current deacons, as it was probable that their role and title could change. Through these conversations, it was recognised that the deacons were happy with the practical aspects of the role, but did not

feel that this included the spiritual responsibility for the church that the name 'deacon' seemed to imply. As they were open to changes being made, we continued to work out what structure could serve the church best. Before the next church meeting, we discussed the issue as Elders, to discern what possible new structures could improve the situation. We then sent out information, setting out the situation as the Elders saw it, and a suggestion for changes. I also talked to a number of other church leaders about the leadership structure in their churches, and gained some very helpful insight.

At the 2012 June church meeting, the church agreed that it would be helpful to make changes. Discussion continued over the summer, and a proposed structure was sent out for discussion at the September church meeting. After some helpful adjustments had been made, we started the process of identifying people who could be appointed to lead the 'Ministry Areas.' Our hope was that they would be delegated the responsibility for the coordination, leadership and development of that area, and be supported by the Elders and in coordination with the wider church. Defining the 'Ministry Areas' was a slightly complex discussion, as so many areas of church life overlap. Eventually, we decided on the following areas: Children, Facilities and Functions, Finance, Hospitality, Mission, Pastoral Care, Prayer, Discipleship, Small Groups, Worship and Youth.

Identifying leaders for some areas was fairly straight forward; for other areas it has been more difficult. In our December 2012 church meeting, we were able to propose and appoint most of the Ministry Leaders, and also identify which of the Elders would take on the role of supporting each of them. It took about a year to have these discussions and make these changes and, a further year on, many areas have thrived. We continue to review what could be improved, and how people are best supported; but we do see that this has been a beneficial change.

As I mentioned previously, the church is quite active and reasonably busy, but I don't think the number of people attending on a Sunday morning, or the number of good activities, is a true gauge of health in a church. If our measures of 'success' is a new structure, or purely activity and numbers, we can easily miss the point. An abundance of

activity, or better structure, doesn't mean that people's lives are been transformed by God.

So where are we now?

In order to further answer this question, I asked the Elders and Ministry Leaders to choose "10 words to describe Tillicoultry Baptist Church." The words chosen were generally positive words, that would be people's first impressions of the church. Below is a 'wordle', a pictorial representation of the words that were chosen: the larger the word appears, the more times it was chosen.



I thought this was a very interesting self-description of the church, and was encouraged by what was said and fascinated by what was not said. We observed very quickly that nearly all of the words we used were the 'surface' of how the church looks, rather than the deeper things. We thought that our descriptions were probably the practical outworking, rather than the spiritual reality we hope is going on underneath. Apart from 2 or 3 words, all of them could be attributed

with lots of details. As yet, that hasn't happened, and so we continue to earnestly seek where God is leading us, just a step at a time.

The reflection of the Elders and Ministry Leaders was that God seemed to be calling us to focus on the deeper things of life and faith. These discussions have been reinforced by conversations with folks in the 'Discipleship' Ministry Area. Over the last months, we have come to the conclusion that a focus on discipleship in 2014 is the right thing to do. We know that people are at different stages of faith in the church. Some know God changing them on a regular basis, but there are probably those who feel a bit stagnant in their faith. We will invite people to commit themselves again to be Jesus' disciples in 2014, and provide a variety of opportunities and resources that could help them grow in faith and life. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations." Matt 28:19. We are part of that worldwide band of disciples that the Apostles were sent out to make. This call from Jesus is a call to be involved in God's Mission; but it is also, and maybe primarily, a call to be His disciples ourselves. As activists we can be involved in a lot of activity, and may miss God's invitation to be His disciples. We are invited to follow Jesus, submit ourselves to God and be changed by the Holy Spirit. This transforming encounter with God is then the source and motivation for our church activity.

In a recent article for the CLAN Magazine, Fred Drummond, Director of Evangelical Alliance Scotland, wrote the following, "Before strategy, structure, even mission itself there is the encounter with Jesus. Not just an encounter but a growing longing for even deeper encounters with our Lord. It is the encountering that is the springboard for meaningful engagement with the world." Our hope is that we will encounter Jesus afresh this coming year and be changed by Him. It may not be clear what the next 5 or 10 years holds for the church, but it feels that God may be guiding us towards the next step. As we have started to take this next step we wrote down some of the aspects of discipleship that seem to be important for us as a church at the moment. We are aware that far more able and theologically astute people have written great things about discipleship and hope to benefit from those. However, as we are called to work out what it means in our context, here and now, a few aspects seemed to emerge. If this were written for another church or another time, it may be quite different, but here are a few

thoughts that we hope will guide us over the next year.

Discipleship is...Transformational, Supernatural, Intentional, Personal and Relational

Transformational – God wants to change us and to see that transformation spread in the world. Discipleship is not an end in itself, a programme to work through, but us allowing God to change us, our attitudes, our character and our actions. Being Jesus' disciple is to become truly the best people God made us to be. The Christian life is one of lifelong change for the better. This transformation does not stop with us: it then extends to the world around us as we are involved in God's mission, transforming the world.

Supernatural – Discipleship is more than a self-help strategy: it is the supernatural Creator God making a positive difference in our lives. It starts with the love of God, and us responding in love to Him. Through this love we are called to follow God the Son, to make Jesus Lord, live in obedience to Him and submit everything to Him. As we do this we experience God's Spirit within us, transforming us. We also recognise that, with the excitement and transformation, there is a spiritual battle that goes on and we need God's empowering.

Intentional – It would be great if we could be transformed in the Christian faith, by simply letting sermons or Bible verses wash over us; but in reality this doesn't often happen. We are very unlikely to change or learn anything in life, without some personal commitment and effort. This is true if we want to be changed by God. We have to choose to listen to God, be open to His Spirit, pay attention to His Word, make Jesus truly Lord of our lives, taking effort to make space for God to change us. Then there is the hard work of living that out day to day, in every area of life. Without commitment and effort, we are unlikely to be changed by God.

Personal – God has made us all differently, with our own personality, style, ways of learning and doing, likes and dislikes. Some of us will sit quietly and pray, and God will change us; some will experience God changing them through reading; others will get involved in a project and God will change them. We may appreciate studying the Bible

more than worship, or praying more than reading, or discussions more than preaching, action more than reflection. Whichever we prefer, there are many ways in which, opening up to God, we can be changed. Discipleship, being changed by God for the better, will not be a “one size fits all” process. Each of us will experience God changing us, through different ways and means.

Relational – The Christian life is not a solitary life. We are called to follow God and be part of His Church, working together with God’s people. God has put people around us that we can learn from, through whom He can speak to us and can encourage us in life and faith. By being with other people, choosing to encourage each other and challenge each other to grow in faith, we can see God transforming us.

We pray that God would lead us as individuals and a church over this next period, and that we will see lives transformed by Him.

