

# Connect



## Fruitfulness

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Messengers of Hope

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June 2017

John 15 teaches us that if we abide in him we will bear much fruit, and yet for over 50 years the church in Scotland has been in sharp decline. With a focus on membership, Sunday service attendance and baptismal statistics, the picture painted by statisticians is overwhelmingly gloomy. The recent church census conducted by Peter Brierley in 2016 has demonstrated that all traditional denominations in Scotland are in decline, with a small trace of church growth being seen in new forms of church and ethnic minority congregations. There is no doubt in my mind that these stories are overwhelmingly debilitating and faith-sapping for our churches. Trying harder or seeking to discover the latest trending programme will not resolve the underlying issues.

The problem with these numbers is that they only tell a particular story. Ten years ago, very few of our churches were committed to the local community in the way I observe today. Church buildings are open to the public, ministers are spending more time with as yet unbelievers. I hear stories of small groups that have adopted a missional stance and are engaging with local schools, artists, musicians, prostitutes, prisoners, bikers, joggers, and so the list could go on.



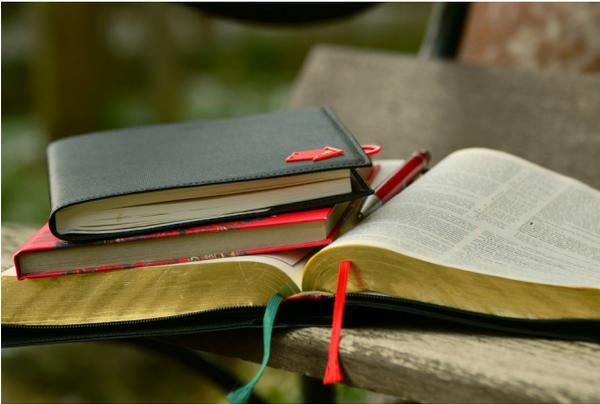
I hear of churches developing fresh gatherings for prayer that often last several days at a time. There are new ways of approaching the discipleship of young leaders and putting space aside to think about the long term future of the church rather than always focusing on the immediate.

Thankfully, decline is beginning to disturb our equilibrium. We have been forced, in many cases, into a journey of self-emptying, a humbling journey. Arrested by the imminent death of the established church, we travel towards a new place of Christ-like reliance and creativity that embraces the journey celebrated in Baptism of dying to self and rising in an expression of new life in God's Kingdom.

Abiding in Christ should cause us to re-evaluate our practices and priorities. To consider what has been lost from our Baptist faith and practice in the last 50 years that we need to recapture. To measure the fruitfulness of the discipleship of each and every believer; our commitment to see everyone in our churches faithful in witness and global outreach; and the counter cultural lifestyle that is always present where Jesus is declared as Lord.

## Forres Lighthouse Baptist Church

Forres Lighthouse Baptist Church continues to be grateful for the grant that assists the work here on the Moray Firth coast. As we continue to preach the glorious riches of Christ we are seeing people grow in the grace and faith of the Lord Jesus, with a number of people coming into his kingdom for the time. We had a number of people saved as we preached the book of Proverbs (probably not many people's idea of 'evangelistic strategy'!) and it's been great to see God speaking with power as his Word is preached.



After a challenging year pastorally, the Lord is blessing us with a few surprises. After two years of non-activity in the local Academy, they have approached our pastor to begin talking about recommencing the chaplaincy work. This currently only takes place in the local primary school. We have also just taken on a

young mum in conjunction with the Criminal Justice System to work at the Church and our mid-week toddlers group each week in order for her to complete her community service hours. Pray that she may see the love of Christ in us. Please also pray we would continue to be open to how God wants to work in and through us as he is doing things we never expected. Many thanks for your prayers.

