

the : tablet

tabernacle : penarth

purpose: to reflect God's love in our church, community and world.



May 2015 edition

AGM Report 2015

Last week we held our AGM at Tabernacle and it was a delight to once again see it so well attended. One of the overriding impressions that came from the meeting was just how busy Tabernacle is. On every day of the week we see dozens and dozens of people coming through our building for Playgroup, Bible studies, worship, food bank, Home Access, mid-week youth meetings, counselling, prayer, maintenance on the property and many, many other activities. We are a busy church! In his report on the development of the Arcot House project Tom Bourne commented that he has been surprised at how difficult it is to find a room to meet in during the week at Tabernacle!

In order to sustain such a large amount of activity we require a huge number of volunteers and as people become more elderly or move away we need to find new volunteers all the time. Richard Jackson pointed that over 100 people are on the rota to service Sunday worship alone. We require a vast army of people just to make a Sunday service work.

However, the AGM was not all about activity and rotas. At several points through the meeting we paused to pray for our life and ministry together. The phrase "Be still" was used several times to remind us that we need to pause in the presence of God to find his direction. We also paused to

remember Angus and Helen and their children in Nepal at this difficult time. At the centre of our busy life together we must remember to be still and know that we are serving a great God. Our activity must not be generated by our sense of urgency or busyness but driven by the impulsion of the Spirit.

Tom Bourne, Andrew Lawrence and Julian Haines brought us a report on the developments in Arcot House. Within the next few weeks work will begin to make the property watertight and start bringing it up to standard so that we can begin ministry. About £10,000 will be spent on scaffolding, repointing, re-guttering and other external works on the building. The front office will be decorated and refurbished and the other rooms got into shape for their new ministry. Once this is done and our services move into the property we will begin to get a better idea of how the building might be used. The plan at the moment is not to spend too much money changing the layout of downstairs until we know exactly what it is we need. At the same time we can then start thinking about the upstairs property. Our initial plan was to make one large communal property as a shared house. However, the best advice we are receiving from architects and planners is that applying for permission to turn it into three flats legally may be the best way

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COMING SOON

Sunday Mornings

Sunday, May 10th

2. Blessed are those who mourn (with Rev Elfed Godding from EA)
Is 61:1-3; Matt 5:4

Sunday, May 17th

3. Blessed are the meek
Ps 37:1-11; Matt 5:5

Sunday, May 24th

Pentecost Sunday

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
Is 55:1-13; Matt 5:6

Sunday, May 31st

5. Blessed are the merciful
Micah 6:6-8; Matt 5:7

Sunday, June 7th

6. Blessed are the pure in heart
Ps 24:1-10; Matt 5:8

Sunday Evenings

Sunday, May 10th

Christian Aid Service

Sunday, May 17th

Café Church Night

2. Deep love, deep insight
Phil 1:9-11

Sunday, May 24th

3. The freedom of chains
Phil 1:12-14

Sunday, May 31st

4. Just get the message out there
Phil 1:15-18a

Sunday, June 7th

5. Should I stay or should I go!
Phil 1:18b-26

THE BIG ISSUE

Each issue of *The Tablet* will look at one issue that has been discussed at a recent Church Meeting and explain some of the background. Our hope is that you will use this as a guide for prayer, but also that you might be encouraged to attend future Church Meetings. The matters we deal with are sometimes mundane, sometimes

routine, but sometimes of incredible importance to our Christian life together. This issue we reflect on some scary statistics.

The Christian Research Institute gathers together statistics from all the Christian denominations in the UK to publish a report called 'UK Church Statistics'. Each of these reports looks back over the last 5 years and then predicts forward for the next 5 years based on the trends that they can see. In the last few weeks the UK Church Statistics for 2010-2020 have been published.

In the last edition of the statistics and in his book 'Pulling Out Of The Nosedive' Christian Research's former director Peter Brierley made some alarming forecasts by extrapolating the trends shown in the data he had collected. Whilst there was optimism in his analysis which showed a slow-down in the decline in attendances at churches, the indication was still of falling support. That report warned the church to act to halt and then reverse the decline. His prediction was that if the church didn't do something in the UK then it would be virtually wiped out by the end of the first quarter of the 21st Century. In the latest edition of the statistics there are some signs that in some parts of the UK the church has taken such action.