Peter Foster.

Sheddocksley Baptist Church - Community

Stephen Hibbard is currently the Senior Pastor at Sheddocksley Baptist Church in Aberdeen. From 1993 - 2005 he was the Assistant Pastor at Queens Park in Glasgow, before taking the post at Sheddocksley. As the church website says, he, "is an armchair football supporter and fair-weather golfer", while also serving across the city and nation with Street Pastors, HOPE counselling, MWANA ministries, Baptist Union Board of Ministry, and as chaplain to the local primary and secondary schools.

Born and bred a baptist, I was raised in Kirkintilloch Baptist Church, Glasgow and also attended the local Crusader group. The 1970's saw several local churches beginning to embrace young people and grow successful youth ministries, a scene that I was part of. Relocating to Edinburgh when my father moved jobs, and becoming a member of Morningside Baptist Church, I benefitted from the ministry of Rev. Peter Bowes and also became an active member of the Edinburgh Baptist Student Association (EBSA) while at university. One of my strongest memories of Peter's ministry was his encouragement to us to explore our gifting. I particularly remember Peter saying, "you don't know what you're good at until you give it a try." EBSA was only a small group of 20-30 people and was an alternative to the main CU meeting. For some, attending the EBSA meeting was a practical choice; we met at the weekends and not on Friday nights like the main CU. This was a particular 'plus' for me, as I helped at a Friday night youth drop-in; but the real benefit of this small group was that there was a freedom to explore and stretch our faith. This exploration spread through the worship, outreach, social and spiritual aspects of the group.

Having completed my business degree, I started working for Marks and Spencer as a commercial manager and, having lived in a number of locations around Scotland, found myself back in Glasgow, this time worshipping at Queens Park Baptist Church. Having settled and married, God began to prompt the call to ministry. I enrolled to study theology at the Baptist College in the city. After a few years of study, Queens Park began looking for an Associate Pastor, but didn't manage to appoint anyone, and so asked me if I would consider completing my degree part-time and working, on a voluntary basis, for the church.

As the development of practical skills wasn't less important to me than 'academic achievement', I accepted the post with the assumption that, having completed my studies, I would move on to a new, pastoral position.

However, at the start of my voluntary employment, God gave me a word. This word was that, if I stayed there, God would build me up; and over the following 13 years, God did just that. My emphasis for those years was on pastoral care, encouraging small groups, prayer ministry, counselling and preaching. During this period we saw the 'Toronto Blessing', and the church explored the works of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in working with growing numbers of small groups and was a time of growth and blessing for the church.

My time at Queens Park was not without its difficulties; but holding to the word that I had been given helped to see me through those times. However, one evening, during a worship service, I began to pray and enquire of God how long this word would last; and I felt God saying that it would last until it was replaced. Moments later, a member of the congregation got up and gave a word, "you have stayed long enough at this mountain: break camp and advance into the hill country...", which I took as a sign to leave. Yet this decision wasn't without its challenges. Edwin Gunn, the Senior Pastor, was due to retire and there had been, by some, an unspoken assumption that I might transition into that role. Nevertheless, I felt that God had shown me the time had come to move on, and the Union put me in touch with Sheddocksley Baptist Church.

It seems appropriate at this point to give a little of the history of the church, before our paths join up. Sheddocksley Baptist Church, located now in Eday Walk in the west of Aberdeen, was a church plant from Gerrard Street Baptist. The idea of a church plant, in the Springhill area, was approved at a church meeting in April 1990. Use of the Sheddocksley Community Centre was agreed, and 36 church members set out, to establish the daughter church which would be known as 'Sheddocksley Baptist Church' (SBC), with Jim Pirie, a primary school Head Teacher, as the lay Pastor. SBC remained part of Gerrard Street Baptist for the first two years. Over the course of those two years, the church had developed a number of regular activities, regularly holding a Sun-

day worship service, Sunday Club, a midweek prayer meeting, youth fellowship, and young adults group.

2002 saw the church step out in faith, and begin building a purpose built facility at its current location. However, before the building was finished, Jim Pirie, the Lay Pastor, moved on. Therefore the responsibility for the building project, as well as the day to day functioning of the church, came to rest on the shoulders of the elders and leadership team of the church. This was a difficult time and resulted in the church being in a tired, painful, and also insecure place when they appointed me as their full-time pastor, in 2005. When I arrived, although the leadership team were tired, the church were holding themselves together, and the worship and teaching that had happened, week by week, was really good. But it was obvious that the church, for whatever reason, had become insular. Perhaps this was because they started out as a church plant and had to work hard, sticking together to get through the hard times. So when I started it was a new beginning, and time to help the church move on.

The Early Stages

The church activities looked very much the same in 2005 as they had done in 2003; and I felt that it was important that we, as a church, began to get involved in the community around us. A book that really spoke to me about this was *Unleashing the Church*. The book is not particularly ground breaking, but it tells the story of Frank Tillapaugh, whose pastoral ministry was consumed by counselling his congregation, and was burning him out. So he began to encourage and empower them to begin to serve others. In doing so, people's problems were put into perspective, and his need to counsel his congregation significantly reduced, as they began to look beyond themselves.

One of the things we did, at this early stage, was to start discussions with the church members about their visions for the church: why we are here, and what we are here to do. Initially, the process of engaging the members of the church and their ideas caused a certain amount of anxiety: this was a very different approach to leadership than the church had been used to. Perhaps two reasons could be highlighted here: firstly, the church had been through a difficult and tiring period

of time, and this approach to leadership opened up the possibility of conflict, something which the leadership team wanted to avoid. Secondly, it challenged the understanding of leadership that the leadership team held: they thought visions and programs came from their meetings, not the members of the church. But having convinced them that church should be an inclusive place, the leadership bravely took this new direction, and sought to explore some of the church members' ideas. As a leadership team, we sought to shape the ideas that were shared, and also to help discern those ideas which were unrealistic.

From these meetings came 10 key emphases. However, 10 is a large number: people didn't identify with them and even I, as the Pastor, found it difficult to remember all of them. So, returning to the key ideas and trying to make them more accessible, the list was condensed into 4 two-word couplets. Deeply rooted (in a relationship with God); Firmly planted (in our relationships with each other); Branching out (into the community); and finally, Bearing Fruit, a consequence of the first three, but also a sense of the 'fruit of the Spirit': particularly generosity, and displaying that to people beyond the church.

As a church, our primary role is to build the Kingdom, not to build the local church. However the church, even though it was a plant, didn't really have any connections to other churches across the city. It had quite quickly detached itself from the mother church. So we set about the task of beginning to look outside ourselves. I should mention that, prior to my appointment, the church had decided to set aside 12.5% of the budget for giving to local projects; so I wasn't leading them in a completely new direction, but helping develop what was already there.