**Rev Dr Jon Mackenzie**



Messages

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Assembly booking is now open. We are returning to Motherwell Civic Centre. Early Bird discounts are available until the end of the month! Everything sounds predictable, except this year you could be a keynote speaker. You are being invited to bring a message of hope to our Assembly. There is no age limit, no media limitation, you don't need to have achieved some elevated status of leadership within the church. We are looking to gather together messages of hope from the churches collectively, and also from individuals who will take the time to carefully and prayerfully craft a letter, tweet or video to be shared in the run up to Assembly and during the course of our gathering.

Baptists have been committed to the priesthood of all believers since their inception. One expression of this is that we believe that each of us can speak directly with our Father God and can hear his voice directly, through others, in his word and in the world around us. Taking time to listen to all voices is a challenge. Big voices are always easier to hear, yet in Scripture it is so often the still, small voice that we are drawn to, in order to hear the word of God. Your message should explore the theme of hope. If using social media, please use #BUShope. If writing a letter or email, it should be no longer than 250 words and printed on one side of paper, it can be posted to our usual address marked "hope" or emailed to [BUShope2017@gmail.com](mailto:BUShope2017@gmail.com) We are creating a YouTube channel where we will upload your videos. We would encourage you to film these on a phone held horizontally, and it should last no longer than 1 minute.

Please think carefully and prayerfully about the message of hope you wish to share. The videos will be streamed throughout Assembly, with letters on display in the exhibition area. Social media messages will be immediately live on our social media channels, and should be posted with appropriate care. God is at work in our nation, through our churches and the people of God. Amidst suffering, personal and national distress, facing a world in great pain and daily impacted by the sinful selfishness of humanity, the resurrection gives us reason for hope and the power to live differently. In these messages, let us remind one another of the hope we have and the stories of hope that emanate from that deep belief.

#BUShope

Hope, Baptist Union of Scotland, 48 Speirs Wharf, Glasgow, G4 9TH.

Videos – [BUShope2017@gmail.com](mailto:BUShope2017@gmail.com)

## Prayer Link June

### June 4th

- Rebekah Sharp (Chaplain, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow)
- Easterhouse Baptist Church
- Elgin Baptist Church
- Ellon Baptist Church

### June 11th

- Jim Simpson (Chaplain, Royal Cornhill Hospital, Aberdeen)
- Erskine Baptist Church
- Falkirk Baptist Church
- Forres: The Lighthouse Church

### June 18th

- David Vogan (Chaplain, Nethervale Care Home, Auchlochan)
- Fort William Baptist Church
- Fraserburgh Baptist Church
- Galashiels Baptist Church

### June 25th

- Chris Withers (Chaplain, 16 Signals Regiment)
- Garioch Church
- Gerrard Street Baptist Church
- Glenrothes Baptist Church

#### Rebekah Sharp – Chaplain, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow

Prayer Point: experiencing a time of change in Chaplaincy, with team members leaving the future seems uncertain. Our hospital chaplaincy team are working at half capacity so prayer for God's glory and guidance to take us to the people with real needs. For God's wisdom and guidance as I embark on the pre-accreditation process for Baptist ministry.

Praise Point: I have continued to build working relationships which help people to see the value in chaplaincy and in using chaplaincy. I am thankful for the opportunities to speak publicly about that work.

#### Elgin Baptist Church

We are thankful to God for His many blessings to us as a fellowship for the unity in Christ that we enjoy, for the new small group structure put in place, for the door of opportunity that has opened up in one of the local schools.

Please pray that we might be faithful and fruitful in the work He has called us to do.

### **Forres: The Lighthouse Church**

Give thanks with us that God is establishing the Church in the community and giving us opportunities to show the love of God and share the gospel of Christ. Please pray that grace of God would work in abundance in the many complex pastoral issues a large number of our congregation faces.

### **Easterhouse Baptist Church**

We want to give thanks for the growth in so many areas of our church life. Our main prayer request is that we are moving into a time of transitioning where we will be looking for a New Pastor. Our goal is that the new person would work for a year with our present pastor and then take over senior leadership. Please pray for revelation and guidance for our search group.