Statistics derived from a number of the major UK Christian denominations indicate that numbers of people attending worship across the UK are now more stable than during the later

years of the last millennium. These statistics contradict the widely reported view that church-going numbers are in a nosedive and the country is either becoming more secular or more "fuzzy" in its faith. However, it is no time to become complacent.

Across the whole UK the decline in Baptist church membership between 2008 and 2013 was 13% down. It is predicted that that decline will continue and that between 2013 and 2020 there will be a further 19% loss of church membership in Baptist churches.

Across all denominations in the UK the figure for 2008-2013 was down 5% with a further 7% decline expected going forward in the next 5 years. That means that the total church population in the UK will have dropped from 5,694,000 in 2008 to just a fraction over 5,000,000 in 2020.

One thing that we can see from the statistics however is that the picture is not uniform across the whole UK. For example, in England total church membership between 2008 and 2013 showed no change at all. In the next 5 year period there is some indication that there may be small levels of growth in England. However, here in Wales for the 2008-2013 period we saw an 8% decline in membership with a further 14% decline predicted by 2020. Not that its any consolation but the figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland are even worse!

This means that whilst the church continues to decline in Wales,

Scotland and Northern Ireland, in England the situation has stabilised and to some degree is offsetting the decline across the rest of the UK.

The indications are that the situation has been reversed in England (particularly in the South East) by 3 factors: The first is by the immigration of Christians from sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe. The good news is that they have brought new life and energy to many English congregations. The bad news, of course is, that these are not converts but merely transfers from another part of the world.

The second feature of growth in England is amongst Russian and Greek Orthodox congregations which are showing a large increase. This is not just through immigration but also through younger people who are looking for a faith based in a historic tradition joining their numbers. Liturgical worship led by choirs and robed ministers seems to be very attractive to some younger people! This is backed up by the growth in cathedral congregations in England in the last 10 years. If you have been to an evensong in a major cathedral recently you will have seen just how large mid-week congregations can be in such places.

Thirdly, a major factor of growth in England has been the planting and establishing of what are called 'emerging churches'. These are churches which are finding completely

new ways of gathering and expressing their Christian faith. They are based in people's homes or in coffee shops, in pubs or in libraries. They rarely have their own building and almost never have professional clergy. Visiting and pastoral care is taken on mutually by members and teaching and worship leading is shared across the whole congregation. In strategic terms these churches are what is called 'agile'. That means that without buildings, large organisational structures or traditions they are able to move and adapt easily. If a building becomes unsuitable they can move to a new one. If something is not working they can change it quickly without having to go through a complicated consultation process. They are evangelical, charismatic and their worship is contemporary—and they are growing.

So what are the challenges for us here in Wales and particularly for Tabernacle? One of the features we can see straight away is that we do not have the levels of immigration in Penarth that they have in some parts of the UK. Similarly we are not an orthodox congregation. Whilst we may be able to adapt some of the 'future historic' practices of the traditional liturgical churches we are never going to be one of them. Robes, candles, incense, written liturgy may all be attractive to one section of our community, but I don't quite see how we could bring these practices into Tabernacle easily!

The emerging model also proves difficult for us. We have a 150-year history, a large building and many traditions that it would be difficult to change. Just moving the time of some of our meetings causes major consternation so how we could make major changes in other areas is hard to see.

At Tabernacle we have been somewhat insulated from the church decline that has been

going on in Wales. Over a 10 year period congregations across Wales have seen something like a 15-20% decline—but not at Tabernacle.

One of the features of church life going forward is that as other congregations collapse, the remnants of those congregations will be looking for places to worship. There will be a period where we pick up folk from other congregations, but we need to remember that this is not true growth in Kingdom terms.

It has been a delight to see much of our growth in recent years is growth through conversion. People attending Alpha (and Pub Alpha), coming to us through Home Access or the food bank, responding to invitations given on the street during our evangelistic efforts and our web site have all contributed to the stability in the size of our congregation. Whilst we have lost some members through death and others have left to join other churches, we have seen our numbers creeping up very slightly.

However, going forward we need to be thinking more clearly about our strategy for mission, evangelism and growth. We cannot take for granted our past or rely on growth we have seen in previous years. As culture continues to shift and change rapidly around us and as the community becomes more distant from a church-going tradition, we need to find relevant and new ways to share the gospel with our neighbours. As with everything in church life this must begin with prayer.

So... over to you!