As part of the process of beginning to engage the community, it was recognised that the church is often seen by the local community as 'after your money', so we needed to do something to counter that. It is also clear that the local community often doesn't trust the church, so it was also necessary to open the doors and let people come in. These realisations didn't come through extensive community consultation, but rather a discerning of general public opinion.

Another key area of information for us, prior to developing any ideas,

was the local demographics and statistical analysis that are available in the public domain. During this, it was discovered that there were significant numbers of elderly folk, people who live on their own, a lot of single mums. It was also recognised that this area of the city is often overlooked, when considering areas of the city and communities needing funding. This is because many people in the area sit just above the poverty line, and don't qualify for additional help. So our conclusion, at the end of our study, was clear: the church is located in an ageing, unhealthy, lonely neighbourhood. Having understood this information, the leadership went back to the church to talk to them, about what they had found, but also to empower them to respond and get involved; to ask each member what they were going to do to live out the four-parted vision, in response to this information.

To address these issues, it was necessary to start building community relationships. In order to do this, the weekday bible study ceased. It was decided that, as a church, they were blessed with good worship, good preaching, good prayer times; but all of these things were still focussed on our relationship with God. In order to focus outwards, towards the community, we needed to make time to go out and serve it. We started this process by gathering and exploring different ideas from the church members. But this process was also about deciding what we weren't going to do, just as much as it was about deciding what to get involved in. With that in mind, it was decided at this time not to get involved in youth ministry. Instead, effort was put into children's work. As a consequence, we have developed healthy connections over the past few years of working with the local primary schools, and now the children that have been involved in our holiday clubs and other activities have begun going to secondary schools. The results of this approach have not been quick and only now, nine years on, has a Youth worker been employed.

Schools Work

A key aspect of our approach to branching out into the community, was to build relationships with the local primary and secondary schools. Building trust takes time.

This is not always easy. In one of the local schools, we encountered members of staff who had been hurt by their past experiences of

church; but over time these relationships have improved and developed, to the point now that we have employed a Children's Worker. The scale of this development was shown when one Head Teacher approached us, to arrange a meeting to work out how to get the Children's Worker involved in the school. We also regularly have groups from the church going into schools, to deliver assemblies and classes.

One of the projects that the church has also developed is prayer spaces in schools. A space, usually a classroom, with a number of zones that pupils come and explore. Each zone is different, and might encourage a pupil to think or reflect about a particular topic or, if they feel comfortable, to pray. Perhaps they might have a chance to say, 'sorry; to ask God a question; or maybe to say, 'thank you' for something, or even to express their hopes. Some schools were a little skeptical at first, but after one got involved and shared their experiences, a number of local primary and secondary schools have got involved. This is something that often happens with the schools. If you have a good relationship with one school, you gain credibility with others. Not all of our involvement with schools, however, is directly religious; Inter-Generational Involvement is a bit of a buzz-word in education at the moment, and groups from the church have been involved in running CREATE, a craft based club, where older members of the church are currently involved in teaching sewing and knitting.

Our involvement with schools is not just based here in Scotland. We partner with Operation Mobilisation (OM), to help a school in India. We partner in a number of ways, helping financially, and also sending teams to help physically, with building and running activities. We saw this as a great way to get the local schools involved. The local schools are twinned with the school in India, and sponsor children. Members of the church also go out to visit the school, and so have a chance to bring news back to our local schools, and keep them in touch with what is going on. We have, recently, had an opportunity to tell pupils all about a girl, who used to attend their school, who has gone out to India with one of our teams. It is great for the pupils to see that they can be part of this project, and really make a difference.

Beyond the impact it has with the local schools, this engagement with the school in India also stretches and develops those members of the

church that go out to help. Those who may have never prayed for someone else, suddenly have a queue of people who want prayer; and have to rely on God to give them the words to pray. There have been a number of occasions where folk, going on these trips, have been asked by those they work with, why they are going and what they'll be doing; and been surprised by the response they have received. Companies and colleagues have offered financial help, and want to find out more about what went on, when they return.

Whilst these opportunities are great, they can sometimes cause issues. We had agreed with OM to fundraise for the building of a new school hall. As a start, we had committed £5,000 to the fund. The overall cost of the project was estimated to be £30,000, and we had expected over a number of years to reach this target. Soon after agreeing this, I went out to visit the school; and was greeted by the site of foundation works being started, and the school being told we had given the funds for the complete project! This caused some frantic financial decisions, especially as we were still repaying our own building project.

A Spirit of Generosity

As a church, even before I was appointed, a decision had been made to set up a 'giving fund'. This fund was particularly aimed at giving money away into the local community, and was set at 12.5% of the annual budget. This was a great way to counter the often held public opinion, that the church is only interested in people's money. It has also been a great conversation starter, and the reason some groups got to know about us, trust us, and work with us. Let me illustrate that with a few stories. In our schools work, we have asked schools if there are projects we could fund or donate funds to. We have also been able to offer things, like the Bible Societies Exhibitions BIBLEWORLD for free, so that pupils can explore the origins of the Bible.

Being situated next to a local NHS rehabilitation centre has given us the opportunity to also be able to enrich the lives of those who are currently going through rehabilitation, for various brain/head injuries. Having built a relationship with the centre next door, we would hear that a patient was ready to go home, but couldn't, because they did not qualify for funding for a particular piece of equipment; or a grant

they needed, to get their home refurbished, wasn't available to them. In most cases, we have been able to meet those needs, either through providing funding, or providing the necessary 'people power', to get a home cleaned up and ready to move back into.

Funding requests for help, like those that come from the rehabilitation centre, are not something we do just from the central church budget. The Fine Peace Community Café, that currently runs in the foyer of the church building, is part of this spirit of generosity and gives away its profits; which in itself has been a brilliant way of reaching into the community. It may not be a lot, but it is often that 'little extra' that makes things possible. After 18 months of planning, training, searching for funding and kitting out the church, we establish the café in 2008, initially with one paid staff member and now have three paid staff and over thirty volunteers. We also have a number of volunteers with additional support needs, and have become a favourite place for school 'work experience' placements. Year on year, the Café has steadily built a great reputation. The Fine Peace has received an Aberdeen Impact Award for Best Emerging Social Enterprise. It provides a genuine social hub for the local community, as well as producing some wonderful cakes!

But it would be easy to imagine that this engagement is just about giving out, but this is not the case. Through this giving, and the publicity it has generated, people have come to see this as a good venue to use for meetings, with a café to provide tea, coffee and lunches, knowing that the profits gained will go back into the community. It is for this reason that we get so many NHS meetings using our facilities. Giving money away has been a real point of interest for local people and businesses, as it is so counter-cultural. This has led to other links with different projects, enabling us to build trust with other groups, who feel able to present needs to the church; and have the church respond either in cash terms, or volunteering to see a job done.