### **Chris Withers - Army Chaplain, Infantry**

Training Centre in Catterick  
Here I serve with two other Chaplains and a SASRA Scripture Reader. We deal with around 900 new recruits most of whom have no understanding of Christian faith. I thank God that in leading them through various classes looking at character development, morality, resilience etc that we have much opportunity to share of the value of Christian faith. Please pray that as we share the role of faith in military service that minds and hearts will be opened. Pray also for continued growing relationships with training and senior staff and that in pastoral matters we know His wisdom and discernment.

### **Jim Simpson – Lead Chaplain, NHS Grampian**

Please pray, for special opportunities given to NHS chaplains: As I begin an extended secondment for the next two years using the Values Based Reflective Practice tools, enhancing staff experience across Grampian. Give thanks, for the richness of team experience in NHS Grampian: In Aberdeen city we are blessed with 7 full time and 3 part-time NHS chaplains plus 3 denominational chaplains and 2 secretaries, each contributing to the service we provide.

### **Galashiels Baptist Church**

We give thanks that God has not forgotten us during our Vacancy. We have seen people come to faith, had a number of baptisms and new faces appearing at church on Sundays. The work goes on. Our parent and toddler groups are well attended and our lunch club is much appreciated. The teaching on Sundays is most up-building. We look forward to the time when we move out of vacancy and to where God is leading us next.

### **Ellon Baptist Church**

Please pray for us as we go forward with our building project. We are at an exciting stage of exploring what the building will look like with our architect. Please pray that God continues to go before us and lead us as one as we seek to take this forward in His will. Please pray for our team going to Ecuador in June to build a home there and work with children, pray they have a safe journey, keep well and are used by God in amazing ways.

# Scottish Baptist College

## Ross Hamilton



2014 - Ross in his early days at College!

Another academic year has flown by at SBC and we're pleased to be sending out a new batch of (soon-to-be) graduates! One of the great aspects of life at the College is watching people grow. One of this year's graduates is Ross Hamilton and we've seen him grow from a shy school leaver to someone who is confident in moving on to the next step.

Ross picks up his story, "I had just finished 5th year at school and I was convinced I was called to study theology. As I was 16 at the time, I had a few concerns that I wouldn't be ready, but after sitting in on one class I knew it was the right

place for me! I didn't know what I was training for yet, but I felt a peace that I was where I was supposed to be."

When we asked Ross about his time at College he replied: "I loved the discussions we would have in class. Some of the things I heard (from lecturers and students!) have literally changed my life. I've grown in confidence in both myself and my faith, and I've found something I think I can make a difference with."

Ross has now completed his studies and is looking forward to graduating with his Bachelor of Divinity (Hons) from the University of the West of Scotland / SBC in July. What's next for Ross? "I've just finished my final year at the

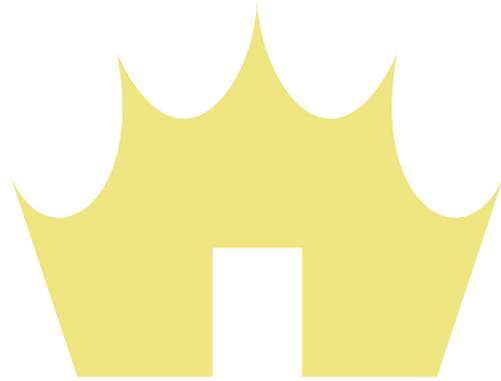


2017 - Ross with other graduates at the Thanksgiving Service

college. I'll be starting a long distance Master's course with IBTS (International Baptist Theological Seminary) in Amsterdam in September (God-willing!)"

Ross's final words to anyone thinking of studying at SBC: "This isn't a club for the intellectual elite, it's a place for normal people to learn about the God they love!"

If you are interested in studying theology at SBC, then please get in contact with us: [scottishbaptistcollege@uws.ac.uk](mailto:scottishbaptistcollege@uws.ac.uk) or see more on our website [www.scottishbaptistcollege.org](http://www.scottishbaptistcollege.org)



# baptist union of scotland

Keep up to date with the Latest News and Events on our website

**[scottishbaptist.com](http://scottishbaptist.com)**



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