Roger Grafton



Election of Deacons

At the Annual General Meeting last week we were delighted that 5 new Deacons were elected to Leadership and 2 of the officers reappointed for a new term.

Ann Niblett was unanimously re-appointed as the Church Secretary whilst **Julian Haines** was appointed to the post of Treasurer for the next year. Julian has already served 5 years as an elder, so will be required to stand down next year under the terms of our constitution.

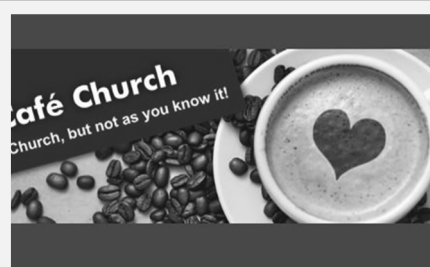
Cath Bourne, Dot Evans, Karl Haldenby and **Naomi and Steve Roberts** were all elected as Trustees and as Deacons and we look forward to their increased contribution to the life of the church over the next 3 years. Once the elders and leadership have met, we will decide what particular role each deacon will take on and let the church know as soon as possible.

Student Placement

For one month this year, during June, we will be welcoming **Eleanor Kelsey** to join the staff team. Eleanor is a student at the Baptist College in Bristol and she will be doing her summer placement with us as part of her ministerial formation. During her time with us she will experience as many areas of church life and ministry as possible. If you are responsible for a ministry or activity that you would like Eleanor to take part in, please speak to Pastor Roger. Please look out for Eleanor around the church over the summer, and make her welcome. She will be staying with a church member, but we hope you will be generous in your welcome and invitations to your home!

Café Church

There are three Café Church Nights coming up in the next few months: 17th May, 28th June and 26th July. Café Church is a relaxed evening of music, poetry, drama, Bible study and discussion, so why not come along and taste church with a coffee?



VERY IMPORTANT

If you have moved house recently, even if you have moved into temporary accommodation, we would appreciate if you would let the church office know as soon as possible.



The Tablet

Got something you want the church to know? Why not publish it in the Tablet?

All submissions to Jayne Neadley please in the week following a church meeting



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If you pay tax in the UK, then Gift Aid is a simple way to increase the value of your gift at no extra cost to you. Making your gift using Gift Aid will enable the church to reclaim the basic rate of tax on your gift. This means that if you give £10 to Tabernacle using Gift Aid, at the present rate of tax, your gift is worth **£12.50**. You can give any amount, regular or one-off, and the church can reclaim the tax at the basic rate up to the amount of tax you have paid in the tax year. The tax year runs from 6th April one year to 5th April the next. That tax paid can be income tax or capital gains tax at any rate and can include tax paid on savings and income.

However, if you do not pay tax you should not use Gift Aid.

To be a “cheerful giver” by using this scheme your first step is to sign a Gift Aid Declaration form. Tabernacle's Finance Team will be delighted to give you this and either offering envelopes or a Standing Order form so that your gift can be identified and an audit trail kept for Inland Revenue inspections. Strict confidentiality is maintained so that your giving is not disclosed beyond the Finance Team and Inland Revenue Inspector.



AGM REPORT (continued)

forward. The flats will be easier to use by our clients and as a side effect will also produce more income. The Arcot House team are continuing to search for the best way forward.

This was a meeting where we said goodbye to a number of our leadership team who have come to the end of their terms or who were standing down. The meeting thanked Liz Freeman who had served as Pastoral Care Deacon; to Drew Firth from the Mission Team; to Richard Jackson, our Worship Deacon; to Andy Bowdler who had looked after our property; Pete Turner who came to the end of his time as CHYPBoard deacon and Jon Morse who has served 6 years as our church Treasurer. Jon in particular has done a fantastic job of keeping our finances in good order and providing the resources we need for ministry. As we thanked those who had served over recent years and said goodbye to them we elected and greeted our new deacons (see elsewhere in this Tablet). Please pray for the leadership as they meet together for the first time next week.

Our AGM this year was a terrific meeting with a great sense of the energy and life that there is in Tabernacle. It is good to be able to look forward to all that God has for us in the coming years and to see how we might fit into his plan. Please continue to pray for the church, for the leaders, for the pastors. Please continue to give as generously as you can (it was noted that our income has been going down over recent years and this has meant cuts in ministry). Please think about where you can serve in this wonderful experience of ministry which is Tabernacle Baptist Church.