One final story about being generous before we move on. This is a story of the best money we never gave away! We have found that Community Councils are a great way to get to know what is happening in the community, and also to influence and share in improving the community. On one occasion, during the winter one year, I attended

a meeting that the Lord Provost also happened to be attending, and heard about a bus shelter that had been knocked down in a road traffic accident. The Council had not replaced it, and were stalling about when it would be replaced. During the discussions, the church asked how much it would cost to replace the shelter; and was able to offer to pay for a new bus shelter to be built. This offer of help spoke to the Lord Provost so strongly, he got on the phone to the council, and within a week a replacement had been put up. The Lord Provost considered it ridiculous that the church should have to pay for a replacement bus shelter! Generosity really impacts the community around you. Being part of these meetings show that you are interested in the community, and being part of improving it.

Partnerships

Engagement with the community should not just be confined to a local level. When I started at the church, I had a real sense of calling not only to Sheddocksley Baptist Church but also the city as a whole. The church have been very gracious in supporting me in this, but it was not something I, or even we as a church, could do on our own. For that reason, we have actively sought to partner with different organisations and agencies. One important partnership is with the YMCA, who we partner with to run a weekly street football project. The church has, from an early stage, been involved too with the Street Pastors that operate in the city centre, and has for sometime been one of the biggest supporters in terms of volunteers.

I imagine that the idea, of partnering with other agencies, might strike terror into the hearts of some; but our experience of partnering has never threatened the development of the church itself. Instead of taking people away from the church it has, in many ways, increased people's involvement. It has been noticed, in a number of ways, that as the church gives out, it has also received more in return. Partnership has brought people to the church and challenged the basic perceptions the public have of the church.

At the global level, I have already mentioned partnering with OM, but we also partner with a member of the church who got involved with a ministry group in Africa. She saw the potential for developing their

puppet ministry, and making a series of television programmes. With the help of people from Perth, a Scottish charity MWANA has been started, and the programmes have been made a reality. The first series has been made and distributed and now, after more training and with better equipment, the second series has been produced and is being broadcast in Zimbabwe and Zambia. One of the great things about these programmes is that they are also easily dubbed, and work is currently underway to dub the programmes into a number of different African languages.

There is more to say about partnership, but for the time being it has, at least for Sheddocksley Baptist Church, been a really enriching experience. Although not everyone has been directly involved in all the different activities, the whole church has benefitted and been encouraged. Those who haven't been directly involved have been able to encourage and support those who are; and this generates a felt sense of being part of the local and global community.

Perhaps the most complicated project we are involved in is Parish Nursing. In an area that has a lot of health related issues, using qualified nurses to serve in the community seemed like a good idea. Having spoken to a number of nurses in the congregation, the initial response was, I have to say, quite negative. A year or so later, a conference came up, discussing a similar idea; and I encouraged the nurses to go and check it out. They came back from this inspired, and started Parish Nursing. They promote health and pastoral care, taking on responsibilities for the visitation of the elderly, young mums and those who are sick, and combine health advice with prayer where it is requested.

This started on a voluntary basis and, through the Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations (ACVO), we applied for grants. Unfortunately, our application for funding was turned down; but we were approached by the funding authority, because a number of different groups had similar goals, and they wondered if we would be interested in being part of a befriending service across the city. So the church now partners with the Red Cross, Bethany, Sue Ryder, and The Living Well project. This took partnering to a different level, working with Government and non-Christian groups. It did, however, require some thinking through, not least because of the baptist view of separation

from the state, but each member organisation needed to agree to respect the ethos of each member group. Therefore, as parish nurses they can offer prayer; and non-christian volunteers, where they may not pray themselves, they can arrange for someone to visit and pray with people, if they request it. Last year, we won the Aberdeen Impact Award for Change for Older People; and this year, we were shortlisted for Charity of the Year in the category of Perfect Partnerships.

It would be fair to say though that, embarking on these sorts of projects, means that money will always be a problem area as you rely on others for funding. Funding often only comes in year by year. Some agencies can be reluctant to commit three or four years money, which can make it very difficult to get things off the ground and to encourage people to get involved. It can be very tricky to encourage someone to leave permanent employment, in order to be involved in a project with an uncertain future.

Whilst it might seem that these ideas have all come from within the church, the relationships we have developed over the years mean that other groups are now coming to us. We have been asked about starting an elderly persons lunch club, and networking the lunch clubs across the city. The efforts we have made over the years have convinced others that we can be trusted. Most of the things that we do as a church aren't directly evangelistic, but they speak to those we meet about the principles that we have and work by. This is by no means all we do: we have developed relationships with numerous other groups. The building has been opened up to a range of local community groups, including Create Aberdeen, who work with physically and mentally disabled adults; the Parkinson's Society Physiotherapy and singing group; TRAINS, which is a support service for those working with Autistic children that also provides Dyslexia assessments; the National Child Birth Trust; Grampian Health Board Child Protection Training; PEEP parenting courses, and an Indian Children's Bible Club. We are even now operating as a Polling Station.

Where Next?

Over the past decade, we have built relationships that are now seeing people coming to the church, to talk about how we can be more in-

volved in the community. So, one of the next things to discern is 'what things to be involved in?'. Discussions are taking place with school guidance staff, about co-ordinating sixth year pupils to establish a lunchtime drop in and to strengthen the pastoral care in the schools. Clearly debt management is a big issue, and the church needs to explore more thoroughly how we are going to respond to it. We also want to sense new moves of the Spirit, so have recently given the use of Art a new emphasis, and trained a ministry team in SOZO skills.

There is also a shift in focus from 'what more we can do?', to considering 'how can we go deeper?' How do we convert a cup of coffee into something more meaningful? This is a significant area for continued thought and development. There may be people that just need asking along. For example, perhaps we should begin to think of services aimed specifically towards the elderly during the week. It is also clear that having developed the Children's work, these children are growing up, and it becomes necessary to consider how to continue this, in terms of youth work. Within the church, there is also the need to continue to encourage those who haven't found ways of being involved, and this refocussing in an outwards direction requires continued work, redirecting people.

It is also clear that the near future will require thought about how to keep all these things going alongside one another. We have grown and filled our current premises to the point that things cross over one another. For example, the cafe uses the foyer, which means it can't be open if we have a funeral. There aren't enough rooms to fit the children and youth in on a Sunday morning. So how do we accommodate that?

Something else that is clear, is that we need to continue to keep our leadership structure as flat as possible, and continue to encourage the ideas and visions of the congregation and empower people to express the love of God to the local community. This can be seen in those employed by the church. All but one of the eleven staff in the team have been internally released, to serve in their particular gifting. Which again, reinforces this sense of empowerment.

Mentoring is also another area in which the church is beginning to de-

velop, following a recent church consultation. Mentoring and encouraging is now seen as an important tool for effective discipleship and pastoral care. In order to facilitate this, we have used the CPAS course Mentoring Matters, to train and release 20 mentors.

We also keep coming back to our overall vision, and are currently seeking to develop each of the four areas: Deeply Rooted – taking prayer to a fresh place. Firmly Planted – through a church weekend and a new culture of honour. Branching Out – by training to share faith naturally in our workplace. Bearing Fruit – through a strengthening of our welcome and integration processes.

Final Reflections on Vision:

Vision involves Birth, with ideas conceived from the leaders, the fellowship and even from outside. These ideas need to be shared and given oxygen. People take time to accept new ideas, and to sense which ones have the Spirit's favour. Some will grow, others will fade away. Vision stirs up a Battle, and just before the birth there can be challenges. People also have to be willing to make time, financial, emotional, and spiritual commitments.

Vision means Building by moving to action, otherwise it's just fantasy or dreams. People have to accept that a vision is their's to fulfill, and not place the implementation onto others. It takes time to build, and this means cooperating as teams, and investing with a long term view, and developing each other's skills through training and discipleship. Vision also brings Blessing, so it's good to celebrate achievements along the way, even if they are not what we originally had in mind, as God takes us on an adventure of faith.

Vision requires Balance, so it's important to reflect on our unique shape, and not to get out of balance between the UP, IN, and OUT. Recognising strengths and confronting weaknesses, asking, 'what does a healthy church look like?' Vision crosses Barriers, as there are always lots of reasons why not to move forward and there are often obstacles in the way; so perseverance is necessary and a step by step developmental approach has to be taken. Vision demands Boldness, so we continue to ask ourselves, 'are we willing to be stretched or have we

become too comfortable?’

‘Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back;
lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left;’ Isaiah 54:2,3

Stephen Hibbard & Paul Hammond

Central Baptist Church Dundee - Planted in the Word

Lead Pastor Jim Turrent came into pastoral ministry after a career in engineering. He served in Culloden Baptist Church for 9 years before coming to Central Baptist in 2008. Jim has overall pastoral responsibility for the church with particular emphasis upon teaching and leadership.

I was brought up in a Christian home, in the evangelical context of Harper Memorial Baptist Church in Glasgow. The church had a strong emphasis on foreign mission and had, as its first pastor, John Harper who had lost his life on the Titanic, preaching the gospel in the freezing waters as it sunk. During my mid-teens, I remember a prospective pastor coming to preach. I had never heard anything like this before: he preached with an authority and confidence that glorified God in a way that I hadn't connected with before. I couldn't articulate what it was, but there was something very different that I hadn't experienced and wanted to know more. That was the beginning of my move towards 'reformed' theology. That process was influenced by the work of Don Carson and John Piper. Having qualified and worked as an engineer for sometime, I left that career and went to study at the Baptist College in Glasgow. I really appreciated the time I had there. Ken Roxburgh was Principal at the time and I was challenged by his ability to make us think, no matter where we were on the evangelical spectrum, and this was really formative for me.

Having completed my studies I was called to Culloden in Inverness, to a little church that had started up and been going for about a year. I was called to be their first minister. The church was about 50-60 when we started and, over nine years, we saw God grow the fellowship to over 200. Key to my formation during this period were the Elders I had around me. Before I arrived at Culloden they had firmly established a principle of plurality within the eldership, which was enormously helpful to me. They were very open in supporting me and we had a kind of 'first amongst equals' ethos; but as the 'paid guy' it was expected that I would take a lead. So a strong leadership was one of the key things I learned, together with the importance of the investment you make in leadership training.

I also learnt a lot from the developmental stages the church went through. At the start there was a happy informality; if something went wrong, it was funny, and no one seemed to mind. However there came a moment, as the church grew, when what was once a happy informality began to look more like a lack of care and preparation. As the church grew, it became clear that we had to think things through more thoroughly and encourage people to look at ministry in a slightly different way. Alongside reflecting on the transition between these different stages, I also discovered and experienced what the word of God does in a fellowship. I found that preaching is fundamental to how God builds his church. I remember a retired pastor, who joined Culloden Baptist, saying to me one day that he had noticed a change in me, "for the first few years you have used all the stuff you had been taught at college and that has brought you through, then there came a point when you started to dig deeper". I will always remember that comment, and as I went deeper into the word, then we began to see the church really beginning to grow and develop.

As we began to grow at Culloden, we were presented with a number of different issues to work through. One of the more sensitive issues concerned the development of various ministries. We found that it was all too easy to need our ministry more than it needs us; to become possessive in what we do, or to fail to recognize that the ministry has moved beyond our capabilities and gifting. That was a striking conclusion to come to; and learning how to care pastorally in those situations involved a very steep learning curve. Having to occasionally say to people, "This isn't really as helpful to people as it once was", "Maybe God has something else here for you", and when they say "no" you have to say "I really think...!" And that is the great thing about an eldership, because you don't come with just your own opinion, but with the reflections of others.

Perhaps one other important lesson I took from my time in Culloden was the experience of having people who pressed me on my preaching. Because we were in Inverness, we had a number of students from the Highland Theological College; and you know what theological students are like! So I had to be on my toes, but also I had people I trusted who would reflect back to me what they thought was good

and what they thought wasn't. This level of feedback and critique was very formative for me, and could only have happened in the context of such a caring and supportive fellowship. I also had a lot of time to reflect upon how the church works. Culloden was a stage in my development where I began to think through how we actually come to decisions, and discern the will of God in the local church, and I cherish the opportunity for that kind of development of my thinking.

Coming to Dundee

Around this time (2007-2008) I was invited to come to Central Baptist, here in Dundee. Personally, I hadn't seen myself moving to a role in a large city centre church; I had always thought that my next move would be to another newer, smaller church. I thought my role was to develop small churches and to see God building them up. So the first time Central Baptist approached me I said "no"; but the Elders came back to me, as their conviction had not gone away, and they asked me if I would reconsider.

After further reflection and prayer, I accepted their offer and took up the position of Senior Pastor. As I reflected on the post God, really spoke to me about the potential that Central Baptist had to be a really strategic church in the city. Dundee has seen numerous baptist churches closing. Central Baptist itself is an amalgamation of Ward Road Baptist Church (which is the building that we meet in), Rattray Street Baptist which was just a stones throw from where we are, and other baptist churches in the city that had folded and merged into it. I remember standing with Angus, the Associate Pastor, before I was called and I said, "lets just stand here and pray, because I believe if God is in this then ours has to be a rebuilding work here in Dundee". So we came with that kind of feeling, that we were not just coming here to keep things turning and just to maintain things, but we really had a vision of the church being strategic in the city. Even before we arrived, we had a sense that church planting might be part of that process.

Whenever a new pastor starts, there is an unsettling period of adjustment. There are lots of different expectations on both sides, and it takes time for the congregation to get to know the new pastor and

for the new pastor to get to know the congregation. My predecessor, Jim Clarke, is a very fine man whose preaching style is more thematic, whereas I think it is fair to say my preaching is more expositional. For some in the church that was quite a change, and it required them to make an adjustment in their expectations. Some people went and some people arrived. Along with the adjustments of having a new pastor, we had a generation of leadership that was beginning to stand down, we were looking for new leaders to come through, and as a church were beginning to recognise the need to move on. In this season of adjustment I found it important to be clear about my purpose, for without knowing exactly why you are there it is very difficult not to get side tracked. When I had talked to the search group, they were very clear that the thing they needed was someone to come along and preach God's word and lead God's people. They already had an excellent Associate Pastor in Angus Morrison, whose gifts were very much to the pastoral side, but they needed a teacher and a leader. So I came with it absolutely crystal clear in my mind. Although people had to adjust, I didn't have many people getting too upset about my focus, and it was very heartwarming to see that the church began to grow again; and growth was key to driving changes.

Worship and Discipleship

As part of this initial settling in process, like many other churches, we had to address our understanding of worship. Leading the church through different styles of worship was like trying to catch a bar of soap in the bath. It was very difficult and we never seemed to get it right. It took us some time and we had to do a lot of thinking and plenty of talking, eventually writing our 'worship position' paper which is now online. The paper tries to define our worship ethos. If you come on a Sunday there is rich worship, and I have to say that is in no small part down to our fantastic musicians. Key to this change, for me, was a number of musicians who understood the gospel; who understood the importance of the ministry of the word and that I could trust. We started a recent Sunday morning with an old hymn, played in a contemporary style, and it engaged the whole congregation. We have what the student publications might call a 'blended musical approach', but it is not a compromised musical approach; our approach is a

grown up, deliberate placing of theology at the heart of what we sing. So we skim through what we sing and we look at it very carefully. Just because everyone else is singing it, doesn't mean that we'll use it here. And some of our musicians are really good at linking into the resurgence in great theology in some of our hymnody, that we were in danger of losing, and reworking it, which is being turned to great effect. Core to shaping our musical stance was our theology of the church. We truly value having a cross section of every age group in the church, and therefore saying to the musicians, if that is the case we have to think about how we serve them in bringing them to worship God each Sunday.

The other major area we have addressed, since I came to Central, is the area of discipleship. We have published two courses, Iron Sharpens Iron for men and One to One for women. Originally I wrote One to One. However, one afternoon someone was chatting to me in the church office and said "One to One, that's a bit touchy feely you won't get guys signing up for that!" So I looked at the sign-up sheet and, sure enough, I had about 14 women and 1 guy signed up, so I decided to rewrite it and wrote Iron sharpens Iron. I didn't envisage it happening at the time, but Iron Sharpens Iron has been a real challenge to the men taking part, and we now have more men than women in discipleship at Central.

We felt it was really important to address this issue of discipleship, because many of the issues that we rubbed up against, within the church, stemmed from discipleship issues. It was also clear that, if we were going to be involved in church planting, then we needed to prepare ourselves. It would have been very easy to concentrate inwardly, making sure that we had great youth and children's work, that we had good teaching and worship; but that is just consumerism. Wouldn't it be much better for our young people to be exposed to a bigger vision of church planting, where they can see people being converted and the church growing? In trying to help people understand this, and looking for people to be involved in church planting, we found that very few people had a pioneering spirit: and that really convinced me of the need to address discipleship within the church.

We needed to rethink our strategy in respect to discipleship. We had

run Christianity Explored in the latter part of the year, and then after Christmas we ran Discipleship Explored, aiming towards a baptismal service around Easter. After our rethink we still have Christianity Explored, but we shifted that from the church building to a local Café along the road: a much better, more relaxed context for it. Now we don't do Discipleship Explored at all, because we have got upwards of 40 people being discipled through One to One and Iron sharpens Iron. What is happening is that people who come to faith are encouraged on to these courses for two reasons. Firstly, because we think it is important to work through some fundamental topics: worship, the Bible, prayer, small groups, discernment, service, giving, witnessing, and holiness. Secondly, because this course means meeting with a lead partner, a mentor, someone who can provide prayer and encouragement throughout the course.

I am currently discipling a man who has only been a Christian for a few years, but it is one of the most fulfilling things I have done. He is praying with his family, and I get to see that and other areas of his life that God is working in. He is beginning to grow, and I am witnessing it, which is just great. Of course, he has input into my life too. I can say to him, "right, now you have to pray for me." That is one of the great encouragements about this process. The One to One and Iron Sharpens Iron courses last approximately 18 months before the formal relationship ends, and some of those who have already come through the course have gone on to become lead partners. In fact, we are currently looking for three more lead partners for people who have said, "I want to be a part of this". The fact that this course is in demand is a really wonderful encouragement. There isn't a week goes by, that Angus doesn't come and sit in my office and say, "I've just had the most fantastic chat with ... and he's really moving on... and he's..."

It would be easy to imagine that these courses have been the answer to all of our problems. However, that wouldn't be an accurate picture. It hasn't all been that straight forward. We have had people say, "this is just not for me." Often the problem has not been the material, although material matters. The key has been to find mature Christians who can speak into the lives of others. One of the by-products of this sort of mentoring, is that those who are lead partners are challenged to re-think where they are in their lives. I keep saying to people in the

church that no Christian should be able to say, "I don't know what to do", because you should either be influencing or being influenced; and preferably both, for Christ. So it has had that kind of effect. There are lots of people within the church engaged in discipleship, who before hadn't found their niche.

As I mentioned earlier, this emphasis on discipleship came about because we were rubbing up against issues in church life which were basic, discipleship issues. For someone like me, who has grown up in the church, you understand what is going on. It is just second nature. You know what is expected, and you know what you should do. Yet these things which appear self-evident to me are not always self-evident to others. So suddenly, as the pastor, you look behind you and there is nobody there and you think, 'I have got to go back and pick up where people actually are'. For example, I am preparing a young couple for marriage, and the church has seen God working in their lives. The husband-to-be has told me he wants to get onto the Iron sharpens Iron course, but he said to me, "I don't really come from a Christian background and I'm embarrassed that I don't know the bible stories." I was able to say to him, "that is really not a problem, this about picking you up where you are." The great thing is that the material is very basic, but the key thing is the relationship between lead partner and person on the course: it's the pouring of one life into another. Engaging in these sorts of discipling relationships has resulted in unexpected things. I married a couple last summer and there, sitting at the front, were an older couple from the church. At first I thought, 'I didn't realise they were friendly with them', then it clicked with me that this older gentleman was the young man's lead partner. A relationship had developed that the young man looked up to him as a father figure. Just giving people the foundations, not being too prescriptive, but giving the shape of what a disciple looks like and how that works out in your life, is such a valuable thing.

Since putting the discipleship stream into action in our church life, I occasionally get people saying that we don't do any evangelism in Central Baptist. The issue is that they have not realised that culture has shifted from the 'Big Event' to ground level, personal contact, which has always been a more effective form of evangelism. So we were seeking to do that, seeking to train people to be disciples and have

their lives tell of the change in them. And if you train them in Scripture as well, then they will have the answers to give. So for us, it's about building people up in their Christian lives. Even more important is that this is open to absolutely everyone, no matter what stage of your walk with Christ. We have had some people in their sixties saying, "I could really do with this", which is great. I admire that humility and honesty.

Growing and Planting

It has always been my intention that, if Central Baptist grew, we would not move to larger buildings but plant churches; and I am glad to say that we have been involved in that process, and are about to embark on it again. As part of the planting process, we need to make sure that the home church is in a good healthy place, because it is a big task, both physically and spiritually, taking on planting another church.

We planted a church in Carnoustie and we have a pastor, John Toller, working there part-time. John splits his time between completing his studies at Baptist College and pastoring the church. It's working well at the moment, but it is important that we avoid one of the big mistakes of church planting. Far too often, church-plants cut the links with the parent church much too quickly. Carnoustie Community Church was planted nearly three years ago and membership then was 25. It is now 16, but they have 7 new members coming into membership in the next few weeks. It is quite normal to see this movement of people, and there are many reasons for it. Some have left to go to bible college, some moved away for employment reasons. However, there is still a congregation of about 30-40 worshipping with their own pastor who is part of the team here in Central, but seconded to Carnoustie.

Towards the end of 2014, we are hoping to plant a church in an Urban Priority Area of Dundee, called Lochee. We fell heir to the old Lochee Baptist Church building up there, when the church closed down. For sometime we have run youth, seniors, mums and toddlers, and all that kind of thing there, but as such there was no church. Lochee has a population of about 12,000 people, with a Church of Scotland and a very small Brethren Assembly. We saw that there is a desperate need for a greater Christian presence up there, and were keen to plant a church

in that area. But we realised that we might not necessarily be best equipped to do that. So, in order to facilitate this church plant, we have been partnering with a group called 20 Schemes (www.20schemes.com). Mez McConnell from Niddrie Community Church is seeking to pioneer 20 churches in the poorest areas of Scotland, and Lochee qualified.

For us the process started 5 years ago, with the intention of working in Carnoustie and Lochee. We had seen the fairly steep church decline on the East coast, and in Dundee in particular, with a number of churches closing down. We felt that there was a need for a Baptist Church in Carnoustie because there wasn't one there, and Arbroath Baptist Church had effectively folded by then. We thought about planting a church in Arbroath, but decided that it was too far away physically from us, for us to offer the support it needed. However, Carnoustie is about 12 miles up the coast from here, and we had some people regularly coming to us from there, who were returned missionaries. We built a team around them and trained them, and God in his mercy and grace gave us a building. A church that was closing down came and asked if we would be happy to take on the building. There was still a loan outstanding on an extension that they had done, but having considered this we thought that we could work with that, so we had a place to start and are hoping that they will soon be in a position to become self supporting.

When it comes to Lochee, that was completely different altogether. We had the desire to do something there, but not the expertise. We are a largely middle class congregation here at Central, and the cultural gap between us and an Urban Priority Area is far wider than many people imagine. There is therefore a danger that anything that we would seek to do would just be seen as patronising. However, I had met Mez at the Scottish Baptist Ministers' Conference in St Andrews, and we started to talk through this idea, so we invited Mez up to take a look at what we were doing, and he agreed that Lochee was ripe for a church plant. So we entered into a partnership with 20 Schemes, where we supply the resources and 20 Schemes bring the expertise. Their expertise includes providing a church planter, a Women's worker and an apprentice, and because we see that this needs to develop as an indigenous church, we are not sending many people. We are providing a

small group with a few supporting people around, because we don't want to swamp this church plant. They need to be free to work in a much more independent way than Carnoustie. If they think that meeting on a Friday or a Saturday is better, then we want them to be free to do that. Our focus is resourcing them to see the Kingdom growing there.

As we continue to find ways to help our church plants grow and develop, and as we continue down the path of church planting, we are hearing from more people within the church who are saying, "where we live there isn't really any evangelical church and the area could really do with one." These are mature and wise members of our congregation, but we have had to say to them that, "we hear what you are saying, but can you hold onto that just now?" Because, while we are excited by this growing desire to see the Kingdom growing in our local areas, we don't want to over commit ourselves, and damage what we have been working to achieve at Central. Therefore, while we have Carnoustie and Lochee, and until Carnoustie has become completely self supporting, then we have to say that we will wait before starting other church plants.

Over commitment is a very serious issue. One of the major considerations in church planting is that you will be giving of your best people. This is why it is not possible to sustain too many plants at once, or else you damage the core. You must also keep the core healthy in order to sustain the others. So for instance, there is no time limit on our commitment to Carnoustie. We are praying that God will graciously build that church to the point that they no longer need our input; but our commitment to Lochee is 15 years, as we recognise that it is going to take time. Along with committing people to the plant and committing to help sustain them, if you are thinking about a church plant it is important to spend time before you plant, preparing people. One of the lessons we learned with Carnoustie, was that we did not spend enough time in team training and I, as lead Pastor, ceded too much of that to others. So while we are coming up to planting in Lochee, there are key lessons I have got to learn from. Firstly, there has to be good doctrinal uniformity. It is very difficult if you are trying to support a church plant, and also trying to work out your doctrinal position together. Those discussions really get in the way of supporting a young

church. It is much better to get those things ironed out beforehand. The second, fundamentally important thing, is strategy. Those involved in the church plant need to be on board with the strategy, because as soon as you get on the ground, strategy so often goes 'out the windows' and everything becomes an opportunity. When this happens, it becomes really difficult to say 'no' to things, and you can end up doing lots of things not very well, and even doing somethings that are just not helpful to where you want to go.

Finally, if you are seriously thinking about church planting, it is important to consider the impact of a church plant on your support staff. If you consider all of those members of the team that have day jobs, and pick up second roles within the church; the treasurer, the church secretary, those within the eldership or congregation that are mentoring people. All of a sudden there is two churches' worth of work to do! Yet it is easy to not think about the extra work, and expect things to run smoothly like normal. We found this, and as we go through this process again, we are thinking much more carefully about the impact on individuals, and trying to make sure that we are not over burdening people.

For us then, church is about worship, serving, and being equipped to serve better. For this reason, we see discipleship as indispensable. Discipleship is the key to a healthy, growing core, and the foundation to planting churches. You can only plant if your core is healthy and ready to serve. The church must also be prepared to commit to serving, as this kind of endeavour is not quick or easy, but is fantastically rewarding when you see the Kingdom of God growing in your city.

Jim Turrent & Paul Hammond

Postscript

At the outset, I would want to express hearty thanks and great gratitude to Paul Hammond and the four other contributors to this short collection of essays. Paul, a member of Abbeyhill Baptist Church, who is working on doctoral research at St Andrews University on 'Fresh Expressions' of church, volunteered at an early stage to collate the essays and has done a wonderful job of planning, interviewing, transcribing and editing the narratives. David, Peter, Stephen and Jim have made themselves vulnerable and allowed themselves and their attitudes to ministry to be exposed to the wider constituency of our Union; and the result, I trust you will agree, is a wonderful celebration of the grace of God at work in our congregations and through their lives, the lives of congregational leaders who sincerely seek to pursue the baptist way.

The idea of this publication was born in conversation with Alan Donaldson after our 2012 Assembly. As well as those invited to platform events and as speakers at Assembly, we saw a place in providing an opportunity to allow further voices to be heard from within and among our constituency. We wanted to celebrate more of the many good things we see, as we travel the length and breadth of Scotland, happening within the churches of our Union. We are well aware of the limitations of such a work. We have 167 churches and only 4 are here represented. Why these people? Because these were the ones that, in prayerful consideration, we felt were appropriate. Why not more? Why not, indeed. Perhaps because what is intended here is but an appetiser. An opportunity for you yourself to go on and to reflect not only on these stories, but on your own story and the story of the local church to which you belong. What is presented here is not, as explained in the introduction, a representation of all that God is doing, nor is this offered as a template for you to follow. Four embodied ministries, firmly located in the life of local church, are laid before you. Their backgrounds and convictions are outlined. The practices that have emerged and been enacted in the local situation are sketched. These are things to think and pray about.

As you go on to reflect on these matters, please allow me to share some of my own reflections, having read and pondered over the material in this volume. My observations are coloured by the experience of travel-

ling and meeting with ministers, leadership groups and congregations throughout Scotland over the last three years. They are also affected by a deep persuasion with regard to the propriety and effectiveness of the baptist way, both for developing disciples and for presenting the Gospel to others. Let me touch on leadership, community, mission and prayerfulness.

Leadership

I have not always been a baptist. I was a minister in another, historic denomination and thereafter of an independent Fellowship, before coming into a baptist church. I have therefore moved significantly in my understanding of ministry over the years. I began, I admit, with a sincere yet more censorial approach to ministry. I was sure of the limited things I knew and had learnt. I was clear that I was called to be a leader. I knew what to teach and had decisive vision. What has changed is, I trust, a growing appreciation of the baptist way. An embracing of breadth and variety, circumscribed by our Union's Declaration of Principle. A deeper appreciation of the depths of Scripture and the generosity and grace of God to us, in fellowship together with each other. And a profoundly greater awareness of what it means to have our lives reformed in Christ and to become, in the words of Peter, partners of the divine nature (2 Peter 1.4).

One of the ingredients in the life of any church is leadership. It comes out in all these essays. What should a Christian leader look like? It is with some bemusement that I reflect on how often, over the years, I have attended events when a Scriptural reference or prophetic injunction has been uttered, encouraging the new incumbent to 'be bold, be strong!' The allusion, specific or implied, to be like Joshua. Or Moses. Possibly a Jeremiah. Occasionally a Nehemiah. To be Apostolic. Prophetic. Evangelistic. A teacher and pastor. But rarely is a passage read, just encouraging a leader to be like Jesus. I wonder why not. Is it not enough? Does it invoke insufficient authority? Israel was drawn to the manly magnificence of Saul. God chose a shepherd boy, a root from the stump of Jesse.

In the essays, it is significant that these leaders have grasped that leadership involves patterning something. Gifts, abilities and skills are

touched on. But there is more to each of these ministers, that makes them able leaders. I think a key lies in their attitude. Paul called the Philippian believers to adopt the same attitude as that of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2.5ff.). Self-emptying. Servant-like. Humble. Obedient.

Towards God? Yes, of course. But towards others? Perhaps a distinction has to be drawn between the authority of the Word of God and the authority of men. Perhaps preachers can sometimes confuse the two. What is evident from these essays is that it doesn't have to be that way. It is possible to have good, prophetic and persuasive preaching that inspires, instructs and informs. The pivotal issue, though, is what the preacher is like when they leave the pulpit. Are they seeking to have the same attitude as Jesus?

Community

What does a Jesus-shaped community of disciples look like? Does it look like your church? Just as I am surprised how easily I can stray off the path of purity and prophetic purposefulness, I am surprised how easily churches can become something less than they would really want to be. As soon as you hear someone mutter, 'I wouldn't bring anyone to this church...', you know something is seriously wrong!

Churches need transparency and honesty as well as good leaders. There also has to be a willingness to engage in some form of critical self-appraisal. And a little bit of help from the wider church family is not always a bad thing. Real communities are organic, not static structures. Our bodies can go out of shape easily. We have to work hard to stay in shape. How healthy is the body of your community; and are you playing your part properly, whether as a leader or a member? Because our baptist way means we are all equally responsible, as ministers of God together (1 Peter 2.5).

Mission

Having a mission statement is one thing. Putting it into practice is another. My observation is that it is easier to write a proposal than to enact a plan. And enacting a plan means having people willing to invest energy in pursuing God's purpose. The great thing about each of these

stories is that they tell the stories of leaders who inspire. And people who are inspired. The calling is to inspire people to do it the Jesus way. Is that how you seek to engage in mission? How does that work out in practice, in your life and in your context? Don't be discouraged. He's promised to be with you, if you're serious about this, at all times (Matthew 28.18-20).

Prayerfulness

Our essays remind us, again and again, of the need to seek Jesus in an immediate, personal way. Having a personal relationship with Jesus is basic to our faith. Surrendering to Him and seeking to be filled by the Holy Spirit, to have our thinking renewed (Romans 12.2). But the baptist way is not just about people as individuals. It is about people together. Knowing that when two or three gather in Jesus' name, our Lord is there with them (Matthew 18.19-20). To gather together, purposefully seeking the presence of the Holy Spirit, in order to inform and guide our prayers and petition. Is this what we look for? God's Word is sure and steadfast. Will we take it seriously?

As we stand on the threshold of a new stage in the life of our nation, seeking to bring the savour of Christ to a new generation in our land and looking to evangelise and bear witness in Jesus' name, reflect prayerfully on these essays and reach out with fresh confidence in the Word of God:

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV)

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:13-14 NIV)

Let us journey together into a future forged in Jesus' name.

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